



Extent of participation of village councillors in implementing rural development programmes in Meghalaya

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted purposively in the tribal state of Meghalaya where Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are absent. It was conducted in the year 2020-21 in three districts among the major tribes of Khasi, Jaintia and Garo communities with the total respondents of 360 village councillors. With the objective to examine the extent of participation of village councillors in implementing the selected rural development programmes in Meghalaya, results indicated that participation index of the village councillors was found to be 74.82%, 76.33% and 75.88% in case of MGNREGA, PDS and ICDS respectively. Majority of the MGNREGA village councillors (74.16%) belonged to the medium participation level, PDS councillors (85.00%) and 55.84 percent of ICDS councillors had medium category level of participation. Formation of Village Employment Council (VEC) scored the highest participation score (91.66%) under MGNREGA, whereas meeting between VEC and Vigilance & Monitoring Committee (VMC) had the lowest score with 63.33 percent. Under PDS, selection and appointment of FPS dealer (88.75%) scored the highest participation score while meeting between dealers and Vigilance Committee scored the lowest (69.16%). Monitoring of ICDS programme scored highest level of participation (80.00%) and consulting the ICDS officials scored the lowest (69.58%) under ICDS programme.

1. Introduction

Panchayati Raj System exists in all states except Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram also all the UTs except Delhi (Mishra et al., 2011). Meghalaya is one of the North-Eastern states having a major tribal population of 86.14 percent mainly dominated by the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo communities. These communities since time immemorial have been living their social life under the administration of the Village Council. Village Council is the council of village elders elected by the village community on voluntary basis and is usually headed by the Village Headman traditionally known as *Rangbah Shnong*, *Waheh Shnong* and *Nokma* in different regions of the state. Village Headman held responsibility for maintaining law and order, peace harmony and overall, the social welfare in the village. All the government programmes and schemes meant for the village are routed through the Village Council. Owing to the

importance of the Village Council in rural development, the present study was conducted with the objective to examine the extent of participation of village councillors in implementing the selected rural development programmes in Meghalaya.

2. Methodology

The study was conducted purposively in the three districts of Meghalaya namely East Khasi Hills, West Jaintia Hills and West Garo Hills, the districts where the respective Autonomous District Councils were located. Data was collected from the village councils of the three districts implementing Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Public Distribution System (PDS) and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programmes, respectively. These programmes were selected purposively because of their massive beneficiary coverage at

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Table 1: Distribution of district, C & RD Blocks, villages under ADCs in Meghalaya

Sl. No.	Autonomous District Councils (ADCs)	Name of district	No. of Blocks	No. of villages	Population (ST)
1.	Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council	East Khasi Hills	11	975	661158
		West Khasi Hills	4	834	375097*
		South West Khasi Hills	2	286	
		Ri Bhoi	4	589	230081
		Total	21	2684	1266336
2.	Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council	West Jaintia Hills	3	293	376099*
		East Jaintia Hills	2	206	
		Total	5	499	376099
3.	Garo Hills Autonomous District Council	East Garo Hills	3	492	317917
		West Garo Hills	7	1394	643291*
		South West Garo Hills	3	576	
		North Garo Hills	3	639	134237*
		South Garo Hills	4	804	
		Total	20	3905	1095445

Source: GoM, 2019, *Population of the then undivided districts

the grassroot level. From each district, two progressive C&RD blocks were selected randomly with five villages from each block. Thus, a total of thirty villages were selected from six C& RD blocks. Twelve respondents were randomly selected from all the three programmes in each village making a total respondent of 360 village councillors. In this study, the village councillors refer to the programme executor along with the monitoring committee members, respectively.

Extent of participation was operationalized as the degree to which the village councillors were actually involved in different functions of rural development programmes. The procedure developed by Ramanna (1999) was followed in the present study with slight modification depending upon the identified roles of the village councillors in implementing the rural development programmes. For MGNREGA, PDS and ICDS programmes; twelve, five and eight items respectively were identified based on identified roles and the responses was collected on the three-point

continuum viz., fully participated, partially participated and not participated in the activity and the score was assigned 2, 1, 0 for each response, respectively.

