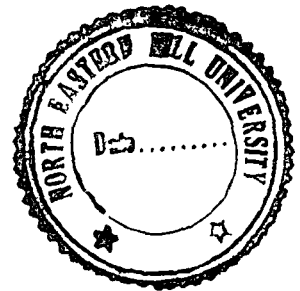


DECENTRALISED PLANNING IN ASSAM
A CASE STUDY OF THE SUB-DIVISIONAL
PLANNING IN SIBSAGAR DISTRICT

BIREN BORUAH

Dissertation

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT OF THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
North - Eastern Hill University
SHILLONG (INDIA)

SEPTEMBER, 1991

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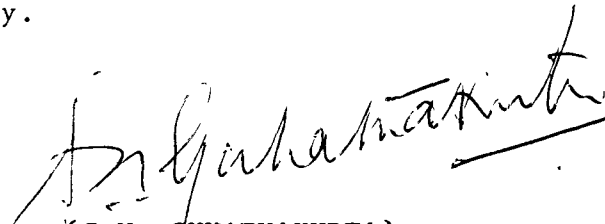
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Certified that the dissertation entitled **DECENTRALISED PLANNING IN ASSAM - A CASE STUDY OF THE SUB-DIVISIONAL PLANNING IN SIBSAGAR DISTRICT** submitted by Mr. **Biren Boruah** in part-fulfilment of the requirement of the Master of Philosophy Programme in Economics of the North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, embodies the record of original investigation carried out by him under my supervision. He has been duly registered for the award of the M.Phil degree. This study has not been submitted for any degree of any other University.

September 25, 1991


(S.N. GUHATHAKURTA)
Supervisor

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In the midst of my research, I had lost my father on 8th August, 1990. I dedicate this work to his loving Memory.

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Shillong
September 25, 1991


(BIREN BORUAH)

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Planning becomes a part and parcel of public policy in almost every country in the world. Planning implies a careful husbanding of the resources and their optimum utilization in the best possible manner. Planning is the basic feature and instrument of economic development. The task of planners is to estimate the available resources in a country and to formulate a comprehensive programme for the most effective and planned utilization of a country's resources.

Broadly, there exist two types of planning, e.g., centralised planning and decentralised planning. Soviet Russia, which is the pioneer in economic planning, and

China can be called as best examples of centralised planned economics. There, the final responsibility for taking economic decision rests with the central authority. Means of production are controlled entirely by government. On the other hand, decentralised planning refers to the process of planning where some of the planning functions and responsibility of decision-making are delegated from the centre to the lower levels of administration. As a first step, planning process got decentralised to state level planning, state level to regional level, then from regional level to district level, district level to sub-divisional level or block level and ultimately to village levels.

1.2 The Problem and the Issues

Decentralised planning may also be called as grass-root level planning or planning from below. There is immense scope of direct participation of the people, proper utilization of locally available resources with the skills of 'man in the spot', and of mobilization of local resources including human resources. Also, it is easier in such type of planning to give specific attention to the targetted group of people.

But decentralised planning cannot be applied to all spheres of economic activities. It cannot be applied to

national level or state level matters like defence, large scale industries, national highways, power, exploitation of mineral resources, higher education, basic infrastructural or economic and social overhead etc. Here, decision-making process cannot be left to local level planning machinery. It needs large amount of capital and large gestation period and sometimes even tackling of intra-state and inter-state problems.

In the context of the present phase of scientific progress, technological advancement and social change, the rural areas with three-fourth of the country's population are by and large having much lower level of income and consumption per head. Provision of infrastructural facilities which ensure income and employment growth are also by and large not adequate.

1.3 Scope and Objective of the Study

A significant departure was made in the Fourth Five Year Plan (from the earlier ones) in asking the state governments to frame their plan proposals in accordance with their own priorities and resources. This approach may be considered as a beginning of decentralised planning process in India. However, in Assam and perhaps in rest of India the process did not get rooted until very recently. We will concentrate our study by limiting it

mainly to one sub-division of Sibsagar District, namely, Sibsagar Sub-Division, where the sub-divisional planning began from 1986.

The objective of our study will be limited to the following :

a) What could be the lowest level of unit for decentralised planning process? This will be an examination of the hypothesis that the village, Panchayat or Block level are better units to formulate a local plan with reference to their resources and needs.

b) What are the sources of information and how priorities are fixed?

In the context of (a) and (b) it will be also examined whether there was any lacunae in earlier (pre-Fourth Five Year Plan) plans in adding up the village or blockwise demands to make a macro level national plan without any consideration of priorities or the constraints of resources, from the operational point of view.

c) Where the planning process, that is to say, decision-making about strategy, priorities and programmes did actually originate from 1986 onwards? In other words, whether it was at the sub-divisional level upward to the district and the state level or downward from the sub-divisional level to village level?

d) The rationale of planning mechanism, decision-

making authorities etc. for the projects undertaken by the sub-divisional planning unit of Sibsagar sub-division will be critically examined from the aforesaid points of view.

1.4 Methodology

The present study has been made adopting the following methodology :

i) Field visits to State Level Planning offices, District Level and Block Level Planning offices and also with non-officials connected with the planning process with the object of obtaining an overall picture of the planning by discussion on the basis of unstructured interviews. Similarly, some preliminary interviews (pilot study) has been conducted with the concerned people and beneficiaries.

ii) Study of the document prepared by the state planning administration concerned with the district and sub-divisional planning.

iii) Canvassing a set of structured questionnaires which were prepared on the basis of unstructured interviews as mentioned in No.(i), among the district and sub-divisional officials responsible for planning and or execution and monitoring etc.

iv) Preparing a set of structured questionnaire on

the basis of preliminary unstructured interviews as mentioned in No.(i) above and canvassing the same among the non-officials connected with the sub-divisional level planning including Mahkuma Parishad/Gao Panchayat, etc.

v) Besides, secondary sources of data wherever necessary were taken from published and unpublished documents of the government, public institutions concerned, planning departments, etc.

The collected data were analysed with the help of suitable statistical technique and results obtained were subjected to relevant economic tools.

1.5 Chapter Plan

Introducing the theme in Chapter I (sections 1 & 2) we give the scope and the objective of the study, and methodology in the next two sections. The last section of the chapter gives a brief review of literature on the subject.

Next two chapters (II & III) deals with decentralised planning. In Chapter II, we give a brief background of decentralised planning, its rationale (section 2), the multi-level concept (section 4) and the background of district level planning (section 5). Chapter III focusses in depth the various planning units,

their strong and weak points in decentralised planning. The sections have been arranged in a vertical order, taking village at the lowest unit and district as the highest. The chapter closes with an overall assessment of the decentralised planning in India from 1969 onwards.

We move on to Chapter IV which deals with the decentralised planning process in Assam. Broadly, the chapter has been divided into two parts: Part A - pre-1986 period - where we make an attempt to study critically the various local self-government institutions and Acts enacted in relation to formation of Local Boards and Panchayats, etc. In Part B of the same chapter we have tried to evaluate decentralised planning process in Assam.

In Chapter V, we take up very briefly a socio-economic profile of the Sibsagar district namely, its physical features (section 2), demographic characteristics (section 3), and farm and non-farm sectors (sections 4 & 5 respectively).

Next we focus our attention to the planning process at the sub-divisional level, mainly in Sibsagar sub-division in Chapter VI. This chapter has been divided into two broad parts: Part A - General - which deals with the important sections, namely, Agriculture (sections 2 & 3) and Industry (section 4). This part closes with an

evaluation of performance of sub-divisional planning (section 5). In Part B, we have attempted to look critically, with reference to our field investigation, some of the projects undertaken at the sub-divisional level.

Our concluding observation is given in Chapter VII.

5.6 A Brief Review of Literature

The term 'decentralised planning' is comparatively a new concept in Economics. Yugoslavia, which is one of the countries which has demonstrated the functioning of decentralised system of planning, is making ample use of the market mechanism. The trend in other countries of Eastern Europe like Hungary and Poland, the trend was towards decentralisation. Khrushnev's sweeping reforms in Russia were a step towards decentralisation of planning.

In India, the need for micro level planning was increasingly felt from the very first five year plans but it was only in 1969, the Planning Commission under the leadership of Professor D.R. Gadgil draw up a set of detailed guidelines for the formulation of district plan. Among the regional plans undertaken at the state level during the Third Five Year Plan period were those for the Rajasthan canal region in Rajasthan, the Rihand region in U.P., the Bhakra Nangal region in Punjab and Telengana

and Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh in recent years. Thus, regional planning from the grass-roots under the name of 'area development' was initiated. Gradually, stress has been laid on the preparation of district, block and village plan. The reforms in democratic decentralisation carried out in recent years, led to the setting up of Panchayati Raj institutions in some states. Yet, decentralised planning is yet to make much headway in this country and its methodology is still evolving. The experiment carried out (The Institution of Regional Planning) in Wardha district (Maharashtra) has major lessons to offer for future attempts at area planning and development. Besides this, the study of Moradabad district (Bihar) conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research, and the study of Muzaffarnagar district in U.P. conducted by the Department of Human Geography of Delhi University are worthwhile. During the Fourth Plan period, a programme for 20 district level studies aimed at identifying the emerging growth centres, followed by a plan for implementation has been undertaken by the Department of Community Development in collaboration with Ford Foundation. The project started well, but has tended to degenerate into a data gathering pilot project, with very weak conceptual foundation. A good example of an integrated district development plan is the one prepared by the Institute of Development Studies,

University of Mysore. Likewise, we may mention about the Quilon district plan of Kerala, Taluk plan in Gujarat, Mindapore district plan in West Bengal, Kundrakudi village plan in Tamil Nadu, perspective plan of Baster district in Madhya Pradesh, sub-divisional plan in Assam as recent development of decentralisation.

Thus the basic task of regional planning in India is as much concerned with development as with adjustment and reconciliation. The current trend shows that while there is some awareness of the importance of the regional approach and a limited awakening to the spatial dimension of development, no positive action has as yet been taken at the national level to make regional planning a part of Indian system of planning.

D.M. Najundappa in his article 'Block Level Planning for full Employment' (Block Level Planning, Adbul Aziz (ed.), Concept Publishing Co., New Delhi) visualises block planning as an instrument which promotes growth with social justice and benefits of growth to the neglected areas. His paper discusses the process, and presents the step by step task that the planner is expected to undertake in the block plan exercise. In the same book tracing the evolution of the idea of Block Level Planning in the Indian context as a logical culmination of decentralised planning process, G. Thimmaiah in 'Block

Level Planning : A Critique', critically evaluates the block level practice in Karnataka. The most significant point made in this paper is that in essence block plans have merely been rural employment plans rather than plan for development of the blocks in the manner the regional planners had conceived.

Rakesh Hooja (Administrative Intervention in Rural Development, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 1987) has proposed some new dimension to the government functionaries in formulation and implementation of development projects in rural India.

Iqbal Narain, in his article 'Decentralisation, Development and Democracy' (in Community Development and Democratic Growth, N.R. Inamdar (ed.), Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1969) opines that block as a unit of decentralisation appears more conducive to the cause of democracy than to development in its economic sense. Because it brings to the seat of power and nucleus of participation nearer to the people, though it is not a viable unit in terms of planning and for reasons of non-availability of technical knowledge and expertise. The district serves the cause of planned development more than democracy because it is too remote from the grass-root people. He stated that perhaps a golden mean is to be struck between Rajasthan and Maharashtra model (district

and block) by strengthening the Zilla Parishad at the district level as unit of plan formulation and maintaining block as strong nuclei for programming and actual implementation.

R.P. Misra, K.V. Sundaram and V.L.S. Prakash Rao (Regional Development Planning in India, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1978) have given a landmark in regional planning studies in India. It puts the theory and experience of regional development in India into a common whole and gives a new concept of decentralised polarization of spatial planning suited to the socio-economic conditions of a densely populated developing country like India. The book tries to explain how multi-level regional planning can be more effective tool for achieving the tripple goals of Indian planning - economic growth, social justice and environmental quality.

S.P. Jain (Panchayati Raj in Assam, National Institute of Community Development, Hyderabad, 1976) in his evaluation of one Mahkuma Parishad, two Anchalik Panchayats and four Gaon Panchayats through a detailed survey maintains that the trend set by the Panchayati Raj institution has so far worked well.

L.S. Bhat in his article 'The Case for Spatial Planning and Decentralisation of the Planning Process' (in

K.R.G. Nair (ed.), Regional Disparities in India, Agriculture Publishing Academy, New Delhi, 1986) stated that without simultaneous devaluation of powers of planning and implementatin of development activities to lower order units such as district and development block, no solution to the problem of minimisation of regional disparities could take place. He viewed tht district level planning would enable to evaluate the extent of disparities in development within and between districts as they are related to the utilization of physical resources, income originating from sectors of production, infrastructure, social facilities, etc.

D.M. Najundappa (Development with Social Justice, Oxord & IBH Publishing Co., New Delhi, 1976) concludes that to overcome the centralised drawbacks, planning from above should be matched by a process of planning from below. That is, planning is to be rationalised by efforts to prepare the village, taluka or district plans. Decentralisation ensures greater will and determination for carrying out the plan programmes closer to the people.

D. Bright Singh (Tools and Techniques of Planning - An Introduction, Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1984) observed that if planning for the whole country is to be meaningful, disparity between the different regions should be reduced without affecting the growth through 'the man on

the spot'.

P. Chattopadhyay in 'District Planning Horns of a Dilemma' (Facts for You, New Delhi, 1990, Vol. 11, No. 8, pp. 40-43) argued that if district planning mechanism does not distinguish between backward and non-backward areas and programmes are sought to be implemented, different problems would arise. Therefore, it is essential that structural strength should be infused before the new strategies are pursued.

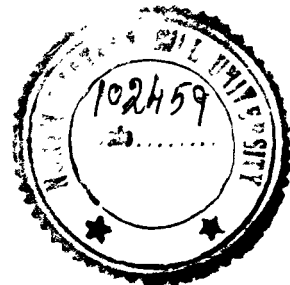
G. Myrdal in his studies (Economic Theory and Underdeveloped Regions, London, Duckworth, 1967) maintained that to develop a backward region one has to evolve a deliberate policy of intervention to neutralize the backwash effects. This intervention has to be made while the economy is still in its development stage, for unless regional equilibrium is achieved at this stage it will be far more difficult to achieve later on and the economy may not be able to achieve its regional development goals.

Kamta Prasad (Planning at the Grass-Roots, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1988) indicates the broad framework within which grass-root planning should be organised, and discusses the reasons for its slow progress and evaluates the Indian experiences with special reference

to recent developments. It analyses the planning functions of institutions working at the district, block and village levels and examines the planning process of poverty alleviation programmes. Moreover, it makes suggestions for raising the quality of planning at the grass-roots, advancing several new ideas and approaches to give it a new thrust and direction.

K.N. Kabra (Planning Process in a District, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, 1977) after a detailed discussion of the theoretical background of a new approach to district planning since the fourth plan period, contrasted the 'Prescribed Model' as thrown up by the field study of the sample district. The book provides the basis for a critical assessment of the planning process as it was operating and paves the way, in the light of theoretical framework evolved, for a precise characterisation of the then existing planning process.

P.R. Dubkhasi (Grammar of Planning : Concepts and Applications, New Delhi, IIPA, 1983) discusses, in an integrated manner, economic, administrative and management aspects of planning in a logical sequence dealing successively with the concept and rationale of planning, various types of planning, planning methodology, planning process, etc. and concludes with the formulation of the concept of optimum planning.



D.R. Gadgil in his article 'Planning from Blow' (in Sharan D. Wadhva (ed.), Some Problems of India's Economic Policy, Tata McGraw Hill Publishing Co. Ltd., New Delhi, 1985) critically examines the planning process in India in its pros and cons of decentralised planning at various levels. Moreover, he has suggested some practical measures for effective implementation of planning system in the existing socio-economic context of India.

The United Nations Asian and Pacific Development Institute, Bangkok (Local Level Planning and Rural Development, Concept Publishing Co., New Delhi, 1980) publication is one of the attempts to explore the nature, and implication mechanisms for local level planning and development with focus on people's effective participation in decision-making and equitable sharing in the benefits of development. The book emphasised on practical and operational aspects of development planning and current experiences with the strategy in various countries in the Asia pacific region.

V.M. Rao in Studies in Rural Development (G. Thimmaiah (ed.), Institute of Social and Economic Change, Bangalore, CHUGH Publications, 1979) has presented the findings of his intensive study of Tumkur district in Karnataka. After studying the population size of several villages in the district, he has found that many villages

do not satisfy population threshold criterion required for providing necessary socio-economic infrastructure facilities. He suggested 'cluster approach' to develop infrastructure in Tumkur district.

In the same book G. Thimmaiah has examined the rationale of Gandhian decentralised development strategy and its relevance in present India. He maintained that rural development today requires a more systematic and comprehensive plan (than Gandhian plan) for effective redistributive measures at the village level.

Chapter II

DECENTRALISED PLANNING

2.1 Introduction

Decentralised planning refers to the process of planning where some of planning functions and responsibilities of decision-making are delegated from the centre to the lower levels of administration. As a first step, planning process get decentralised from national level to state level planning, then state to regional level, from regional to district level, district level to sub-divisional level or block level and ultimately to village level. Decentralised planning may also be called as grass-root level planning or planning from below. Planning from the top or planning by direction is known as centralised planning or macro-level planning. In the case

of macro planning, the planning is done for entire nation or country as a whole. Although planning at the top may be made more precise and coordinated and may take account of the overall requirements of the country, it may not pay equal attention to the needs of all regions. But planning by inducement or planning from below or decentralised planning fixes its targets in lower level (below the national level) and is achieved by real beneficiaries who participate both in formulation and implementation of the plan.¹ Thus, decentralisation provides an opportunity for involving the people in their planning process and thus demonstrate their capabilities.

