

# **Women's Participation in Rural Development Programme in Dhemaji District**

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## **I. Introduction**

Concept of the traditional role of woman as mother, wife and home-maker would undergo a major change in the emerging new social order due to rapid industrialization and urbanization of society and heavy economic burden on the family. In free India, woman in great numbers have begun to engage in various occupations. The increasing number of woman in different occupations and with different skills can be seen in both towns and rural areas. The low class woman of this country are working since a long time for nominal wages but the woman from higher societies were limited to their own household work only. In the sixth plan, National Govt. had launched a major scheme for the development and improvement of women's education in the country. But in rural areas due to illiteracy, backwardness and traditional outlook, people discriminate between a boy and a girl. Expansion of education these days has helped a lot in removing backwardness and superstitions from Indian society. At present, the field of work of women is not limited to the four walls of the house, but has become very wide. They actively participate in all economic, political. Social, cultural and religious activities.

On the issue of rural women's participation in RDPs it can be pointed out that rural development in India has witnessed several changes over the years in its emphasis, approaches, strategies and programmes. It has assumed a new dimension and perspectives as a consequence. Just as implementation is the touchstone for planning, people's participation is one of the foremost pre-requisites of development process both from procedural and philosophical perspectives.

## **II. Need For The Study :**

The development of India, to a large extent, depends upon the development of different communities in general, and her rural communities in particular. As such, some significant plans and programmes are required to plan and implement for bringing about desirable socio-economic changes of the rural masses. It is to be noted that the Govt. of India has introduced and implemented various rural development programmes since 1952.

Like the some other parts of the country, the majority of the population (93.21%) live in rural areas of Dhemaji District. The people of the district are facing some severe problems like flood, unemployment, illiteracy, poverty and communication. In order to alleviate these problems and to uplift the socio-economic status of the rural people, the administration of the Dhemaji District has also implemented several rural development programmes. Although, such rural development programmes have been implemented, the socio-economic condition of the majority of the rural population of the District is not up-to-the mark and remains standstill as it were in Independence. It has been observed that some people of the district so poor that they are not in a position to fulfill their basic needs like food, shelter and cloths.

However, it has been alleged that there are some anomalies in the selection procedure of beneficiary, corruption, favouritism, unnecessary political interference and absence of proper supervision as regards the implementation of rural development programmes. However, after reviewing the studies conducted by earlier researchers in detail, the investigator found that, so far, no study has been conducted to ascertain the effectiveness of the rural development programmes implemented in Dhemaji District of Assam. Thus, an empirical in-depth study was felt need to investigate critically the implementation of rural development programmes in Dhemaji District.

## **III. Methodology :**

In order to study this problem, the information was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Direct interviews with chosen rural women faculty members, District Functional Experts, Block Project Managers, Block Co-ordinators, VO's members of Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission, and District Mission Management Unit, Dhemaji are a few examples of primary sources. The NRLM MIS

Portal, Journals, Govt. Annual Reports, Research papers, websites of ASRLM, Census institutes, etc., are only a few examples of the secondary sources used here to collect the necessary information.

### **Economy of the Dhemaji District**

Dhemaji is the eastern most district of Assam and is the homeland of a large number of tribes namely the Mishings, the Deoris, the Sonowal Kacharies, the Bodos and the Tiwas besides other ethnic groups. Agriculture is the main occupation of all these tribes where work participation of women is remarkable. Most of the people of the district depend on cultivation and they cultivate seasonal crops like paddy, mustard and sugarcane etc. For a major part of the population, cultivation is the main sources of livelihood and income. There are no major scale industries in the district and there are only a few small scale industries depending on which a minimum percentage of people earning their livelihood. Besides these there are some cottage industries in the district which provide a means of livelihood for a small number of families. Regarding the means of livelihood of the people of the district, mention must be made that a small number of people are employees under central and state government.