Extent of participation scores were calculated as sum of the scores of correct responses converted into percentages. The respondents were classified on the basis of mean and standard deviation as below:

Sl. No.	Category	Score
1.	Low participation level	< Mean + SD
2.	Medium participation level	Mean + SD
3.	High participation level	> Mean + SD

$$\text{Extent of participation index} = \frac{\text{Total obtained score}}{\text{Maximum obtainable score}} \times 100$$

Table 2: Details of the selected rural development programmes implemented by the village councillors in Meghalaya

Name of the schemes	Purpose	Year	Objectives	Mode of transaction	Village Councillors	
					Programme Executor	Village Monitoring committee
MGNREGA	Employment	2006	Hundred days of wage employment in a financial year for the rural households	In cash	Village Employment Council (VEC)	Vigilance and Monitoring Committee (VMC)

PDS	Food Scheme	1971-72	Aims at distributing subsidized food and non-food items	In kind	Fair Price Shop (FPS) dealer	Vigilance Committee (VC)
ICDS	Nutrition Supplementary Scheme	1975	Aims at addressing the health, nutrition and development needs of young children, pregnant and nursing mothers	In kind	Anganwadi workers and helpers	Village Level Coordination Committee (VLCC)

3. Results and Discussion

Extent of participation of the village councillors implementing MGNREGA

From Table 3, it can be seen that majority of the village councillors had fully participated in formation of VEC (87.50%), followed by meeting with job card holders (71.66%), registration of families (68.33%) and allotment of work to individuals (65.83%), respectively. The reason for their maximum participation in formation of VEC is because this is the first step as per the programme guidelines to initiate any project work for the community under MGNREGA in any rural village with mandatory for registration/ enrolment under the programme so as a formal job card could be issued. Whereas, the respondents had partially participated in taking initiation for different work

(35.00%), followed by consulting MGNREGA officials for project activities (31.66%) and undertaking monitoring and evaluation on different work executed (30.00%), respectively. About 27.50 percent of them had no such meeting between VEC and Vigilance & Monitoring Committee (VMC). This was due to the fact that most of the Village Headmen were of the opinion that it was the sole responsibility of the VEC to carry out the overall affairs of the MGNREGA and merely lack of monitoring from the Village Headmen. Overall, participation scores were high in case of formation of VEC (91.66%), followed by meeting with job card holders (80.41%), registration of families (77.91%) and allotment of work to individuals (77.91%), respectively, which is in line with the findings of Sebastian and Azeez (2014).

Table 3. Item wise extent of participation of the village councillors in different activities of MGNREGA (n=120)

Sl. No.	Statements	Extent of participation (n=120)						
		Fully		Partially		No participation		Overall participation score
		F	%	F	%	F	%	%
1	Formation of VEC	105	87.50	10	8.33	5	4.16	91.66
2	Registration of families	82	68.33	23	19.16	15	12.50	77.91
3	Meeting with job card holders	86	71.66	21	17.50	13	10.83	80.41
4	Prioritize of work pertaining to rural development	71	59.16	28	23.33	21	17.5	70.83
5	Deciding project plan required for undertaking different work	70	58.33	33	27.50	17	14.16	72.08
6	Consulting MGNREGA officials for project activities	72	60.00	38	31.66	10	8.33	75.83
7	Allotment of work to individuals	79	65.83	29	24.16	12	10.00	77.91
8	Taking initiation for different work	71	59.16	42	35.00	7	5.83	76.66
9	Undertaking monitoring and evaluation on different work executed	64	53.33	36	30.00	20	16.66	68.33
10	Coordination with social audit officials	76	63.33	29	24.16	15	12.5	75.41
11	Consulting with the bank officials for payment of wages	63	52.50	36	30.00	21	17.50	67.50
12	Meeting between VEC and Vigilance & Monitoring Committee (VMC)	65	54.16	22	18.33	33	27.50	63.33