Decentralised planning is sometimes linked with spatial planning relating to a particular geographical unit. In such cases, it involves an integrated area development plan and, will imply a well-coordinated planning for development of a specified geographical space encompassing all aspects of the areas' endowments. The basic concepts of spatial planning relate with:

- i) Von Thunen's Ring Model of land utilisation around a city;
- ii) Central Place Theory of Christaller, and
- iii) Losch's concept of economic landscape.

1. Najundappa, D.M., "Planning from Below", Yojana, Special Number, 26 January, 1989.

i) Von Thunen's Ring Model of Land Utilisation around a City

This model was devised by Von Thunen who was the forerunner among the theorists who had attempted to explain organisation of space through a workable model. He developed a theoretical model of land-use pattern, giving a particular arrangement of towns and villages in a situation experienced in Mecklenburg. The main aim of Von Thunen's analysis was to show how and why agricultural land-use varies with the distance from a market.

The basic proposition of the location theory is that the location of an industry should be in that place/region where it can achieve the lowest average cost of producing a product and delivering it to the market. For purposes of location policy, however, the planner has to consider the location of an 'industrial complex' and not a single industry.

ii) Central Place Theory of Christaller

Walter Christaller, a German Geographer, wrote his classic Central Places in Southern Germany and he advocated a theory that there was order in the patterns and functions of settlements. He tried to explain that the size, number and distribution of towns has some ordering principle governing the distribution.

The most important aspect of Christaller's idea of the Central Place Theory is the central place itself. The basic unit is no way related to a city or a town or even a community. But his research on the question of size, number and distribution of settlement is predicted upon a specific understanding of the measuring of settlement. He points out that the role as a market centre is the chief characteristic of the central place.

iii) Losch's Concept of Economic Development

Losch was an economist. He elaborated and extended the Christaller's model of central place theory, adopting the hexagonal based model and modifying it into complete hexagonal shape which gives nearly the patterns in the real world.

Losch's model about the central places like that of Christaller, however, does not lead to larger market areas containing all the activities of the smaller, or to identical activities in all-settlements of the same size. He points out about location theory which must consider maximum of profits.²

2. Hermensen, T., 'Development Poles and Development Countries' in Kukliniski, A., A Review of the Concepts and Theories of Growth Poles and Growth Centres, United Research Institute for Social Development, 1970 (quoted from Patnaik, S.C., Economics of Regional Development and Planning in Third World Countries, Associated Publishing House, New Delhi, 1981, pp. 64-67).

One central point that emerges from the above models is that location of production centres, particularly of manufacturing unit, should be such so as to facilitate not only in the use of inputs, but also of outputs. That is, location should make the way for sale of the products through evolving a market which may enable the economy to be vibrant and buzzing with activities.

2.2 The Rationale

Decentralised planning process has become of late a matter of world-wide concern, whether in socialist or mixed economies. Fundamentally, planning is a means to achieve an end. Ends fluctuate from time to time and from place to place or from country to country. In India, the main objectives of planning are growth, self-reliance and social justice. The growing realization is that the governmental activities must also expand, develop and come closer to the people at the grass-root level and face the challenges of the time. Decentralisation through the involvement of local level people or their representatives and institutions in the formulation of plan for development is being advocated in the interest of efficient utilisation of resources and for ensuring more equitable sharing of benefits from development. Not only that, decentralisation of development planning and management can very well lead us to more flexible,

spatial, innovative and creative administration. Because district and lower level planning administrative units have comparatively greater access and opportunities to test and conduct their innovative projects and plans.

The type of the development task that can be effectively handled by a centralised regime of planning differs radically from the kind of development activity that can be adequately tackled by a decentralised regime. It is argued that formulation of national economic plan in spheres involving the whole or bulk of the country (like large and medium industry, railways, national highways, shipping ports, communications, major power projects, defence, university education, research, inter-state projects, foreign trade, etc.) it is essential to work out the national implications of these programmes, whereas in a number of fields the scope of district planning or subdivisional planning pertains to chalking out programmes and project and raising the counterpart of resources through the use of state-sponsored subsidies and incentives (like agriculture, animal-husbandry, fishery, forestry, land development, village and small-scale industries, minor irrigation, soil and water conservation, primary education, primary health, cooperatives, water supply etc.).

In the context of the present phase of scientific

progress and technological advancement, a centralist approach to development planning often fails in the task of genuinely improving the lot of ordinary people. Besides, a country of India's size and dimension having diverse language, culture and tradition can hardly rely entirely on the centralised planning process. Under such circumstances, centralised planning approach would be insufficient to meet the needs and aspirations of the people.

Planning, if only concentrates on growth, i.e., a rise in national income by some percentage, may fail to achieve reduction in inequality; rather if uncontrolled and unregulated, growth itself may bring in wide disparity in social justice.

Secondly, securing a reduction in the concentration of economic power would help in reorienting the production process and thereby employment and income distribution.

Thirdly, and as a corollary to this, the process would help in tackling the problem of poverty and unemployment, both disguised and open form.

Fourthly, as said above, decentralisation of the planning process besides involving the people including those who would be the beneficiaries in the planning process is expected to ensure growth with social justice.

Fifthly, decentralisation would also help in taking up albeit in a small area specific physical and resource-specific (including human) projects.

Sixthly, the evaluation performance of projects and programmes executed by the people in their area may make the government personnel accountable which would reduce mismanagement of resources.

Lastly, decentralised planning is imperative not only due to wide regional variations in resource endowment, attained levels of development but also for reducing information cost and administrative costs as well. Thus, planners can have better information about the cost and efficiency of group activities.

Whether the benefits of decentralised planning is more or less than those of centralised planning is a question involving subjective assessment and so it is not easy to arrive at definite conclusion. However, because of the increasing realisation of the unsatisfactory performance of the centralised planning and top down development strategy pursued so far, the balance of arguments seems to tilt in favour of decentralisation.

2.3 Decentralised Planning in India

From the point of view of the Indian economic perspective, the case for decentralised planning rest on certain arguments. Firstly, it is difficult for the macro level planning to cover effectively the resources of local level and of spatially dispersed economic activities pursued on small scale at household and village level.³

Secondly, bringing the periphereal groups of the poor and the disadvantaged within the mainstream of economic processes needs programmes and organisational structure at the grass-roots for identification, delivery, initial support and guidance towards viability.

Thirdly, given the likely slow and halting pace of rehabilitation of these groups and the frequent periods of stress and strain through which they pass, stable and dependable arrangements are required for provision of relief and supply of minimum needs to them on an adequate scale.

Fourthly, it is important to have participatory mechanisms in the planning of resources and needs with a view to promoting among the people motivation, habits of

3. Rao, V.M., 'Decentralised Planning : Priority Economic Issues', in Prasad Ramayan (ed.), Decentralised Planning, Deep & Deep Publication, New Delhi, 1991, p. 21.

self-help, local level leadership and active role in strategic and planning decisions.

Decentralisation to regional or local levels allows officials to disaggregate and tailor development plans and programmes to the needs of heterogenous regions and groups, cuts through red tape, enables better information flow, facilitates integration and local elites with the national elites, leads to greater equity in allocation of government resources, develops administrative capability for economic development, institutionalises participation of citizens in planning process and it creates an atmosphere of political stability and national unity.⁴

It must, however, be admitted that translation of the above conceptual formulation into action would imply radical structural changes or rather a total restructuring of the planning and implementation systems. It would also imply revolutionary changes in the present day socio-political milieu besides attitudinal changes among the politicians and bureaucrats. Under the present circumstances, in India bureaucracy has so much fattened that without any reform no rational policy at any level is feasible. Indian experience of decentralised planning

4. Seetharam, G.N., 'Decentralised Planning - Some Issues', Economic Times, 24th September, 1988.

reveals that instead of the package of practices and procedures, merely wishing for democratic decentralisation or participatory planning would not lead us any farther.

In Indian federal constitution, below the state level, the relationship between the various tiers i.e., between the district and the state, between the subdivision and the district, between the district and block, block and panchayat level etc. have not been clearly defined and delineated in the constitution. Therefore, micro level planning remains rather vague unless the actual operational level of planning is defined clearly. How can the planning process descend from top to bottom if autonomy is not given either at the state level or below the state levels? No decentralised planning can take place without the accurate devolution of political and financial power to the local bodies (below the state). Even in respect of centre-state relations there has been so much ambiguity and the centre has been appropriating such a large proportion of financial resources that the centre-state relations have reached a breaking point. A more detailed plan of fiscal resource responsibility, accountability as well as rights of the three or four tiers of governments still have to be constitutionally established in a manner which is fair and just to all. If mutual matching political and financial powers are not

given to the institutions of decentralised policy there will be neither democracy nor planning.⁵ Rather detailed planning from above at the district or below the district level will tend to decrease the autonomy of agencies of local self-government.

In most of the states of India and in the centre there seems to be apathy for a strong political commitment to decentralisation and multi-level planning. It is, therefore, important that so long as India's plans remains centrally oriented, their success would lie in the devolution of power to check economic concentration, corruption, inefficiency as well as the creation of a just society.

In addition to the problems of agrarian restructuring in respect of land, there is the question of tackling poverty and reducing unemployment as structural problems in India. Unless there is a reasonable change of such infrastructures and a firm commitment to the removal of these problems, there is little hope that decentralisation within the existing institutional parameters will bring about more than a marginal change in the situation. Yet we hope that, decentralisation would bring the planning process within reach of the people.

5. Sethi, J.D., 'Planning from Below : The Indian Experiment', Economic Times, 10th June, 1988.

The above discussion should not lead to the inference that decentralised planning ideas are either alien to our culture or cannot be implemented through the democratic institutions at the grass-root levels. In fact, India is reaching a stage in the development process that it has become necessary not only for better planning of various beneficiary-oriented programmes but more importantly, for minimising leakages in their implementation so that benefits of these programmes reach the poor. The viability of the size of the state and structural changes brought about seem to have had greater impact on growth and social justice than formal decentralisation of planning below the state level. The experience of Punjab and Haryana illustrates how smaller states with efficient land tenure systems can grow faster with more equitable sharing of benefits and growth without decentralised planning at the sub-state levels. Whereas, Maharashtra and Gujarat though pioneers in district planning, their performance is not better than Karnataka, West Bengal or Jammu and Kashmir where land reforms have been more progressive than others.⁶

2.4 The Multi-Level Concept

Decentralised planning, as we have stated already,

6. Rao, Hanumantha C.H., Decentralised Planning : An Overview of Experience and Prospects in India, Man and Development, Vol. XI, No. 3, 1989, p. 17.

is a process of planning that starts from the grass-root level of planning taking into confidence all the beneficiaries. In other words, it is a planning by the people, planning of the people and planning for the people. The Panchayat Raj Institution has a number of strata, namely Gaon Panchayat, Anchalik Panchayat, Mahkuma Parishad, sub-division, district planning unit etc., each is linked with the other and ultimately with the state planning body as its apex body. In India, the idea of decentralised planning may be found in the Gandhian economic thought. But the attempt at conceptualisation and its introduction may be said to be of recent origin.

The multi-level concept in the form of decentralised planning would encompass the different levels of rural urban social hierarchy - the village, the panchayat, town, block, sub-division and the district, thereby the state and ultimately the country as a whole. Thus complementing each other macro and micro-level planning should go hand in hand in a common path and achieve the goal of required growth.

Among the countries in the world, Yugoslavia may be regarded as one of the pioneers in implementing decentralised planning in 1948. It was introduced in that country as an empirical solution to render greater autonomy to industrial enterprises. The local enterprises

were left free to determine both in plan formulation and its implementation. They were also left relatively free to fix the prices of their products. The market economy and practical blending of socialistic and capitalistic devices were recognised and reordered.⁷

2.5 District Planning - Its Background

The idea of district planning arose primarily out of pragmatic considerations though theoretical arguments for micro-level planning supported the case for it. The Community Development Programme (CDP) initiated in the First and Second Five Year Plans failed to make much impact at the grass root levels. The important shortcomings may be listed as follows :

- a) Too much bureaucratisation
- b) No supportive agencies
- c) Lack of sincerity by government
- d) A lack of popular support
- e) Departmental prejudices etc.

The least successful aspect of the CDP was its attempt to evoke local initiative. Among the other factors the main ones responsible were the lack of durable strength and leadership necessary to provide the motive

7. Hansen, A.H., The Process of Planning, Oxford University Press, 1966.

for continuing the improvement in economic and social conditions in rural India. CDP could not draw adequate support and cooperation from the officials. Most of them did not consider the block as their own.⁸ On the other hand, people's reactions in most of the blocks were not generally favourable to this model. The majority of the villages did not regard it as their own programme and seemed to rely mainly on the government to bring the development of the rural areas. The basic philosophy and approach of the CDP were, therefore, inadequately subscribed to by the people in those areas.⁹ Perhaps, lack of adequate training programme for the CD workers in India, the areas of selection of trainees, selection of instructors and the content of the pre-service and inservice training explain a bit of apathy. It was due to a failure to relate the issue to the realities of rural India, weak communication between the extension services and the rural people, resulting in a gap between official expectations and people's response - all these contributed to the weak implementation of the CDP.

8. Mann, Haribans Singh, Analysis of Some Problems of Community Development in India, Atma Ram & Sons, Delhi, 1967, p. 60.

9. Programme Evaluation Organisation, Planning Commission, Govt. of India, 1960, 'Seventh Evaluation Report on Community Development and Some Allied Fields', p. 85.

The lack of coordination of development departments at the district level with its echo-down to the block level contributed to the poor performance of the block, resulting almost in the disintegration of the block organisation. The reason was, as said above, that the personnel in-charge of this programme lacked planning perspective, administrative and financial authority and also technical competence for formulating and implementing micro-level plan on their own.

In the Second Five Year Plan it was realised that the pattern of district administration envisaged in the national extension and CDP will remain incomplete unless village institutions are placed on a sound footing and are entrusted with a great deal of responsibility for carrying out local programmes.¹⁰

The history of attempts to introduce planning at the sub-state levels is also quite old. The idea of planning from below was advocated even at the time of the formulation of the First Five Year Plan, which had mooted the idea of a village production council for agricultural planning. The preparation of the First Five Year Plan in the states took place mainly at state headquarters. Subsequently, attempts were made to break up state plans into district plans. In national extension and community

10. 'Second Five Year Plan', Government of India, Planning Commission, 1956, pp. 148-149.

project areas, as programmes were carried to the village to be worked in cooperation with the people, the significance of village planning was increasingly realised. In the programme, which they could undertake through their own labour, comprehensive village planning taking into account the needs of the entire community including the weaker sections (like tenant-cultivation, landless workers and artisans) did not benefit sufficiently from assistance provided by the government.

In the Second Five Year Plan,¹¹ one of the most important aspects was the preparation of plans at various levels below that of the state, i.e., for individual villages, towns, taluks, tehsils or extension blocks and districts.

It was recognised that democratic institutions at the district, block and village level should be viewed as parts of one connected structure of development administration within the district. The recommendation of the Balawant Rai Mehta Study Team set up by the Committee on Plan Projects in favour of a system of 'democratic decentralisation' was considered in this regard by National Development Council in January 1958. The second plan clearly visualized a well organised democratic

11. Ibid., p. 156.

structure of administration within the district in which the village plan would be organically linked with popular organisations at higher levels.¹² Moreover, at the district and at the state levels three kinds of programmes sponsored on behalf of public authorities were to be included in the plan, namely,

a) Programme initiated at the level in question, e.g., taluks, district and state,

b) Programmes initiated at lower levels and integrated with those in (a), and

c) Programmes initiated at levels above and integrated with (a), for instance, schemes sponsored by the central government but executed through states or schemes sponsored by the State government and implemented through machinery available at the district.

It was emphasized that a district plan would include programmes prepared on territorial basis for villages, group of villages, taluks, extension blocks, municipal areas, etc. and also programmes to be executed, within the district which are derived from departmental plans formulated at the state level. The part of the district plan which was prepared within the district was important

12. 'Third Five Year Plan', Government of India, Planning Commission, 1961, Chapter XX, pp. 333-334.

both for the range of activities which it embodied and for the fact that it associated people at every level and the opportunity afforded to them to determine their needs and to contribute towards their fulfilment.¹³

This methodology was, however, abandoned before it was adopted. We get little evidence to show that either the Planning Commission or the National Development Council (NDC) exerted itself to persuade the states to adopt its prescription.

The Third Five Year Plan tried to evolve the role of people's participation in local level planning under the framework of democratic decentralisation or the Panchayati Raj in accordance with Balwant Rai Mehta Committee's suggestions. The Third Plan also described a methodology for preparing state plan for rural development, on the basis of the district and block plans. It was suggested that in the following field proposals for third plan should be drawn up by states on the basis of district and block plan:

1) agriculture including minor irrigation, soil conservation, village forests, animal husbandry, etc.;

13. Ibid.

- 2) development of cooperations;
- 3) village industries;
- 4) elementary education, specially provision of school buildings for local communities.
- 5) rural water supply and programmes of minimum rural amenities, including construction of approach roads linking each village to the nearest road or rail head; and
- 6) work programmes for fuller utilization of manpower resources in rural areas.

