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RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN GARO HILLS WITH REFERENCE TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

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ABSTRACT:

The overall development of the region and success of rural developmental schemes are vital in the development of Garo Hills. The aspects of Rural development as seen in community development is a complex phenomenon covering a wide spectrum of activities meant to ameliorate the condition of people especially the people living in rural areas. Community development is a basis of social justice and economic equality and removal of poverty. It also implies involvement of voluntary organizations, rural development functionaries and institutions and strategic interventions to help the rural community. The rural development scenario in Meghalaya presents a completely different picture than the rest of the country. There is no Panchayat or any other statutory elective body in the rural areas except the Autonomous District Councils at the District or tribe level. The findings on the other hand reveal that the villagers are satisfied with the Government schemes as they have been successful in West Garo Hills, Meghalaya. The community development are progressing in the areas of development such as electricity, road and transportation, safe drinking water facilities, health sectors such as PHCs and CHCs, literacy in terms of education etc. which are the main elements of community development. The Government schemes can be implemented in the long run through the intervention of village headman, village councils and Development Officers with basic awareness and training programmes so that the remote areas of the villages there is sound community development with better conditions of living to uplift the marginalized and the downtrodden.

KEYWORDS:

RURAL DEVELOPMENT, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, GARO HILLS.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Rural Development in common parlance means development of rural areas. The term 'rural' denotes a non-urban style of life, characterized by agriculture based occupational structure and close-knit society and settlement pattern. But in modern times it is very difficult to define rural development as its connotation has moved too much from its basic meaning of 'development of rural areas' to 'integrated rural development' to the present form of 'sustainable rural development'.

According to the International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, the term 'rural' is broadly referred to the area(s) where people are usually engaged in field activities involving production of food, fiber, ores and raw materials. On the other hand 'development' is a process of gradual growth of advancement through progressive changes.

As per the rural development Sector Policy Paper (1975) of the World Bank, the term rural development is "a strategy design to improve the economic and social condition of a specific group of people - the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in rural areas - the group includes small scale farmers, tenants and landless".

James H. Copp has defined rural development as "a process through collective efforts, aimed at improving the

wellbeing and self realization of people living outside the urbanized areas". He further extends that the ultimate target of rural development is people and not infrastructure and according to him one of the objectives of rural development should be to 'widen people's range of choices'. Rural development is a complex phenomenon covering a wide spectrum of activities meant to ameliorate the condition of people especially the poor people living in rural areas. It is a basis of social justice and economic equality and removal of poverty which is commonly called community Development Programmes.

Block is a unit of development administration for rural areas formed by the state government. The Community Development Officer is the official in charge of the block. Block Development Officers monitors the implementation of all programmes related to planning and development of the blocks. Coordination of development and implementation of plans in all blocks of district is provided by a Chief Development Officer (CDO). The role of the Block Development Officer is to supervise, monitor, guide and impart awareness programmes to the people in the rural areas about the various developmental projects of the government, i.e. central and state.

2.0 NEED AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

In Meghalaya, the Community Development Programme was started in 1953. But the state remained outside the panchayati raj system or any other popularly elected body

in the rural areas as it was under the sixth schedule of the constitution. The traditional local self-government bodies like the Village Councils or the head of the village which fall within the purview of the Sixth Scheduled of the Constitution were neither equipped to deal with the modern developmental needs of rural development nor strengthened like the panchayats in other areas of the country. With the introduction of Panchayati Raj Institutions in almost all other states of India rural development programmes were/are initiated or undertaken and implemented by Panchayati Raj Institutions, at least to certain extent. It has become, more pronounced after the passage of the 73rd Amendment Act which has not only accorded a constitutional status to the panchayats but also added real teeth to them by transferring 29 subjects under the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution and ensuring availability of funds.

The Block Development Officers (BDOs) role in community development programmes was reduced to a great extent to that of a guide or a facilitator. But the Act was not made applicable to Meghalaya. Article 243M (2) (a) says that "nothing in this Part shall apply to the states of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram". Thus, in case of Meghalaya, in absence of panchayats or similar statutory bodies and its exemption from the purview of the 73rd Amendment Act, the onus of the initiation and implementation of the Community development plans, programmes and schemes fell mainly on the shoulders of the Block Development officer and his team. So the role of the Block Development Officers in the rural development of Meghalaya is very crucial. The success or failure of rural development activities depends on his perception, performance and capabilities.

Garo Hills, the backward district of the state, needs topmost priority for all round development in all sectors of development. In the overall development of the region and success of rural developmental schemes, the key importance is the rural bureaucracy. Full-fledged staffing in all the rural development blocks and involving them effectively in all sectors of development- agriculture, small scale industry, veterinary, horticulture, fishery to generate employment for the rural poor is required. But the importance must be given in motivating the rural bureaucracy to work hard in assisting the villagers in a difficult working condition for which the BDOs are entirely responsible.

3.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To study the role and perception of people towards community development programmes in the various Blocks.
- To study the role of subordinate officers with the BDO and mutual relationship of people in Community Development Programmes.
- To study the role of traditional self-governing institutions and their relationship with the Block

staff in community development programmes.

4.0 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the role and perception of people towards community development programmes in the various Blocks of Garo Hills?
- How is the role of subordinate officers with the BDOs in community development Programmes
- How is the relationship of people in Community Development Programmes with the BDOs, Village Council members, and Executives at various levels?
- To what extent the role of traditional self-governing institutions functional with the Block staff in community development programmes?

5.0 METHODOLOGY

The survey used here is mostly normative in order to find out the status of community development programmes in line with the Rural Development programmes.

5.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study has employed Descriptive Survey method as the design of the study. The findings of this investigation will clearly describe the various schemes, policies, programmes, projects of the Village council and the development of the various Blocks in community development programmes in Garo Hills.

5.2 POPULATION

For the purpose of this study a BDO means the officer in charge of the Block Office, block staff means the different extension officers working in a particular Block and Nokma means the A'king Nokma of the selected village. A villager means an adult man or woman of a selected village whose name appears in the latest electoral roll of the village. The list of the population according to the Blocks with division of the Villages can be seen in the following table attached in the following pages.

TABLE 5.1: POPULATION

SL.NO	BLOCK	SAMPLE				
		MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MINISTERIAL STAFF	FIELD STAFF
1.	RONGRAM	29802	28943	58745	14	17
2.	DADENGGRE	20842	20753	41595	14	12
3.	TIRIKIKILLA	29267	29121	58388	15	17
4.	SELSELLA	80422	78799	159221	11	24
5.	GAMBEGRE	13576	13193	26769	11	10
6.	DALU	25879	25341	51220	12	22

SOURCE OF THE SAMPLE: DETAILS OF BLOCKS FROM CENSUS 2011.

5.3 SAMPLE

The villages are randomly selected from among the list of villages in every Block with purposive sampling technique so as to include proportionate numbers of men and women and young and elders from the voters list of the

village. The exact number of villages and the number of villagers is decided after a preliminary survey of the selected district so that the sample becomes representative of the area. The list of the sample is given in the following table in the following pages.

TABLE 5.2: SAMPLE

SL.NO	BLOCK	SAMPLE				
		MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MINISTERIAL STAFF	FIELD STAFF
1.	RONGRAM	29802	26943	56745	16	17
2.	DADENGGRE	20842	20753	41595	14	12
3.	TKRIKILLA	29267	29121	58388	15	17

Source of the Sample: Details of Blocks from Census 2011.

5.4 TOOLS OF THE STUDY

The Interview schedule-cum-questionnaire is tested and found to be highly reliable and recommended by the subject experts in the field with research experiences. It was developed and standardized with reliability and validity principles with proper item analysis and discrimination of the various items.

5.5 PROCEDURE FOR DATA COLLECTION

Data is mainly collected from the field survey of all the Blocks and selected villages of West Garo Hills District. Data is also collected from available government files and reports and Autonomous District Councils and Village councils. Published and unpublished works are also used as sources of secondary data, wherever available. The data so collected is supplemented by the field notes maintained by the investigator based on his field observation during the field visit.

5.6 STATISTICAL TECHNIQUE

The investigator used Simple percentages, mean, averages as statistical techniques.

5.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

For analyzing the data the tables, figures are converted into percentages by simple calculations and simple statistical measures like frequency and percentages.

TABLE 5.3: RURAL DEVELOPMENT IS AN IMPORTANT TASK

RURAL DEVELOPMENT IS AN IMPORTANT TASK	%
YES	92.30
NO	--
DON'T KNOW	7.69

As per the data given in the Table 5.3, it is seen that Rural development is an important task as said by the BDOs. And it was said by 92.30% of the respondents and 7.69% of the respondents also said that they are not aware of the fact about the important task of the BDOs. All the BDOs declared that they enjoy the work in their respective blocks.