Note: F= Frequency of the respondents

Table 4 revealed that district-wise distribution of respondents according to the extent of participation in MGNREGA activities was higher in case of West Jaintia Hills with 79.25 percent participation index followed by 73.83 and 71.25 percent for East Khasi Hills and West Garo Hills, respectively. Overall participation of the village councillors was 74.82 percent. On an overall participation level, majority of the village councillors (74.16%) belonged to the medium participation level, followed by high participation level (13.34%) and low participation level (12.50%), respectively. This happened due to the fact that most of the respondents took much importance for participation in different roles of the programme and similarly the programme is demand-driven involving cash benefits which motivates the VEC members from time to time. Research findings are in line with the findings of SIRD (2014).

Table 4. District-wise distribution of the village councillors according to the extent of participation in MGNREGA activities

Extent of participation	East Khasi Hills n=40	West Garo Hills n=40	West Jaintia Hills n=40	Overall index score n=120
Low level	3 (7.50)	7 (17.50)	4 (10.00)	15 (12.50)
Medium level	32 (80.00)	28 (70.00)	28 (70.00)	89 (74.16)
High level	5 (12.5)	5 (12.50)	8 (20.00)	16 (13.34)
Mean	17.72	17.10	19.02	17.95
SD	4.89	3.76	3.45	4.12
Participation index (%)	73.83	71.25	79.25	74.82

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

Extent of participation of the village councillors implementing PDS

Table 5 explained that PDS village councillors had fully participated in selection and appointment of FPS dealer (86.66%) followed by formation of Vigilance Committee (73.33%) and consulting PDS officials (59.16%), respectively, whereas 30.83 percent of the respondents had partially participated in undertaking monitoring and evaluation on distribution of ration items and 16.66 percent of them had no meeting with dealers and Vigilance Committee. Overall, participation scores were higher (88.75%) in case of selection and appointment of FPS dealer and formation of Vigilance Committee (80.00%) which is in line with the findings of Srivastava and Chand (2017) and Ahmed *et al.* (2020).

Table 5: Item wise extent of participation of village councillors in different activities of PDS (n=120)

Sl. No.	Statements	Extent of participation (n=120)						Overall participation score %
		Fully		Partially		No participation		
		F	%	F	%	F	%	
1.	Selection and appointment of FPS dealer	104	86.66	5	4.16	11	9.16	88.75
2.	Formation of Vigilance Committee (VC)	88	73.33	16	13.33	16	13.33	80.00
3.	Undertaking monitoring and evaluation on distribution of ration items	66	55.00	37	30.83	17	14.16	70.41
4.	Meeting with dealers and Vigilance Committee	66	55.00	34	28.33	20	16.66	69.16
5.	Consulting PDS officials	71	59.16	34	28.33	15	12.50	73.33

Note: F= Frequency of the respondents

The reason for fully participation of village councillors in selection and appointment of FPS dealer and formation of Vigilance Committee was because it is the recommended procedure of the government to be followed by the Village Council so as the dealer could execute the duties and responsibilities of the scheme as well as the Vigilance Committee could monitor the FPS dealers and overall affairs of the programme from time to time for the welfare of the beneficiaries.

Table 6: District-wise distribution of respondents according to the extent of participation in PDS activities

Extent of participation	East Khasi Hills n=40	West Garo Hills n=40	West Jaintia Hills n=40	Overall N=120
Low level	10 (25.00)	6 (15.00)	13 (32.50)	18 (15.00)
Medium level	22 (55.00)	19 (47.50)	27 (67.50)	102 (85.00)
High level	8 (20.00)	15 (37.50)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
Mean	5.05	8.8	9.05	7.63
SD	3.57	1.11	1.01	2.88
Participation index (%)	50.50	88.00	90.50	76.33

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

Table 6 shows that majority of the PDS village councillors falls under medium level of participation with 67.50, 55.00 and 47.50 percent in case of West Jaintia Hills, East Khasi Hills and West Garo Hills, respectively. There was no such high participation level in case of West Jaintia Hills (0.00%). Overall, majority of them had medium level of participation (85.00%) and participation index was high for West Garo Hills (88.00%). Overall, the participation index was 76.33 percent for all the village councillors.