However, the progress achieved in decentralising the planning process at the district level was negligible. In spite of the much-proclaimed shift from the traditional revenue administration type to the development administration at the lower levels that has taken place in most of the states since independence, almost all decisions were taken from state and central levels. Not only that, the Community Development Programme had paid little attention to developing planning capability at the sub-state levels. Most of the programmes depended on whether the 50 percent public contribution was forthcoming or not.¹⁴

The decades of the fifties and sixties saw a decline in government's faith in community development, people's

14. Varma, S.C., Millions in Poverty Grip, Kunj Publishing House, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 3-4.

participation and decentralised planning. Due to the over-riding need for raising food production to meet the food crisis and pale performance of the CD programme in raising agricultural production, the government of India launched an Intensive Agricultural District Programme (IADP) in 1960. The programme was controlled from above and managed entirely by the bureaucracy. Several other centrally sponsored schemes were introduced in due course, leading to a further centralisation of planning.

2.6 A Brief Summary

In the context of India, decentralised approach appears to be theoretically sound and laudable so far as it seeks to bring the people into the mainstream of the planning and decision making process. In view of the country's vast area, tremendous population diversity and different climatic conditions, etc. it is both impracticable and unadvisable to conduct the administration of planning in the whole country from a single centre, for planning or administration has not merely to touch the surface but also to reach the life of millions of people at very many odd points. In a nutshell, it may be said that the existing system of decentralised planning needs to be radically changed and the lower level institutions specially the district should be streamlined imparting them more and effective fiscal powers.

Chapter III

PLANNING UNITS IN DECENTRALISED PLANNING

3.1 Introduction

The methodology of Indian planning has acquired many new dimensions like district level planning in course of its evolution during the last decades. It reflects a vigorous awareness to changing conditions and needs, based on the capacity to learn from experience, on the one hand, and gives rise to misgivings as to whether a sound theoretical as well as empirical examination of the whole matrix of relevant issues preceded the decision to opt for economic planning, on the other hand.¹

In the earlier plans there was, consciously or unconsciously, a tendency on the part of the states to

1. Kabra, K.N., Planning Process in a District, Chapter 2, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, 1977, p. 3.

follow the national pattern of priorities and central direction with consequential neglect of their own growth capacity and requirements.² In theoretical works on regional planning, emphasis was given on decentralisation or multi-level planning, and many direct and indirect factors bearing on the role, rationale, limits and methods of lower level planning were highlighted.³

The current global trend is to reduce the emphasis on centralised planning and restructure the planning process to give more functions to lower level institutions. Decentralised planning is still in a formative stage to which satisfactory solutions had still to be found, namely, the problem of conformity between national and state priorities, the most suitable unit for decentralised planning; rural-urban integration, the determination of activities and programmes of different sub-state levels, integration of schemes at different levels in a consistent planning framework, both horizontally and vertically and the establishment of inter-sectoral linkages.⁴

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2. Administrative Reform Commission, 'Report of the Study Team on Machinery for Planning', Delhi, December, 1967, p. 87.
 3. Kabra, K.N., op cit.
 4. Yugandhar, B.N. and Mukherji, Amitabh (eds.), 'Proceedings of Expert Group Meeting on District Planning, 11th-13th June, 1990', in Readings in Decentralised Planning, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1991.

Economic planning at the level below the state is conceived as that of increasing the proportion of total national income so that growth generating impulses can be released and strengthened in the economy. In this sense, the priority of central sectoral planning over dispersed regional planning is not disturbed but only made realistic by assigning a well-defined and articulated role to lower level planning like district planning.

In a vast physio-economic diversity country like India, there is inevitability of administrative (operational) decentralisation. In such cases, a planning region should be so defined as to embrace convenient hierarchy or regional and local authorities, so that dialogue between the different level can take place. This means that the definition of region should take into account existing administrative boundaries.⁵

In this connection it can be mentioned that the number of districts in Assam has recently been increased from 10 to 23, obviously, for better administration. A number of sub-divisions has been elevated to the level of a district. The upgradation of sub-divisions into districts has to a great extent made such districts more

5. 'Some Remarks on Regional Planning' in Journal of Development Planning, No. 3, p. 103, Centre for Development Planning, Projections and Policies, UN Secretariat, New York, 1973.

or less a homogenous unit from the point of topography, resources, occupational distribution of population and also specific-economically dominant sector. Therefore, it may be assumed that each such district is a functional region from the point of view of resource flows and needs etc.

In India, culturally, economically as well as in matters of resource endowment different regions are different from one another so much so that the norm applicable for one region is not necessarily applicable for another. For example, the national norm of one well for irrigating 7.5 acres of land (irrigation potential) is based on the assumption that the soil type, water table, cropping pattern and rainfall are same. But since they do diverge from one region to another, even difference within a state is sometimes so significant that a national norm as such has practically little operational content.⁶ It may not be irrelevant to mention here that in Sibsagar district of Assam a formula of drinking water supply has been followed which assumed that Hand Tube Wells (Mark II pumps) with 25 ft. to 35 ft. depth would enable to supply drinking water. But a vast stretch of area under

6. Administrative Reform Commission, op cit.

Charaideo Civil Sub-division in Sibsagar district, particularly in areas bordering Nagaland such tube wells become quite unsuccessful, while they have fairly been successful in other parts of the district. Thus, we find that even within a district, sometimes some norms may have little practical significance.

Planning from below requires to be closely related to specific socio-cultural and institutional conditions of the country in general and of the concerned regions in particular. Moreover, certain pre-requisites for decentralised development such as education, general awareness, technical and organisational capabilities are needed for effective implementation of planning at the grass-root level.

In the light of the above analysis it would be necessary to identify the desirable degree of decentralisation in planning and the socio-political pre-conditions for making it feasible, consistent with equitable distribution of benefits from development. The decentralised planning involves delegation of decision-making process to the lower level of administrative units like district, sub-division, block, panchayat or village with corresponding devolution of resources. Therefore, the question arises as to what could be the lowest level of unit for planning? Let us examine this:

3.2 Village as a Unit of Planning

3.2(i) Advantages

The ideal way of achieving democratic decentralisation is to start planning at the village level where the experienced, well-informed and the senior members of the village may be taken into confidence in implementing programmes of development. Village being the primary unit of socio-economic organisation in India, its transformation is basic to any large-scale socio-economic change in the country.⁷

Secondly, in villages people know each other, they can identify their problems easily and, therefore, there is a greater prospect of the plans being monitored and implemented at the grass-root level. Moreover, it may be possible to mobilise resources more effectively for development efforts when planning and implementations are locally directed.

Thirdly, it is argued that development efforts at higher levels do not find a channel to be transmitted down to the villages, due to missing links in the spatial hierarchies. Therefore, village as a unit of planning at

7. IRDP-Centre for Research, 'Extension and Integrated Rural Development', Gandhigram, Rural University, Tamilnadu, 1981, p. 32.

the bottom of spatial framework may operate as the focal point of specific planned action. Its interaction should be carried back through the panchayat, block, sub-division, district state and finally at the national level.⁸

3.2(ii) Disadvantages

However, in making a village plan and implementing the same, some practical difficulties may be encountered. On practical difficulty at village level planning is that the population structure of an average village does not perhaps warrant plan formulation at that level. For example, the distribution of population in Demow Development Block under Sibsagar sub-division is that, out of 71 villages, 19 villages (26.76 per cent) are below 500 population, 35 villages (49.39 per cent) in between 501 and 1000 population, 14 villages (19.72 per cent) have their population in the range of 1001 to 1500 and there are only 3 villages (4.22%) which have a population above 1500. Therefore, the size of the village is not economically viable for a unit of planning.

A cluster of villages is also advanced as a unit of organising development in rural areas. As suggested by

8. Patnaik, S.C., Regional Problems and Prospects in India, Associated Publishing House, New Delhi, 1981, p. 141.

Dr. V.K.R.V. Rao, villages which have population upto 5000 should be clustered for the purpose of development.⁹

Secondly, there is also administration problem of proper coordination and synchronization of plan in village level. Planning requires continuous monitoring and a long-term and coordinated direction to achieve certain end result in consonance with the objectives set out at the national level.

Thirdly, the technical character of planning itself is not always easy to comprehend by lay non-official leaders and villagers. Moreover, planning necessitates not only the knowledge of the fundamentals of the national plan but also decision rules, parameters and enforcement mechanism which can harmonise local, lower level decision-making with national economic plan.¹⁰

9. Rao's cluster approach (also called as 'A Unit Area of Development') visualises a cluster of contiguous village formed on the basis of three criteria - viability, diversification and community identity. "The base has to be a cluster of villages with an achievable identity as a community and having a total population round about 5000 persons".

"Issues and Problems of Development of Tumkur" UNAPDI and ISEC Workshop on Population, Planning of Area Development, November-December, 1978, pp. 74-76.

10. Tiwari, S.N., 'Suited for Rural Development', Yojana, Vol. 29, No. 2, June 16-30, 1985.

Further, with regard to expertise for plan preparation it is doubtful to what extent at the existing level of literacy and knowledge the village would be able to prepare a blue print of a plan even at the village level taking into account future projection, resource availability and allocation and monitoring etc. From our field investigation we have observed that almost all villages are extremely ignorant about the importance and significance of planning at their level. They do not seem to possess any wherewithal about the planning process being implemented by them. Moreover, most of the villages are fragmented and isolated, instead of being comprehensive and harmonious.

Even if planning is implemented at village level, there is still doubt how far it would succeed with the existing landholding system, domination of rich and elite group and socio-cultural constraints faced by weaker sections like tenant cultivators, landless workers and small artisans.

From all these points of view we may come to the conclusion that although planning is desirable at the village level yet from the points of view of economic viability, technical feasibility and administrative capability there are some practical difficulties to select a village as a unit of planning.

3.2(iii) Village Level Planning : A Review

The Second Five Year Plan had stressed the need for building up plans at various levels below that of the states, but the plan was not very definite about what (a village, a panchayat, or a block or sub-division or a district) actually should constitute a unit of planning. Yet, the plan emphasized the need for a district planning which should (obviously) take into account the requirement of villages and blocks. The detailed working principle was, however, abandoned before it was accepted.¹¹

The Third Five Year Plan¹² drew up the 'village production plans' which were to be formulated for involving the cultivators in the agricultural development and mobilising of local resources.

From the Fourth Five Year Plan onwards, several suggestions and schemes [like Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP), Desert Area Development Programme (DADP), Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourer (MFAL), Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA), Minimum Needs Programme (MNP), Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP), Jawahar Rosgar Yojana (JRY), etc.] are provided for village plans.

11. Government of India, Planning Commission, The Second Five Year Plan, pp. 151-152.

12. Government of India, Planning Commission, The Third Five Year Plan.

As for the planning at the village level through Panchayat, the Janata Government had appointed a Committee on Panchayat Raj Institutions under the chairmanship of Ashok Mehta in 1977 and the committee submitted its report in August 1978. The Committee was of the opinion that as nearly 80% of villages have a population of less than 1000, they would not be able to discharge effectively developmental planning although they might be able to tackle the traditional civic and welfare function. The committee suggested that a cluster of villages with a population of 10,000 to 15,000 should be the primary unit of planning and the planning body there should be Mandal Panchayat above the village set up.

Based on 1971 Census, the committee shows that as many as 26% of villages in India had a population of less than 200 and another 29% between 200 and 499. In otherwords, over 50% of the Indian villages had a population of less than 500 person and in fact 92% had a population of less than 2000 inhabitants.

According to the committee it was difficult to think such tiny habitats are either self-contained or self-sufficient, although from a geographical point of view many of them might well be isolated. In any case, such units hardly qualify to be primary units for planning in

any meaningful sense.¹³

Although the Second Five Year Plan of India emphasized that village plans were to be the foundation of the CD movement and the bricks upon which the edifice of entire state plan was to be erected, yet there have been no village plans in rural development under government auspices before 1973. The only effort that came closest to formulation and implementation of village plans was the Whole Village Development Programme (WVDP) initiated in 1973-74 on the basis of the recommendations of National Commission on Agriculture. Five pilot projects were launched under this scheme, covering 52 villages in 7 blocks in 4 states.¹⁴

13. Lakdawala, D.T., "Experience in Planning", Section IV, Page 703, Brahmananda, P.R. & Panchamukhi, V.R. (ed.), The Development Process of Indian Economy, Himalayan Publishing House, Bombay 1987.

<u>State</u>	<u>Block</u>	<u>No. of Villages</u>
Bihar	Musahri	23
	Adhoura	14
Tamil Nadu	Malanelidanallur	4
Orissa	Jaleshwar	6
	Balasore	
	Saraskona	
Uttar Pradesh	Dudhi	5
Total	7	52

The purpose of WVDP was to achieve the overall objectives of economic growth with social justice. Therefore, the emphasis was naturally placed on reducing unemployment and disparities of income.

In terms of acquiring physical assets, the WVDP made success in providing better irrigation, drainage, farm inputs, milch animals, poultry and piggery units. Besides these, more employment opportunities and creation of additional income commensurated to the landless labourers and small marginal farmers. Of course the programme has to face several hindrances like delay in release of funds, limited expertise in plan implementation, lack of technical know how and knowledge funds and fraction of village in the effective implementation of WVDP.

Another experiment has been undertaken by the Government in Midanpore district of West Bengal.¹⁵ This is an experiment in village based district planning and was started in 1985. The purpose to associate the village community as a whole in the planning process so as to arouse their awareness and to create a self-reliant

Foot note 14 continued.

Harnessing of local resources through initiative action and initiating the process of development in the area so as to make the employment viable, self-sustaining and self-propelling, were considered the model for rural development. The main component of WVDP was an overall plan for land development, water control, cropping pattern, and expansion of subsidiary occupation. Composite funding of village plans was provided by the Central Government totalling Rs.3.73 crores between 1975-1983 (Mid-term Appraisal, WVDP, NIRD, December 1981, sponsored by Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India).

15. Village Based District Planning Process : An Outline of Methodology, District Planning Committee, Midanpore, West Bengal, September 1985 (Mimeographed).

organisation. The experiment was being coordinated by the District Planning Committee, Midanpore with the assistance of the Rural Development Centre of the I.I.T. Kharagpur.

Some experiments in village level planning have also been made in an isolated manner by voluntary agencies and one successful experiment of this type can be cited in the 'Kundrakudi' village plan of Tamil Nadu.¹⁶

It is obvious, that planning at the village level have started taking place in recent years. But these have been confined to a few states only. The planning forum in such states are relatively strong in comparison to others.

3.3 Gaon Panchayat as a Unit of Planning

The idea of Panchyat Raj emerged as a by-product of national planning and community development. Panchayat Raj inaugurated by Nehru was hailed as pivotal to both development and democracy. At the present stage, however, the experience, content and direction of panchayat raj have to be considered primarily from the angle of planning and development, with emphasis on the role of the people

16. Towards Improved Local Level Planning for Rural Development : Case Study of Kundrakudi, Tamil Nadu, Multi-Level Planning Division, Planning Commission, Government of India, New Delhi, 1985 (Mimeographed). Kurukandi village is situated in Kalal Panchayat. Union (Block) Muthuramalingam district, with a size of population of 2700 (1981).

and people's institutions in grass-roots development.¹⁷ The reasons in support of gaon panchayat as a unit of planning can be enumerated as follows :

3.3(i) Advantages

1) Gaon Panchayat has been performing traditional civic, welfare and regulatory functions associated with Local-Self Government. Given the magnitude of task of rural development, it may be predicted that development component will grow in volume and intensity through gaon panchayat.

2) Gaon Panchayat facilitates speedier decision-making and also make effective actions with reference to urgent or peculiar local problem under its jurisdiction.

3) Gaon Panchayat may fulfil the criteria of democratic planning in the sense that it is a 'building from below' and moreover it comes into existence through voluntary participation and cooperation of the people.

4) Having close relation to local circumstances with a view to securing full and efficient utilisation and development of its resources in the field of agriculture and allied activities, and being accountable to the people, Gaon Panchayat can fully involve itself in the

17. Maddick, 'Can Panchayat Raj Become the Agency for Rural Development?' The Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol. XXIV, No.3, p. 591.

formulation of its plan.¹⁸

3.3(ii) Difficulties

From the beginning of the Panchayat Raj Act, 1959, the Gaon Panchayat as a form of local government and as a unit of planning have been merely stressed. It becomes evident in most of the states that village panchayats or Gaon Panchayat meant only a partial association of local representative in certain specific field; and it is not so much capable for the setting up of a planning machinery for 'building from below'. Moreover, local leader in general do not seem to have a comprehensive outlook. With a partial and rather short sighted attitude it is really difficult to attune to local needs and adjustment to the objectives of overall strategy of state and national level planning.

Unless and until adequate safeguards are provided against the likelihood of the dominance of the Gaon Panchayats by the vested interest, mere planning at the Gaon Panchayat level would not be fruitful to render the benefit for the weaker sections of people. To create such socio-economic and political atmosphere may be difficult in practical field.

18. Chaturvedi, T.N., Democratic Perspective in Administration, Prashasika, 1974, p. 34.

Another prime requisite of Gaon Panchayat to become the unit of planning for the rural development is the political will. Except in a few states there is hardly any worthwhile set up of village panchayat or such panchayat raj institutions. Most of the state governments have, while echoing promise and hope, only attempted to proceed in the matter of transfer of power to the people in a lackadisical manner. In case of Assam, the last election was held in 1979, and since then there was hardly any serious attempt taken by the governments to demonstrate the political will of government for facilitating panchayati raj institutions in the state.

Planning requires a considerable degree of communication skills, patience and hardwork to exploit the full potentiality of resources. Gaon Panchayats remained largely ineffective not only because of lack of finance but also because of certain deficiencies resulting in non-scientific locational plans and lack of public interest to Gaon Panchayat functionaries.

