



Rural Development Gaps in Meghalaya: Constraints Faced by Farmers and Officials

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted in the state of Meghalaya comprising of two types of respondents *i.e.*, officials working in community and rural development blocks and the rural people. A sample of 40 officials was selected randomly from two blocks (Pynursla and Mawryngkneng C&RD). From each block, 50 rural people were randomly selected, thus comprising a sample of 40 officials and 100 rural people as respondents, making the total sample size to be 140. The data were collected through personal interview method with the help of pre-structured schedule. For the officials, it was observed that financial constraints ranked first with average mean score of 36.75 followed by infrastructural constraints with average mean score of 35.00. While for the rural people respondents, banking constraints ranked first with average mean score of 72.67 followed by capacity building constraints at rank second with average mean score of 53.33. The study also revealed that all the officials and rural people respondents suggested that dialogue with banks and financial institutions to establish financial centres in villages, regular maintenance and updating of internet facilities, up gradation of block offices and transportation for field work, proper sensitization and awareness required to motivate the people towards rural development programmes.

Keywords: Constraints, Development, Infrastructure, Rural, Suggestions

INTRODUCTION

Rural Development in India is considered as one of the most critical factors for the economic and social ability of the nation as a whole. As per condition without the development of rural people, the country can never claim to be developed (Vanitha and Vezhaventhan, 2019). It mainly focus on the development of rural economies to elevate the serious poverty issues and effectively improves their productivity. Rural development programmes will not only enhance the social, economic and environmental conditions of the rural poor but will also help in developing a sustainable future. A good dynamic and foundation is required for effective implementation of various development programme by empowering the rural people in the rural areas especially in youth and women. These schemes are targeted for empowering and poverty reduction, employment generation, rural infrastructure, habitation development, provision of basic services and awareness (Annonymous, 2019). It was also realized that a sustainable strategy of poverty alleviation has to be based on increasing the productive employment opportunity in the process of growth itself. The rural people should get better prospects for

economic development. Along with this, there should be decentralization of planning, better enforcement of land reforms and greater access to credit for the rural poor people (Kumar *et al*, 2019).

Meghalaya is a state where majority of the population are living in the rural areas. Most of the people in the state rely on rural development programmes to sustain their livelihood but with high incidence of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment poor infrastructure and absence of basic facilities it becomes a challenge to the planning and policy makers for the state. Despite so many efforts and development scheme in the past few decades, the main issue of rural poverty in Meghalaya still continues to be a great concern. Therefore, this study was conducted to find out the constraints faced by the officials of rural development department of the state and of the rural people to better understand the present scenario of rural development programmes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in the state of Meghalaya and comprised of two types of respondents

Table 1. Constraints faced by the Officials in implementation of Rural Development Programmes.

Problem	Officials Respondent (n=40)		
	Frequency	Per centage	Rank
A. Financial Constraints			
1. Underpayment of salaries to project staff	40	100.00	I
2. Delay in flow of funds disrupts the working of the project	38	95.00	II
3. Irregular Update of Bank Passbooks by beneficiaries	35	87.50	III
4. Cost of labor increases due to terrain topography	34	85.00	IV
B. Infrastructural constraints			
1. Network problems during bad weather	40	100.00	I
2. Vehicles required for transportation to reach all corners of the Block	35	87.50	II
3. Lack of technical facilities	30	75.00	III
C. Human Resource Constraints			
1. Man Power required for regular monitoring and inspection of sites.	40	100.00	I
2. Requirement of specialized skill trainers	35	87.50	II
3. Lack of knowledge and training about the different programmes	32	80.00	III
4. Poor understanding about rural development programmes	30	75.00	IV
D. Administrative Constraints			
1. Difficulty to access in border areas, require proper permits	30	75.00	I
2. Corruption at different levels	25	62.50	II
E. Coordination Constraints			
1. People's hesitancy towards Aadhaar Card and opening of Bank account	38	95.00	I
2. Problems of identification and selection of beneficiaries under different rural programmes	30	75.00	II
3. Lack of co-operation from people's groups and social organizations	25	62.50	III

i.e., officials working in community and rural development blocks and the rural people. A sample of 40 officials was selected randomly from two Blocks (Pynursla and Mawryngkneng C&RD). From each block, 50 rural people were randomly selected, thus comprising a sample of 40 officials and 100 rural people as respondents, making the total sample size to be 140. The data were collected through personal interview method with the help of pre-structured schedule and ranking was performed. The data were analyzed with the help of suitable statistical tools like percentage and rank orders.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Constraints faced by the officials in implementation of rural development programmes

Financial Constraints

The data (Table 1) revealed that all of the official respondents agreed that under payment of salaries to project staff was the main constraints under financial constraints. The data also revealed that 95 per cent of the respondents reported that delay in flow of funds disrupts the working of the project, 87.50 per cent reported that irregular update of bank passbooks by beneficiaries and 85 per cent reported that cost of

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Table 2. Overall ranking of constraints faced by the Officials in implementation of Rural Development Programmes

Sr. No.	Constraint	Officials Respondents (n=40)	
		Mean Score	Rank
A.	Financial	36.75	I
B.	Infrastructural	35.00	II
C.	Human Resource	34.25	III
D.	Administrative	27.50	V
E.	Coordination	31.00	IV

Table 3. Constraints faced by the rural people in adoption of Rural Development Programmes.