Extent of participation of village councillors implementing ICDS

It can be seen from Table 7 that the ICDS village councillors had fully participated in monitoring of ICDS programme (63.33%), followed by maintenance of Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) about 60.83 percent and construction of AWCs (58.33%), respectively. About 59.16 percent of them had partially participated in consulting the ICDS officials followed by formation of VLCC (50.83%), respectively. Only 7.50 percent of them had no such participation in maintenance of AWCs. Overall participation scores were higher in case of monitoring of ICDS programme (80.00%), followed by supervision of Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP) and construction of AWCs (77.91%), respectively, which is in line with the findings of Manzoor and Shabanakhurshid (2014).

Table 7. Item wise extent of participation of the village councillors in different activities of ICDS (n=120)

Sl. No.	Statements	Extent of participation						
		Fully participated		Partially participated		Not participated		% participation score
		F	%	F	%	F	%	
1.	Formation of VLCC	59	49.16	61	50.83	0	0.00	74.58
2.	Assisting in selection of AWWs/ AWHs	61	50.83	57	47.50	2	1.66	74.58
3.	Construction of AWCs	70	58.33	47	19.58	3	1.25	77.91
4.	Maintenance of AWCs	73	60.83	38	31.66	9	7.50	76.66
5.	Supervision of SNP	71	59.16	45	37.50	4	3.33	77.91
6.	Monitoring of ICDS programme	76	63.33	40	33.33	4	3.33	80.00
7.	Meeting with ICDS beneficiaries	66	55.00	50	41.66	4	3.33	75.83
8.	Consulting the ICDS officials	48	40.00	71	59.16	1	0.83	69.58

Note: F= Frequency of the respondents

With regards to the participation of village councillors in ICDS activities, Table 8 indicated that majority of them belonged to medium category level in case of West Garo Hills (75.00%), West Jaintia Hills (55.00%) and East Khasi Hills (52.50%), respectively. Overall, more than half of them had medium category level of participation (55.84%), followed by low level (30.00%) and high level (14.16%), respectively. Participation index was high in case of East Khasi Hills (77.50%) followed by West Garo Hills (77.18%), and West Jaintia Hills (73.87%), respectively with an overall participation score of 75.88 percent.

Table 8. District-wise distribution of the village councillors according to the extent of participation in ICDS activities

Extent of participation	East Khasi Hills n=40	West Garo Hills n=40	West Jaintia Hills n=40	Overall N=120
Low level	11 (27.50)	8 (20.00)	10 (25.00)	36 (30.00)
Medium level	21 (52.50)	30 (75.00)	22 (55.00)	67 (55.84)
High level	8 (20.00)	2 (5.00)	8 (20.00)	17 (14.16)
Mean	12.40	12.35	11.82	12.19
SD	3.26	2.66	3.45	3.13
Participation index (%)	77.50	77.18	73.87	75.88

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

4. Conclusion

The study indicated that most of the village councillors had a medium level of participation for all the three selected development programmes. For MGNREGA, the village councillors had fully participated in formation of VEC which happened due to the demand and need of the public but least participation in meeting between VEC and Vigilance & Monitoring Committee (VMC). Similarly, for PDS programme the village councillors had fully participated in selection and appointment of FPS dealer and least participated on meeting with dealers and Vigilance Committee. Also, ICDS village councillors had fully participated in monitoring of ICDS programme and least on consulting the ICDS officials. The study suggested that there should be a close coordination between the programme implementing agency and the monitoring committee to improve the participation level and the overall implementation of the selected programmes.

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