TABLE 5.4: BEING A GENERALIST HEAD, ANY DIFFICULTY OR INCONVENIENT WORKING WITH SPECIALIST

BEING A GENERALIST HEAD, DO YOU FIND ANY DIFFICULTY OR INCONVENIENT WORKING WITH SPECIALIST?	%
YES	61.54
NO	
DON'T KNOW	38.46

The table 5.4 tells us that 61.54% of the BDOs said that they find difficulty/inconvenient working with the specialist and around 38.46% of the BDOs do not face any difficulties.

TABLE 5.5: ARE THE OTHER FUNCTIONARIES OF THE BLOCK COOPERATIVE AND COMPETENT TO DISCHARGE THEIR DUTIES?

FUNCTIONARIES OF THE BLOCK COOPERATIVE AND COMPETENT TO DISCHARGE THEIR DUTIES	%
YES	61.54
NO	--
DON'T KNOW	38.46

From the above table 5.5, it is clear that 61.54% of the BDOs said that Functionaries of the block cooperative and competent to discharge their duties whereas, 38.46% of the BDOs are not aware of the Functionaries of the block cooperative and competent to discharge their duties.

PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES FACED IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES.

The BDOs face many difficulties in implementation of the rural development schemes such as Bank linkage, Network connectivity, Road connectivity, Implement new technology, Awareness about Block programme, Facilities available, Supervising, Coordination/cooperation Awareness, Communications. There are the common problems which are BDOs face in the various blocks of the West Garo Hills District.

TABLE 5.6: CENTRAL GUIDELINES OF SCHEMES REGARDING BENEFICIARY SELECTION

FOLLOWING THE CENTRAL GUIDELINES OF SCHEMES REGARDING BENEFICIARY SELECTION	%
YES	76.92
NO	23.08

As per the data from the Table 5.6, 76.92% of the BDOs said that there is a central guideline of schemes regarding beneficiary selection whereas, 23.08% of the BDOs said there is no central guidelines of schemes regarding beneficiary selection

**TABLE 5.7: ORIENTATION PROGRAMME,
SEMINAR ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

ATTENDED ORIENTATION PROGRAMME	%
WORKSHOP BY CSRD	15.38
NIRD, HYDERABAD	23.08
MGNREGA	38.46
IAY	23.08

The data in the table 5.7 shows that 15.38% of the BDOs attended Workshop by CSRD, 23.08% attended NIRD, Hyderabad, 38.46% attended MGNREGA and 23.08% attended IAY Programmes. These are some of the programmes conducted either through orientation or seminar on Rural Development for the Block Officers in West Garo Hills, Meghalaya.

VILLAGE ACTION PLAN FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The BDOs have a significant role in the Village Action Plan of the various Blocks in the West Garo Hills of Meghalaya. Their task lead to the implementation of the Plan which is set by the village councils/Gram Sabha in the respective blocks. Training and guiding the villagers/members to implement the plan. On the hand to cooperate and seek cooperation of all the villagers, council members/Gram Sabha members in the developmental activities. The Block Development Officers act as liaisons to the District Development Planning Committee.

AREAS WHERE BLOCK IS PROGRESSING WITH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

The Block Development Officers gave their views that the Blocks are progressing in many areas. Some of the areas where the Blocks are progressing can be mentioned under the following heads. But generally, the Blocks are growing in their own way and pace of development in the areas of rural connectivity by the schemes of PWD, Road and transportation facilities, Rural Electrification and through Rural employment under the MGNREGA schemes under the Government of India. The BDOs moderate all the above schemes and programmes for development. Another interesting part of development in the various blocks is that there is a creation and conduct of individual and community assessment mechanisms in order to check the progress in the blocks of West Garo Hills, Meghalaya.

TABLE 5.8: POLITICAL INTERFERENCE IN THE WORKS

ANY POLITICAL INTERFERENCE IN YOUR WORKS	%
YES	7.69
NO	46.15
SILENT	46.15

The data from the Table 5.8 indicates that 7.69% of the BDOs said that there some kind of political inference in the

developmental activities, works in the various blocks. Whereas, around 46.15% of the BDOs said there is no glimpse of political interference in the various blocks in developmental activities. But, around 46.15% of the BDOs remain silent regarding this subject matter and do not want to discuss for various reasons.

TABLE 5.9: DO YOU FEEL THAT THE AREA OF YOUR BLOCK IS TOO LARGE?

DO YOU FEEL THAT THE AREA OF YOUR BLOCK IS TOO LARGE	%
YES	53.85
NO	7.69
SILENT	38.46

As per the data in the table 5.9, we get to know that 53.85% of the BDOs said that the area of the Block where they are working is too large for better administration, 7.69% said that the area is not too large. Whereas, 38.46% of the BDOs remain silent and do not want to discuss about the subject matter. From here it is clear, that the areas under the BDO is really too large for better administration. And it is very much evident that there are many villages under a block.

TABLE 5.10: RELATION OF BDOs WITH THE VILLAGE COUNCILS, DRDA, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

RELATION WITH THE VILLAGE COUNCILS, DRDA, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER	%
GOOD	30.77
VERY GOOD/SATISFACTORY	53.85

The table 5.10 shows that 30.77% of the BDOs said that there is good relation with the village Councils, DRDA, Deputy Commissioner whereas, 53.85% of the BDOs also said that the relation with the village Councils, DRDA, Deputy Commissioner is very good, satisfactory. From here we can find out that there is sound working out mechanisms for the BDOs in order to bring better collaboration in the various blocks of West Garo Hills Meghalaya.

WAYS IN WHICH THE VILLAGERS/BENEFICIARIES MOTIVATED AND ENCOURAGED FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

The various ways through which the villagers/beneficiaries are motivated and encouraged can be seen in the following headings:

- Workshop/interactive programme
- Conducting meeting, awareness programme
- Progressing of rural people
- Motivate and encourage them
- Work in their own benefit
- Well information about the schemes

The BDOs have a very wide range of powers and functions in the development blocks. Their role also includes working for overall development of the Blocks in various activities. The BDOs also have a role in creating and spreading awareness programme for veterinary staffs and the general public.

IMPRESSIONS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

The BDOs have a wonderful feedback mechanism where it was found out that the Rural Development Programmes are satisfactory and successful programmes. These Rural Development programmes benefit the villagers and the people in general and most of the development carried out through Rural Development programmes is satisfactory in nature. The role of BDOs lies in the process of making effective and impactful.

PROBLEMS IN IDENTIFYING THE BENEFICIARIES IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

- a) Non availability of proper documents by the beneficiaries
- b) Faulty census report
- c) Communication and Road/transportations
- d) Electricity and networks

6.0 GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions are given below for the improvement of Community Development Programmes:

(A) SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE THE WORKING CONDITIONS FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

- i. Better infrastructure, facilities in terms of mobility and transport etc
- ii. Regular meeting with the staff
- iii. Motivation to the staff
- iv. Rural people in rural areas
- v. Providing internet facilities
- vi. Proper training for the staff
- vii. Proper room with toilets and drinking water facilities etc
- viii. Rest room, electricity problem
- ix. Proper training for block staff
- x. Cooperation with the villages and the staff

(B) SUGGESTIONS TO MAKE THE VILLAGE COUNCILS MORE POWERFUL FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- i. Sustaining people on the development issues
- ii. Awareness, Interest is required to be created and spread over
- iii. Education for the better implementation of programmes/schemes with coordinators
- iv. Record keeping for future reference

- v. Vehicle to reach to the
- vi. office quarters

7.0 CONCLUSION

The development sectors such communication, marketing system, agriculture and allied still needs to be explored although some achievement has been made with the efforts of the Government of Meghalaya especially after 1972. It is true that results, analysis and findings indicate that Rural Development is taking place with slow pace in different districts of Garo Hills. The Community Development officers, and the staff in rural development schemes are noteworthy to mention. The present study on the other hand reveals that the villagers are satisfied with the Government schemes focused for the community development as they have been successful in West Garo Hills, Meghalaya. The development are progressing in the areas of community development such as electricity, road and transportation, safe drinking water facilities, health sectors such as PHCs and CHCs, literacy in terms of education etc. More focus can be emphasized in the areas such as concentration for Development of Agriculture, Public Health, Poverty Elevation programmes in the village and raising the standard of life in the various villages. The Government schemes can be implemented in the long run through the intervention of village headman, village councils and Development Officers with basic awareness and training programmes so that the remote areas of the villages there is sound community development with better conditions of living to uplift the marginalized and the downtrodden.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "NBA".