Problem	Rural People Respondents (n=100)		
	Frequency	Per centage	Rank
A. Banking Constraints			
1. Bank concentration more on headquarters.	88	88.00	I
2. Lack of knowledge on Bank Procedures	70	70.00	II
3. Irregular Update of Bank Passbooks by beneficiaries	60	60.00	III
B. Communication Constraints			
1. Non-availability of supporting staff to beneficiaries	50	50.00	I
2. Non-cooperative attitude of local leaders	45	45.00	II
3. Conflicts amongst beneficiaries while working	40	40.00	III
4. Biasedness in distribution of work at worksite	35	35.00	IV
5. Non-co-operative attitude of officials	20	20.00	V
C. Infrastructural Constraints			
1. Lack of office for village employment councils (VECs)	40	40.00	I
2. Non-availability of worksite facilities	25	25.00	II
D. Capacity Building Constraints			
1. Lack of training in organizing of SHGs	70	70.00	I
2. Poor knowledge and awareness of the programme.	50	50.00	II
3. Irregularity in attending gram sabha	40	40.00	III
E. Other Constraints			
1. Hesitancy in training outside the state.	60	60.00	I
2. Women more busy with household work, hence 100% attendance not possible	40	40.00	II
3. Non-availability of assured 100 days employment to every house hold	25	25.00	III

labor increases due to terrain topography were some other financial constraints. A study conducted by Tamang *et al* (2016) also revealed similar results. The discussion revealed that with the increase in cost of living it was difficult especially for contractual staff to function.

Infrastructural constraints

All the official respondents reported that network problems during bad weather was main constraint under infrastructural constraints. Similar findings have been reported by Patel and Suryawanshi (2023). About 87.50 per cent and 75 per cent accounted

for vehicles shortage for transportation to reach all corners of the block and that there was a lack of technical facilities in the block. During the discussion with the officials, it was found that there were no proper rooms, toilets and common facilities required in most of the offices.

The data (Table 1) revealed that all the official respondents reported that man power was required for regular monitoring and inspection of sites. They also revealed that requirement of specialized skill trainers (87.50%), lack of knowledge and training about the different programmes (80%) and poor understanding

Table 4: Overall ranking of Overall constraints faced by the rural people in adoption of Rural Development Programmes

Sr. No.	Constraint	Rural People Respondents (n=100)	
		Mean Score	Rank
A.	Banking	72.67	I
B.	Capacity Building	53.33	II
C.	Other	41.67	III
D.	Communication	38.00	IV
E.	Infrastructural	32.50	V

about rural development programmes (75%) was also the constraints.

Administrative Constraints

Difficulty to access in border areas which require proper permits (75%) and corruption at different levels (62.50%) were reported as administrative constraints. It was revealed that there are several procedure to apply for permits for rural development programmes for villages located in the border areas of Meghalaya under Pynursla Block and this delays the work.

Coordination Constraints

It was observed that people's hesitancy towards Aadhaar Card and opening of bank account (95%) and problems of identification and selection of beneficiaries under different rural programmes (75%) were the main constraints. The official respondents also reported that lack of co-operation from people's groups and social organization's (62.50%) also contributed to coordination constraints. During the discussion, it was revealed that most of the rural people are still hesitant to apply Aadhaar card due to illiteracy and hence do not apply for rural development schemes.

The overall constraints faced by the officials in implementation of rural development programmes is presented by calculating the average mean score for individual category (Table 2). It was observed that financial constraints ranked first with average mean score of 36.75 followed by infrastructural constraints at rank second with average mean score of 35.00. Human resource constraints and coordination constraints were ranked third and fourth with average mean score of 34.25 and 31.00, respectively. At fifth place was administrative constraints with an average mean score of 27.50.

Constraints faced by the rural people in adoption of Rural Development Programmes

Banking Constraints

The data (Table 3) revealed that 88 per cent of the rural people respondents reported that bank concentration was more on headquarters. Constraints like lack of knowledge on bank procedures (70%) and irregular update of bank passbooks by beneficiaries (60%). These findings were in line with Rao (2019). During the discussion, it was mentioned that respondents had to bear the cost of transport just to update their bank passbook in the headquarters.

Communication Constraints

It was evident that half of the rural people respondents agreed that there exists a non-availability of supporting staff to beneficiaries. Less than half *i.e.*, 45 percent reported on non-cooperative attitude of local leaders while 40 per cent and 35 per cent reported on conflicts amongst beneficiaries while working and biasedness in distribution of work at worksite. Only 20 percent reported non-co-operative attitude of officials. These findings were in line with Gopalraju and Kumar (2011); Rana and Bhardwaj (2020). During the discussion, it was found that the respondents suggested that a strong and motivated headman with hard working office bearers were required for rural development works to function smoothly.

About 40 percent of the respondents reported that lack of office for Village Employment Councils (VECs) and Non-availability of worksite facilities (25%) were the main infrastructural constraints.