Gaon Panchayats act generally as agent of government implementing a limited schemes, without much autonomy or power and finance. Baring a few states like Karnataka, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh, at present Panchayat Raj institutions have no power to make plan and implement it.¹⁹

19. Ghosh, Arun, 'Decentralised Planning : West Bengal Experience', Review of Agriculture, Economic and Political Weekly, March 26, 1988.

The above are some of the reasons which may be said to stand in the way in making Gaon Panchayats as a planning unit at the micro level. These also explains why in our field investigations we have seen that most of the officials show their reluctance to select Gaon Panchayat as a suitable unit of planning.

3.4 Block as a Unit of Planning

The blocks in the Community Development (CD) schemes are the grass-root implementing agencies of rural development. With the establishment of C.D. block from 1955 onwards they were treated as units of planning and development. The modus operandi of the plan formulation at the block level is that the schemes of all relevant departments are integrated together to make it a block plan. The schemes are implemented through the administrative machinery of the development block consisting of the extension officers of various department (development) headed by Block Development Officer (B.D.O.). But with the passage of time and particularly with the introduction of Panchayat Raj Act in 1972, the administrative capabilities of block lost their significance. They could not render their services as instruments of socio-economic transformation to that level.²⁰ Although the idea of making a block as a unit of

20. Reddy, Venugopal, Y., Multi-Level Planning in India, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1979, p. 101.

decentralised planning did not take off to its logical conclusion, it may be said nevertheless that at least it made a significant attempt towards democratic planning process in India, making an average citizen more conscious of his rights than before.

3.4(i) Advantages of Block as a Unit of Planning

Block-level planning may claim some advantages which may be pointed out as follows :

1) In Block-level planning there is the possibility of greater opportunities for minute study of details which may be viewed as sine-qua non of rational planning.²¹ It is claimed that this will make the task of implementation easier and more effective. It is assumed that the close proximity between the planners and the people at the block level would encourage a spontaneous and continuous dialogue making room for correction in the light of thinking and practical experiences.

2) It is intended that the attention of the Block-level planning should be generally directed to the functioning of the local economy particularly village economy. In other words, the solution of rural problems relating to roads, bridges, irrigation facilities, power supply, lower level education, public health, village and

21. Aziz, Abdul, Studies in Block Planning, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1983, p. 335.

small scale industries etc. would be easier.

3) People's participation is an important condition for the success of planning. In Block-level planning, rural people are expected to participate in the process of plan formulation and implementation which may create a higher level of rural enthusiasm for the fulfilment of plan objectives.

4) While national planning or state planning is necessary for the country's overall needs, the block-level planning has a local or area-bias. But such Block-level planning should not be viewed as an isolated exercise but as a link hierarchy to the sub-division, district, regional, state and national level.

5) From the point of view of technical feasibility, Block has more supporting staff in comparison to Gaon Panchayat or village level. The set up basically consists of a Block Development Officer (B.D.O.) who is associated by five extension officers, one overseer, a social education organiser, besides village level workers and clerical staff.

6) Block is an observation platform in close proximity of the beneficiary group and this helps to :

i) understand more clearly the felt needs of the

people and factors inhibiting the uplift of the weaker sections;

ii) ascertain area (block) specific physical and human resource potential;

iii) identify constraints inhibiting socio-economic and technological growth;

v) expand the area of people's participation in preparation and implementation of plans.²²

G. Thimmaiah viewed that, in fact, block plans have merely been rural employment plans rather than plans for development. D.M. Najundappa favours block planning from the point of social justice and benefits to the neglected areas. Iqbal Narain, argued that block as a unit of decentralisation seems more conducive to the cause of democracy than to development in its economic sense.*

22. Government of India, Planning Commission, Report of the Working Group on Block Level Planning and Guidelines for Block Level Planning, 1978-79.

* Thimmaiah, G., 'Block Level Planning : A Critique' in Aziz, Abdul (ed.), Block Level Planning, Concept Publishing Co., New Delhi, 1983.

Najundappa, D.M., 'Block Level Planning for Full Employment' (in the same book).

Narain, Iqbal, 'Decentralisation, Development and Democracy' in Inamdar, N.R. (ed.), Community Development and Democratic Growth, Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1969.

3.4(ii) Limitations/Disadvantages of Block as a Unit of Planning : A Critical View

Although a Block has some advantages as a unit of planning yet it is not free from its limitations. Let us now look at the latter and see to what extent they are genuine.

1) The block team is a group of officials drafted from the development departments designed to have a unified approach for achieving a common goal. But the departmental officers do not act as they are expected to act. They have their own departmental prejudices, intra-departmental and inter-departmental rivalries. Even in the same department, there is no cohesion among its various wings.

2) Achieving coordination at the block level would involve a restructuring of the administrative apparatus aiming at strengthening of the horizontal linkages and loosening of the vertical command line.²³

3) In the absence of any constitutional measures, there has been reluctance on the part of the state leadership to delegate powers to the block level. Unless certain powers are delegated to the block level and the

23. Government of India, Planning Commission, Report of the Working Group on Block Level Planning, 1978.

mismatch of authority and responsibility corrected, it is practically impossible to make any effective plan at this level.

4) The tendency of planning from above prevailed here too, because it is a question of administrative tradition and attitude.

5) The sectoral plans at the block level may face constraints of short projection periods, of almost exclusive reliance on individual judgements and guess-work and finally of inability to build up inter-sectoral perspectives. From this point of view block might be too small an area for adequate planning growth centres.²⁴ In this connection it may be worthwhile to mention that the report of the Dantwala Committee makes a pointed reference to the existence of certain other linked activities which have to be undertaken as part of larger resource development programme cutting across block boundaries.²⁵ The other linked activities implies sectoral and spatial integration of plan activities in a broader sense.

24. The key projects and supporting subsidiary projects that are identified in an area in the productive sectors (have) a generative role and is concentrated in a few specific locations may be called rural growth centres', in Roy, Prodip and Patil, B.R. (eds.), Manual For Block Level Planning, Macmillan, Delhi, 1977.

25. Government of India, op. cit.

6) The existing system of administration involves a sort of dual control in Community Development Projects. For example, the operational and administrative control of extension officers at the block level is with the concerned district officers. Since the technical officers of the Extension Services are officers meant for rendering technical guidance it seems, therefore, logical that they should be subject to the technical control of their own superior officers functioning at the district and higher levels.

3.4(iii) Pre-requisites of Block Level Planning

The Dantwalla Committee has laid down some pre-requisites for block level planning.²⁶ They mainly related to (a) reform of the agrarian structure and the institutional set up; (b) proper manpower estimation and jobs required and created; (c) credit planning; (d) arrangement of people's participation; (e) identify local needs and problems, (f) assessment of resources available; (g) formulation of plans and programmes rationally and take up hard and pragmatic decisions to implement it.

26. The Planning Commission during the period of Janata Government (1977-79) formulated guidelines for block level planning. In November 1977, it appointed a Working Group on Block Level Planning under the Chairmanship of Prof. M.L. Dantwalla. The Report of the Committee was submitted in April 1978.

The Dantwalla Committee's suggestions are that :

1) Adequate will and power²⁷ will have to be developed to increase the number of decision-making and plan implementation bodies in the rural areas and block level.

2) Allocating local resources for different terms of development will have to be tackled efficiently.

3) For the success of plans and programmes, adequate and effective institutions and organisations are necessary.

4) Adequate coordination of block plans, state or national plans will have to be ensured.

5) Measurement of poverty (in money terms), potential resources, local needs, and proper identificational handicaps will have to be arranged through adequate facilities and machineries.

The necessity for planning at the block level was emphasized in the Second and Third Five Year Plans. Although some efforts seem to have been made in the fifties and sixties to evolve a suitable methodology in block level planning, it now appears in retrospect that they were merely piecemeal and disjointed effort with hardly any push and thrust.

27. Pieris Ralph, Social Development and Planning in Asia, Oxford and IBH Publishing Co., New Delhi, 1979, pp. 80-86.

In accordance with the recommendations of the Balawantra Mehta Committee,* three tier Panchayati Raj institutions namely Village Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad (at village, block and district level respectively) were introduced. These tiers were interlinked and the Committee recommended that the block level should be the most crucial agency for local level planning. But the idea of block as a unit of planning and development has not fully been materialised; because the state development departments did not transfer either resources or powers as was expected from them.

However, more than the official level, some non-official organisations seem to have contributed in a better way towards block level planning. For example, the Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development (under the inspiration of Jayprakash Narayan) was the first to undertake the preparation of full employment block plan. Under the direction of Ranjit Gupta it prepared the famous Musahri Plan (Muzzafarpur district, Bihar) in the early 'seventies.**

* The Committee was appointed in 1957 to study Community Development (CD) and National Extension Service (NES) Programmes, with particular reference to popular participation.

** 'District Administration and Decentralised Planning' in L.C. Jain et al. (eds.), Grass Without Roots, op. cit., p. 60.

In accordance with the suggestions of the Asoka Mehta and Dantwalla Working Group Committee²⁸ (Block Level Planning and Panchayati Raj Institutions respectively) the Planning Commission during the period of Janata Government started formulating guidelines for block level planning.²⁹

The Planning Commission of India in October-November, 1978, decided to take up 300 blocks (each block covering population of about 1 lakh, spread over 100 villages in area of 100 sq. km.) every year beginning from 1978-79 for five years for comprehensive block level planning. This was in addition to 2,000 of the 5,000 blocks in the country, taken up for intensive integrated development. An assistance of Rs. 2 lakhs per block every year was provided for the 300 blocks for 1978-79.³⁰ It is pertinent to mention that block plans initiated under the Draft Sixth Plan (1978-83) brought to the surface considerable employment potential and opportunities.

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28. Government of India, Planning Commission, The Working Group on 'Panchayati Raj Institutions' under the chairmanship of Prof. Asoka Mehta submitted its report in August, 1978.
 29. The block plans were envisaged to be built within the framework of the state plans. The state plans form a part of the national plan. It was thus a scheme of limited decentralisation and essentially an exercise in multi-level planning from above.
 30. Government of India, Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Rural Development, 'Integrated Rural Development and Allied Programmes - A Manual', New Delhi, 1986, p. 16.

However, the scheme did not get support from the state governments ruled by political parties not in alliance with that in the centre. They saw in its design a method to circumvent the power and function of the state authorities. There was much opposition for this from the opposition-ruled states.

Over the years, changes took place both at the block level and at the field level such that in the words of the G.V.K. Rao Committee,³¹ "at the start of the 'eighties the block was a picture of disarray."

3.4(iv) Block-Level Planning in Some States

Gujarat has made considerable progress in decentralising the planning process at the taluk (block) level by allocating untied funds and creating a planning machinery. In Jammu and Kashmir, Block Development Board has been delegated to perform IRDP, NREP, activities and few other related rural development programmes. In Maharashtra, Kerala and Tripura also there has been a proposal to introduce block level planning.³²

31. In March 1985, the Government of India appointed a Committee to Review the Existing Administrative Arrangements for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation Programmes under the chairmanship of G.V.K. Rao. The Committee submitted its report in December 1985. This Committee underlined the need for strengthening the planning process at the district and block levels.

32. Prasad, Kamta, Planning at the Grass Roots, Sterling Publishing Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1988, p. 36.

Summing up, we may say that unless the presence of an adequate planning machinery and implementing agencies at the block level are ensured, block level planning cannot be a working proposition. Bulk of the work of the block level should be production-oriented with specific targets rather than only welfare oriented projects. The block level planning agency should act as a channel of interaction between gaon panchayat level and district level. In the present system of administrative structure, the appropriateness of choice of a block as a planning unit, though desirable, does not appear to be feasible.

3.5 District as a Planning Unit

Districts are not statutory or constitutional units in the Indian federal system; they are administrative units and can be created or abolished by the state at will. The reasons for choosing the district as a unit of planning are :

- 1) First, the district is the only level below the state where adequate administrative and technical expertise is available. Decentralisation of the planning process at the district level is expected to bring informational, decision-making and operational structure into harmony with each other. This would also provide the basis for obtaining 'planned' results from outlay of

resources in agriculture and allied activities in the sphere of social overhead capital and for arriving at realistic, waste-avoiding 'planned' task.³³

2) District planning makes for better dovetailing of physical and financial planning because knowledge of local conditions is brought to bear on decision-making. District has its ability in identification and mobilisation of resources, including popular participation and development in the process of plan formulation and implementation.³⁴

3) It is the only grass-roots territorial unit where adequate finances and information necessary for planning were readily available. Since district plans are integral part of overall national plan, the national perspective plan generates the regional perspectives and the objectives, strategy and principles of district plan conform to their national counterparts. This necessitates not only the knowledge of the fundamentals of national plan but also decision rules, parameters and enforcement mechanism which can harmonise local, lower-level decision making with national economic plan. It is felt that in the absence of the above mentioned informational inputs

33. Kabra, K.N., Planning Process in a District, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, 1977. P. 7-8.

34. Santhanam, K., 'Planning from Below' in M.V. Mathur et al. (eds.), Panchayati Raj Planning and Democracy.

and policy instrument planning cannot subserve national objectives.³⁵ Therefore, district is thought to be a proper unit to perform the above mentioned goals.

4) The wings of almost all state level departments are available at the district level, and effective communication (through these departments) between state level and district level is possible.

5) Competent development officers and specialists are required for guidance to prepare local plans and the district has the full complement of the services.

6) The accurate and adequate data which are needed for drawing up district plans can be available at district level.

7) Better use of local resources such as land and manpower may be expected in district level. Location of various socio-economic activities, integration and co-ordination of national and state level department schemes and popular association of people is possible at the district level. The village and block levels are relatively too small units to provide integration and co-ordination of all socio-economic activities. Because of lack of co-ordination the Agricultural Department often do

35. Thimmaiah, G., 'District Level Planning, Economic Times, November 13, 1983.

not know what the Department of Livestock and Animal Husbandry was doing in the state level planning. In contrast, district planning can be regarded as more effective for bringing integration and so can escape from overlapping.

8) Another facet of the district level planning is the argument that since more intimate, precise and detailed knowledge about physio-geographical, techno-economic, socio-political and organisational level, planning for activities which have strong local foci (like agriculture and allied activities, employment generation in rural areas, raising productivity in predominant economic activities, provision of infrastructural facilities, etc.), can be more fruitfully undertaken at the district level.³⁶

9) District level planning is conceived as a device which unite plan formulation and plan implementation together in the same agency. There hardly exist a sub-regional agency better than district administration in the present set up of our country which can discharge the functions of lower level planning organ.

The justification for having the district as the planning unit is that traditionally the district has been

36. Kabra, K.N., op. cit., p. 9.

the administrative unit. The Deputy Commissioner/District Magistrate who has the chief executive power at the district level keep under his control various departments of the state. The responsible officers are supposedly eminently fitted to advise on local development needs and suggest worthwhile schemes for implementation. Further, most activities of data collection do not at present go below the district level. L.S. Bhat stressed in the district level planning as a means to achieve the end. Iqbal Narain viewed that district serves the cause of planned development more than democracy because it is too remote from the grass-root people.* From all these points of view district planning, in our view, is preferred as special unit of low-level planning.

[The Planning Commission, under the leadership of Professor D.R. Gadgil, drew up a set of detailed guidelines setting out the methodology for district planning to the state and district agencies before the exercise on formulation of Fourth Plan.³⁷ These guidelines have been adopted in most of the state governments with suitable modification, and district

* Bhat, L.S., 'The Case for Spatial Planning and Decentralisation of the Planning Process' in Nair, K.R.G. (ed.), Regional Disparities in India, Agriculture Publishing Academy, New Delhi, 1986.

Narain, Iqbal, op. cit.

37. Government of India, Planning Commission, Programme Administration Division, Guidelines for Formulation of District Plans, September, 1969.

planning is in operation in most of the states now. Yet, unfortunately, district planning remains to be an experimental issue. The actual planning operation in a district is diffused between numerous agencies, local authorities and government departments].

However, while enumerating all the plus points for making district as a planning unit, let us not underestimate some of the shortcomings of district planning. These are discussed in the following section.

3.5(iii) Shortcomings/Limitations of District Level Planning

With regard to some shortcomings, it may first be stated that at the district level, active participation may remain confined to elected representatives only. But it is the levels of villages or panchayats that the scope for participation would be more.

Secondly, district planning as it is conceived and administered today seems to be unsuitable for bringing about socio-economic transition at the grass-root level of predominantly rural economy. The Deputy Commissioner/District Magistrate at present at the head of the development organisations at the district level suffers from the same glaring defects as state level development departments. He is loaded with new duties,

compelled to fulfil a quasi-political role, yet still burdened with all his former responsibilities. If over and above these, he is expected to coordinate and inspire all development tasks, then perhaps we are expecting too much from him. Therefore, under such limitation it may be difficult to expect a real decentralisation at the district level.

Thirdly, the purview of district planning is further limited by the objectives and constraints faced by the state and National plans. The two power variables pertaining to policy, namely the factor and product prices, fall outside the jurisdiction of the district planners. Needless to say that this limitation restricts the scope of plan formulation at the district level.³⁸

And finally, one may note that if higher authorities lack political will to pass on administrative power to local (district) authorities, panchayati raj institutions would not receive direction and encouragement from the district level to fruitfully participate in the process of development.

