

Rural Development in a Village: A Case from Manipur

A. Kapesa

Department of Anthropology, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong-793022

Email: kapesa33@gmail.com

Abstract:

Rural development is 'a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people – the rural poor' (World Bank 1975: 3). Various developmental programmes and schemes are implemented to improve the quality of life and standard of living of the people. 'For proper implementation and fruition of such developmental programmes, leadership and particularly political leadership played a pivotal role' (Ranjan 2011: 52). The paper discusses how these developmental programmes and schemes are actually functioning in the village and the hurdles faced by the villagers in assessing those programmes and schemes and highlights lack of accountability of the local leaders who monitor and supervise those programmes and schemes in the village.

Keywords: *Developmental Programmes and Schemes, Village, Leadership, Functioning, Accountability, Hurdles.*

1. Introduction

Development is essential in the life of every community and political institutions play a key role towards the development of the community. India being a land of villages, its development is synonymous with the development of the rural poor living in the villages. Thus, development of the rural poor has emerged as the main target of all rural development efforts (Mathur 1995: 2). Rural development is 'a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people – the rural poor' (World Bank 1975: 3). According to Singh, to accelerate the pace of rural development, apart from agriculture development, development of

education, health and other social sector infrastructure, governing institutions and involvement of appropriate policy formation are necessary. He further state that the first and foremost necessity for rural development is to strengthen the Panchayati Raj Institutions in terms of finance, functions and functionaries and capacity building through training and awareness programmes (2010: 4-5).

Various developmental programmes and schemes are implemented to improve the quality of life and standard of living of the people. In this paper, we shall discuss how developmental programmes and schemes is actually functioning at the village and the hurdles faced by the villagers in assessing those programmes and schemes and highlights lack of accountability of the local leaders who monitor and supervise those programmes and schemes in the village.

2. Materials and Methods

The present paper is an ethnographic study of *Makhel* village. It is the ethnography that gives rise to the text. It is not just a descriptive account of the way of life of a particular people, rather also brings in analysis and interpretation. *Makhel* village is a *Mao Naga* village of Manipur, India. *Mao Naga* is a major Naga tribe in Manipur and a recognized Schedule Tribe under the Constitution Scheduled Tribes order of 1950. They are known as *Ememei* in Mao language. They occupy the northernmost part of the state spread across Senapati district. The main area of their habitation falls under Mao-Maram Sub-Division. According to 2011 census, the total population of *Mao Naga* under Mao-Maram Sub-Division is 1, 16,374.

There are 58 Mao Naga villages, out of which 38 villages are revenue village and the remaining 20 are federal unit.

Makhel village is selected for the present study and is a revenue village. It is known as '*Makhrui Rabu*' which means 'A Secret/Selected Abode/Place of God'. The village has 250 households and a total population of 1217 out of which 628 are male and 589 are female. This village is selected for the present study since both Government and Non Governmental Organization's developmental programmes and schemes are implemented in the village.

Fieldwork was conducted during October 2014 to June 2015. Data was collected through household census, interview, group discussion and observation techniques.

3. Developmental Programmes and Schemes

Various developmental programmes and schemes are implemented in Makhel village by the Government of India and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). These programmes include rural electrification, water supply, BSNL telephone connection, elementary school, Anganwadi centres, Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) and North Eastern Regional Community Resource Management Project (NERCORMP). Some of the villagers also enjoyed individual beneficiary oriented schemes like Old Age Pension Scheme, Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY), Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), etc.

Makhel UJB School: Makhel UJB School is a primary government school, established in the year 1960. There was only two staff at the time of its establishment. At present, there are ten teaching staffs and a cook. The present school building is a pucca house, constructed in 1999. It has one staff room, three class rooms, one kitchen and three toilets. Under the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education, commonly known as Mid-day Meal Scheme, the school provide mid-day meal, thrice in a week – Monday, Wednesday and Friday on regular basis to the student. Usually the school gives *Kophani*, an indigenous dish similar to porridge as mid-day meal to the students.