Editor in Chief





BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF MEGHALAYA

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ABSTRACT:

The key importance in the Rural Development is the rural bureaucracy. Full-fledged staffing in all the rural development blocks and involving them effectively in all sectors of development- agriculture, small scale industry, veterinary, horticulture, fishery to generate employment for the rural poor is required. But the importance in motivating the rural bureaucracy to work hard in assisting the villagers in a difficult working condition for which the BDOs are entirely responsible. Garo Hills, the backward district of the state, needs topmost priority for all round development in all sectors of development. The overall development of the region and success of rural developmental schemes are vital in the development of Garo Hills. Though Rural development is a complex phenomenon covering a wide spectrum of activities meant to ameliorate the condition of people especially the people living in rural areas. It is a basis of social justice and economic equality and removal of poverty. It also implies involvement of voluntary organizations, rural development functionaries and institutions and strategic interventions to help the rural community. The rural development scenario in Meghalaya presents a completely different picture than the rest of the country. There is no Panchayat or any other statutory elective body in the rural areas except the Autonomous District Councils at the District or tribe level. Hence, the present study attempts to give a full picture of Role of Rural Level Bureaucracy in Non-Panchayat Areas with special reference to West Garo Hills district of Meghalaya. The findings on the other hand reveal that the villagers are satisfied with the Government schemes as they have been successful in West Garo Hills, Meghalaya. The development blocks are progressing in the areas of development such as electricity, road and transportation, safe drinking water facilities, health sectors such as PHCs and CHCs, literacy in terms of education etc.

KEYWORDS:

BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS, RURAL DEVELOPMENT.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Rural Development in common parlance means development of rural areas. But in modern times it is very difficult to define rural development as its connotation has moved too much from its basic meaning of 'development of rural areas' to 'integrated rural development' to the present form of 'sustainable rural development'. The term 'rural' denotes a non-urban style of life, characterized by agriculture based occupational structure and close-knit society and settlement pattern. According to the International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, the term 'rural' is broadly referred to the area(s) where people are usually engaged in field activities involving production of food, fiber, ores and raw materials. On the other hand 'development' is a process of gradual growth of advancement through progressive changes.

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benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in rural areas - the group includes small scale farmers, tenants and landless". James H. Copp has defined rural development as "a process through collective efforts, aimed at improving the wellbeing and self realization of people living outside the urbanized areas". He further extends that the ultimate target of rural development is people and not infrastructure and according to him one of the objectives of rural development should be to 'widen people's range of choices'.

Thus, rural development can be defined as strategy to improve the socio-economic, cultural and political conditions of the rural people particularly the poor living in rural areas. It also implies involvement of voluntary organizations, rural development functionaries and institutions and strategic interventions to help the rural community.

Soon after independence, the Community Development Programme initiated in 1952 and National Extension Service in 1953 and the setting up of the panchayati Raj Institutions later were the significant measure undertaken by the Govt. of India. These were significant efforts indeed for coordinated rural development to achieve economic growth and self sustained developments, to generate employment, to bring equity in the level of development,

to increase the standard of living of the rural poor and to develop community participation in the process of rural development.

Various approaches and strategies for rural development were initiated such as multi-purpose approach, minimum package and area development approach, target group approach, employment oriented approach, and Integrated Rural Development Approach. Realizing the importance of people's participation in the process, Panchayati Raj Institution as an agency of rural development has been introduced in 1959. The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act of 1992, further added a new dimension and vigour in the process of rural development by bringing in a constitutional provision for what is commonly known as democratic decentralization.

The rural development scenario in Meghalaya presents a completely different picture than the rest of the country. There is no Panchayat or any other statutory elective body in the rural areas except the Autonomous District Councils at the District or tribe level. Further while in the rest of the country there is continuous effort at developing newer and newer strategy and agencies of rural development leading to wider range of democratic decentralization, in Meghalaya the status of rural development strategy, more or less remained the same since independence. In absence of a modern representative body at rural level or any serious attempt to modernize the traditional village level bodies to meet the contemporary needs of development in the rural areas, the Block Development Officers are and remained the most important functionary of rural development activities in the state. It is therefore necessary that their role in rural development be studied in depth, assessed and understood in its proper perspective.

The Block level bureaucrats play a very insignificant role in the development of various sectors like agriculture, small scale industry, horticulture, fishery, education, health etc. The role of Block Development Officer as central functionary, therefore, needs to be examined and assessed if the problems and prospects of rural development in Meghalaya is to be properly understood. The Government of Meghalaya as well as the Central Government is presently concentrating on accelerated development of rural areas particularly for economic self-sufficiency, improvement of communication, eradication of rural poverty etc. Various programmes were implemented and some are under implementation. The success of these programmes depends upon efficient and dedicated rural bureaucracy led by the Block Development Officers. It is in this context that the present study is considered to be important. The study will be carried out by surveying the field reality and the working of the Block Development Officers in the West Garo Hills District of Meghalaya.

The West Garo Hills District lies in the western part of Meghalaya. The total population of the district is 6,42,923 (Meghalaya- 29,64,007) is per 2011 census. The district

has six Rural Development Blocks - Rongram, Dalu, Tikrikilla, Selsela, Dadenggre and Gambegre. It is mainly inhabited by the Garos with a homogeneous socio-political back ground throughout the district. A relatively democratic and uniformly developed traditional tribal socio-political institution the Nokma, and the village council is the indigenous political system of the people there. Besides, the village councils in the district acquired a formal status under the Village Council Rules, 1971 adopted by Garo Hills District Council. Communication in the district is moderately good and it is neither very highly exposed nor very unexposed to the outside influences. Thus the district offers a better and representative sample of the state and the non-panchayat areas of the region. Hence the East Garo Hills district is selected as the area of the field study.

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

There are some works dealing with the rural areas of Meghalaya which touches upon the problems of rural development. The various studies are given in the following lines:

S. Bhatnagar in his book, Rural Local Government in India (Light And Life Publishers, New Delhi, 1976) discusses the status of Rural Government in India in general. But he does not pay attention to the status of rural development in Non- Panchayat areas in India or in a Sixth Scheduled area.

Robert Chamber also presents only a general study of rural development in India in hi, New Delhi, 1980 presents a study of strategies of rural development in his book Rural Development: Putting the Last First (Longman Group Ltd, London, 1983). He presents a study of the status of rural development in India and examines the problems and prospects of rural development in the country. But he does not make any reference to the role of rural bureaucracy in rural development.

S.G. Deogaokar, (Administration for Rural Development in India, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi.) discusses rural development administration in India as whole. Without paying attention to Sixth schedule areas, or the role Block Development Officers in particular.

Rakesh Hooja, in his book administrative interventions in Rural Development (Rawat Publications, Joypur, 1987), studies the role of bureaucrats in rural development in general, in areas where panchayats are also. He does make any reference to the role of rural bureaucrats in non-panchayat areas.

N. R. Inamdar, studies development administration in general in India, but does not touch upon the problems of rural development in scheduled areas. (Development Administration in India, Rawat Publications, Joypur, 1992)

C.R. Kotha has edited book, Rural Development in India, Retrospect and Prospect contains a number of papers dealing with theoretical and conceptual as well as strategically aspect of rural development in India. This is a

useful book for understanding the process and practice of rural development in the country. While the book is helpful in understanding certain concepts and practices, it is to be applied to particular cases like Meghalaya through empirical experiences of the local situation.

N. Karna, L. S. Gassah and C.J homas in their edited book *Power to People in Meghalaya* (Regency Publications, New Delhi, 1997) presents as many as 14 papers on Sixth Schedule, 73rd Amendment Act, traditional political systems etc. One of them dealt with a comparative study of the Panchayat raj and traditional Khasi Institutions. But none of them dealt with the role of Block Development Officers in rural development in non-panchayat areas.

L. S. Gassah presents a detailed study of the working of the Autonomous District Councils in Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura in his book (edited), *Autonomous District Councils* (Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1997) While the book or its contributors provide a detailed study of the Autonomous District Councils in the region the studies confine their focus mainly on Sixth Schedule and related problems. It does not contain any discussion on rural development or role of rural bureaucracy in rural development.

S.K. Chattapadhyas' edited book *Tribal Institutions of Meghalaya* (Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1985) contains as many as 27 papers contributed by 24 authors many of them being eminent scholars in the field. He book mainly confines itself to the study of socio- religious and socio-political institutions of the tribes of Meghalaya. The book while being useful for the back ground study of the rural areas and traditional village councils found among the tribes of Meghalaya does not throw much light on the status and practices of rural development.

Milton Sangma's book *History and Culture of the Garos* (Books Today, New Delhi, 1981) presents a comprehensive picture of the socio- political life of the Garos a major tribe of Meghalaya. It devotes one independent chapters each to the Garo village Council system and Garo political systems. The Nokma system of the Garos and their role in village governance is elaborately discussed in the book. But since the book was published much before the passage of the 73rd Amendment Act which rejuvenated the system of rural governance and rural development throughout the country and which directly or indirectly influenced the rural governance system and rural development practices, even in the areas kept outside the purview of the Act, the issues generated by it did not find place in the book.

