

POLITICS OF IMPLEMENTATION: A STUDY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (SGSY) IN THE HILL AREAS OF MANIPUR WITH REFERENCE TO CHURACHANDPUR DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

There could be variety of factors involves in the process of implementation of rural development programmes. Deeper analysis of these factors brings out fundamental questions involved in the implementation of rural development programmes i.e questions about conflict, decision making and who gets what, when and how in a society. This study examines the politics involved in the implementation of Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) programme and its influence on the programme's outcome among the tribal in Churachandpur District of Manipur. It shows that politics pervades and impedes the implementation of rural development programme like SGSY and has negative influences on its outcome.

Keywords : Politics, Rural development, Implementation, Churachandpur.

1. INTRODUCTION

Manipur splits up naturally into two tracts i.e. the valley and the hills. The valley districts namely Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal and Bishnupur are better off in aggregate levels of development (industry, agriculture, economic infrastructure, transport and communications and in social services sector) than the hill districts i.e. Churachandpur, Ukhrul, Senapati, Tamenglong and Chandel (Singh, 2000). The hill area is inhabited by the 33 Tribes belonging to Naga and Kuki-Chin-Mizo groups.

Among the hill districts, Churachandpur district is the largest in terms of area with 4,570 sq. km. According to 2001 census, it has a total population of 2, 28,707. Majority of the population in Churachandpur district are engage in agriculture as their livelihood. Other than this traditional unproductive agricultural practice, the poor masses could not venture to other occupation and also could not start their own enterprise due to lack of capital. In this scenario, various rural development programmes have been implemented. This paper attempt to highlight the implementation of one of the most important rural development

programmes i.e Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) and the politics involve in the process of implementation within the conceptual framework laid out in section 2.

2. MEANING OF POLITICS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Politics has been conceptualized in various ways. It generally falls within two approaches viz. *an arena or site* and *processual* (Leftwitch, 2005 & Kari Polanen, 1994). According to the former approach, politics is an activity found only in certain kinds of societies (normally with states) and in certain kinds of institutional sites or processes within those societies. The latter holds that politics is universal processes that exist wherever the human species have been found. It is therefore a characteristic and necessary feature of all societies. The former approach that stressed upon 'what concerns the state' tends to focus upon the nature and structure of government as a decision-making process and on those who press their claims upon it (Heywood, 2005 & Barrie Axford et.al, 2002). Politics in this way is seen to be portrayed as a distinct and separate sphere in a society apart from personal, fami-

ly, business life etc. As such, normally many seem to regard politics as the arena largely populated by politicians, political parties, elections and the various institutions of government (David Held, 1998). Also, this approach provides little basis for understanding what David Held said 'the very stuff of politics, that is, those deep-rooted problems that actually face us all daily as citizens, for example issues of war and violence; unemployment and poverty; health and welfare. Considering politics as an activity universal to all societies and at all levels and times, it is seen to be not only centered on state and its power but 'a conscious activity for every classes, strata, groups and individuals who are involved in organizing and governing society' and an 'activity by which the framework of human life is sustained' (Mooij, 1993, Axford et al, 1994; Heywood, 2005; Bhambhri, 1991 & Minogue, 1995).

Further, in any Development sequence, what is crucially at issue is how resources are to be used and distributed in new ways and the inevitable disputes, conflicts, negotiation etc that arised from the calculations made by individual and groups as to who will win and lose as a result (Adrian Leftwitch, 2008). It is observed that such activities are a part of politics although politics may also have other connotations like the art of government and the state (Heywood, 2000), public affairs (Oakeshott, 1963), compromise and consensus (Callinos, 1998), power and the distribution of resources (Lasswell, 1963) etc. Politics is inevitable not only in the formulation of policies for rural development, but also in its implementation. Implementation encompasses those actions by public, private and individuals or groups that are directed at the achievement of objectives set forth in prior policy decisions (See Meter and Horn, 1974). Williams opines that implementation seeks to determine whether an organization can bring together men and material in a cohesive organisational unit and motivate them in such a way as to carry out the organisation stated objective (Williams, 1971). On the basis of a study conducted in different parts of the third world, implementation has al-