In the academic year 2013, 42 students were admitted and in 2014, only 30 students. Most of the students admitted in the school were under age children i.e. below four years of age. Some students were mentally retarded children. Teachers gave an account that every year under age children were admitted in the school and in the following year, they were admitted to the private institutions nearby the village. The main reason behind sending the children to this school was to let the children enjoy the mid-day meal and the parents want to work at home or in the field freely without the children. Thus, the school functions as a pre-nursery home and not as an educational institution.

According to the office of the Inspector of Schools, the Makhel UJB School should be up to class six but it is only up to class one. When the children reached four or four and half years old, the parents sent their children to the private schools nearby the village and not to the same school. The parents are of the opinion that the teachers do not teach the students properly so they do not send their children to this school. They further

alleged that the teachers here have been brought in through 'back door entry' and are not qualified for the job. There are two private schools nearby the village, Don Bosco School and Baptist High School. Both these two schools have proper school building and well-qualified teachers.

Bharat Nirman: The Government launched Bharat Nirman programme as a four-year plan to build infrastructures in rural areas with identified physical targets for completion by 2009. Bharat Nirman has six components, namely – Irrigation, Roads, Water Supply, Housing, Rural Electrification and Rural Telecom Connectivity for the rural areas (Government of India, 2008). The main objective is to provide basic amenities to the people living in the rural areas and to improve the quality of life in the villages.

In Makhel village, under this programme, every house is connected with electricity provided by state power department; ten households have BSNL landline telecom connectivity and thirteen households reported to received Indira Awaas Yojana (more discussion on this scheme in the later part of the paper). The village is connected to the state highway by a *kutch*a road. The village has tap water connection provided by the state water department. However, the villagers informed that the tap water supply is not regular. Most of the time, there would be one problem or the other. During winter, when the water sources dried up, it hardly reached the village, since the same water pipeline is shared by 5 villages and Makhel village being the last point, the villagers hardly get water during winter. It is learnt that even after the Village Authority, statutory body in the village had complained about the same to the concerned department, there was no improvement.

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS): The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is the World's largest programme which is aimed at enhancing the health, nutrition and learning opportunities of infants, young children (0-6 years) and their mothers. The service provides an integrated approach for converging basic services through community-based honorary workers at a centre known as Anganwadi centre. Anganwadi centre is a courtyard play centre providing supplementary nutrition and pre-school non-formal education to children between 3-6 years of age.

Makhel village has three Anganwadi centres. Each centre has a lady in-charge and a helper and they are all from Makhel village. It was found that these centres are not functioning satisfactorily. The villagers informed that the lady in-charge called the children only when she received food supply and gave the children whatever supply they got from the office without cooking and do not teach or perform any other activities which is supposed to be carried out at the Anganwadi centre. The lady in-charge defended her position by saying that they do not get supply regularly, they received only twice or thrice in a year. The supply items mostly consist of *balbhog* (a type of cheap cereal packed food) and sometimes dal, rice, sugar, and milk powder in very less quantity. The villagers complained that the food items were not of good quality and were distributed irregularly.

The lady in-charge informed that their salary is very less, just two thousand rupees (₹2,000/-) and for helper only rupees five hundred (₹5,00/-). Further it is learnt that the workers were not paid on regular basis. For instance, from March

2013 up to April 2014, the workers were not paid their salary. They do not get any travel allowances when they have to collect food supply from their head office. They bore all the expenses. The lady in-charge blamed the higher authority for delay in dispersing their salary and irregularity of food supply. Nobody seems to be doing their duty for which they are appointed. The system is corrupted from the higher level to the village level. There is no one to check or correct the corrupt system since everyone is involved.