Nani Bath, *Electoral Politics in Arunachal Pradesh*, (unpublished Ph D thesis of Rajiv Gandhi University) presents among other things a study of interaction between the modern electoral political process and the traditional tribal socio-political practices in Arunachal Pradesh. The study was carried out in Arunachal Pradesh which is although a hills tribal state of Northeast is not a non-panchayat state. And therefore, is not very relevant to the present problem.

Harendra Sinha, presents a study of the role of Block Development Officers in rural development of Mizoram in his unpublished Ph.D. thesis.

Entitled *The Role of Block Development Officer in the Rural Development of Mizoram*. In which he discusses among other things, the recruitment, training and the functions of the Block Development Officers in Mizoram, relationship among the officers associated with rural development and the public opinion about them in the state. However, while Mizoram and Meghalaya are similarly placed in so far as Sixth Schedule and rural development strategies are concerned, Meghalaya presents a different situation in so far as the existence of traditional village institutions and their role in rural development is concerned. Hence the findings of Dr. Harendra Sinha in case of Mizoram may not be applicable in case of Meghalaya.

Thus, the existing literatures do not cover our knowledge of the process and practices of rural development and the role of rural democracy in its working. The proposed study will be a humble attempt to fill this gap. In the present spate of democratic decentralization the non-panchayat areas are also bound to experience certain changes in the rural development strategies and practices. The perception, practices, functioning and accountability of the rural bureaucracy and the people are bound to be influenced by the happenings outside the block, district or the state. It is the responsibility of the social scientists to investigate and find out these processes and emerging trends in these areas taking place during post independent specially the post 73rd Amendment Act period. The present study is a small step towards this direction.

3.0 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In Meghalaya, the Community Development Programme was started in 1953. But the state remained outside the panchayati raj system or any other popularly elected body in the rural areas as it was under the sixth schedule of the constitution. The traditional local self-government bodies like the Village Councils or the head of the village which fall within the purview of the Sixth Scheduled of the Constitution were neither equipped to deal with the modern developmental needs of rural development nor strengthened like the panchayats in other areas of the country. With the introduction of Panchayati Raj Institutions in almost all other states of India rural development programmes were/are initiated or undertaken and implemented by Panchayati Raj Institutions, at least to certain extent. It has become, more pronounced after the passage of the 73rd Amendment Act which has not only accorded a constitutional status to the panchayats but also added real teeth to them by transferring 29 subjects under the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution and ensuring availability of funds. The Block Development Officers (BDOs) role was reduced to a great extent to that of a guide or a facilitator. But the Act was not made applicable to Meghalaya. Article 243M (2) (a) says that "nothing in this Part shall apply to the states

of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram". Thus in case of Meghalaya, in absence of panchayats or similar statutory bodies and its exemption from the purview of the 73rd Amendment Act, the onus of the initiation and implementation of the rural development plans, programmes and schemes fell mainly on the shoulders of the Block Development officer and his team. So the role of the Block Development Officers in the rural development of Meghalaya is very crucial. The success or failure of rural development activities depends on his perception, performance and capabilities.

At present, the posts of BDOs are filled through a) direct recruitment through State Public Service Commission and b) promotion or transfer from existing State Administrative Service. The practice of promotion or transfer from the state service is obtained in Meghalaya. The Meghalaya Civil Service (MCS) Junior Grade Officers are appointed as BDO in Meghalaya. Usually, persons in the age group of 25 - 31 and in possession of Bachelor's Degree on Arts, Science, Agriculture, etc are eligible for appointment as the BDO, giving importance on Administrative Experience, Social Service or Experience of Revenue Administration. The BDO also needs a comprehensive training for performing his duties as an extension worker, as a Programme Planner, as a Coordinator, as a Captain of the team functionaries and most important is, as an agent to motivate, encourage and assist village families.

The BDO as a multipurpose functionary is expected to be more prompt, efficient, objective, and most important is motivating the rural poor. He is a ubiquitous figure today and no one at least, in rural India, remains, or can even afford to remain unaware of his presence. The introduction of Community Development and changes in new functionaries has passed more than five decades. Since then, India has executed over forty programmes of rural development. The Block level bureaucrats play a very insignificant role in the development of various sectors like agriculture, small scale industry, horticulture, fishery, education, health etc. This is due to the communication constraint like lack of available staff and frequent transfer of the BDOs. The BDOs and Eos do not attend regularly training programmes organized by the State Institute of Rural Development. Thus, the BDOs posting for a longer period appointment of required number of level functionaries, area of operation of the Village Level Workers, reducing the area of operation by making an Additional Block needs to be made. The functions of the BDOs and his assisting staff mostly found to be confined in the block office only. But it is observed that motivating the Extension Officers and Village level Workers by the BDOs to work on the field is lacking.

Garo Hills, the backward district of the state, needs topmost priority for all round development in all sectors of development. In the overall development of the region and success of rural developmental schemes, the key importance is the rural bureaucracy. Full-fledged staffing in all the rural development blocks and involving them

effectively in all sectors of development- agriculture, small scale industry, veterinary, horticulture, fishery to generate employment for the rural poor is required. But the importance must be given in motivating the rural bureaucracy to work hard in assisting the villagers in a difficult working condition for which the BDOs are entirely responsible.

4.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- a) To study and assess the status of rural development in Meghalaya as a Sixth schedule and non-panchayat state.
- b) To study the Socio economic background and recruitment base of the Block Development Officers and other rural bureaucracy in the state.
- c) To study and evaluate the role of Block Development Officer and his team in rural development in Meghalaya.
- d) To investigate and assess the role perception and perception of rural development of the Block level officers.
- e) To study the relationship of the subordinate officers with the BDO and mutual relationship among themselves.
- f) To study the role of traditional self-governing institutions and their relationship with the Block staff.

5.0 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In view of exploratory nature of the study and lack of enough literature dealing with the area and scope of the proposed study, it is considered appropriate that we formulate the following research questions to investigate and find answers to them:

- a) What is the present status of rural development in Meghalaya and how does it differ from the non schedule areas having Panchayats?
- b) What is the organizational arrangement of the agencies involved in rural development activities in the state?
- c) What is the role and position of the Rural Development Officer and his team in the overall mechanism of rural government agencies in the state?
- d) What is the recruitment base and the socio-economic background of the rural bureaucrats in the state?
- e) What is the status and relationship with the officers engaged in rural development work in the state; of the traditional rural level self governing bodies/institutions in the state?
- f) What are, if any, the difficulties encountered by the rural bureaucracy in carrying out the rural

development activities?

6.0 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The methodology of the study is mainly empirical and descriptive survey. It involves surveying all the six blocks in the sample district of West Garo Hills, Meghalaya, interviewing the Block Development Officers and other selected staff currently working in the BDO offices. The Nokmas in selected villages in each Block and a specified number of villagers in the sample villages are to obtain an understanding of popular perception of rural development and the role of BDOs in it.

6.1 Research Design

The investigator has employed Descriptive Survey method as the design of the study. The findings of this investigation will clearly describe the various schemes, policies, programmes, projects of the Village council and the development of the various Blocks in Garo Hills.

6.2 Population

For the purpose of this study a BDO means the officer in charge of the Block Office, block staff means the different extension officers working in a particular Block and Nokma means the A'king Nokma of the selected village. A villager means an adult man or woman of a selected village whose name appears in the latest electoral roll of the village. The list of the population according to the Blocks with division of the Villages can be seen in the following table attached in the following pages.

Sl.No	Block	Sample				
		Male	Female	Total	Ministerial Staff	Field Staff
1.	Rongram	29802	28943	58745	16	17
2.	Dadenggre	20842	20753	41595	14	12
3.	Tirikilla	29267	29121	58388	15	17
4.	Selsella	80422	78799	159221	11	24
5.	Gansbegre	13576	13193	26769	11	10
6.	Dalu	25879	25341	51220	12	22

Source of the Sample: Details of Blocks from Census 2011.

6.3 Sample

The villages are randomly selected from among the list of villages in every Block with purposive sampling technique so as to include proportionate numbers of men and women and young and elders from the voters list of the village. The exact number of villages and the number of villagers is decided after a preliminary survey of the selected district so that the sample becomes representative of the area. The list of the sample is given in the following table in the following pages.

Sl.No	Block	Sample				
		Male	Female	Total	Ministerial Staff	Field Staff
1.	Rongram	29802	28943	58745	16	17
2.	Dadenggre	20842	20753	41595	14	12
3.	Tirikilla	29267	29121	58388	15	17

Source of the Sample: Details of Blocks from Census 2011.

6.4 Tools of the Study

The main tools of the field study are two sets which are developed and structured interview schedule-cum-questionnaire. One for the Block staff and the other for the Nokma and the villagers'. The Interview schedule-cum-questionnaire is tested and found to be highly reliable and recommended by the subject experts in the field with research experiences. It was developed and standardized with reliability and validity principles with proper item analysis and discrimination of the various items.

