

People’s Participation in Rural Development: A Study of Noksen Block in Tuensang District, Ngaland

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Abstract: *With the introduction of decentralized planning in India, people’s participation has become the core of all the development strategies. The failure of the development strategies for the last few decades has been widely attributed to the absence of people’s participation. In fact, it has become a worldwide accepted notion for all the development activities. Unless the common people of the rural population are willing to participate to develop themselves, the programmes of the rural development cannot be successful. As the rural development programme is for the people, it should certainly be the programme of the people and by the people. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to bring out the advantages of people’s participation and to suggest measures to increase the extent of people’s participation in rural development programmes for a sustainable rural development.*

Keywords: *Decentralised planning, People’s participation, Rural development, Rural Development Programmes, Sustainable development, Village Development Board.*

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I. Introduction

A refocusing of development strategies in the mid 1970s led to the emergence of people’s participation as a central concern, seeking to involve people more directly in development process. Most manifestation of participatory approach seek “to give the poor a part in initiatives designed for their benefit” in the hopes that development projects will be more sustainable and successful if local populations are engaged in the development process. Participatory approach has become an increasingly accepted method of development practice and it is often presented as an alternative to mainstream “top-down approach” to development. But in its broader sense participatory approach implies both bottom-up and top-down approach to development. Aristotle observed that ‘if liberty and equality are to be found in democracy, people need to be involved.’ Participation is the key to inclusion of human resources in development efforts. People’s participation is part of the process whereby people seek to have some influence and to gain access to the resources which would help them sustain and enhance their living standards. According to United Nation’s resolution, there are three basic ways of popular participation in development.

- (a) Mass sharing of the benefit of development.
- (b) Mass contribution to the development efforts.
- (c) Decision making in development.

People’s participation implies the active environment in development of the rural people, particularly disadvantaged groups that form the mass of the rural population and have previously been excluded from the development process. In India the significance of people’s participation in rural development became more prominent with the introduction of decentralized planning during the Seventh Plan. The decentralized planning is the kind of planning at the grass-root level or planning from below. Under decentralized planning emphasized has been given on the introduction of district planning and block-level planning so as to reach finally the village level planning successfully.

Nagaland has been exempted from the purview of 73rd Amendment of the Constitution, due to existence of local self government activities through Village Council and the VDB. The institution of the Village Development Board (VDB) which is synonymous with the concept of decentralized grass root level planning in Nagaland is responsible in all the phases of developmental activities in the village. The VDB function under the primary village authority known as village council. All the permanent resident of a village are the members of the VDBs. However, the management of the VDB is entrusted with a management Committee.

II. Study area

Tuensang is one of the eleven districts of Nagaland and it lies in the easternmost part of Nagaland. It is bordered by Myanmar all along its eastern side, on the west lies Mokokchung and Zunheboto district, on the north lies Longleng and Mon district and towards its south lies Kiphire district. Changs, Sangtams, Yimchunger and Khiarniungans are the main indigenous tribes of this district. Besides, Aos and Semas form a significant part of the district's population. Noksen block is one of the nine Rural Development (RD) blocks under Tuensang district, Nagaland. It is located at 26° 00' N to 26° 19' N latitudes and 94° 46' E to 94° 68' E longitudes. It covers an area of about 272 sq.km. approximately. There are twelve villages under this block and the entire block is inhabited by a particular indigenous Naga tribe called the Chang Nagas. According to 2011 census there are 2785 households with a total population of 16160 persons.

Fig. 1: Showing the Location Map of the Study Area



III. Objectives Of The Study

1. To make an in-depth study on the advantages of people's participation in rural development.
2. To examine the extent of people's participation in rural development with special reference to Noksen block under Tuensang district.

IV. Methodology

The present study is based on both the primary and secondary source. The primary source was collected from the field survey with the help of a structured interview schedule which was conducted during the period from 2016 to 2017. For the collection of primary data two villages have been selected and 100 households have been surveyed on the basis of stratified random sampling, 50 households from Longra village and 50 households from Litem village. Secondary sources were also used in framing the theoretical framework of the study.

V. Advantages of people's participation in rural development

People's participation is one of the strong features of decentralized planning, and it is important to achieve development for all section of people. Many research scholars, planners and scientist from different fields have pointed out the advantages of people's participation in different ways.

However, Oakley has rightly pointed out the advantages of people's participation in rural development in the following manner:

(a)Efficiency: People's participation can ensure effective utilization of available resources.