National Rural Health Mission (NRHM): The National Rural Health aims to provide accessible, affordable and accountable quality health services to the rural poor. Under NRHM, two health activists 'ASHAs' are appointed in the village. The ASHAs circulate important dates for vaccination programmes like poliomyelitis, BCG, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, tuberculosis, measles, etc to the villagers and keep a record of every child-birth in the village. The villagers informed that they do not seek the help of the ASHAs even if there were cases of physical injuries, accident or delivery cases in the village. The injured persons are taken directly to medical doctors or nurses who are available nearby the village or taken to PHC or CHC since it is not very far from the village. During delivery time also, if there was any sign of complication, the mother is taken to hospitals or private clinics. It was found that majority of the delivery cases in the village was home delivery. At the time of delivery, generally, the mother-in-law and a few experienced female relatives or female neighbours would assist the mother in labour in the village.

Janani Suraksha Yojana was launched all over the country to promote safe delivery. In Makhel village, 74 deliveries were registered by the two

ASHAs during 2009-2014. Out of 74 deliveries, six cases were reported to have delivered in the hospital, eight at private clinic and the remaining at home. The people informed that those mothers who deliver in the hospital got rupees five hundred and others got rupees three hundred. The ASHAs maintained a register which keeps a record of the number of deliveries in the village. Some women informed that they did not get money for their delivery. The ASHAs too informed that after 2013, the PHC Tadubi stopped giving Janani Suraksha Yojana (delivery money) regularly as before. Those women (who did not get the money) do not question the concerned doctors. Instead, they complained to the ASHAs.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS): MGNREGS is a flagship programme of the Government of India that directly touches the lives of the poor and promotes inclusive growth. It is an anti-poverty alleviation programme. It is implemented in Phase manner as Phase-I, Phase-II and Phase-III. Makhel village is covered under Phase-III of its implementation. It was implemented in 2008 but the actual works begin in 2009. The Makhel Village Authority, the statutory body is the sole implementing agency in the village. Under the leadership of Chairman and Secretary of the Village Authority, every household or families in the village have a job card for the 100 days wage employment scheme under MGNREGS. By 2013, after the government notification order, every job card holder in the village has a bank account. However, till date, the fund was transferred into the joint account of the Chairman and Secretary of the Village Authority which is opened solely for the purpose of MGNREGS.

The villagers were engaged in the construction work under the scheme and were paid wages by the Village Authority. The Village Authority do not give the wages according to the number of working days. They gave the wages according to their wishes and the villagers do not question the Chairman and Secretary of the Village Authority. Under a project, they gave the wages only once in lump sum. In the year 2011, the Makhel Village Authority bought corrugated galvanized iron (CGI) sheets with the MGNREGS fund and gave three bundles each to every household in the village. The plan was to let every family in the village to have their own house. The villagers informed that the Village Authority do not give the wages on time. When the villagers were questioned as to why they do not approach the higher bodies at Tadubi (Block Office) or Senapati (District Headquarter), they expressed their ignorance about how to go about it. They seem to have reconciled with the state of affairs. On the other hand, the Village Authority members defended themselves by saying that they distribute the wages whenever they receive it which is on an irregular basis. The villagers suspect that the fund coming from the government is more than what the Village Authority gave them but they never question how much money they received from the government. They seem to have reconciled with the state of affairs.

Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP): Integrated Watershed Management Programme is a centrally sponsored scheme. The main objectives of the IWMP are to restore the ecological balance by harnessing, conserving and developing degraded natural resources such as soil, vegetative cover and water in order to prevent soil erosion, regeneration of natural vegetation,

rainwater harvesting and recharging of the ground water table. This enables multi-cropping and the introduction of diverse agro-based activities, which help to provide sustainable livelihoods to the people residing in the watershed area.

Under the IWMP, a big water reservoir is under construction at the centre of Makhel village with the fund received from the government. It is measuring 8×20 in breadth and wide and 10 feet in height. This construction started in 2013 yet, it is still under construction as of June 2015 which clearly shows the ignorance and incompetence of the local leaders in the village.