3.5(iv) Conclusion

Despite the above mentioned limitations, one thing is, however, evident that if decentralised planning is to

38. Misra, R.P. et al., Regional Development Planning in India, Vikas Publications, 1972, pp. 201-203.

be implemented earnestly, in the present administrative set up, the district should be regarded as the best unit of planning. Otherwise, there may not be uniformity in the states, and diverseness would prove detrimental to the process of decentralisation. Planning Commission had recommended the district as the unit of planning and development. It had emphasized the need for district level planning on the assumption that the plans made at the state and national level can be brought down to the people in a much more efficient manner.³⁹ Another advantage of the district, as has been pointed out above, is that it has well integrated administrative structure for implementation of micro level plans. Moreover, the planning and implementation in a district can, therefore, easily be coordinated. A district plan may start with almost a clean slate and progressive distribution of district plan expenditure ensures that equity is much better served. In the field of administration, as a practical unit, the district has virtually stood the best of time. Therefore, from all these points of view we feel that a district should be selected as unit of planning in the present circumstances.

39. Government of India, Planning Commission, Guidelines for Formulation of District Plans, New Delhi, September, 1969.

3.6 Decentralised Planning in India - 1969 Onwards

Our planners recognised the importance of decentralised planning right from the beginning and this problem has been discussed in almost all the Five Year Plan documents formulated so far. Despite the acknowledged merits of grass-root planning and efforts taken by the Central and State Governments during the past four decades, planning in India remained basically centralised. The progress, if anything, made towards decentralisation in planning, implementation and decision-making to district and block levels has been sporadic and tardy.⁴⁰

However, it is only in the Fourth Five Year Plan that the Planning Commission had taken a clear stand on the question of district plan. The plan marked a significant departure from the earlier ones in as much as it defined the nature and scope of district planning and issued operational guidelines to the state and district agencies.⁴¹ During this plan attempts were made to

40. Palanidurai, K.V., 'Decentralised Planning in India - Experiences of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu' in Misra, R.P. (ed.), District Planning - A Handbook, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1990, p. 81.

41. 'Planning Process in India : An Appraisal and Framework', an unpublished cyclostyled paper of the Planning Commission, p. 14, quoted by Kabra, K.N., op. cit., p. 3.

develop the three tier panchayat raj system and to associate the people's representatives in planning process below the district level.

But the attempts at the decentralised planning did not succeed because the states were neither ready nor well-equipped for the task. The data base was weak. There was no planning machinery at the district level, nor there was any institutional mechanism. Above all, there was lack of political will for decentralisation. Of course, the planning agencies of some states like Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra prepared their own guidelines within the framework of the guidelines issued by the Planning Commission with particular attention to their special needs and problems.

Since the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79), a number of special area programme like SFDA, MFDA, IRDP, and MNP were undertaken with some special agency at districts and blocks for their implementation. The programmes were targetted and ameliorate rural poverty.⁴² Thus, the introduction of the special area programme led to the recognition of the decentralised planning efforts. Although, most of the state governments started formulating district level plan, they faced the problem of personnel and it was due to the existing weak planning

42. Rao Hanumantha, C.H., 'Planning for Removal of Poverty', Yojana, 1-15 July, 1984.

machinery at the state level itself. The Planning Commission as a remedial measure assisted all the state governments financing on fifty-fifty matching grant basis to enable them first to strengthen the state planning agencies. Consequently, it gave way for the state governments to initiate fruitful work on district planning. Similar financial assistance was offered to the state governments in 1982-83 to strengthen the district level planning machinery.

The Sixth Plan (1980-85) continued giving emphasis on decentralisation and formulated a central programme for strengthening the planning machinery at the district level.

In September 1982, a Working Group under the chairmanship of Professor C.H. Hanumantha Rao was set up by the Planning Commission to define the scope and content of district planning in the context of state planning. The Committee submitted its report in 1984.⁴³ It has advocated a gradual approach towards introduction/strengthening of district planning and has made several recommendations for the same. The first stage, according to these recommendations, will be a phase

43. Government of India, Planning Commission, 'Report of the Working Group on District Planning', Vol. I, May, 1984.

of 'initiation', the second stage 'limited decentralisation' and the third and final stage will involve planning for all district sector activities with high level of people's participation. The Working Group envisaged that all states in the country would reach the final phase by 2000 A.D. It recommends that the State Plan should have two-fold classification, one dealing with district plan and the other with state plans. District Planning Board should have complete autonomy in respect of district schemes both with beneficiary-oriented and area development schemes.

In March 1985, the Government of India appointed a Committee to Review the Existing Administrative Arrangements for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation Programmes under the chairmanship of G.V.K. Rao which submitted its report in December 1985. The Committee endorsed the concept of a district budget, the creation of a post of District Finance and Account Officer and considerable delegation of powers (including reappropriation of funds) to him from the state level.

The Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) stipulated that as the district is a well known and accepted administrative unit, the decentralisation of planning from the state level should be taken to the district in the first phase and eventually extended to the block level,

particularly for the more effective implementation of anti-poverty programmes. In this context, the need for and possibility of introducing a larger unit than the district at the intermediate level of planning was also supposed to be examined.⁴⁴

The Eighth Plan approach also envisaged decentralisation of the planning process. It involves not only a reorientation of the forces and priorities of planning, but also in its processes and mechanisms. This process will be enriched and made more effective by involving mass of the people in planning and implementation through democratic decentralisation and closer association of the Planning Commission with the State Planning Organisations. The state planning agencies will need to interact closely with institutions of democratic decentralisation in rural and urban areas.⁴⁵

3.7 An Overall Assessment

Thus, we see that planning process in India once conceived at a macro level is now being transformed into a micro level to achieve our required goals. The

44. Government of India, Planning Commission, Seventh Five Year Plan 1985-90, Vol. II, Delhi, 1985, p. 414.

45. Government of India, Planning Commission, 'Approach to Eighth Five Year Plan 1990-95', Meeting of the National Development Council, 18-19 June 1990.

decentralised concepts have been accepted, but new ideas are being analysed, and some details worked out. It is still in a trial and error process. The plans are implemented in most of the states through the heads of development departments at the district level. But it is at the level of formulation that much remains to be done, although, as we have said above, efforts are being made by our planners to diffuse the administrative power towards the bottom to formulate, execute and implement the plan.

The attributing factors for the failure on its operational level may considerably be due to :

- 1) lack of political will and commitment to hand over the administrative power to the lower authorities;
- 2) absence of well-developed techniques and methodologies at different levels of planning;
- 3) lack of chance of public participation in the planning activities to the desired extent; and
- 4) inadequate financial resources and technical personnel at sub-district level to make decentralisation operational.

Reviewing the past attempts for adoption of 'grass roots planning', the seventh plan has noted⁴⁶ that the

46. Government of India, Planning Commission, Seventh Five Year Plan, op. cit., pp. 415-417.

actual decentralisation of political and administrative authority has been generally in limited nature. Nor there have been sufficient arrangement of technical and administrative personnel at the state level and below to facilitate decentralisation.

C.H. Hanumantha Working Group reviewed that district planning in the country has remained a non-starter all along because all the essential elements or ingredients did not exist as a total package. Where the structure existed, the personnel were not there or where the personnel existed, skills, powers or authority were lacking. Somewhere the district planning process got chocked on the way and could not follow, somewhere the flow began but directions were not clear and so on.⁴⁷

The pattern and level of decentralisation achieved in various states is not uniform. Some states like Karnataka, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Jammu and Kashmir and West Bengal have made appreciable progress. It is interesting to note that states where decentralised planning at district level is effective are precisely the states whose performance in respect of land reforms has been better. West Bengal, Karnataka and Jammu and Kashmir belong to this category.

47. Government of India, Planning Commission, 'Report of the Working Group on District Planning', op. cit., 1984.

Assam is in the initial stage of decentralised planning and has made a beginning only. West Bengal is, perhaps, the only state in which Panchayat Raj Institutions have been intimately associated with district/block planning and implementation of development schemes.

Karnataka is another state which has ushered in a new era of democratic decentralisation in 1987 with the establishment of Zilla Parishads and Mandal Panchayats endowed with powers, functions and resources. The credit for achieving this measure of success goes to political leadership and its willingness to share power with newly created district level institutions. Andhra Pradesh has also introduced major reforms in Panchayat Raj. Kerala has attempted a pilot district planning project only in Quilon district, Madhya Pradesh has also prepared a perspective plan for one district, Baster. U.P. has made an institutional arrangement for planning at the divisional level and Gujarat has made considerable progress at taluk level.⁴⁸

Inspite of all these, decentralised planning is in the state of slow progress because of the following reasons :

48. Prasad, Kamta, Planning at the Grass Roots, op. cit., pp. 20-25.

3.7(i) Causes of Slow Progress of Decentralised Planning

1) The very role of planning is not realised by many bureaucrats and politicians and they viewed that it is implementation rather than planning which is important in development. So, they hinder the setting up of a suitable planning machinery.

2) Central schemes carrying subsidy strike at the root of local level planning. These provide a temptation to the state governments to adopt these schemes regardless of their suitability for specific areas so as to obtain the funds associated with them and thereby exercise some patronage at the local levels.

3) Monitoring of progress is done with respect to the fund spent or the number of beneficiaries and not with reference to the quality of schemes or the impact of the programmes. Therefore, there is no pressure to prepare good schemes.

4) There is a vital lack of coordination in planning process. On its core, the district plan is implemented through heads of Development Departments which generally lack co-ordination. The plan programmes and 'Zilla Parishad' schemes are treated as separate streams administered by different organisations. It requires a

great deal of work to develop integration to bring about a homogenous area development approach.

5) A predominantly sectoral or departmental outlook is that officers tend to look at planning as a marginal activity. Planning becomes a primary responsibility of only core planning staff and attains a secondary status within a departmental organisation. It has been corroborated in our field investigation in Sibsagar District of Assam.

6) In reality the basic task of plan formulation is undertaken by the Planning Commission at the Central level. The State Governments simply adjust their policies and programmes accordingly. This perhaps is the reason which reportedly prompted some District Magistrates to complain that the plans prepared in Delhi and state capital cannot be effectively implemented. If this is the position of the state in plan formulation one can well imagine the fate of district planning.⁴⁹

3.7(ii) Conclusion

In the present socio-political and economic set up, district is the best unit of planning, though it has suffered from a lot of practical hindrances. It is true .

49. Baruah, Bhuban 'District Planning : Need and Impediments', The Assam Tribune, 26th March, 1989.

that, genuine and effective decentralised planning would remain beyond our reach unless there is adequate devolution of resources and decision-making powers at sub-state level, restructuring of administrative set up and attitude, administrative personnel capable of achieving intersectoral coordination, active participation of the masses, strong political will and action oriented motive instead of mere promises.

Chapter IV

DECENTRALISED PLANNING PROCESS IN ASSAM

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter we are making an attempt to unfold the gradual development of different institutions under the umbrella of decentralised planning in Assam. In the first few sections (namely 4.1 through 4.4) we are giving a descriptive and critical account of the different organs of panchayati system as it existed in Assam prior to 1986. In section 4.5 we will try to evaluate the working of the same institutions prior to 1986.

1986, in our opinion, may be regarded as a watershed in the process of formalisation of panchayati raj institutions in Assam. It is in this year that the

Government of Assam had set up decentralised planning machinery at the state headquarters and planning cells at the district level. Moreover, a Sub-Divisional Planning and Development Council (SPDC) has been set up to propose and oversee the implementation of sub-divisional plan. Section 4.6 and 4.7 deal with a brief background of decentralised planning process from 1986.

The local government institutions in the state of Assam had been in existence in some form or other during different periods of history. It is contended that there were local government institutions not only during the British period but even prior to that. It is pointed out that the 'Sarumel', the 'majumel', the 'dekamel', and the 'gabharumel' that existed during the time of Ahoms were powerful local government institutions; that the Bodo-Kacharis had village committees which were responsible for the construction of irrigation works.¹

A closer examination of these reveals that the 'mels' that existed during the Ahom period were not local government institutions. They were concerned with the settlement of disputes of different character. Moreover, these local bodies were generally overshadowed by personal rule of the feudal nobles who constituted the hierarchy of

1. Das, J.N., 'Democratic Decentralisation', The Assam Tribune, January 29, 1961.

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1. Das, J.N., 'Democratic Decentralisation', The Assam Tribune, January 29, 1961.

the Ahom administration as well as a system of centralised monarchy.

During the British rule, however, the traditional form of these bodies underwent some change and officials such as the Mandals, the 'Gaonburahs', the Mouzadars and the Tohsilders became the new leaders in the villages. In this process of change these panchayats-like institutions (such as Sarumel and the Dekamel) lost their existence. The tradition of self-help continued, though in a smaller way, inspite of centralisation of administration under the British rule.² The 'Satras' and 'Namghars' of Assam continue to dispense justice and resolve village disputes even to this day.

The present system of local self-government in Assam is a creation of the British. Prior to 1826, when Assam was annexed by the British, there were practically no local government institutions.³

4.2 Local Boards

Till the introduction of the system of local self-

2. V. Venkata Rao, Local Self-Government, Bani Prakash, Calcutta, 1973, p. 32.

3. V. Venkata, Rao, A Hundred Years of Local Self-Government in Assam, Bani Prakash, Calcutta, 1967, p. 20.

administration through Panchayats, local boards functioned at least in all the plain districts of Assam. The history of this institution goes back to 1915 when under the provision of Assam Local Self-Government Act one local board in each sub-division was established. Majority of the members of the boards were elected (like legislative council), but a small proportion of them were nominated from either officials or non-officials and were appointed by the Commissioner of divisions subject to the approval of state government. Local boards could elect non-official vice-chairman and chairman as well with the approval of the government.

The local boards were authorised to appoint district engineers, health officers and sanitary officers. Secondly, two or more boards were permitted to combine together for the appointment of common establishment. Thirdly, boards were permitted to combine together for the appointment of common establishment. Thirdly, boards were permitted to levy tolls on new bridges and to manage primary and secondary education. Moreover, boards were authorised to levy special tax for the construction of railway, subject to several limitations.

Subject to rules, the local boards had to provide, within the sub-division, for the construction, repair and maintenance of roads, embankments, bridges, waterways and

other works except a few main lines of communication which were under the management of P.W.D.⁴ These boards also maintained under them dispensaries including veterinary units, besides adopting proper measures for sanitation and health. If the surplus income from ponds and ferries and other taxes and tolls levied under the Assam Local Self-Government Act 1879, fell short of requirement, the income was supplemented by annual grants from provisional funds. With the repeal of Local Self-Government Act, 1953 the local boards were abolished and their functions were taken over by the panchayats, enacted under the Assam Panchayat Act, 1959.

4.3 Development of Panchayats

The Panchayat, as a local unit of administrative machinery, goes back to antiquity in Assam and the institution, although continued to function in different forms during the Ahom period, had acquired a legal status during the British administration only. When the British took the administration of Assam, a properly organised panchayat or council appeared to have functioned from 1825 to 1828 with regular sessions. In the middle of 1828 when Maniram Dewan became Revenue Seristader under captain Nuefville, the former council or Panchayat was split up

4. Government of Assam, Assam Gazette - 1967, Vol. III, Shillong, p. 29.

into three different organs : (i) Sadar Panchayat or Borpanchayat; (ii) Saru Panchayat, and (iii) Charochari Panchayat or Council.⁵

It was the Assam Local Self-Government Act, 1915, that provided the rural self-government in Assam on legal basis. The Act also brought into existence Statutory Panchayats. The Panchayats were controlled by the Deputy Commissioner when they dealt with the problems not concerned with local boards and by the local boards when they performed functions delegated by the local board.⁶ The panchayats under the 1915 Act were not a success. Therefore, a separate legislation, the Rural Self-Government Act, 1926 was enacted. The Act provided that in each village there should be a village authority consisting of nine members, elected by adult franchise. Under exceptional circumstances the Panchayat may be single member panchayat.⁷ However, the Act did not provide a machinery for the villages to undertake the management of their own affairs and to develop a capacity

5. Government of Assam, 'Gazetteer of India - Assam State, Sibsagar District', Shillong, 1967.

6. Rao, V. Venkata and Niru, Hazarika, A Century of Government and Politics in North-East India (Assam) (1874-1980), Vol. I, S. Chand & Company Ltd., New Delhi, 1983, p. 193.

7. Government of Assam, 'Report of the Directorate of Panchayats and Community Development', Shillong, 1962, p. 22.

for self-help.

In order to activate the working of panchayats the State Government appointed a Committee in 1953⁸ under the chairmanship of Balwantrao Mehta. The Committee recommended that panchayats should be established throughout the State in a period of two years and the total number of primary panchayats might be from five to fifteen.

In accordance with the recommendations of the Mehta Committee, the Government of Assam had set up a three-tier panchayati raj system, namely, gaon panchayat, anchalik panchayat and mahkuma parishad in the rural areas in 1959. The 1959 Act, envisaged formation of gaon panchayat at the block level and mahkuma parishad at the level of sub-division.