(b)Effectiveness: People's participation can make different programmes more effective by granting them a say in deciding the objectives and strategies and by participating in implementation, thereby ensuring effective utilization of resources.

(c)Self reliance: With active involvement of local people, it is possible not only to break the mentality of dependence but also to increase their awareness self confidence and control of the development process.

(d)Coverage: Development interventions are directed towards the upliftment of the weaker section of the society. Despite so many attempts, most projects have been at least partially successful. The benefits are mostly concentrated to the elite and the powerful. People's participation can be a potent way of ensuring the flow of the benefits to the target groups.

(e)Sustainability: Generally, development interventions are funded by government or by donor agencies. Experience has shown that development interventions from the external assisted projects fail to sustain the required level of development activity once support or inputs are withdrawn by the funding agencies. People's participation is regarded as an essential pre-requisite for the continuity of the activities. Therefore, people must be the centre of development and they should be actively engaged in all the developmental activities in order to achieve the efficiency, effectiveness, self-reliance, coverage and sustainability of the rural development.

VI. People's Participation In Rural Development In The Study Area

People's participation has been widely used in the discourse of development for the last few decades and it has become a worldwide phenomena. It has become a key factor in all development programmes. The failure of past development efforts was largely attributed to the lack of people's participation. For effective functioning of the rural development programmes, people's participation and involvement is necessary. Their involvement and participation are required in decision making, contribution to the development efforts such as implementation, monitoring and evaluation and in sharing the benefits of development programmes. To examine the participation of people in the selected villages, following questions mention in the interview schedule have been asked to the respondents.

1. To know about the people's knowledge regarding their locality, question about basic problems were asked. In response to the question, 25% responded that health is the basic problem, according to 24% of the respondents unemployment is the basic problem, 20% was of the view that communication, 15% of the respondents considered education as the basic problem, 13% responded that food is the basic problem and 3% responded that housing is the basic problem.

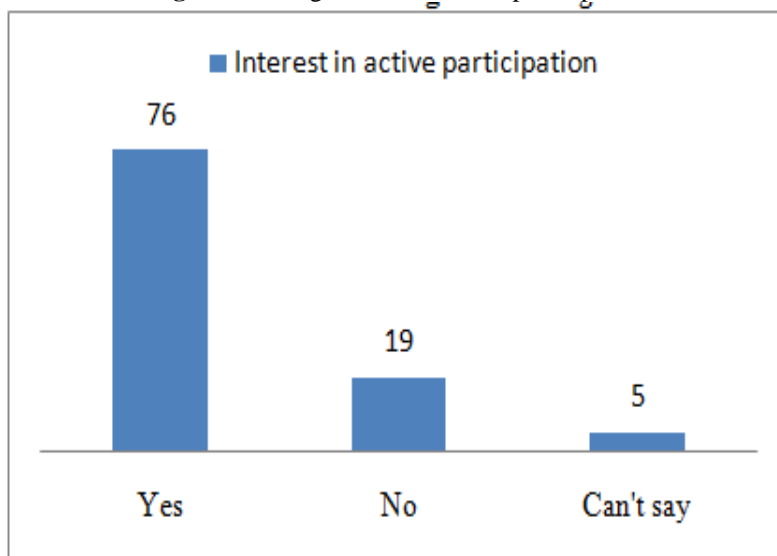
Table I: Basic problems of the locality

What are the basic problems of your locality?	
Basic problems	No. of respondents
Communication	20
Unemployment	24
Health	25
Education	15
Housing	3
Food	13
Total	100

Source: Field Survey

2. As shown in the **fig. 2**, interest in active participation in the rural development activities was asked. According to 76% of the respondent they are interested in active participation, while 19% of the respondent are not interested in the participation and 5% of the said they have no comments.