6.5 Procedure for Data Collection

Data for the study is mainly collected from the field survey of all the six Blocks and selected villages of West Garo Hills District. Data is also collected from available government files and reports and Autonomous District Councils and Village councils. Both published and unpublished works are also used as sources of secondary data, wherever available. Information is also collected from the leading local intellectuals and knowledgeable villagers through self developed questionnaire and formal and informal discussions. Data so collected is supplemented by the field notes maintained by the investigator based on his field observation during the field visit.

6.6 Statistical Technique

The investigator used Simple percentages, mean, averages as statistical techniques.

6.7 Analysis of Data

For analyzing the data the tables, figures are converted into percentages by simple calculations and simple statistical measures like frequency and percentages.

7.0 MAJOR FINDINGS

- i) MGNREGA/IRDP/SGSY is implemented in Meghalaya especially in Garo Hills.
- ii) 89.09 % of the officials gave their witness regarding the status of Rural Development
- iii) BDOs are responsible for village development,
- iv) 89.09% of officials said that the villages have benefitted from NLUP, IRDP, SGSY, IAY, EAS etc
- v) Block Development Official implements the Rural Development Schemes.

- vi) The various schemes which are implemented are MGNREGA, IAY, MIA.
 - vii) MGNREGA and IAY schemes are liked most by the people in the Garo Hills.
 - viii) 87.27 % of the people are happy with the selection process of the beneficiaries.
 - ix) 52.72 % of the Villages said that they have no cooperative stores, medical sub Centres and Veterinary Centres
 - x) 76.36% of the people said that Block officials are the Sources of knowing about RD programmes.
 - xi) 78.16% of the BDOs and 65.45% of the Beneficiaries said that Village level worker, Gram Sevika, Extension officer are helpful to the villagers.
 - xii) 47.27% of the people gave their Opinion regarding Village BDOs, level worker, Gram Sevika, Extension officer that they are very helpful whereas, 41.82% of the people also express their opinion that Village BDOs, level worker, Gram Sevika, Extension officer are not so helpful.
 - xiii) 83.64% of the people said that the BDOs must concentrate for Development of village in line with Poverty Elevation programs.
 - xiv) 85.45% of the people said that they are satisfied with the village development initiated by BDOs
 - xv) 60% of the people expressed that BDOs visit the villages for the purposes of Awareness of rural development schemes, Motivating the farmers, Imparting agricultural education, aware of fertilizers and Supervision of works in the Blocks.
 - xvi) Areas where Block is Progressing are Rural connectivity, Create and conduct individual and community assessment, Road and transportation, Electricity and Rural Employment
 - xvii) Regarding the Impressions on implementation of Rural development programmes the people responded that it was successful and satisfactory.
 - xviii) The problems such as Non availability of proper documents by the beneficiaries, Faulty census report, Communication and Road/transportations, Electricity and networks.
 - xix) 65% of the Nokma's and 49.09% of the council Members are head of the family.
 - xx) 45% of the Nokmas and 36.36% of Council Members have Primary Education.
- 78.0 SUGGESTIONS**
- i) Areas BDO should concentrate for Development of Agriculture, Public Health, Poverty Elevation programmes in the village.
 - ii) Suggestions to make the Village Councils more powerful:
 - a) Sustaining people on the development issue
 - b) Spreading Awareness and Interest among the people in the Blocks
 - c) Education for the better implementation of programmes/schemes with coordinators
 - d) Training for Record keeping
 - e) Vehicle for the staff in the operation
 - f) office quarters can be provided so that working would be easy and comfortable at reachable time schedule
 - iii) The findings from the village elders reveal that 55% of the development officers do not visit the village and so there is an urgent requirement that development officer visit the village frequently in the respective blocks in West Garo Hills.
 - iv) BDOs can concentrate more on the Agricultural Development of the respective blocks.
 - v) Workshop/Interactive programme can be conducted to motivate and encourage the villagers/beneficiaries
 - vi) Information about the schemes can be given well in advance in the respective blocks so that everyone is aware of what is going on in the Blocks.
 - vii) Better infrastructure, facilities in terms of mobility and transport etc can be introduced.
 - viii) Regular meeting with the staff of the blocks can be conducted
 - ix) Providing internet facilities in the offices of the Block development
 - x) Proper training for the staff in the blocks can be introduced.
 - xi) Proper room with toilets and drinking water facilities etc can be introduced in the blocks
 - xii) Cooperation with the villagers and the staff in the blocks can be established
 - xiii) Faulty census report can be modified and republished
 - xiv) For better administration the Blocks in the West Garo Hills can be divided in small units.
 - xv) Kind of training needed according to block functionaries to functions effectively are such as Training on punctuality, Public Relation, Management and maintenance of Record, Creation of Assets and PAY schemes.
 - xvi) The village council members are happy with the selection process of the beneficiaries and the same spirit can be continued in the near future.
 - xvii) The block official can also motivate the farmers in the blocks.
 - xviii) Imparting agricultural education and creating awareness of fertilizers etc among the village farmers

are the need of the hour and lines of actions can be taken accordingly in different blocks.

9.0 CONCLUSION

Though Rural Development programmes in Garo Hills have been badly affected due to many reasons but activities have posed a big blow to the developmental activities carried on by the different Departments of the State Government. The communication, marketing system, agriculture and allied sector still needs to be explored although some achievement has been made with the efforts of the Government of Meghalaya especially after 1972. The results, analysis and findings indicate that Rural Development is taking place with slow pace in different districts of Garo Hills. The role of the Rural Development officers, and the staff in rural development schemes are noteworthy to mention. The findings on the other hand reveal that the villagers are satisfied with the Government schemes as they have been successful in West Garo Hills, Meghalaya. The development blocks are progressing in the areas of development such as electricity, road and transportation, safe drinking water facilities, health sectors such as PHCs and CHCs, literacy in terms of education etc. Still more focus can be stressed in the areas such as concentration for Development of Agriculture, Public Health, Poverty Elevation programmes in the village and raising the standard of life in the various development blocks. More Government schemes can be implemented in the long run through the intervention of Nokmas, village councils and Block Development Officers with basic awareness and training programmes in the remote areas of the blocks in order to minimize the poor living conditions and uplift the downtrodden.

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11. The Position of Block Development Officers in Rural Developmental Process in the Sixth Schedule Areas of West Garo Hills of Meghalaya

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An Abstract

Even after the introduction and strengthening of Panchayats the main functionaries and unit area of operation -- the Block Development Officer (BDO), the 'block' and 'block level functionaries' introduced during Community Development days, largely remained the same. The panchayats wherever they are available were and are often advised and guided by these functionaries in their participation in rural development activities. But, in non-panchayat areas like Meghalaya for reasons of convenience and accessibility rural development administration continued to be the main responsibility of the Block Development Officer assisted by number of subordinate officers specialized and trained to motivate and assist the rural people. In absence of any popularly elected body in the village level the BDO and his team continued to look after all aspects of rural development. The role of BDOs became crucial for the rural development endeavors in Sixth scheduled areas of Meghalaya especially in West Garo Hills District.

Key words: Rural, governance, development, Meghalaya

Introduction

Rural Development in common parlance means development of rural areas. But in modern times it is very difficult to define rural development as its connotation has moved too much from its basic meaning of 'development of rural areas' to 'integrated rural development' to the present form of 'sustainable rural development'. The term 'rural' denotes a non-urban style of life, characterized by agriculture based occupational structure and close-knit society and settlement pattern. According to the International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, the term 'rural' is broadly referred to the area(s) where people are usually engaged in field activities

involving production of food, fiber, ores and raw materials. On the other hand 'development' is a process of gradual growth of advancement through progressive changes.

Rural development is a complex phenomenon covering a wide spectrum of activities meant to ameliorate the condition of people especially the poor people living in rural areas. It is a basis of social justice and economic equality and removal of poverty. As per the rural development Sector Policy Paper (1975) of the World Bank, the term rural development is "a strategy design to improve the economic and social condition of a specific group of people - the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in rural areas - the group includes small scale farmers, tenants and landless". James H. Copp has defined rural development as "a process through collective efforts, aimed at improving the wellbeing and self realization of people living outside the urbanized areas". He further extends that the ultimate target of rural development is people and not infrastructure and according to him one of the objectives of rural development should be to 'widen people's range of choices'.

Thus rural development can be defined as strategy to improve the socio- economic, cultural and political conditions of the rural people particularly the poor living in rural areas. It also implies involvement of voluntary organizations, rural development functionaries and institutions and strategic interventions to help the rural community.

In India, where about 72% of the population lives in rural areas, the development and progress of the country lie in the development of the villages. Hence, reduction of incidents and severity of poverty have consistently headed the development agenda of all successive government, both central and states. Numerous schemes and programmes have been devised and implemented often with fanfare. Massive money has been pumped in and the ministries related to rural development have reportedly spending huge amount of money annually for poverty alleviation programmes alone. Yet, rural poverty seems to be persisting and indomitable as ever.