so been defined as an ongoing process of decision making by a variety of actors. The ultimate outcome of implementation is determined by the 'content' of the programme being pursued and by the interaction of the decision makers within a given politico-administrative 'context' (Grindle, 1980). Implementation in its most general form therefore refers to those actions by a variety of actors geared towards the achievement of objectives set forth in prior policy decisions. In the process of implementation of rural development programmes in India, a wide variety of factors frequently intervened. Attempt to explain these factors leads to realization of the fundamental questions involve in implementation i.e. questions about conflict, co-operation, negotiation and decision making which this study seek to examine.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study is based both on primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected during March – April 2007 from 160 respondents who are the beneficiaries of SGSY programme and 40 respondents drawn from a cross section of officials and NGOs involved in the implementation of SGSY programme. Also, data was collected from Rural Development Monitoring Cell, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Directorate of Information and Public Relations, State Institute of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development, Directorate of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj and District Rural Development Agency (Churachandpur). Secondary sources include published books, newspapers and journals. The data collected from both primary and secondary sources formed the basis of analysis of the study. Data collected were quantified using simple statistical tools like per centage and average and interpreted in qualitative terms on the basis of that.

4. SGSY AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

Under SGSY programme, poverty alleviation is seen as a holistic anti-poverty programme covering all aspects of self-employment such as organisation of the poor into SHG and their capacity building, train-

ing, planning of activity clusters, infrastructure development, financial assistance, subsidy and marketing (Ministry of Rural Development, 1999). Its thrust is the generation of employment through establishing micro enterprises in rural areas, building upon the potential of the rural poor (Gupta, 2004). The objective of SGSY programme is to bring the assisted families above poverty line in two to three years or in other words Swarozgaris are to earn atleast Rs. 2000 per month from the activities taken up (Malhotra, 2002). SGSY is also particularly oriented towards the vulnerable groups among the poor. According to the guideline, at least 50 per cent of the Swarozgaris should be from Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) category. Further, women are to account for forty per cent and disabled are to account for atleast 3 per cent of the Swarozgaris.

The beneficiaries under SGSY programme are called Swarozgaris. These beneficiaries may be individual or group (SHG) but emphasis is on SHG. Thus, SHG becomes the core of the SGSY scheme. Further, group approach is seen to be a viable alternative for achieving the objectives of rural development and to get community participation in poverty alleviation programmes (Gurumoorthy, 2000). The need for a special self help promotion concept arises from the fact that the largest benefit from most development programmes and projects, initiated and operated by Government institutions were seen to be predominantly absorbed by the better off sections of the rural society (Lalitha & Nagarajan, 2002). Therefore SGSY programme is perceived as a scheme for greater equity and justice and a more realistic measure for the upliftment of the rural poor.

A number of agencies like Village Authorities (VA), Line departments, District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), Bank and Non-Government Organizations (NGO) are involved in the entire process of implementation i.e. selection of beneficiaries and villages, identification of key activities, monitoring, re-

viewing etc. Unlike in the valley districts, there is no panchayat system in the hill districts. Thus the selections of beneficiaries under poverty alleviation schemes including SGSY programme are entrusted to the Village Authorities (Srivastava, 1997). Line department are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of key activities that falls under their respective department. District Rural Development Agency is the overall in charge of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Rural Development programmes in the District (Singh, 2002). SGSY also envisaged the close association of Bankers at all stages of the programme's implementation. Bank has the final say in the selection of Swarozgaris. Further, NGO are expected to involve in mobilizing and creating awareness among the people for the successful implementation of the SGSY schemes.

The first necessary step in the implementation process is to spread awareness about SGSY programme. Table 1 show that NGO plays maximum role in disseminating information about the programme to the villagers. About 35 per cent of the Swarozgaris came to know about the programme through NGO. However, this information seems to be meant only for the SHG promoted by them. Mass media which is one of the most important and effective tools to create awareness about the programme was not put to good use. Only 15 per cent of the Swarozgaris claimed to know about SGSY programme from mass media. In a place where information through mass media like Newspaper, Radio, Television (Local Channel as popularly known) are available in different dialects (at least in and around the plain areas of Churachandpur district where most of the sample falls), it could have been put to better use. Another agency that plays an important role in disseminating information about SGSY programme was the staffs at Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS). About 20 per cent of the Swarozgaris came to know about the programme through them. DRDA which is the nodal agency for the implementation of SGSY programme did not per-

formed well in spreading awareness about the programme as compare to NGO. Through NGO, 35 per cent of the Swarozgaris learned about the programme and only 20 per cent of the Swarozgaris came to know about the programme through DRDA. Once Swarozgaris came to know about the programme, they turn to DRDA staff especially Assistant Project Officer (APO) on how to go about it. According to them, APO even helped them in writing their application.