Fig. 2: Showing interest in active participation



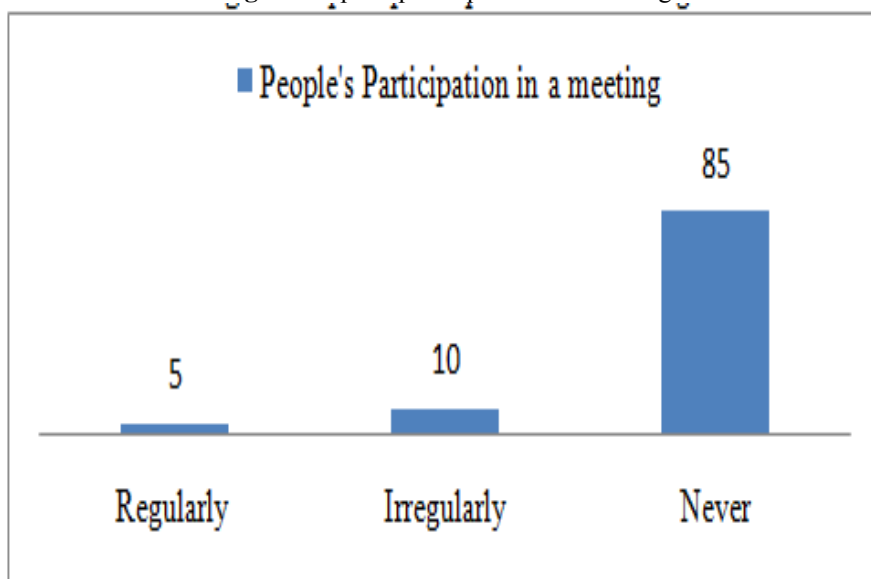
3. To understand the knowledge of the people about VDBs two questions were raised as shown in **table II**. Firstly awareness about the VDBs was asked. In response to this question 80% are aware, 15% were not aware and 5% of the respondents did not have any comment. Secondly, question was asked about the membership of the VDBs. 30% responded that they know about the membership while 60% did not know that they are also a member of the VDBs and 10% respondents have no comment.

Table II: Awareness about VDBs

Question	Yes	No	Can't say
Are you aware about VDBs in your village?	80	10	5
Do you know that you are also a member of VDBs in your village?	30	60	10

4. People's participation in a decision making is an important feature of development. As shown in **fig. 3**, only 5% are actively participating in decision making, 10% are irregular and 85% said that they never attain a meeting.

Fig. 3: People's participation in a meeting



5. People's participation in the audits and account as shown in the **table III** reveals that only 2% participate in the audits and accounts, 3% said they participate sometimes and 95% said they never participate.

Table III. People's participation in the audits and accounts

Do you participate in the audits and accounts of different rural development programmes implemented in your village?		
Always	Sometimes	Never
2	3	95

6. To know whether implementing agencies encouraged the people to take active part in rural development activities or not, an important question as shown in **table IV**, was asked. From the given table it is revealed that 43% said yes, 50% said no and the remaining 7% said they can't say.

Table IV: Encouragement from the authority

Whether the RD authorities encourage you to take part in RD activities?		
Yes	No	Can't say
43	50	7

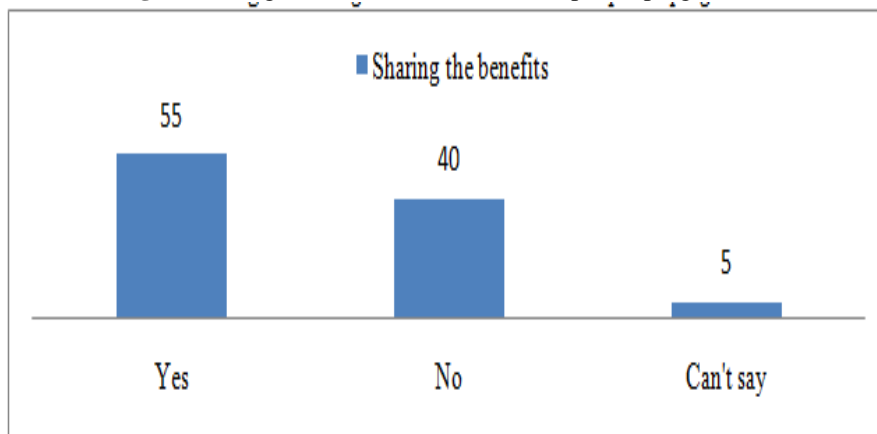
7. The implementing agencies have the responsibility to spread awareness to the people regarding different rural development activities. If people are not aware about the plans and programmes, then the rural development programmes cannot be successful. Question regarding organization of the programme by the implementing agencies is shown in the **table V**.

Table V: Organisation of the programmes.

Whether the implementing agencies organized any programme to increase the interest of the people in RD activities?		
Yes	No	Can't say
10	88	2

8. Another important question regarding sharing of benefits shows that 55% of the respondent said yes, 40% said no and 5% have no comment. Sharing the benefits of rural development scheme is shown in **fig. 4**.