It may, however, be mentioned that although the structure of the panchayats under the Assam Panchayat Act, 1959, broadly followed the pattern of the Mehta Committee, it had a few significant differences. Firstly, there was no Zilla Parishad at the district level, but in lieu thereof, a mahkuma parishad had been established in every sub-division. This deviation is partly due to

8. Ibid., p. 24.

administrative and partly to historical reasons. Secondly, a mahkuma parishad had a non-official president, and Deputy Commissioner was included as an ex-officio member, whereas the Mehta Committee had suggested that the Collector should be the chairman of the mahkuma parishad so that the task of coordination might become easier.⁹

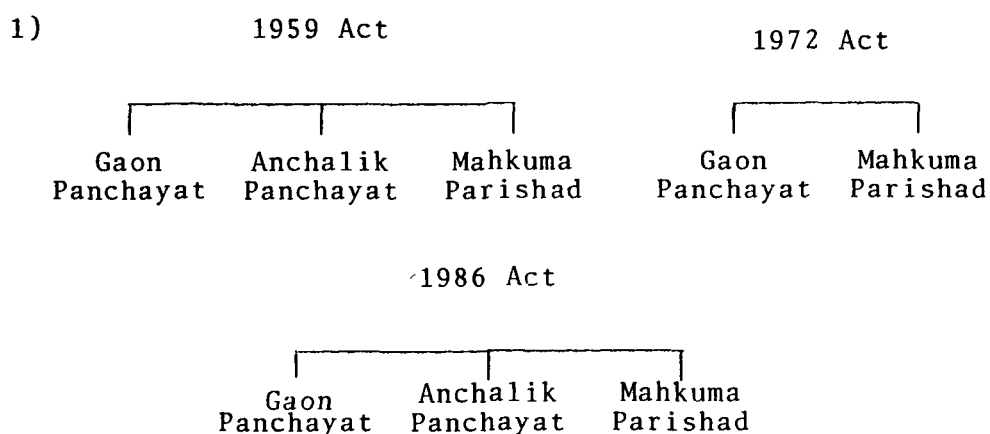
The working of the panchayati raj bodies was revived by the study team¹⁰ and some of the recommendations made by the team were incorporated in the Assam Panchayat (Amendment) Act, 1964. The 1959 Act, replaced the sub-divisional development board and local board through the introduction of mahkuma parishad. The system was in existence till 1973. In 1973, the Panchayat Raj Act (1972) abolished the intermediate body, i.e., the anchalik panchayat and retained mahkuma parishad and gaon panchayat. The Panchayati Raj Act 1986¹¹ reorganised the two-tier panchayati raj bodies (1972) to three-tier pattern of panchayati raj bodies, namely, gaon panchayat, anchalik panchayat and mahkuma parishad in place of gaon

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9. Jain, S.P., 'Panchayati Raj in Assam', Report of Research Project, National Institute of Community Development, Hyderabad, 1976, p. 3.
 10. Government of Assam, 'Report of the Study Team on Panchayat Raj', under the chairmanship of K.P. Tripathi, Development of Panchayat and C.D., Shillong, 1963.
 11. Government of Assam, 'Assam Panchayat Raj Act, 1986'.

panchayat and mahkuma parishad (1972). The new structure is same with 1959 Act.

4.4 Comparative Study of Panchayat Legislations¹²

The Panchayati Raj Act, 1959, replaced the Block Advisory Committee in the 1959 set up; the 1972 Act abolished the anchalik panchayat and introduced two-tier system, and 1986 Act re-established the 1959 Act's structure with certain modifications. The structure of panchayati raj bodies in various Acts is as follows :



2) Population to be covered under a Gaon Panchayat

<u>1959 Act</u>	<u>1972 Act</u>	<u>1986 Act</u>
5,000	15,000-20,000	6,000-8,000

3) Tenure (for all the tiers)

<u>1959 Act</u>	<u>1972 Act</u>	<u>1986 Act</u>
4 years	4 years	5 years

12. Government of Assam, 'Assam Panchayat Raj Acts 1959, 1972 and 1986'.

4) According to the 1959 and 1986 Acts, all the presidents of the gaon panchayat were the members of anchalik panchayats and all the presidents of anchalik panchayats were the members of mahkuma parishads. But according to the 1972 Act, as anchalik panchayat was abolished, so there was a provision of councillors (one councillor from each gaon panchayat area) directly elected as members of mahkuma parishad. One significant departure in the 1972 Act from the 1959 Act and 1986 Act was that no M.P. or M.L.A. whose constituency fall within the area of mahkuma parishad has been associated with the mahkuma parishad as executive members.

4.4(i) Powers and Functions of Mahkuma Parishad

The parishad tendered its advice to the government on development activities, allocation of funds to different blocks and served as an administrative channel between the state government and the blocks. The broad functions of the parishad can be summarised as follows (1959 Act and 1986 Act) :

i) scrutinize and approve the budget of the anchalik panchayat;

ii) review the working of anchalik panchayat from time to time;

iii) give guidance or assistance to anchalik

panchayat;

iv) coordinate the work of anchalik panchayats;

v) advise the government in distribution and allocation of funds and grants to different anchalik panchayats;

vi) advise the Deputy Commissioner or sub-divisional officer (civil), as the case may be, in the distribution of rural development funds,

vii) advise government in drawing up of the district plan;

viii) administration of sub-divisional cadre of panchayat employees, etc.

In 1972 Act, instead of mere supervisory and coordinating functions, mahkuma parishad was charged with more executive and financial powers to enable it to achieve an effective control on and coordination of the sub-divisional departments, as well as to ensure effective guidance among the panchayati raj bodies, i.e., the gaon panchayat at the lower level.

4.4(ii) Power and Functions of Gaon Panchayat and Anchalik Panchayats:(1959 and 1986 Acts)

The functions and responsibilities of the gaon panchayat and anchalik panchayat were very wide. The activities which could easily be executed at the village level without impinging upon the other panchayats, were

allocated to gaon panchayats; activities of interest to several gaon panchayat, and those requiring higher technical skills were responsibilities of anchalik panchayats. In specific terms, responsibilities of gaon and anchalik panchayats were under nine different heads with a number of sub-heads under each. These were :

- i) sanitation and health;
- ii) public works;
- iii) education and culture;
- iv) village defence;
- v) administration;
- vi) welfare of the people;
- vii) agriculture and forest;
- viii) breeding and protection of cattle, and
- ix) village industries.

4.4(iii) Finance (1959 Act)¹³

The gaon panchayat and anchalik panchayat had special funds, namely, gaon panchayat fund and anchalik panchayat fund. The proceeds of taxes, fees, and contributions from the state government, including share of land revenue and other sums raised by the panchayat itself were credited to the gaon panchayat fund. Similarly, all money collected or received by the anchalik

13. A sample of an Anchalik Panchayat (Income & Expenditure) is given in Appendix 'B', tables 4.2. & 4.3.

panchayat formed a part of the anchalik panchayat fund.

Over and above these two level bodies, two more special funds, namely, 'the Sub-divisional Rural Fund' at the sub-divisional level and Assam Rural Development Fund at the state level had been created. The Deputy Commissioner or Sub-divisional Officer (Civil) in consultation with the mahkuma parishad was empowered to distribute the fund.

The gaon panchayats were required to prepare annual budget estimates of their receipt and expenditure and forward them to the concerned anchalik panchayat for approval. Similarly, the budget of anchalik panchayat was sent to mahkuma parishad for approval.

According to 1972 Act, the mahkuma parishad and gaon panchayat met their expenditure from mahkuma parishad fund and gaon panchayat fund respectively. Moreover, the executive officer of the sub-division distributed the sub-divisional Rural Development fund each year in consultation with mahkuma parishad.

4.4(iv) Organisational Pattern

The organisational chart given at page 100 presents the organisation of panchayat raj operated at different levels, namely, state, district and below. However, these

Table 4.1
Organisational Structure of Panchayat and Community Development Department of the Assam State (Secretariat Level)

Agricultural Production Commissioner-Cum-Secretary (P & CD)						
Director (Panchayat & CD)						
(State Level)						
Dy. Director (Training)	Dy. Director (Panchayat)	Dy. Director (Hills)	Dy. Director (Composite)	Joint Director (Panchayat & CD)	Special Officer (AI NP)	Special Officer (Grass Feeding)
						Asstt. Development Commissioner
(Mahkuma Parishad Level)						
Secretary (Standing Committee)						
Secretary (M.P.)						
M.P. Planning Officer						
(Block Level)						
Block Development Officer						
E.O. (Veterinary)	E.O. (Agriculture)	Sub-Inspector (Statistics)	Senior Gram Sevak	E.O. (Co-op.)	E.O. (Panchayat)	E.O. (Overseer)
						E.O. (Woman & Child)
Veterinary Field Asstt.			Gram Sevak			Gram Sevak

Source : Director of Panchayat and CD, Assam State, 1979

levels had been interlocked with each other though the administrative hierarchy which flows from the state headquarters to gaon panchayat. The different administrative tiers for purposes of carrying out the different development programmes through panchayat raj bodies were (i) secretariat, (ii) directorate, (iii) sub-division, and (iv) block.

Whereas, the non-officials elected in panchayat raj bodies were closely associated with the administration of the programmes at the sub-division and at the block levels, they are not so much involved at the higher levels of administration, i.e, secretariat and directorate.

The organisational pattern though seems to be interconnected, yet it was reported to us in our field work that the officials working at levels above the mahkuma parishad are not so much helpful in ensuring efficient implementation of various programmes.

However, it cannot be denied in retrospect that the growth of panchayati raj bodies in this state has been quite steady, although the state government has not been prompt enough to effect necessary changes from time to time.



4.5 An Evaluation

Politically, the Panchayati Raj Acts of 1959 and 1972¹⁴, became a democratic process, making an average citizen more conscious of his rights than before.¹⁵ Administratively, it bridged the gulf between the bureaucratic elite and the people. Socio-culturally, it generated a new leadership and new outlook. From the development angle, it helped rural people to walk in a new path of their livelihood.

The Assam Panchayati Raj Act 1972, was enacted with the idea of involving panchayats with some development works. Accordingly a provision was made in the Act for transfer of institutions/works/programmes of development departments along with fund, officers and staff to the mahkuma parishad as and when government consider necessary and expedient to do so. But most of the major departments did not agree with this principle as it remained a pious hope.¹⁶

14. The 1986 Panchayati Raj Act is not yet being implemented.

15. Iyer, V.R. Krishna, 'Panchayati Perestroika?', Economic and Political Weekly, September 16, 1989, Vol.XXIV, No.37.

16. Major development departments did not appear to have agreed in principle and spirit to get their respective schemes implemented at the panchayat level. Some minor schemes were reported to have been transferred. Schemes transferred by sericulture, veterinary, cottage industries and health departments were in name only. Had the agriculture department transferred its schemes a vast field of activity would have open for the panchayat institutions.

In the 1986 Act also, the mahkuma parishad has not emerged as a full fledged planning and implementation body. No mention has been made about transfer of plan schemes to panchayat institutions for planning and implementation. The mahkuma parishad (different from sub-divisional Planning and Development Council) seems to be subordinate body of the SDPC. The chief executive councillor (according to 1972 Act) of the mahkuma parishad is an ex-officio member of the SDPC. Peoples' participation in the planning and implementation process is sought to be achieved by associating peoples' representative in the council. But only three social workers (till now no one is nominated) is too meagre for decentralised planning.

4.5 An Evaluation

Ever since its inception, panchayati raj institutions in the state of Assam appears to have been working to some extent satisfactorily, specially when compared with its position in some other states. Panchayat raj system by their special ability organised the people to participate in the developmental activities like construction of road and bridges in rural areas, distribution of relief goods to the flood/storm damaged people, rationing of government supplied food and non-food products, drinking water supply to the problem areas, etc. etc.

The implementation of the block and district projects and schemes ultimately depend on the response of the village and village panchayats. Traditionally, it may be said that the system has established its roots in the larger socio-political and administrative structure of the state and has the element of continuity which is so vital for the growth of any organisation. The impact of panchayati raj bodies is also reflected in the process of decision-making at the local level and in the process of social change, although slow, in rural social structure as a whole. Despite these favourable arguments one does notice, however, certain constraints that need to be tackled for achieving the desired objectives.

The participation of its members and that of officials both in gaon panchayat and mahkuma parishad have been much below the desired level. The members in general do not evince much interest in matters connected with development.

The participation of members belonging to the weaker sections namely, scheduled caste, scheduled tribes and women in raising matters concerning their own welfare are far from satisfactory. This is mainly because they are only interested to the schemes and programmes of grant and subsidies. But as the panchayati raj bodies have limited resources, they cannot satisfy the minds of those

members. Moreover, most of the members were not given a respectable status due to their inefficiency and illiteracy.

The pattern of income and expenditure appeared to have not undergone any substantial change in terms of taking up of new projects or programmes in concerned with general welfare. There is also instance of not getting salary upto more than two years by the employees of panchayati raj bodies.¹⁷ Initiative was lacking in the sense that only such activities and programmes had been undertaken for which grants-in-aid were made available from the government. A few activities had been undertaken on local initiative and resources.

A major portion of expenditure of the panchayati raj bodies was incurred for administration and establishment. In the absence of a consistent pattern of income and expenditure,¹⁷ these bodies find it difficult to keep a satisfactory level of efficiency. Local resource mobilisation in terms of tax collection and raising of revenue by panchayat themselves was relatively meagre. In some panchayats it is seen that they do not have made any fruitful attempt to raise their own resources for which grants-in-aid are not made available

17. As shown in Appendix 'B'

from the government.

It can be said that regular visits by the state officials can help the government in understanding the routine problems faced by the panchayati raj bodies. If they guide them on various matters it will go a long way in improving their general performance.

The panchayats are, at present, performing a few functions mainly due to inadequacy of resources. The edifice of the entire panchayati raj administration is based on such foundation which can only be strengthened and stabilised by people's confidence and co-operation. If the panchayats fail to provide even the most essential services, people will naturally develop scepticism towards these institutions. If the people are convinced that panchayats are constituted for their interest, they will unhesitatingly submit to taxation imposed by these authorities. But the irony of the fact is that, in spite of few performance there is no noticeable improvement either in the quantity or in the quality of local services. In some cases the increase of expenditure is due to the mismanagement of certain services or due to an increase in the cost of materials, labour and high salary bills.

Peole may not grudge in paying taxes, provided

timely intimation is sent. Therefore, tax demand notice should be regularly posted without allowing any arrear to accumulate. Such a méâsure has two desirable effects. Firstly, it will eliminate the chances of temporary misappropriation of public money by the tax collectors. Secondly, it will reduce accumulation of tax arrears. Pay-at-the counter system will not only reduce the chance of arrears accumulation but will deprive the rate payers also of the convenient plea that 'they are not paying because the tax collector has not come to collect it'. It is also necessary to provide for penal measures against tax delinquents.

Again, panchayati raj bodies did not exercise their discretion judiciously in the matter of remission of taxes. Remission ought to be given to give relief to tax payers who are in real distress.

Valuation seems to be a dark spot in tax administration by the local authorities. Valuation is generally done by an assessor, mostly who is inexperienced, untrained and inefficient. Without a proper machinery to check it, valuation is always open to abuse. Rental value of a holding should be assessed in relation to market value.

As an instance of under-assessment of tax by the Sibsagar Mahkuma Parishad, we give the following examples:

1) Brick Field	Rs. 500/- per year (fixed)
2) Rice Mill	Rs. 100/- per year (fixed)
3) Rice Mill (5 HP-10 HP)	Rs. 200/- per year (fixed)
4) Rice Mill (10 HP-above)	Rs. 300/- per year (fixed)
5) Petrol/Kerosene Depot	Rs. 200/- per year (fixed)
6) Cinema Hall	Rs. 300/- per year (fixed)
7) Licence Fee (Tea Manufacturing)	Rs.1000/- per year (fixed)
8) Land Revenue and Local rate	Rs. 0.45 per capita (from Director of Panchayat)

The above rate, to our knowledge on the basis of our field investigation, has been fixed about a decade and half back.¹⁸ Meanwhile, the price indices have gone up by more than three-fold.¹⁹ Now, therefore, it will appear that in real terms the taxation has been very much regressive in character. Secondly, the fixation rate as given above seems to have no connection with the rate of income of the tax payer. It can be reasonably argued that during the last 15 years the income of the firm/individual has, at least, in nominal terms also increased. In otherwords, the taxation has been very much inelastic in character.

18. In spite of our best effort we could not get the exact date from which these rates were determined by the Mahkuma Parishad. However, it was not less than 15 years old assessment.

19. The Whole Price Index 1975-76 was 173.0 and in 1988-89 it was 435.3 (Base 1970-71 = 100), Govt. of India, Economic Survey 1990-91, Table S-61.

In the light of the foregoing evaluation and on the basis of our field study we may suggest the following steps which may be taken for further improvement of the activities of the Panchayati Raj System :

1) The election process should be mandatory to be held at regular intervals to panchayati raj bodies in order to involve people's participation in the planning process.

2) The interaction between official functionaires working at the State level on the one hand and mahkuma parishad and lower level bodies on the other, should be integrated in cohesive manner.

3) The expenditure of these bodies needs to be re-oriented by isolating expenditure on administrative items on the one hand and development activities on the other.

4) An integrated service cadre having people from different backgrounds and experience have to be created to discharge their functions effectively.

5) Training to different office bearers should be regularly maintained. Moreover, the village people should also be made aware through proper propaganda about the role of the panchayati raj institutions.

6) Panchayat raj has to contribute towards

strengthening the planning process at the micro level and overall rural development.

7) It has to improve the access of the (poor) beneficiaries to the appropriate decision-making bodies. It is clear that the power structure which exist today in our rural areas should be changed in favour of the poor.

Part B

POST 1986

4.6 Decentralised Planning in Assam

4.6(i) Introduction

The Government of Assam set up decentralised planning machinery at the state Headquarter and planning cells at the district level. Also, in each sub-division of the plain districts, a Sub-divisional Planning and Development Council (SPDC) has been set up. This council has the authority to propose and oversee the implementation of sub-divisional plan. The sub-divisional plan, however, is first drafted at the official level by a Core Group constituted in each district Headquarter and then placed before the SPDC for approval.²⁰

20. Government of Assam, Planning and Development Department, Compendium of Important Circulars on Decentralised Planning in Assam, Vol. I, Dispur, Guwahati, pp. 5-6.

The Core Group is chaired by the Deputy Commissioner and consist of District Planning officer as the Vice-Chairman, the Sub-Divisional Officers (Civil) and Sub-Divisional Planning Officers of the sub-divisions, the Project Director, DRDA, as members. The Senior Planning Officer of the district acts as Member-Secretary of the Core Group.