Table 1. Sources of awareness about SGSY programme

Sl.No	Sources of information	% age of Swarozgaris
1	Through Local Newspaper	15%
2	Through DRDA and its staff	20%
3	Through ICDS staffs	20%
4	Through NGO	35%
5	Through other SHG	10%

Sources: Interview Schedules

Around 560 SHG were formed under SGSY programme throughout the eight blocks in Churachandpur district. SHG were found to be more concentrated in blocks that are situated in and around the district headquarter than the blocks situated further from the district headquarter. Table no.2 show the coverage of SGSY programme across the blocks and the actual number of SHG formed.

Table 2. Coverage of the programme according to Block-wise

Sl.no	Name of the Blocks	No. of SHG
1.	Tipaimukh	2
2.	Thanlon	3
3.	Henglep	8
4.	Singhat	13
5.	Lamka	186
6.	Tuibuong	102
7.	Saikot	136
8.	Samulamlan	110
	Total	560

Sources: DRDA, Churachandpur.

SGSY programme aims to cover the BPL families by organising them into SHG. However, according to the recommendation of the “Report of the Working Group on Poverty Alleviation for the 10th five Year

Plan” and feedback/suggestions from the States/UTs, amendment have been made in the SGSY Guidelines to make the scheme more effective. According to this, if necessary 20 per cent and in exceptional cases up to 30 per cent of Swarozgaris in a SHG may be from villagers who are marginally Above Poverty Line (APL) and residing congruously with BPL families. Except for one member of a particular group, all the Swarozgaris claimed that they belong to BPL category.

SGSY also focus on the vulnerable groups like women, Scheduled Cates/Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) and disabled among the rural poor. Table 3 show the composition of the weaker sections under SGSY. The share of the weaker sections appears to be significant in respect of the SC/ST and women. About 90 per cent and 65 per cent of the SHG were composed by SC/ST and women members respectively. However, there are no SHG identified under Disabled category.

Table 3. Coverage of the programme according to category-wise

No. and %age of STs SHG	No. and %age of Women SHG	No. and %age of Disabled
508 (90.7 %)	364 (65 %)	Nil

Sources: DRDA, Churachandpur.

Also, SGSY emphasize on activity clusters. This means that 4-5 key activities are to be identified by the implementing agencies for each block based on the resources, occupational skills of the people and availability of the market. However, in Churachandpur district it was found that Swarozgaris have a total say in choosing their activity. Some of the key activities taken up by SHG are Handloom/Weaving, Piggery, Goatery, Ginger, Banana, Passion fruit, Chilly and Mushroom cultivation, Dairy, Tailoring and Desktop printing. Though majority of SHG registered Piggery as their activity, it is seen that about 70 per cent of the SHG under study performed multiple activities. Table 4 show the economic activity taken up by SHG according to registration and also the number of SHG

performing multiple activities.

Table 4. Activities taken up

	Name of the economic activity				Number of SHG who performed multiple activities
	Weaving/ Hand-loom	Piggery	Soap Making	Total	
No. of SHGs under the activity	8 (40)*	10 (50)*	2 (10)*	20 (100)*	14 (70)*

Sources: Interview Schedules.

It has been well acknowledged that for success and sustainability of self-employment endeavours, the required skill to successfully run the enterprise is a pre-requisite. Accordingly, DRDA organized training programmes every year for SHG. The main aim of the training was to ensure that Swarozgaris possess the minimum skill requirement for their activity. Also, through training programmes Swarozgaris are expected to become more aware about the programme's objectives. DRDA therefore engaged NABARD, Bank Officials, Line Departments (District Industry Centre, Agriculture Department and Veterinary Department) and NGO like Don Bosco Social Service (DSS) to give training to Swarozgaris. Also, DSS organized training on their own. Participation of Swarozgaris in the training programmes was quite high i.e. 76.47 per cent. NGO who conducted training programmes was not assigned by DRDA to give training. They organized training programme as a promoter of SHG or as an ordinary NGO who took the task upon themselves. In this way SHG promoted by NGO has advantage over other SHG in availing knowledge through training programme and were also found to have a better concept about SHG and its operation.

Financial assistances in the form of Revolving Fund and bank loan are also available for the SHG. Revolving Fund can be avail by SHG who have been functioning for atleast six months. Most of the SHG availed this Fund. This fund seeks to impart credit discipline and financial management skills to the mem-

bers so that they become creditworthy and bankable in the eyes of the Bank. Majority of the SHG (90%) also received bank loan as financial assistance to start economic activity. The loan sanctioned for taking up economic activity however differs among the SHG. Table 5 show the amount received by SHG, including revolving fund and bank loan for the purpose of economic activity.