The Initiation of Community Development Programmes

Soon after independence, the Community Development Programme initiated in 1952 and National Extension Service in 1953 and the setting up of the Panchayati Raj Institutions later were the significant measure undertaken by the Govt. of India. These were significant efforts indeed for coordinated rural development to achieve economic growth and self sustained developments, to generate employment, to bring equity in the level of development, to increase

the standard of living of the rural poor and to develop community participation in the process of rural development.

Various approaches and strategies for rural development were initiated such as multi-purpose approach, minimum package and area development approach, target group approach, employment oriented approach, and Integrated Rural Development Approach. Realizing the importance of people's participation in the process, Panchayati Raj Institution as an agency of rural development has been introduced in 1959. The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act of 1992, further added a new dimension and vigour in the process of rural development by bringing in a constitutional provision for what is commonly known as democratic decentralization.

Role of Block Development Officers in West Garo Hills District of Meghalaya

In Meghalaya, the Community Development Programme was started in 1953. The traditional local self-government bodies like the Village Councils or the head of the village which fall within the purview of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution were neither equipped to deal with the modern developmental needs of rural development nor strengthened like the panchayats in other areas of the country. The BDOs role was reduced to a great extent to that of a guide or a facilitator. But the Act was not made applicable to Meghalaya. Article 243M (2) (a) says that "nothing in this Part shall apply to the states of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram". Thus in case of Meghalaya, in absence of panchayats or similar statutory bodies and its exemption from the purview of the 73rd Amendment Act, the onus of the initiation and implementation of the rural development plans, programmes and schemes fell mainly on the shoulders of the Block Development officers and their team. So the role of the Block Development Officers in the rural development of West Garo Hills District is very crucial. The success or failure of rural development activities depend much on their perception, performance and capabilities to bring about development in rural areas of the district.

Although more than six decades have passed since the introduction of Community Development, about 40% of rural population is still living below poverty line. The Block Development Officers play very significant role in the development of various sectors like agriculture, small scale industry, horticulture, fishery, veterinary, etc. The role of Block Development Officers as central functionaries therefore, perform a wide ranging powers and functions as heads of the offices, as the managers of the development processes, as coordinators

and conveners of various Block Level Committees, as planning officers, generating employment, in times of natural calamities and improving health conditions of rural settlers. Recently with the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in 2005, BDOs are also responsible to carry on the task in implementing it. BDOs are Coordinators for Mahatma Gandhi NREGS (MGNREGS) at the Block levels. The primary responsibility is to ensure that anyone who applies for work gets employment within 15 days. Therefore, BDOs are vital for this new scheme of the Government.

The Block Development Officers, being the heads of the Block administrations have also to maintain a perfect co-ordination and understanding with other staff in the Block Levels. The success and failure of Block administration depend on a perfect coordination, understanding and healthy relations with other Block level staff of the district.

The Block Development Officers as multipurpose functionaries are expected to be more prompt, efficient, and objective and more importantly is motivating the rural poor. They are ubiquitous figures today and no one at least, in rural areas of the state particularly west Garo Hills District, remain or can even afford to remain unaware of their presence. The introduction of Community Rural Development and the changes in new functionaries has passed more than six decades

The Government of Meghalaya as well as the Central Government is presently concentrating on accelerated development of rural areas particularly for economic self-sufficiency, improvement of communication, eradication of rural poverty etc. Various programmes were implemented and some are under implementation. At present West Garo Hills District has six Rural Development Blocks – Rongram, Dalu, Tikrikilla, Selsela, Dadenggre and Gambegre. It is mainly inhabited by the Garos with a homogeneous socio-political background throughout the District. The success of all those developmental programmes in the District depends upon efficient and dedicated rural bureaucracy led by the Block Development Officers.

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The Block Development Officers in West Garo Hills of Meghalaya: Some Reflections

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Abstract- The Block Development Officers are responsible for the development of the rural areas not only in Meghalaya but in the country as a whole. They are expected to act promptly and efficiently for the developmental process of the rural areas. The Meghalaya Government as well as the Central Government is working to facilitate and accelerate developmental process in order to enable the rural people to be economic self-sufficient. At present West Garo Hills District has six Rural Development Blocks. They are Rongram, Dalu, Tikrikilla, Selsela, Dadenggre and Gambegre. It is mainly inhabited by the indigenous tribe i.e. the Garos with a homogeneous socio-political back ground throughout the District. The success of all those developmental programmes in the District depends upon the efficient and dedication of the rural Block Development Officers of the District.

Key Words- Rural Areas, Sustainable rural development, Integrated rural development'

Introduction: Rural Development in common parlance means development of rural areas. But in modern times it is very difficult to define rural development as its connotation has moved too much from its basic meaning of 'development of rural areas' to 'integrated rural development' to the present form of 'sustainable rural development. The term 'rural' denotes a non-urban style of life, characterized by agriculture based occupational structure and close-knit society and settlement pattern. According to the International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, the term 'rural' is broadly referred to the area(s) where people are usually engaged in field activities involving production of food, fiber, ores and raw materials. On the other hand 'development' is a process of gradual growth of advancement through progressive changes.

Rural development is a complex phenomenon covering a wide spectrum of activities meant to ameliorate the condition of people especially the poor people living in rural areas. It is a basis of social justice and economic equality and removal of poverty. As per the rural development Sector Policy Paper (1975) of the World Bank, the term rural development is "a strategy design to

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improve the economic and social condition of a specific group of people - the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in rural areas – the group includes small scale farmers, tenants and landless”. James H. Copp has defined rural development as “a process through collective efforts, aimed at improving the wellbeing and self realization of people living outside the urbanized areas”. He further extends that the ultimate target of rural development is people and not infrastructure and according to him one of the objectives of rural development should be to ‘widen people’s range of choices’.

Thus rural development can be defined as strategy to improve the socio-economic, cultural and political conditions of the rural people particularly the poor living in rural areas. It also implies involvement of voluntary organizations, rural development functionaries and institutions and strategic interventions to help the rural community.

In India, where about 72% of the population lives in rural areas, the development and progress of the country lie in the development of the villages. Hence, reduction of incidents and severity of poverty have consistently headed the development agenda of all successive government, both central and states. Numerous schemes and programmes have been devised and implemented often with fanfare. Massive money has been pumped in and the ministries related to rural development have reportedly spending huge amount of money annually for poverty alleviation programmes alone. Yet, rural poverty seems to be persisting and indomitable as ever.

The initiation of Community Development Programmes:

Soon after independence, the Community Development Programme initiated in 1952 and National Extension Service in 1953 and the setting up of the Panchayati Raj Institutions later were the significant measure undertaken by the Govt. of India. These were significant efforts indeed for coordinated rural development to achieve economic growth and self sustained developments, to generate employment, to bring equity in the level of development, to increase the standard of living of the rural poor and to develop community participation in the process of rural development.

Various approaches and strategies for rural development were initiated such as multi-purpose approach, minimum package and area development approach, target group approach, employment oriented approach, and Integrated Rural Development Approach. Realizing the importance of people’s participation in the process, Panchayati Raj Institution as an agency of rural development has been introduced in 1959. The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act of 1992, further added a new dimension and vigour in the process of rural development by bringing in a constitutional provision for what is commonly known as democratic decentralization.

The powers and functions of Block Development Officers:

Even after the introduction and strengthening of Panchayats the main

functionaries and unit area of operation — the Block Development Officer (BDO), the 'block' and 'block level functionaries' introduced during Community Development days, largely remained the same. The panchayats wherever they are available were and are often advised and guided by these functionaries in their participation in rural development activities. But, in non-panchayat areas like Meghalaya for reasons of convenience and accessibility rural development administration continued to be the main responsibility of the Block Development Officer assisted by number of subordinate officers specialized and trained to motivate and assist the rural people. In absence of any popularly elected body in the village level the BDO and his team continued to look after all aspects of rural development. The role of BDOs became crucial for the rural development endeavors in Sixth scheduled areas of Meghalaya especially in West Garo Hills District.

In Meghalaya, the Community Development Programme was started in 1953. The traditional local self-government bodies like the Village Councils or the head of the village which fall within the purview of the Sixth Scheduled of the Constitution were neither equipped to deal with the modern developmental needs of rural development nor strengthened like the panchayats in other areas of the country. The BDOs role was reduced to a great extent to that of a guide or a facilitator. But the Act was not made applicable to Meghalaya. Article 243M (2) (a) says that "nothing in this Part shall apply to the states of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram". Thus in case of Meghalaya, in absence of panchayats or similar statutory bodies and its exemption from the purview of the 73rd Amendment Act, the onus of the initiation and implementation of the rural development plans, programmes and schemes fell mainly on the shoulders of the Block Development officers and their team. So the role of the Block Development Officers in the rural development of West Garo Hills District is very crucial. The success or failure of rural development activities depend much on their perception, performance and capabilities to bring about development in rural areas of the district.