North Eastern Regional Community Resource Management Project for Upland Areas (NERCORMP): NERCORMP is a jointly funded project of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and North Eastern Council, Ministry of DoNER, Government of India. NERCORMP is a livelihood and rural development project aimed to transform the lives of the poor and marginalized tribal families in North East India. Under the project, four states namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur and Meghalaya were covered. It was implemented as NERCORMP-I, NERCORMP-II and NERCORMP-III in phase-wise.

Makhel village was covered under NERCORMP-II in the year 2010. Makhel was also included under NERCORMP-III and extended for two more years i.e. 2016-2017. Under the project, 2 Natural Resource Management Groups (NaRM-Gs) and 6 Self Help Groups (SHGs) were created. NaRM-G comprises of both husband and wife drawn from 50 households in the village. SHGs comprises only of female members consisting of 16-18 members. Under each NaRM-G, three

SHGs each were clubbed together for proper coordination of work in the village. Under Chipramei NaRM-G, Chiprana SHG, Kishena SHG, Chalele SHG were included and Karalemei SHG, Marabuphimei SHG and Litingho SHG were under Chishumei NaRM-G.

Natural Resource Management Group (NaRM-G): NaRM-G received direct financial assistance for infrastructural development in the village and direct financial assistance for low-cost latrine (LCL), piggery loan, etc. They also engaged in income generation activities like dairy farm, potato farm, cabbage farm, mixed vegetable farm, etc.

According to the direction from the NERCORMP office, project works were carried out in the village. The selection of the beneficiaries for low-cost latrine and piggery loan was done by the Chairman and Secretary of NaRM-Gs. They did not look out for poorer and more needy family from the village, rather relatives were given preferences in selection of the beneficiaries. The infrastructural work like inter-village road, minor irrigation, canal were carried out in and around the village and two big water tanks were constructed in the village for storage capacity of 5000 litres each. However, under farming section, due to poor maintenance, some farms like perkai farm, duckery, fishery, etc did not perform well under the project.

Self Help Groups (SHGs): The SHGs function as micro-credit institution in the village. NERCORMP gave loan to SHGs as income generation activity (IGA). Money was given out as loan in small amount like ten thousand, twenty thousand and at maximum thirty thousand at the interest rate of 2% to their own SHG members and non-members at 3%. The SHGs conduct meeting four times in a month and in every meeting, the members

collect contribution in small amount like rupees ten, rupees twenty as saving. The SHGs also engaged in fundraising activities. Some of the fundraising activities were selling of brine water, laborious activities like carrying firewood, tilling paddy field, unloading cement, sand and stone chippings, etc. The SHGs also raised fund through vegetable farming like potato, ginger, cereals, beans, etc. The SHGs also carried out social service works in the village like cleaning the village surrounding, the drainage system, helping old aged people in the village by fetching water for them, giving rice to orphans in the village, etc.

Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY): Indira Awaas Yojana is a public housing scheme for the homeless poor families and those living in dilapidated and *kutchha* houses with a component for providing house sites to the landless poor as well. The scheme is designed to enable Below Poverty Line (BPL) families identified by the community through Gram Sabha following criteria suggested for such identification from time to time to build their houses or get house sites with financial and technical assistance from the Government.

In Makhel village, there were thirteen beneficiaries of IAY. One beneficiary received ₹5,000 during 2000-2001. The other twelve got it recently between 2013 and 2015 after the financial assistance for IAY was increased. All the beneficiaries received the financial assistance in cash; two of them got rupees ₹10,000, three got rupees ₹20,000, four got rupees ₹28,000 and the remaining three got rupees ₹30,000. The variation in the amount received by the beneficiaries

clearly indicated the corruption practiced by the concerned office disbursing the scheme.

According to the IAY rules, the Gram Sabha (Village Authority) is supposed to nominate the IAY beneficiaries according to the living standard of the people in the village like BPL family. However, in Makhel village, the beneficiaries were randomly selected by influential people who have links with local Manipur Legislative Assembly (MLA) and Autonomous District Council (ADC) members. The elected representatives from the community used such kind of grant-in-aid as an opportunity to help their relatives and to get more power for future election rather than helping the poor and needy people in the village.