In order to study the rural women's participation in rural development schemes, three important programmes are selected for this study. These are- Indira Awas Yojana(IAY), National Rural Employment Gurantee Scheme(NREGS) and Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana(SGSY). These three programmes have been selected on the basis of their gravity in the area falling within the district. The main aim of the IAY scheme is to provide dwelling units, NREG Scheme for providing wage employment and SGSY for eradicating poverty of the rural poor.

The present study is mainly based on Descriptive Survey method. It is a fact-finding approach related mainly to the present status by exploring the ways for future upliftment through the cross-sectional study of the present situation.

### **Centrally Sponsored RDP implemented in Assam:**

- 1) *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act(MGNREGA).*
- 2) *Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana(SGSY).*
- 3) *Kanaklata Mahila Sabalikaran Yojana under the Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission(RLM) launched in 2018 .*
- 4) *Indira Awaas Yojana(IAY) now renamed as Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Rural.*
- 5) *Atal Atma Sansthan Yojana under selfemployment generating Schemes(EAS )announced in the year 2018-19 for the educated unemployed youths .*
- 6) *Construction of Blocks of Community toilet.*
- 7) *Swahid Kushal Konwar Sarbajanin Bridhya Pension Achani launched on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2018.*

Below we are going to have an analysis of the major three RDPs in Dhemaji District.

**MGNREGA:** It was notified on September 7,2005. The objective of the act is to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The most distinguishing feature of MGNREGA is its approach towards empowering citizens to play an active role in the implementation of employment guarantee schemes, through Gram Sabha, social audit, participatory planning and other activities.

The Central Government has released a total amount of Rs.2376.98 crore to the North Eastern (N-E) States during the year 2021-22. As far individual states are concerned, highest fund is utilized in Assam(78.52%) followed by Meghalaya(72.59%) and Mizoram(54.56%). The utilization of the remaining states is below 50% of the fund available. The lowest fund is utilized by Arunachal Pradesh which is only 11.49% of the fund available. Again, Tripura has the highest fund available which is more than double than Assam and almost four, five times than the other N-E States.

### **Category-wise Percentage of Persons Registered under MGNREGA in 2021-2022**

State/District	SC	ST	Others	Women
India	19.83	16.14	64.03	43.43
Assam	5.85	17.99	76.16	31.04
Dhemaji	2.31	24.85	72.85	32.73
Lakhimpur	5.14	26.06	68.80	22.78

Source: Compiled from MIS download from <http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx>

MGNREGA Statistics ( 2021-2022)	District: Dhemaji
SCs	13.38
OBC	0.31 (2.31%)
STs	3.54 (26.49%)
Women	4.22 ( 31.53%)
Others	9.53 (71.21%)
Total works taken up	3607
Works completed	575
Works in progress	3032

<http://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx>

**SGSY:** The Integrated Rural Development Program(IRDP) was reformed in 1999, which led to the introduction of the Swarnajayanti Gramin Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY) (IRDP). Its goal is to help underprivileged rural residents who want to work for themselves. The program's bugs have been resolved since SGSY was changed into NRLM. This campaign officially began in 2011. The Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission (ASRLM) is carrying out the National Rural Livelihood Mission(NRLM) in Assam to enhance the social and economic empowerment of the rural poor in the state and it is a body that is independent and autonomous in accordance with the Society Registration Act XXI of 1860. It makes an effort to raise the standard of living for the rural poor by assisting SHGs through a variety of strategies.

ASRLM in Dhemaji district has taken a great initiative towards improvement of the rural livelihoods. ASRLM Dhemaji has promoted 8829 Nos. of SHGs under the five development blocks viz., Bordoloni, Dhemaji, Machkhowa, Sissiborgaon, and MSTD; 506 Nos. of village organisations(Vos); and 17 Nos. of Cluster Level Federations(CLFs) in the district, covering approximately 91,738 households. These SHGs are strengthened through capacity building programmes such as community mobilization, SHG basic management training, village organization formation, bookkeeping training, livelihoods training, Farmers Field School, gender equality and other mainstream training. ASRLM, Dhemaji also provides various funds such as Revolving Fund(RF), Community Investment Fund(CIF), Community Enterprise Fund(CEF), Kanaklata Mahila Sabalakaran Yojana, etc. to women SHG members for their economic upliftment. ASRLM Dhemaji, in collaboration with all bank branches, e.g., AGVB, SBI, UCO, HFDC, Allahabad Bank, Central Bank of India, PNB, Indian Bank, etc., of Dhemaji district, has a vision to improve access to financial services to SHGs.