Although more than six decades have passed since the introduction of Community Development, about 40% of rural population is still living below poverty line. The Block Development Officers play very significant role in the development of various sectors like agriculture, small scale industry, horticulture, fishery, veterinary, etc. The role of Block Development Officers as central functionaries therefore, perform a wide ranging powers and functions as heads of the offices, as the managers of the development processes, as coordinators and conveners of various Block Level Committees, as planning officers, generating employment, in times of natural calamities and improving health conditions of rural settlers. Recently with the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in 2005, BDOs are also responsible to carry on the task in implementing it. BDOs are Coordinators for Mahatma Gandhi NREGS (MGNREGS) at the Block levels.

The primary responsibility is to ensure that anyone who applies for work gets employment within 15 days. Therefore, BDOs are vital for this new scheme of the Government.

The Block Development Officers, being the heads of the Block administrations have also to maintain a perfect co-ordination and understanding with other staff in the Block Levels. The success and failure of Block administration depend on a perfect coordination, understanding and healthy relations with other Block level staff of the district.

The Block Development Officers as multipurpose functionaries are expected to be more prompt, efficient, and objective and more importantly is motivating the rural poor. They are ubiquitous figures today and no one at least, in rural areas of the state particularly west Garo Hills District, remain or can even afford to remain unaware of their presence. The introduction of Community Rural Development and the changes in new functionaries has passed more than six decades

The Government of Meghalaya as well as the Central Government is presently concentrating on accelerated development of rural areas particularly for economic self-sufficiency, improvement of communication, eradication of rural poverty etc. Various programmes were implemented and some are under implementation. At present West Garo Hills District has six Rural Development Blocks – Rongram, Dalu, Tikrikilla, Selsela, Dadenggre and Gambegre. It is mainly inhabited by the Garos with a homogeneous socio-political back ground throughout the District. The success of all those developmental programmes in the District depends upon efficient and dedicated rural bureaucracy led by the Block Development Officers.

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PROBLEMS AND ISSUES OF THE BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT:

The Block Development Officer as a multipurpose functionary is expected to be more prompt, efficient, objective, and most importantly to be capable of motivating the rural poor. He is an ubiquitous figure today, especially in the context of rural development in non-panchayat areas like Meghalaya. In spite of the fact that the District Council has been functioning for long, the area still remains very backward. There is not enough co-ordination between the District Council and the State Rural development functionaries in the region. A certain degree of co-ordination among the two is important to avoid duplication of work. A focused and co-coordinated effort is necessary for the improvement of agriculture and allied sector, village industry, and horticulture. The Block Development Officer who is to ensure this co-ordination between the various implementing agencies at the rural level in all supervising the various developmental programmes, projects, activities for better implementation and sound evaluation.

The development blocks are progressing in the areas of development such as electricity, road and transportation, safe drinking water facilities, health sectors such as PHCs and CHCs, literacy in terms of education etc. Still more focus can be stressed in the areas such as concentration for Development of Agriculture, Public Health, Poverty Elevation programmes in the village and raising the standard of life in the various development blocks. More Government schemes can be implemented in the long run through the intervention of Nokmas, village councils and Block Development Officers with basic awareness and training programmes in the remote areas of the blocks in order to minimize the poor living conditions and uplift the downtrodden. The problems and issues of Block Development Officers in Rural Development can be minimized in this manner which can boost the overall development of the region. Thus, this present study is a humble attempt in the present state of democratic decentralization in the non-panchayat areas to experience certain changes in the rural development strategies and practices.

KEYWORDS:

BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, PROBLEMS AND ISSUES.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Rural Development programmes in Garo Hills have been badly affected due to many reasons but activities have posed a big blow to the developmental activities carried on by the different Departments of the State Government. The communication, marketing system, agriculture and allied sector still needs to be explored although some achievement has been made with the efforts of the Government of Meghalaya especially after 1972. Six decades have been passed since the introduction of Community Development, about 40% of rural population is still living in below poverty line. It is high time now to make a field survey of rural development activities, evaluation of performance and find out some mechanism to monitor, assess the performance of the rural bureaucracy. In the Rural Development Department, at the Directorate level, all the bureaucratic personnel's have been borrowed from the various development departments. The Block level bureaucrats play a very significant role in the development of various sectors like

agriculture, small scale industry, horticulture, fishery, education, health etc.

There are also many issues related to problems and difficulties of implementation of the rural development schemes such as implementation of new technology, facilities availability, supervision and communications which are also major problems and difficulties in implementation of the rural development schemes in the various development blocks of West Garo Hills Meghalaya. These are the challenges and trials in the rural development for which the BDOs have to take measures to overcome and bring satisfactory results in their respective blocks.

The fact that village level workers, Gram Sevika, Extension officers are helpful to the villagers in the various Blocks, their presence is felt by the people and the welfare work is being carried out for greater good of all. Thus, rural development is taking good shape and lives of the people are uplifted from poor conditions to tolerable situations. The village council members are happy with the selection process of the beneficiaries and the same spirit can be

continued in the near future. The block officials can also motivate the farmers in the blocks and impart agricultural education and creating awareness of fertilizers etc among the village farmers which are the need of the hour and lines of actions can be taken accordingly in different blocks.

Though various approaches and strategies for rural development were initiated such as multi-purpose approach, minimum package and area development approach, target group approach, employment oriented approach, and Integrated Rural Development Approach, there was less impact. Realizing the importance of people's participation in the process, Panchayati Raj Institution as an agency of rural development has been introduced in 1959. The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act of 1992, further added a new dimension and vigour in the process of rural development by bringing in a constitutional provision for what is commonly known as democratic decentralization. But even after the introduction and strengthening of Panchayats the main functionalities and unit area of operation is not systematic.

The existing literatures do not cover our knowledge of the processes and practices, problems and issues of rural development and the role of rural democracy in its working. Though there were few glimpses of the various functions, roles, responsibilities of the village development blocks. The present study is a humble attempt to fill this gap in the present state of democratic decentralization in the non-panchayat areas to bring certain changes in the rural development strategies and practices.

2.0 NEED AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The Block Development Officer as central functionary needs to be examined and assessed if the problems and prospects of rural development in Meghalaya is to be properly understood. The Government of Meghalaya as well as the Central Government is presently concentrating on accelerated development of rural areas particularly for economic self-sufficiency, improvement of communication, eradication of rural poverty etc. Various programmes were implemented and some are under implementation. The success of these programmes depends upon efficient and dedicated rural bureaucracy led by the Block Development Officers. It is in this context that the present study is considered to be important. The study is carried out by surveying the field reality and the working of the Block Development Officers in the West Garo Hills District of Meghalaya. The present study is a humble attempt in the present states of democratic decentralization in the non-panchayat areas.

The perception, practices, functioning and accountability of the rural bureaucracy and the people are bound to be influenced by the activities happening outside the block, district or the state. It is the responsibility of the social scientists to investigate and find out these processes and emerging trends during the post independent era specially the post 73rd Amendment Act period. The present study is a small step towards this direction. The study besides

adding to our knowledge in the field of rural development and the role of rural bureaucracy is expected to provide necessary feedback to the planners and Administrators for better policies, its implementations as well as mechanism for better evaluation. It makes further investigation about the various problems and issues that the Block Development Officers face in the Rural Development. Besides, it may also help scholars and future researchers in their work by serving as a bench mark work for grassroots best practices.

3.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To find out the various problems and issues of Block Development Officers in Rural Development.
- To study the nature of the problems and issues in rural development.
- To suggest some measures to minimize the problems related to rural development.

4.0 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the various problems and issues faced by the Block Development Officers?
- What are the nature of the problems and issues faced by the Block Development Officers?

5.0 METHODOLOGY

The study is based on descriptive survey research and qualitative as well as quantitative methodology is employed in order to bring out the result of the study.

5.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

Descriptive survey research design is used to carry out this particular study. Simple random technique is employed to survey the phenomena under study.

5.2 POPULATION

TABLE 5.1: POPULATION

SL.NO	BLOCK	POPULATION		
		MINISTERIAL STAFF	FIELD STAFF	TOTAL
1.	RONGRAM	16	17	33
2.	DADENGGRE	14	12	26
3.	TIKRIKILLA	15	17	32
4.	SELSELLA	11	24	35
5.	GAMBEGRE	11	10	21
6.	DALU	12	22	34
TOTAL		79	102	181

Source of the Sample: Details of Blocks from Census 2011.

From the above table 5.1, it is clear that 79 Ministerial staff, 102 Field staff comprising of 181 is the target population of the study from the 6 Development Blocks.