Old Age Pension Scheme: The Department of Social Welfare is providing financial assistance to the aged and destitute individuals under Old Age Pension Scheme. To avail the pension scheme, the age must be of sixty or above in case of men and fifty-five or above in case of women and should be destitutes, widows or widowers who do not have any income or sources of income either of his or her own or anyone else who is legally liable to support him or her.

In Makhel village, there were twenty beneficiaries under Old Age Pension Scheme. The people alleged that most of the beneficiaries were not eligible for the schemes as they did not fulfill the above-mentioned criteria. The beneficiaries were selected randomly by people who have links with influential leaders like local MLA, local ADC members, etc. There were some old aged and destitute people in the village who

were not selected for the pension scheme in the village. It was painful to see them as they were deprived of the right to enjoy the pension. When the researcher enquired from some beneficiaries as to how much money they get in a month, they replied that they did not know. They informed that the person who had helped him/her in getting the pension collected the money from the office and gave him or her only once in a year. The person working as middlemen collected the pension from the District Commissioner Office at Senapati and gave to the old beneficiary after deducting his commission which he himself decided. After these corrupt practices came to the notice of the Deputy Commissioner of Senapati district in 2015, she personally took the charge of disbursing the pension directly by herself. She gave out notification to the whole of Senapati district that the concerned beneficiary of Old Age Pension should come personally and collect the pension money from the District Commissioner Office. However the beneficiaries being old, find it difficult to go to Senapati, the district headquarter. Again, the Deputy Commissioner made another announcement to the concerned beneficiaries to collect personally the pension money from their Block Office. The main bottleneck is that they do not have a bank account. The beneficiaries being old and illiterate find it very cumbersome to open the bank account and hence, hampering the proper implementation of the scheme.

Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP): The Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme is a centrally sponsored credit-linked subsidy programme for generation of employment opportunities through establishment of micro enterprises in rural

as well as urban areas. The main objectives of the programme is generation of employment opportunities in rural as well as urban areas through self-employed ventures and enterprises, to bring together widely dispersed traditional artisans, rural and urban unemployed youth and to provide continuous and sustainable employment to the traditional and prospective artisans to prevent migration of rural youth to urban areas.

According to the PMEGP guidelines, the Panchayati Raj Institution is empowered to nominate the names of the beneficiary. However, in Senapati district, Panchayati Raj Institution is not implemented and the district officers who were members of the selection board selected the beneficiaries at their will. People informed that only those people who bribed the selection board members were selected as beneficiaries. For example, Mr X said that he was selected in 2013 batch. He first gave some money to one of the board members through a middleman to the District Industries Centre, Senapati. He further said that the concerned officers take illicit commission through a system of percentage. The beneficiaries received the money in instalments. Every time they received the money in instalment, they do some paper works i.e. they have to get their documents signed from the concerned officers at the state and district offices. During this process of signing documents, the concerned officers took their commission through percentage system from the beneficiaries.

There was only one beneficiary from Makhel village till 2015 under this programme. It is difficult to get selected as beneficiary. The people informed that it is pointless to apply if they do not have money to bribe the concerned district officers.

4. Discussion

Developmental programmes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) or subsidy linked programme like Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) or before that, Rural Employment Generation Programme (REGP), the concerned district officers practiced bribery system while selecting the beneficiaries and took commission through a system of percentage during the disbursement of fund. This system is institutionalized in the district. The recruitment of government primary teachers in Manipur was through 'back door entry'. There is not even a single appointment on the basis of merit; every appointment was through bribery system.

At the village level, the selection of beneficiaries under government grant-in-aid schemes like IAY, Old Age Pension Scheme was random and biased. People who are really in need are not included under the schemes. The selection was made by the people who have links with influential people like local MLA, local ADC members, etc.