A small organisation in the Deputy Commissioner's office headed by District Planning Officer serves as permanent secretariat for the Core Group as well as for SPDC. Besides, the District Planning Officer, the secretariat consists of the Senior Planning Officer, 2 Assistant Planning Officers, 2 Research Assistants and other supporting ministerial staff.

4.6(ii) Composition of Sub-Divisional Planning and Development Council

The composition of the Sub-divisional Planning and Development Council (SPDC) consist of a Cabinet Minister as Chairman, the Divisional Commissioner as Alternative Chairman, the Deputy Commissioner as Vice-Chairman, the District Planning Officer as Member Secretary, the Senior Planning Officer as Joint Secretary; SDO (Civil), M.P. and M.L.As, Chief Executive Councillor of the Mahkuma Parishad, Chairman of Municipalities/Town Committees, Project Director, DRDA, Sub-Divisional Planning Officer,

two Economists, one representative from Lead Bank of the sub-division, one representative from State Planning and Development Department and three social workers as the members of the SPDC.²¹

4.6(iii) Approach of Decentralised Planning in Assam

At the initial stage of decentralised planning, top down approach has been followed in the sense that at first a divisible pool fund is determined in State headquarters and then distributed among the sub-divisions as per requirements, potentials and priorities of the sub-division taking into consideration the level of development. At the sub-divisional level, projects are formulated within the schematic allotment from given headquarters on the basis of the local needs and priorities of the locality.

Identification of Schemes

All the schemes under different sectors are classified into two categories, i.e., state level and sub-divisional level schemes according to some pre-set criteria. The scheme which concern the lives of common people particularly in the economic sectors of agriculture, veterinary, fishery, minor irrigation, cooperation, cottage industries, etc. and rural health,

21. Government of Assam, ibid., p. 3.

elementary education, social forestry, village roads in the social service sector have been taken up under decentralised planning on the sub-divisional level.

The state level schemes are the following :

a) Schemes which are implemented in fixed locations, but designed to benefit the whole state;

b) Schemes which are highly technical in nature and require constant supervision and guidance from superior officers and experts at the state Headquarters, and

c) Projects and programmes relating to generation and distribution of power, medium and major industries, university education, professional and technical education, research and training, state highways, ports and inland water-ways.

For the year 1988-89, sub-divisional level schemes have been identified afresh. The principles adopted for reclassification of sub-divisional schemes are as follows:

i) Schemes which are to be implemented in all or most of sub-divisions;

ii) Beneficiary-Oriented schemes, viz., IRDP, NREP, etc.

iii) Minimum Needs Programme Scheme.

iv) Schemes under education.

4.6(iv) Disaggregation of Fund

During the year 1987-88, 20 per cent of the allotment in respect of general areas of the state was earmarked for decentralised planning. Out of this amount, 10 per cent was set apart as untied fund. The objective of this amount is to meet special problems of needy sub-divisions. The remaining 90 per cent was distributed to different sub-division on the basis of the following formula :²²

- 50% on the basis of total population
- 20% on the basis of total geographical area
- 13% on the basis of Scheduled Tribe population
- 7% on the basis of Scheduled Caste population

A new formula has been adopted for 1989-90 for distribution of fund for each sub-division as shown below:

- 80% on the basis of total population
- 15% on the basis of total geographical area
- 5% on the basis of backwardness.

In 1987-88, identified schemes under 22 sectors and sub-sectors of development were finally brought under decentralised planning. For the year 1988-89, sectors like IRDP and NREP have been included, while Khadi

22. Government of Assam, 'Report of the Planning and Development Department', Dispur, Guwahati, 1989.

programme excluded considering the fact that allotment made under state sector is mainly for maintenance of staff. In 1989-90 in place of NREP, JRY schemes included and in 1990-91 again Khadi and village industries introduced. The sectors included under decentralised planning are shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Sectors Included Under Decentralised Planning in Assam during the year 1990-91

Sl. No.	Name of the Sectors
1	Agriculture
2	Land Reform
3	Minor Irrigation
4	Soil Conservation
5	Animal Husbandry and Veterinary
6	Fisheries
7	Forest (Social Forestry)
8	Panchayat and Community Development
9	Co-operative
10	Industries
11	Sericulture
12	Handloom and Textile
13	Rural Roads (M.N.P.)
14	Secondary Education

S1. No.	Name of the Sectors
15	Elementary Education
16	Adult Education
17	Sports and Youth Welfare
18	Health
19	Rural Water Supply
20	Housing Board
21	House Sites
22	Integrated Rural Development Programme
23	JRY (in place of NREP)
24	Khadi and Village Industries

4.6(v) Basis for Distribution of Funds (Sectoral Allotment of Fund)

The sectoral fund-size of a sub-division is determined on the basis of various criteria relevant to each sector. Some of the broad criteria adopted for determining the sectoral size of each sub-division are as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Criteria for Determining the Sectoral Size of
Sub-Divisional Planning

Sl. No.	Sector	Criteria
i)	Agriculture	Net sown area
ii)	Fishery	Water area
iii)	Animal Husbandry	Cattle population
iv)	Panchayat	Number of Gaon Panchayat
v)	Education	Backlog in Education
vi)	Road	Deficiency in respect of roads per 100 sq. km.
vii)	Sericulture	Number of families engaged in Sericulture
viii)	Handloom	Number of Weaving Co-operative Societies
ix)	Water Supply	Villages having no drinking water supply facilities
x)	Health	Population per doctor
xi)	Co-operation	Number of Gaon Panchayat Somabay Samities

After determination of the sectoral size of the sub-division on the basis of the above criteria, actual allotment of fund is adjusted taking into consideration the spill over work, continuing expenditure and work (committed liabilities), needs, potentialities and

requirement of the sub-divisions.

4.6(vi) Planning Methodology

The planning methodology followed for the preparation of decnetralised sub-divisional plan in Assam is as follows :²³

The Planning and Development Department communicates to the Deputy Commissioners the tentative quantum of fund likely to be available for the preparation of draft plans for the sub-divisions for a year by April/May of the preceding year. The Deputy Commissioners in turn, inform the District Heads of the Development Departments about the likely amount of funds for the preparation of the draft sub-divisional plan of the next year.

The District Heads of the Development Departments prepare the draft sub-divisional plan and submit to the Core Group for examination. After examination, the Core Group places the draft sub-divisional plan before the SPDC for approval. The approved draft sub-divisional plans are forwarded to the concerned heads of departments and Planning and Development Department within 31 August for integration with the draft annual plan of the State.

After finalisation of the State's annual plan by the Planning Commission, a similar process starts. A sub-

23. Government of Assam, Ibid., pp. 4-6.

divisionwise schematic allotment proposed by the Heads of the Development Departments are forwarded to the Planning and Development Department in February/March. The Planning and Development Department examines the sectorwise allotment and suggest adjustment whatever necessary. After receipt of the approval of the sub-divisional allotment from the Planning and Development Department, the Heads of the Development Departments communicate the schematic allotment to their district level officers for the preparation of annual operation plan. The District Heads of Departments prepare projects/schemes, etc. The Core Group scrutinizes the operational plan as submitted by the District Heads of Department and places it before the SPDC. The SPDC approves the sites selected, target fixed, list of beneficiaries, institutions, societies etc. for the implementation of the programme. The Deputy Commissioners forward the approved operational plan to the Heads of the Development Departments. After the approval of the operational plan, the District Heads of Development Department prepare detailed proposals/schemes for obtaining sanction.

4.7 An Assessment

Assam has gone a step beyond the district level by introducing decentralised planning at the sub-divisional

level. In the initial stage it is obvious that the State would face a lot of problems. However, the State has already experienced a number of difficulties in the implementation of decentralised planning due to a lack of trained and experienced personnel. The problem of personnel is to some extent fulfilled and could be overcome through training. Besides these, there is a silent resistance for decentralised planning process on the part of some political functionaries and from the bureaucracy. There is the lack of commitment on the part of some officers who are supposed to guide, nurse and implement the process. In our opinion, if the administrators and political activists do not come forward with a whole hearted image, then, decentralisation will not surface in the state in the real sense.

Decentralised planning would be successful only when it is adopted from the very grass-root level. It would be more realistic and need-based when priorities are decided at the bottom. But it is seen that priorities are decided at the State Headquarters and there is a variance with the priorities decided at the SPDC level. Unless the SPDC has the power to suggest changes in the sub-divisional plan prepared by the district level officials, keeping in view an integrated perspective of development of sub-divisions, the district planning effort would not be much of success.

Except associating public representatives, i.e., M.Ps, M.L.As, etc. people's involvement in the planning process could not be established till now. Social workers or workers of voluntary organisations are till now not nominated by the Government. Likewise, two members as economists or researchers also have been lying vacant in most of the SPDCs. People's participation is a sine-qua non for the reflection of actual need and aspiration of the people. Moreover, in plan formulation, Panchayati Raj institutions are not given an appropriate forum except that the Chief Executive Councillor and the Secretary of the Mahkuma Parishad are mere members of SPDC. Unfortunately, officers at the field level are not sincere enough to deliver inputs to the people in due time. There is also lack of integration and coordination among the officers at field level.

There are large number of centrally sponsored schemes like NREP, RLEGP, etc. which have been adopted in the subdivision without due examination and consideration of the outlook of the people. For example, the wage paid in RLEGP schemes is much lower than the existing market wage and so the scheme has not been really successful in Assam. As a result, funds are either inefficiently absorbed or do not go to meet the objectives for which it is meant. Operational flexibility, therefore, should be introduced

to suit the local needs without compromising the original purpose.

In our field work we have also been observed that similar nature of schemes are taken up by more than one development department apparently for different purposes but in reality for the same. For example, the P.W. departmental and NREP schemes are simultaneously implemented in the same locality for the same purpose, viz. road, without coordination of the two departments. Such lack of coordination, as we have noted above, in the matter of implementation of different schemes at the sub-divisional level may, in our considered opinion, be corrected, perhaps, provided they are implemented at the district level.

In particular our field investigation shows that the planning at the sub-divisional level suffers from the late sanction of schemes; lated release of funds of the sanctioned schemes, etc. These difficulties, in our opinion, may be at least lessened, if not totally eliminated, if planning and its implementation is done at at the district level.

Chapter V

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF SIBSAGAR DISTRICT

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we would like to discuss the historical background and socio-economic life of the people of Sibsagar District in general and of the Sibsagar Sub-division in particular.

The very name of the famous historical place 'Sibsagar' conjures the feeling of historic wonder and admiration which attained its pinnacle as the capital of entire Assam during the reign of the Ahom kings. Before the arrival of East India Company, the Ahoms ruled in Assam continually for 598 years from 1228 A.D. to 1826 A.D., till it passed into the hands of the British on 24th

February, 1826, by the British Burma Treaty of Yandaboo.

The Ahom kings created a number of historical monuments of rare historical and archaeological significance. The most outstanding of these are water tanks by the name of Sibsagar, Joysagar, Gourisagar, Rudrasagar, Athaisagar, Tengapukhuri, Mithapukhuri and temples by the name of Shivadols, Bishnudols, Devidols, Joydol etc., built on the banks of each monumental tank; the royal palaces like 'Rang Ghar', 'Kareng Ghar' (known as Talatal Ghar) and tombs of kings and queens known as 'Maidans' (which shape like the pyramids of Egypt); the 'Namdong Stone Bridge' made from a single solid rock cutting; the famous Ajan Peer Durgah Sharif - the symbol of Hindu-Muslim integration - and many others, present before us a full vision of a highly developed culture.

The place came to known as Shivapur, as it was associated with the great Shiva temple (Shivadol); but in the passage of time, the name Sibsagar alluding both to the tank and the town, gained popularity. By a proclamation in 1839, the area was divided into two districts, viz., Sibsagar and Lakhimpur. The headquarters of Sibsagar was Jorhat till July 1, 1983, and when it was formally declared as a new district with headquarters at Sibsagar, Sibsagar regained its lost position.

Sibsagar, from its origin to the present, has been standing as a nerve centre of all political activities, art, culture and literature. In fact, the district presents before us enormous potentials for occupying an important place in the country's map.

Present Status

Sibsagar district (area: 2602.9 sq. km.) is comprised of two sub-divisions, namely, Sibsagar (area: 1532.75 sq. km.) and Charaideo (area: 1070.15 sq. km.) sub-divisions.

The district is located between 26°15' and 27°15' north latitude and 90°25' and 95°20' east longitude. The district is bounded by the river Brahmaputra in the north-west, the district of Jorhat in the south-west, Nagaland State in the north and Dibrugarh district of Assam in the north-east. The average elevation of the district is 86 metres above mean-sea level.

There are six Community Development (CD) Blocks in the district, namely, Amguri, Nazira, Demow, Sonari, Sibsagar and Sapekhati. Sonari and Sepekhati CD Blocks are in Charaideo sub-division. The district comprises of five revenue circles - Demow, Amguri, Sibsagar, Nazira and Sonari. The first four revenue circles are in Sibsagar sub-division and the later in Charaideo sub-division. Each sub-division has one Municipal Board with Sibsagar

sub-division having two Town Committees and Charaideo having only one. There are 35 Gaon Panchayats, 22 in Sibsagar sub-division and 13 in Charaideo sub-division. The district has 27 Mouzas, 21 in Sibsagar sub-division and 6 in Charaideo and 853 settled villages.¹

5.2 Physical Features

Topography

Situated in the humid sub-tropical regions and receiving medium to heavy rainfall during the monsoon season (varying from 101.6 mm to 749.6 mm in June, July and August), the topography of the district may be divided into three main divisions :

1. The flood affected areas - lying by the side of the river Brahmaputra and river mouths of the main tributaries.

2. Occasionally flood affected areas - this area comprises of the comparatively low-lying adjacent tracts of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries. Thowra, Nitai, both east and west Kunwarpur Gaon Panchayat, Panidihing and few other parts of Gaon Panchayat fall under this

1. Government of Assam, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Sibsagar District, Sibsagar Assam, 'Annual Report 1989'.

category.

3. Flood free zone - this zone is situated in the foothills of Naga Hills and its branches. The Charideo sub-division and upper part of Amguri Agricultural sub-division fall in this zone.

Special Features

Sibsagar may be described as a district floating on the 'liquid gold', i.e. oil. The ONGC has its Eastern Region Headquarters at Nazira in Sibsaigar sub-division. The Commission undertook exploration of oil in 1957 and founded large oil fields in Lakwa, Geleki and Rudrasagar areas. Besides oil, coal is also found in abundance around Nazira. The search for oil and natural gas is still going on in various oilfields.

5.3 Demographic Characteristics

As the census operation for 1981 was not held in Assam the classified data on demographic features for that period is not readily available. The total population of Sibsaigar district, according to 1971 Census is 6,54,336 persons. The decennial growth of population was 23.36 per cent during 1951-61 and 19.46 per cent during 1961-71. There are 874 number of villages of which, 22 are uninhabited. In addition there are 89 number of tea estates in the district (1989). The details of

districtwise and sub-divisionwise demographic features are given in Tables 5.1(a) & 5.1(b).

Table 5.1(a)

Sub-Divisionwise Demographic Features of Sibsagar District

	Year	Unit	Sub-Division		Sibsagar District
			Sibsagar	Charaideo	
Total population	1971	Nos.	4,14,922	2,39,414	6,54,336
Male	"	"	2,19,716	1,26,995	3,46,711
Female	"	"	1,95,206	1,12,419	3,07,625
Rural	"	"	3,79,450	2,34,452	6,13,902
Urban	"	"	35,472	4,962	40,434
Scheduled Caste	"	"	16,931	2,025	18,956
Scheduled Tribe	"	"	17,420	5,539	22,959
Labourer	"	"	1,06,909	73,981	1,80,890
Infant mortality rate	"	1000	105	108	109
Sex ratio (No. of females per 1000 males)	"	1000	-	-	871
Literate	"	%	44.64	29.45	39.01
Literate female	"	%	32.79	31.08	30.02
Literate Male	"	%	44.68	40.20	47.00
Density of population (sq. km.)	"	Nos.	271	225	251
Projected population	1981	Nos.	-	-	9,03,900

Source : Government of Assam, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Statistical Handbook of Assam 1988, Guwahati.

Table 5.1(b)

Distribution of Population, Sex Ratio, Growth Rate, Density of Population and Literacy of Sibsagar District (1991 Census, Provisional Figures)

Persons	Population 1991		Sex Ratio (Females per 1000 males)		Density of population per km ²		Growth Rate of population		Literate population 1991*	
	Males	Females	1971	1991	1971	1991	1961-71	1971-91	Males	Females
<u>Sibsagar</u>										
895,112	467,610	427,502	887	914	245	335	+ 19.47	+ 36.80	283,988	201,517
<u>Assam</u>										
22,294,562	11,579,693	10,714,869	896	925	186	284	+ 34.95	+ 52.44	58,62,115	37,69,414

* Literates excludes children in the age group 0-6 who are treated as illiterates in the 1991 Census

Source : Census of India, 1991, Series 4 (Assam), Paper-I of 1991, Provisional Population Total, N.C. Dutta, Director of Census Operations, Assam.

5.3(i) Occupation

The 1971 Census (1981 Census was not taken) shows the occupational distribution of the Sibsagar district.

Table 5.2

Occupational Distribution in Sibsagar District

Sl. No.	Occupation	Percentage of workforce employed
1	Cultivators	44.10
2	Agricultural labourers	5.83
3	Livestock, Forestry, Fishery Plantation, etc.	26.93
4	Mining and Quarrying	2.70
5	Manufacturing, Processing Servicing and Repairing	2.86
6	Construction	1.46
7	Trade and Commerce	4.40
8	Transportation, storage and communication	1.92
9	Other services	9.80
Total		100.00

Source : Government of Assam, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Statistical Handbook of Assam 1987, Guwahati.