Capacity Building Constraints

The data (Table 3) revealed that 70 percent of the rural people respondents reported on lack of

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Table 5. Suggestion of respondents for overcoming the constraints in Rural Development Programmes.

Sr. No.	Item	Officials Respondents (n=40)			Rural People Respondents (n=100)		
		Agree	Partially agree	Disagree	Agree	Partially agree	Disagree
1	Regular follow up and coordination with funding agencies for smooth flow of funds	25 (62.50)	15 (37.50)	-- --	80 (80)	20 (20)	-- --
2	Dialogue with banks and financial institutions to establish financial centres in villages.	40 (100)	-- --	-- --	100 (100)	-- --	-- --
3	Regular maintenance and updating of internet facilities	40 (100)	-- --	-- --	100 (100)	-- --	-- --
4	Up gradation of block offices and transportation for field work.	40 (100)	-- --	-- --	90 (90)	10 (10)	-- --
5	Work and training schedule to be based on the seasonal work activity of the beneficiaries	30 (75)	10 (25)	-- --	88 (88)	12 (12)	-- --
6	Collaboration with other Private and Public organizations to provide specialized trainers.	31 (77.50)	9 (22.50)	-- --	85 (85)	15 (15)	-- --
7	Inform and encourage people to regular update their bank passbooks so as to avoid any problems in fund flow.	33 (82.50)	7 (17.5)	-- --	88 (88)	12 (12)	-- --
8	Motivate and Sensitize people towards opening of bank account and Aadhaar Card.	30 (75)	10 (25)	-- --	80 (80)	10 (10)	10 (10)
9	Proper Sensitization and awareness required to motivate the people towards Rural Development programmes.	40 (100)	-- --	-- --	100 (100)	-- --	-- --
10	More technical officials can be recruited for Blocks with larger coverage	40 (100)	-- --	-- --	100 (100)	-- --	-- --
11	The sanction of fund should be based on the topography of the villages to bear the high labour cost.	35 (87.50)	5 (12.50)	-- --	91 (91)	9 (9)	-- --

training in organizing of SHGs and 50 percent reported on poor knowledge and awareness of the programme in rural development programmes. Also 40 percent revealed that there was an irregularity in attending gram sabha meetings. The findings of the study were in

line with the study of Gupta *et al* (2013), Kumari *et al* (2020) and Singh *et al* (2021). During the discussion, the respondents suggested on trainings on book keeping and establishment of SHGs enterprises should be encouraged.

Other Constraints

Hesitancy in training outside the state (60%), women more busy with household work, hence 100 percent attendance not possible (40%) and non-availability of assured 100 days employment to every household (25%) were other constraints reported by the respondents. The respondents discussed that since the rural women were busy with household work and other agricultural practices it was not feasible to give 100 percent attendance to meetings and awareness programmes.

The overall constraints faced by the rural people in adoption of rural development programmes presented by calculating the average mean score for individual category. It was observed that banking constraints ranked first with average mean score of 72.67, followed by capacity building constraints at rank second with average mean score of 53.33. Other constraints and communication constraints were ranked third and fourth with average mean score of 41.67 and 38.00 respectively. At fifth place was infrastructural constraints with an average mean score of 32.50.

Suggestion from the respondents for overcoming the constraints

The data in Table 5 revealed that all the officials and rural people respondents suggested that dialogue with banks and financial institutions to establish financial centres in villages, regular maintenance and updating of internet facilities, up gradation of block offices and transportation for field work, proper sensitization and awareness required to motivate the people towards Rural Development programmes and increasing technical officials can be recruited for blocks with larger coverage. Similar findings have been reported by Rao (2019) which suggested the same. It was reported that 62.50 percent of the officials and 80 percent rural people respondents agreed that regular follow up and coordination with funding agencies is required for smooth flow of funds. During the discussion, it was revealed that 75 percent of the officials and 88 percent of the rural people respondents suggested that work and training schedule should be based on the seasonal work activity of the beneficiaries. The respondents expressed that collaboration with other private and public organizations to provide specialized trainers, informing and encouraging people to regular update their bank passbooks so as to avoid any problems in fund flow and sanctioning of fund should be based on the topography of the villages to bear the high labour

cost can be followed to improve the implementation of rural development programmes. A study conducted by Patel (2014) also suggested to have requisite strength of the trained staff for rural development programmes. It was reported that 75 percent of the officials agreed on motivating and sensitizing people towards opening of bank account and Aadhaar Card while, 80 percent of the rural people respondents agreed, 10 percent partially disagreed and 10 percent disagreed on the same.

CONCLUSION

It was concluded that financial and infrastructural constraints were major constraints faced by the official respondents and these should be address so that they can perform their responsibilities efficiently to uplift the standards of living for the rural people through various rural development programmes. The study also revealed that banking and capacity building constraints play a major role in the adoption of rural development programmes by the rural people. Therefore, these constraints hinder the implementation of various rural development programmes which should be addressed and appropriately solved by the government improve the socio- and economic conditions of the rural population. The suggestions from the study can help various stakeholders make policies on improvement to implement the programmes in the state.

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