As Alpa Shah writes that 'the choosing of a contractor at the village level was a highly politicized affair for many reasons' (2010: 74), such was seen even in Mao villages. It was rather a long process, making linkages among the local leaders. For instance, at the time of election for Autonomous District Council (ADC) members or MLA, the intending candidate or their agents and the members of Village Authority worked hand in hand. During election, the Village Authority (the village level statutory body) by forced threatened the villagers to vote for their candidate and so the villagers gave solid vote to the candidate and win the election. In return,

the elected ADC members or MLA gave petty contracts to the Chairman or Secretary of Village Authority for their support during the election. The people informed that small contracts like irrigation, repairing of roads, etc which came in as government aided schemes, the local MLA/ADC in consultation with some village leaders took the money for themselves and do not carry out the project work in the village.

Case 1 – In the year 2014, Makhel UJB School was selected for a project under the ADC office. Since, the project was under the jurisdiction of the local ADC member, the selection of the contractor was in his power. And so the contract was given to the Chairman and Secretary of the Makhel Village Authority.

Case 2 – According to the Chief Medical Officer, Senapati, there is a Primary Health Sub-Centre at Charanho (Shajouba) village, a Mao Naga village under Senapati district. However, at Charanho village, there is neither any office nor any kind of construction work in the village under the said project. Some villagers informed that the state government had sanctioned fund for the establishment of the said Primary Health Sub-Centre. People suspected that some prominent leaders from the village had embezzled the project money.

5. Conclusion

Most of the developmental programmes and schemes are not functioning satisfactorily in the village. The tap water supply is not regular. Most of the time, there would be one problem or the other. According to the office of the Inspector of Schools, the Makhel UJB School should be up to class six but it is only up to class one. This school is functioning as a pre-nursery home and not as an educational institution. The recruitment of government

primary teachers in Manipur was through 'back door entry'. There is not even a single appointment on the basis of merit; every appointment was through bribery system. The three Anganwadi centres in the village are not functioning satisfactorily. The workers distribute what they received from the head office and do not teach nor perform any other activity which is supposed to be carried out at Anganwadi centre. The quality of the works carried out under the MGNREGS in Makhel village was substandard and works were carried out for the sake of extracting money. The selection of beneficiaries under government grant-in-aid schemes like Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY), Old Age Pension Scheme was random and biased. The selection of beneficiary under PMEGP was through bribery system.

Development should come from within as Patel rightly said that 'the problem is not merely one of development of rural areas but of the development of rural communities – to dispel ignorance and poverty and create self-reliant and self-sustaining healthy modern little communities' (2010: 14) through awareness programmes and workshops. As Ranjan writes, 'for proper implementation and fruition of such developmental programmes, leadership and particularly political leadership played a pivotal role' (2011: 52). Thus, a committed and development oriented leadership is the need of the hour. Furthermore, to make leadership more effective, regular training programmes and information should be provided for the local leaders to tackle the intricacies of modern development processes.

6. References

- [1] Government of India, "Programmes for the People: Four Years of UPA Government 2004-08 (Manipur)", Press Information Bureau, New Delhi, 2008.



-
- [2] Mathur, H. M, “Anthropology and Development in Traditional Societies”, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1995.
- [3] Patel, A, “Rural Development Projects and Programs”, *Kurukshetra-A Journal on Rural Development*, 2010, 58(3), pp. 11-14.
- [4] Ranjan, G, “Ethnography of Development: Challenges and Promises”, *The NEHU Journal*, 2011, 9(2), pp. 49-62.
- [5] Shah, A, 2011, “*In the Shadows of the State: Indigenous Politics, Environmentalism, and Insurgency in Jharkhand, India*”, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2011.
- [6] Singh, S. P., “Emerging Issues in Indian Rural Economy”, *Kurukshetra- A Journal on Rural Development*, 2010, 58(3), pp. 3-6.
- [7] World Bank, “*Rural Development*”, Sector Policy Paper, Washington Dc, 1975.