**IAY (Now renamed as PMAY-G) :** Initiated in 1985-86, the Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) is the core program for providing free housing to BPL families in rural areas, targeted SC/ST households and bonded labors to provide concrete house. In the year 2014-15, an amount of Rs.594 crore was earmarked for the North Eastern Region with a physical target of construction of 2.19 lakh houses, 2.00 lakh houses were constructed in the N-E States under IAY and 1.20 lakh houses were at various stages of construction. In 2021-22 , Rs.2054 crore has been earmarked for the N-E States with a physical target of construction of 3.68 lakh houses.

#### **Fund position under IAY in North Eastern States**

State	Fund Available(Rs. In Lakh)	Fund Utilized(Rs. In Lakh)
Arunachal Pradesh	2008.22	674.995
Assam	85115.542	43406.208
Manipur	2047.517	816.788
Meghalaya	3951.191	3251.621
Mizoram	1053.228	554.415
Nagaland	NA(Not Available)	NA
Sikkim	NA	NA
Tripura	NA	NA

*Source: Compiled from Annual Report 2021-22, MHRD.*

Every year there is an increase in the houseless population. The availability of funds no doubt has increased over the years, but the demand for housing among the poor has increased more than the availability of funds, therefore, more funds should be allocated for IAY. It has been observed that there is a lot of political interference in the selection of beneficiaries under IAY. Hence, there is a need to bring total transparency in the selection of beneficiaries. It is suggested that the implementing agency should closely monitor the design of the house and its plinth area to ensure that the beneficiaries follow IAY norms.

#### IV. Suggestions

- 1) More training programmes should be provided at the block levels in phase-wise manner by the FIs, banks, management institutions, etc. so that it becomes easier to monitor and review the performance of the trainees from time to time.
- 2) The training sessions carried out by SIRD must incorporate specialized sessions on how to allocate locally available resources with limited finance.
- 3) An initiative should be taken for empowering women aspiring to set up their own venture. For this **One Stop Centres** for women can be set up in order to provide integrated support under one roof of the working women.
- 4) Schemes are to be made aware by distributing leaflets printed on local languages, broadcasting information on radio and television etc.
- 5) Identification of relevant block for any given scheme. So that, the efforts made for awareness development gets a surgical precision.

#### V. Conclusion

The implementation of various anti-poverty programmes has provided an opportunity to discover the dormant resources and skill in the rural areas and to activate them. But this is possible only when constraints, structural, technological and institutional are removed in the state. In Assam especially the rural development schemes are suffering the problem that financial allocations and physical targets are determined without taking into careful account of local conditions like incidence of poverty, size of population and resource endowments. It is sometimes also observed that most rural areas suffer from limited credit absorption capacity. After discussing about the condition of rural tribal woman particularly in the district of Dhemaji, we can come to the conclusion that the progress in this field is not satisfactory despite the fact that the various schemes meant for economic development of rural woman are not working in full-swing due to some administrative bottleneck as well as due to lack of having proper attention to the education of girls' particularly in rural areas. By adopting proper group-oriented activities through co-operatives, registered societies, informal group discussions etc. economies of small scale inherent in some activities in the service sector could be fully realized and beneficiaries can be protected from adverse operations of market forces. There should be uniform allocation of funds among all the blocks under each particular scheme. In order to be aware of the problems coming in the way of effective implementation of the programmes, the functionaries have to maintain links with beneficiaries even after the schemes have been sanctioned. The government of Assam as well as the people must also be conscious regarding each rural developmental programme properly which can also help to minimize the problem of bureaucrats.

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