5.3 SAMPLE

TABLE 5.2: SAMPLE

SL.NO	BLOCK	SAMPLE		TOTAL
		MINISTERIAL STAFF	FIELD STAFF	
1.	RONGRAM	16	17	33
2.	DADENGGRE	14	12	26
3.	TIKRIKILLA	15	17	32
TOTAL		45	46	91

Source of the Sample: Details of Blocks from Census 2011.

From the Table 5.2, we get to know that 45 ministerial staff and 46 Field staff comprising of 91 is the selected sample of the study from the selected 3 Development Blocks- Rongram, Dadengre and Tikrikilla.

5.4 TOOLS OF THE STUDY

The standardized questionnaire cum interview schedule is used to collect information from the Block Development Officers from various Developmental Blocks of West Garo Hills, Meghalaya.

5.5 PROCEDURE FOR DATA COLLECTION

The investigator personally went to the development blocks and had personal interviews and discussions with the Block Development Officers in black and white in order to sort out the issues and problems of Block Development Officers.

5.6 STATISTICAL TECHNIQUE

Qualitative and quantitative statistical techniques were used to analyze the collected data. But this section was totally based on qualitative analysis and it is the extract from the main research report which the investigator undertook.

5.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The various problems and issues encountered by the Block Development officers in carrying out the development activities of the block in the particular district under administration as surveyed by the investigator during field survey can be discussed in various lines. At first, it is to be noted, the area coverage of the various blocks in Garo Hills is huge and it becomes a difficult task to reach out to every village regularly. The various problems can be discussed under the following head as given in the following pages:

A) PROBLEMS IN IDENTIFYING THE BENEFICIARIES IN DEVELOPMENTAL BLOCK

Due to huge population in the various blocks, it is quite hard find identify the various beneficiaries of the block. Infact, there is no good and proper mechanism in order to identify the beneficiaries of the block. This aspect is very crucial as many of the targeted beneficiaries are left out of the scene and do not enjoy the benefit of the various schemes of development. And it becomes a constant factor of complaint on the part of the civilian regarding the beneficiaries need and demand. In this area sometimes,

there remains a big misunderstanding which needs to be rectified.

B) PROBLEMS DUE TO THE LACK OF FOLLOW-UP

Due to many issues, the Block Development Officers face problems because of lack of proper follow-up mechanism in the various developmental activities that have been undertaken in well manner. Activities are so tight and vast that it becomes a hard thing to be followed-up in the due course of time. Many implemented schemes need proper follow-up after certain period of time with due care and assessment which is imperative but lack of sufficient time and manpower, proper follow-up is not possible as per demand of the schemes.

C) PROBLEMS RELATED TO FINANCIAL CONSTRAINS

Financial constraints are the biggest problem the BDOs encounter before and after the implementation of the various developmental schemes in the block. The processes and procedure to obtain financial aid itself is lengthy process. Though Budget is prepared and submitted annually and yet in certain aspect or more this becomes the whole mark of the issue in the implementation any scheme in the village/Block. The developmental schemes must be financed well in advance so that every activity will be smoothly covered up in order to meet the desired targets.

D) PROBLEMS RELATED TO MANPOWER IN THE BLOCKS

Lack of manpower in the block is also another problem which Block Development Officers face. As the blocks are huge in areas, and the schemes need to be implemented with the targeted beneficiaries, sufficient personnel become the need of the hour. Many schemes are unattended with proper follow-up because of the lack of manpower in the block to assist the Block Development Officers.

E) PROBLEMS RELATED TO LACK OF TRAINED PERSONS

Lacked of Trained persons in the developmental schemes is another setback for the Block development officers. Though there are training undertaken before any new schemes in the Block that are implemented, yet sufficient numbers of trained persons are few to cater to the huge crowd in the various blocks. Time span of the particular schemes sometimes almost over but not reached out to the targeted population.

F) PROBLEMS RELATED TO VARIOUS DEVELOPMENTAL SCHEMES

The various developmental schemes need to be undertaken well in advance with due preparation, planning, monitoring, and with budgeting. At times, it becomes hard for the Block Development Officers to carry out the plan when other plans are being implemented in the process.

G) PROBLEMS RELATED NON AVAILABILITY OF PROPER DOCUMENTS BY THE BENEFICIARIES

When any scheme is introduced in the block the beneficiaries full information is collected and documented for ongoing process and it becomes hard sometimes that there is lack of proper documents of the beneficiaries for which they might not availed the schemes. If the document exists even then, there is lack of full information about the family and relations and it becomes a blame to the Block Development officers in many cases, where misunderstanding and misconceptions create lots of havoc and bring to a standstill in the developmental activities.

H) PROBLEMS RELATED FAULTY CENSUS REPORT

Many at times, the beneficiaries try to avail the various schemes because of faulty census report which have been created and boosted by other agencies which are not inline with the other documents and reports that leaves behind impressions of distrust, unethical and unseen situations which arise due to temperament among the village people towards the BDOs. There are many documents rejected which have faulty report regarding the beneficiaries and therefore, constant checking and rechecking becomes a difficult task.

I) PROBLEMS OF COMMUNICATION AND ROAD/TRANSPORTATIONS

Problems of Communication and road/transportation are another great issue in the various blocks. The villages are in rural areas with poor road facilities and transportation that it becomes hard for the Block Development Officer to go for regular visit and constantly be in the office for monitoring and assessment purpose. This creates big gap in the delivery of information about the schemes and implementation of the schemes in the specific time period. As mentioned earlier, though village council assist the BDOs yet it is not manageable in all cases to reach out to every family to enlighten about a particular scheme.

J) PROBLEMS OF ELECTRICITY AND NETWORKS

Problems of Electricity and networks find another set of severe gap in the Block. Many at times again, there is shortage of power, and networks in the village/Blocks, and it becomes difficult for BDOs as well as other officials to remain in the offices and work in sound manner. The equipment would not function properly, lack of internet facilities in order to receive and send information to the higher authorities, which do not cater to the needs of the BDOs in relation to the various schemes.

K) PROBLEMS RELATED TO SAFETY, SECURITY

Due to so many above issues and problems the BDOs encounter, which counts them for safety and security in the Block/village and thus it may reduce the regularity of BDOs towards their responsibilities in the developmental task for the welfare of the respective blocks. Safety and security in the task allotted can be the sole factor for responsibilities and its undertakings. Thus, the above issues and problems regulate the BDOs for which there is less manifestation of welfare in the respective block/village.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS

- a) Proper room with toilets and drinking water facilities etc., can be introduced in the various development blocks.
- b) Cooperation with the villagers and the staff in the blocks can be established.
- c) Faulty census report can be modified and republished.
- d) For better administration, the Blocks in the West Garo Hills can be divided in small units.
- e) Kind of training needed according to block functionaries to function effectively are such as Training on punctuality, Public Relation, Management and maintenance of Record, Creation of Assets and PAY schemes.
- f) The village council members are happy with the selection process of the beneficiaries and the same spirit can be continued in the near future.
- g) The block officials can also motivate the farmers in the blocks.
- h) Imparting agricultural education and creating awareness of fertilizers etc among the village farmers are the need of the hour and lines of actions can be taken accordingly in different blocks.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Rural development is a complex phenomenon covering a wide spectrum of activities meant to ameliorate the condition of people especially the poor people living in rural areas. It is a basis of social justice and economic equality and removal of poverty. As per the rural development Sector Policy Paper (1975) of the World Bank, the term rural development is "a strategy design to improve the economic and social condition of a specific group of people - the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in rural areas - the group includes small scale farmers, tenants and landless". James H. Copp has defined rural development as "a process through collective efforts, aimed at improving the wellbeing and self realization of people living outside the urbanized areas". The findings on the other hand reveal that the villagers are satisfied with the Government schemes as they have been successful in West Garo Hills, Meghalaya. Though the central guidelines on the schemes are followed regarding beneficiary selection before implementing the Government schemes. Kind of training needed according to block functionaries to functions effectively such as Training on punctuality, Public Relation, Management and maintenance of Record, Creation of Assets and PAY schemes. Various orientation programme, seminar on rural development especially Workshop by CSR, NIRD, Hyderabad, MGNREGA and IAY are required to undertake before the implementation of the Government schemes by the Block Development Officers in the Blocks to minimize future discrepancies.

The development blocks are progressing in the areas of development such as electricity, road and transportation, safe drinking water facilities, health sectors such as PHCs and CHCs, literacy in terms of education etc. Still more focus can be stressed in the areas such as concentration for Development of Agriculture, Public Health, Poverty Elevation programmes in the village and by raising the standard of life in the various development blocks. More Government schemes can be implemented in the long run through the intervention of Nokmas, village councils and Block Development Officers with basic awareness and training programmes in the remote areas of the blocks in order to minimize the poor living conditions and uplift the downtrodden. Thus, the importance of Role of Block Development Officers can be felt throughout Garo Hills and more especially, West Garo Hills, Meghalaya. This will boost up sound development in an integrated manner.

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