Fig. 4: Sharing the benefits of rural development programmes.



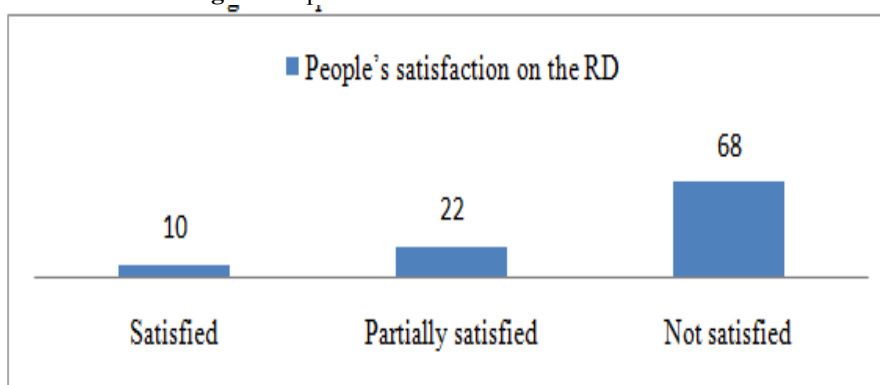
9. An important question as shown in **table VI** was asked and in response to the question the percentage of the category of people benefitted by RD activities were 12% poor, 45% rich, 15% educated, 8% uneducated and 10% relative of VDBs management Committee (MC).

Table VI. Category of people benefitted by RD activities.

Which category of people has been benefitted by rural development activities in your village?				
Poor	Rich	Educated	Uneducated	Relative of VDBs MC
12	45	15	8	10

10. As shown in the **fig. 5**, when asked about the people's satisfaction on the RD activities in the village, only 10% respondents said that they are satisfied, 22% were partially satisfied and 68% were not satisfied with the RD activities in the village.

Fig. 5: People's satisfaction on the RD activities.



VII. Findings And Discussion

Following are the findings as shown in the table and figures above.

1. Identifying the basic problems of the area is the basic needs of people's participation in the development process. The basic problems of the study area were communication, unemployment, health, education, housing and food. Out of these, majority of the people felt that health is the main problem of the study area.

2. People's interest in active participation plays a crucial role for the success of RD programmes. A good number of respondent said that they are interested to take active part in RD activities. Only a handful of people are not interested but it could be due to lack of knowledge.
3. Most of the people are not aware that they are also a member of the VDB. As a result overwhelming majority of the people never participate in a decision making process, monitoring and evaluation.
4. Encouragement and organization of the programmes to increase the interest of the people is not very encouraging because most of the respondent said no to this question.
5. Half of the respondent was of the view that they are sharing the benefits of RD programme. And most of the respondents said that only the rich people in the village are benefitted from RD activities. However, it reveals that targeted groups are not benefitted by the RD activities.
6. Majority of the people said that they are not satisfied with the rural development activities in the village. It is revealed that equality is not maintained in the distribution of the benefits.

VIII. Suggestions And Conclusion

In order to increase the extent of people's participation in RD programmes following suggestions are given below:-

- a) Rural people should be made more conscious about the schemes and projects introduced by the government by organizing awareness camp and workshop frequently in the village area.
- b) Meeting of the VDBs should be held regularly and estimating the budget, selecting beneficiaries under various schemes, etc. should be discussed in those meeting.
- c) Date, time and venue of the meeting for RD activities should be made known to the common people. Chances should also be given to the common people to express their views and thoughts.
- d) Transparency should be maintained in managing the RD funds by the management committee and equality should be maintained while selecting the beneficiaries.
- e) Efforts should be made to involve women and youth in all the activities of the RD.

Rural development is mainly concern with the rural people as such participation of the rural mass is very important for the development. As the rural development programmes is for the people, it should certainly be the programmes of the people and by the people. Without effective people's participation it would not be possible to make rural development programmes as people's programmes. As observed in the present study area, rural people are very keen to participate in all the developmental activities in such condition the goals of people's participation can be achieved. The active participation, involvement and cooperation of the people are absolutely essential for the success of the RD programmes. Therefore, the planners should educate the people on the benefits that flow from different RD programmes and the needs of people's active participation for the efficiency, effectiveness, coverage, self-reliance and sustainability of rural development.

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