



PROBLEMS AND ISSUES OF THE BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

NICHOLAS A. MARAK¹ | DR. A.C. TALUKDAR²

¹ RESEARCH SCHOLAR, DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, MEGHALAYA.

² PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, MEGHALAYA.

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 functionaries 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		
		MINISTERIAL STAFF	FIELD STAFF	TOTAL
1.	RONGRAM	16	17	33
2.	DADENGGRE	14	12	26
3.	TIKRİKILLA	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, Dadenggre 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 un attended 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 CSRD, 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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