Table 5. Financial assistance Received by SHGs

No.of SHGs	%age to the total SHGs	Revolving Fund received	Loan sanctioned
1	5	25,000	Nil
16	80	25,000	50,000
1	5	25,000	1 Lakh
1	5	50,000	1 Lakh
1	5	25,000	2 Lakhs
Total	100		

Sources: Interview Schedules.

5. POLITICS OF IMPLEMENTATION

The process of identification of beneficiaries for SGSY programme mainly goes through two stages - approval of BPL list by VA and identification of Swarozgaris to avail benefits under SGSY. According to the guideline of SGSY programme, the Village Authorities are to approve the list of BPL families who intend to form SHG in order to avail benefits from SGSY programme. VA plays a role by way of giving certificate stating that the intended Swarozgaris belongs to below poverty line. Here there are cases where identification of persons belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL) was monetarily induced. In some cases, the VA just knows that SHG under SGSY existed in their villages. In most cases the VA are ready to approve and issue certificate whenever necessary. They hardly verify the credentials of the persons concern. Justifying this, one Secretary of a particular VA stated that 'it doesn't matter whether the person belongs to Above Poverty Line (APL) or Below Poverty Line (BPL) as long as he or she benefitted from rural development programmes'. A kind of apathy towards rural development programmes seems to be there as the fund meant for the villagers hardly reaches the

poor. Further, majority of the Village Authorities under study revealed that they do not know about the programmes and the role entails in the programme for them. Their knowledge is limited to the fact that the SHGs are like any other Groups formed by any other organizations. This shows that training programme is necessary for the implementing agencies too. From the Block level up to the Commissioner level, there was no meeting or consultation in which they were included.

Also, data shows that most of the approvals were done on the basis of direct/indirect relationship with VA members as well as bribe which were charged by VA as processing fee. Even majority of Swarozgaris (68.5%) disclosed that they had to pay what the VA termed 'processing fee' ranging from Rs. 30 to Rs.100 depending on their proximity to the members of VA to get approval and formed SHG. Further, many fake SHG were found to have forcibly established and availed the benefit of the programme through the involvement of underground forces. On the other hand, it was found that a sizeable numbers of villagers (40.54 %) who managed to get VA approval and even formed SHG could not availed benefits from SGSY. About 74 per cent of this group attributed the problem to lack of connection with the bank and other implementing officials.

It was also found that financial assistance in terms of revolving funds and loans were granted to SHG mostly on the basis of how the members of SHG engaged or influenced the implementing officials with monetary, political and other forces. Many SHG (45%) have reported that they could not get loan after the first loan due to the lack of the above stated factors. Majority of SHG (75%) revealed that certain percentage (about 15-20%) was deducted by officials from DRDA, Bank and NGO from revolving fund and loan sanctioned for the help they have rendered to them and also as a share for the underground. Further, about 65 per cent of SHG revealed that they used political influence to avail revolving fund and bank loan.

Such illegal deductions and influences were openly practiced and SHG expressed their helplessness due to direct or indirect involvement of politicians, underground and social activists in the whole process of programme implementation.

Though the implementing agencies are supposed to guide and nurture the SHG throughout the process of programme implementation according to the guidelines of the SGSY programme, however in reality the SHG members have to consistently pursue the officials for the same. On the other hand, officials from Line department, Bank and DRDA revealed that they were forced by politicians, undergrounds and social activists to follow their direction in the whole process of programme's implementation. The officials reported that they were always under pressure from various quarters like underground, politicians and NGO to give preferential treatment to their respective clients. On this ground they expressed their helplessness in strictly following the guidelines of the programme.

6. CONCLUSION

The factors that intervened between the statement of policy and their actual achievement in the society show that there is marginal success in evolving an effective and responsive delivery system for the rural poor. One reason could be that only at the programme level changes were initiated but not at the organizational levels, particularly at village and block levels. A systematic process of implementation has been laid out, but in the study areas or for that matter in the hill areas of Manipur as a whole, absence or minimal presence of the key implementing agencies hampers the progress of the programme. By simplifying the procedures and rules of the delivery system, proper rapport can be promoted between the delivery system and the target groups, which in turn will be instrumental in ameliorating poverty in the country side.

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