5.3(ii) Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) Area

The total tribal population of Sibsagar district was 22,959 out of which 60.70 per cent are in four Gaon Panchayats covered by ITDP Sibsagar. The name of the

Panchayats constituting the number of villages covered by ITDP area are : Nitai Gaon Panchayat 6 villages, Pub-Kuwarpur Gaon Panchayat 11 villages; Panidihing Gaon Panchayat 22 villages and Jakaichuk Gaon Panchayat 6 villages. The total geographical area under ITDP is 96.47 sq. kms.

5.3(iii) Employment and Unemployment Position

According to Employment Exchange Register (1989 December) the total number of job seekers (registered) in the district is 75,582 of whom, 62,870 are in Sibsagar and 12712 in Charaideo sub-divisions. The number of employed persons in 1989 was 458 only in the district (Sibsagar 337 and Charaideo 121). The Table 5.3 shows the unemployment position in Sibsagar sub-division.

Table 5.3

Qualificationwise and Communitywise Unemployment Position in Sibsagr District (1989)

S1. No.	Academic Qualificationwise	Communitywise
1	Graduate 3482	Scheduled Caste 1727
2	HSLC/Matric 17468	Scheduled Tribe 1118
3	PU/HSSLC 4745	Physically handicapped 120
4	Diploma in Engineering 273	Women 8217
5	ITI passed 2869	Ex-Servicemen 782
6	Others 34133	General 50306
	Total 62,870	Total 62,870

Source : District Employment Exchange, Sibsagar

5.4 Farm Sector

5.4(i) Land Resource Utilization

The type of soil varies from sandy loam to clay. Nearly 80 per cent cultivable land fall under loamy soil.

The pH value of the soil reveals that the soil varies between 'highly acidic' and 'acidic'. The percentage of land falling under various pH ranges is given in Table 5.4 and classification of land-use area is shown in Table 5.5.

Table 5.4

Percentage of Area of pH range with Characteristics

Percentage of total area	pH Range	Remarks
3	Below 4.5	Highly acidic
64	4.5 to 5.0	Acidic
30	5.0 to 6.4	Low acidic
3	6.5	Slight acidic

Table 5.5

Classification of Land-Use Area of Sibsagar District
1987-88 ('000 Hectares)

1.	Total Reporting Area	260
2.	Forest Area	33
3.	Not available for cultivation :	
	a) Land put to non-agricultural use	38
	b) Barren and uncultivable land	9

4.	Other uncultivated land excluding fallow land :	
	a) Permanent pastures and other grazing land	7
	b) Land under miscellaneous tree crops and groves not included in net area	26
	c) Cultivable waste	1
5.	Fallow land :	
	a) Fallow other than current fallows	5
	b) Current fallows	2
6.	Net area sown	139
7.	Area sown more than once	30
8.	Total cropped area (6 & 7)	169

Source : Statistical Handbook of Assam, 1988

5.4(ii) Land Holding

The land holding pattern of the district is shown in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6
Land Holding Pattern of Sibsagar District (1988-89)

Size of Holding	No. of Holding	% of Total Holding
0-1 Hectare	38909	45.6
1-2 hectare	37549	44.0
2-above hectare	8811	10.4
Total	85269	100.0

Source : District Agriculture Office, Sibsagar

The nature of the soil is mostly heavy clay and clay loam texture and so water holding capacity is more in the plain areas of the district. It is for this reason that the agricultural crops grown here are mostly paddy. Besides a large area (32689 hectares) is under tea cultivation. Most of the land in Sibsagar sub-division is utilized for monocrop, i.e., paddy (Ahu and Sali). Some portions of agricultural land is utilised for pulses, oil seeds, vegetables, sugarcane, wheat, etc.

5.4(iii) Cropping Pattern

Out of the total geographical area of 260,305 hectares the net sown area is 1,39,000 hectares accounting for about 53.3% of the area. The gross cropped area for the year 1988-89 was 1,69,000 hectares and the cropping intensity comes to 121.6 per cent.

The main food crop of the district is paddy, occupying 85.42 per cent of the gross sown area. Compared to paddy wheat occupies only 2.2 per cent of the total gross sown area.

The production of major crops in the district is given in Table 5.7. This table reveals that the acreage and output fluctuate substantially from 1984-85 to 1988-89. There has not been a proportionate increase (or decrease) of output with the increase (or decrease) of

Area and Production of Major Crops in the Sibsagar District

(Area in Hectares; Production in M.T.)

Crop	1984-85		1985-86		1986-87		1987-88		1988-89	
	Area	Production	Area	Production	Area	Production	Area	Production	Area	Production
Ahu	12,879	16,450	40,119	12,750	6,177	7,847	5,761	9,937	8,049	14,021
Sali	1,05,118	1,57,486	1,08,773	1,39,137	1,07,150	1,60,511	1,01,061	1,73,117	1,01,135	1,76,986
Wheat	993	1,043	763	884	450	474	2,012	1,760	2,837	2,502
Maize	61	32	74	36	80	41	82	43	47	24
Pulses Rabi/Kharif	1,718	652	3,025	1,206	2,368	898	2,041	783	2,000	780
Oil Seed	5,972	4,154	6,140	4,854	4,675	2,599	5,700	3,471	7,028	4,357
Sugar- cane	1,079	29,508	804	21,145	382	12,079	214	6,766	106	3,353
Jute	255	1,922	271	2,346	71	582	111	910	113	928
Total	1,28,075	2,11,247	1,59,969	1,82,358	1,21,355	1,85,031	1,16,982	1,96,787	1,21,365	2,02,951

Source : Potential Linked Rural Credit Plan of Sibsagar District, Assam, 1990-91 to 1994-95, NABARD Regional Office, Guwahati, p. 178.

average. Physical factors like drought and flood are mainly responsible for these chaotic fluctuations and apparent inconsistencies. Table 5.8 shows the trend of these major food production in Sibsagar district.

Table 5.8

Trend of Major Food Production in Sibsagar District

Year	Area (ha.)	% charge over pre- vious year	Production (MT)	% charge over pre- vious year
1984-85	1,28,075		2,11,247	
1985-86	1,59,964	+ 24.9	1,82,358	- 13.7
1986-87	1,21,355	- 24.1	1,85,031	+ 1.5
1987-88	1,16,982	- 3.6	1,96,787	+ 6.3
1988-89	1,21,365	+ 3.7	2,02,951	+ 3.1

Table 5.8 shows the fluctuation trend of acreage from 3.6 per cent to 24.9 percent and output from 1.5 per cent to 13.7 per cent respectively.

5.4(iv) Average Yield

The average yield of agricultural crops in Sibsagar district is given in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9

Average Yield of Agricultural Crops in Sibsagar District
1988-89 (per hectare)

Sl. No.	Crops	Production in Kgs.
1	Local Sali Paddy	907.5
2	H.Y.V. Sali Paddy	1512.5
3	Mustard	226.9
4	Black gram	226.9
5	Green gram	242.0

Source : District Agriculture Office, Sibsagar

5.4(v) Mechanisation

Farm mechanisation has not made desired progress in the district because of predominance of small and marginal farmers, poor irrigation facilities and reluctance to give up the practice of traditional agriculture. An analysis of size and number of holdings shows that approximately 45.6 per cent of total holdings are within one hectare range, 44.0 per cent of the holdings fall within 1-2 ha. range and only 10.4 per cent of holdings are 2 ha. and above in the district. Hence, about 90 percent of the holdings belong to small farmers. Due to demographic pressure holdings are highly fragmented and often situated far away from each other. Owing to these facts farm

mechanisation could not make any sizeable progress in the district. According to Assam Agro-Industries Development Corporation the total number of tractors in the district is 20 and power tillers 780 (1989).

5.4(vi) Plantation and Horticulture

Almost in all areas in the district horticultural crops like arecanut and coconut are grown. The area covered by various horticultural crops is shown in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10

Area under Different Horticultural Crops in Sibsagar
District (1988-89)

Sl. No.	Name of the Crop	Area (Hectares)
1	Arecanut	4985
2	Coconut	120
3	Banana	686
4	Lemon	245
5	Orange	132
6	Pineapple	391

Source : District Agriculture Office, Sibsagar

Tea is the only important major plantation crop in organised sector. The present area under tea, according

to 1988-89 Report of District Statistics, is 32,689 hectares and total production in the district is 261,408.60 quintals.

However, scope for other plantation crops like rubber, coffee, black pepper etc. also does exist.

5.4(vii) Animal Husbandry Development

Animal husbandry is the main allied activity particularly among weaker sections of the people of the district who constitute about 60 per cent of population. This activity includes diary farming, poultry including duck rearing and piggery.

Diary farming, a subsidiary occupation of farmers, occupies second position in respect of employment generation after agriculture. Diary farming through rearing of milch cows and buffaloes provides supplementary income and helps in lessening disguised unemployment in rural areas. The Table 5.11 shows livestock and poultry population in Sibsagar District.

Table 5.11

Livestock and Poultry Population in Sibsagar District 1982

Sl. No.	Name of Livestock	Numbers
1	Cattle	255,888
2	Buffaloes	35,094
3	Sheep	495
4	Goat	60,333
5	Pigs	15,580
6	Fowls	109,529
7	Ducks	165,637
8	Horse and Ponies	690

Source : Statistical Handbook of Assam, 1988

5.5 Non-Farm Sector

5.5(i) Sericulture Development

Sibsagar is traditionally known for its sericulture activities. Eri, Muga and Mulberry culture are found in this district. It has the distinction of being the highest producer of Muga Silk Cocoons in the State of Assam. Table 5.12 below gives the details of production of Eri, Muga and Pat (Mulberry) in the two sub-divisions of the district.

Table 5.12

Sericulture Output in Sibsagar District (1988-89)

	Item	Eri	Muga	Mulberry
Sibsagar Sub-Division	i) Production of seed	1 lakh layings	90 lakh layings	80 lakh layings
	ii) Production of silk & cocoons silk	3500 kgs.	95 million numbers	3000kgs.
	iii) Distribution of seed cocoons	1 lakh layings	95 million numbers	80 lakh layings
Charaideo Sub-Division	i) Production of seed	50 lakh layings	19.5 lakh layings	Nil
	ii) Production of silk & cocoon silk	1600 kgs.	27 million numbers	1500kgs. silk
	iii) Distribution of seeds	50 lakh layings	19.5 lakh layings	40 lakh layings

Source : Directorate of Sericulture Office, Guwahati, unpublished Annual Report 1988-89.

5.5(ii) Small Scale Industries

The district of Sibsagar has got good development potential in the non-farm sector. The ONGC engaged in oil exploration is the only public sector industry in the District. There are 473 registered small scale industrial (SSI) units and 467 of them are in operation. Three industries come under the category of medium scale industries, two of which, are Flour Mills and the other is engaged in manufacturing of liquified Nitrogen gas.

Excluding ONGC approximately 20,000 people are employed in 467 operation units.

Among the goods exported outside the district mention may be made of :

- i) Crude oil
- ii) Tea both of CTC and orthodox varieties
- iii) Silk cocoons, muga, mulberry, etc.
- iv) Atta, rice, etc.
- v) Plywood, Black board etc.
- vi) Sports goods such as football, volleyball, etc.

The activities in operation under non-farm sector can be classified into the following major groups :

- a) Manufacturing and processing
- b) Servicing and repairing

The following are the major manufacturing and processing units in the district :

- 1) Rice mills
- 2) Atta chaki and Flour mills
- 3) Edible oil seed crushing units
- 4) Steel fabrication works including steel furniture
- 5) Brick manufacturing
- 6) Sports goods such as football, volleyball, etc. and leather goods, Rexin, Canvas, etc.

- 7) Saw mills and Plywood factories
- 8) Agriculture implements
- 9) Readymade Garments
- 10) Cane and Bamboo works
- 11) Wood carving and furniture manufacturing
- 12) Black Tea manufacturing, CTC and orthodox
- 13) Bus/Truck body building
- 14) Soap, candle manufacturing
- 15) Silicate manufacturing
- 16) Decorative textiles
- 17) Bakery
- 18) Stone crushing.

Among the important 'Servicing and Repairing' units we find :

- 1) Automobile repairing including two wheeler repairing
- 2) Radio/TV repairing
- 3) Tyre retreading
- 4) Tea Machinery repairing
- 5) Printing Press
- 6) Photostat
- 7) Watch and clock repairing
- 8) Motor winding.

There is very good scope for the development of ancillary units catering to the needs of ONGC. Large

quantities of industrial goods are required by ONGC like hand-gloves, special nuts and bolts, rubber and rubber goods, casing pipes, Barites, Bentonite, etc.

5.5(iii) Infrastructure

a) Roads

Excluding the roads built by the Forest Department (16 km.) and the DRDA (159.74 km.), the total length of roads comes to 1557.90 kms. of which 328.57 km. are metalled and 1229.33 km. gravelled roads (including the National Highway 37 and State Highway).

Most of the villages are connected with net work of state and village roads. The Assam Trunk Road which passes through the middle of the district touches many villages. But during monsoons, road connection is disrupted at many places because of flood.

b) Railways

The entire stretch of 176 km. of the railway line is on metre gauge. The train service is still very much inadequate. It touches stations like Amguri, Nazira, Simaluguri, Lakuwa, Sufrai, Bhojo, Longpatia, Sapekhati, etc.

c) Airways

The nearest airport to Sibsagar is at Jorhat



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Dated 19th December '91

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To

Prof. S.N. Guhathakurta
Deptt. of Economics
NEHU
Shillong

Sub : M.Phil Dissertation - Evaluation for

Ref :

Sir,

Both sent today 28/12/91

With reference to your _____ mentioned above, I am directed to enclose herewith the dissertation submitted by Shri Biren Boruah of Economics Department for evaluation. The title of the dissertation is "Decentralised Planning in Assam: A Case Study of the Sub-Divisional Planning in Jibsagar District".

The dissertation may please be examined in accordance with the provision of the Ordinance No.7 an extract of which is quoted below for your guidance.

EVALUATION : "The performance of the scholar shall be evaluated in the following grades :

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As an appreciation for the work done, a remuneration of Rs. 200/- will be paid to you for which claim form is enclosed. Contingency charges may also be claimed in the same form. Envelopes for use may also be found enclosed.

Yours faithfully,

(Signature)
(A. Patton) 29/12/91
Controller of Examinations

Enclo : a.a.

situated at a distance of 58 km. from Sibsagar town, the Headquarter of earlier Sibsagar District. The other airport is situated at Dibrugarh (79 km. from Sibsagar).

5.5(iv) Education Facilities

According to 1971 census 39.1% of the population of the Sibsagar district are literates as compared to the state average of 36%. The number of institutions in the district offering primary level, secondary level, collegiate education, etc., are furnished in Table 5.13.

Table 5.13

Number of Educational Institutions in Sibsagar District
1990 (General)

S1. No.	Institutions	Number
1	Pre-Primary Schools	29
2	Primary Schools	1569
3	Middle Schools	300
4	High Schools	160
5	Higher Secondary Schools	21
6	Colleges	17

Source : Field Investigation.

5.5(v) Medical Facilities

The Civil Hospital, still under construction at Joysagar in Sibsagar Sub-division has a bed strength of

200. Another with a bed strength of 30 is expected to come up shortly. The Sibsagar Sub-division has got six primary health centres, one each at Gaurisagar, Kalugaon, Demow, Khelua, Geleki and Morabazar.

The Charaideo sub-division has got three mini-primary health centres at Borhat, Tengapukhuri and Bakota. At Sonari, it has got a lone subsidiary health centre. This sub-division is yet to have a Civil Hospital. One hospital at Sapekhati and another at Patbaker each having a bed strength of 30 are under construction.

5.5(vi) Financial Institutions

There are 10 financial institutions including some nationalised banks having a network of 47 bank branches, 35 bank branches in Sibsagar sub-division and 12 in Charaideo sub-division. The United Bank of India is the Lead Bank and has got 12 branches in the district. The details of the Blockwise financial institutions and their branch network are given in Table 5.14.

Table 5.14

Blockwise Financial Insitutions and Branch Network in
Sibsagar District (1990)

Sl. No.	Name of the Block/Town	No. of Branches
1	Anguri Development Block	8
2	Demow Development Block	5
3	Nazira Development Block	8
4	Sibsagar Development Block	3
5	Sonari & Sapekhati Dev. Block	12
6	Sibsagar Town	11
Total		47

Source : Potential Linked Rural Credit Plan of Sibsagar District, Assam 1990-91 to 1994-95, NABARD, Regional Office, Guwahati.

5.6 A Brief Summary

Sibsagar district is endowed by nature with copious rainfall and abundant oil and natural gas resources. The severity of flood and soil erosion might be reduced by afforestation and river training. The expansion of acreage under cultivation in new areas has little possibility because of population explosion. Intensive cultivation and improvement of livestock can lead to a prosperous rural economy.

The tea industry has been playing a very significant role in the development of the district

economy from the point of view of employment generation and providing a market for coal and fertilizer. The availability of the large quantity of petroleum and natural gas may also lead to the establishment of refinery and few other industries. There is the problem of initiating an industrialisation programme by the private sector because of present unrest in society. Besides, inexperience and consequent unwillingness to take risks, the local people do not have the entrepreneur ability and the necessary capital to start an industry. Sericulture industry has its importance from the point of view of its employment creation and income generation. We have observed that development plans for industry cannot be framed in isolation, they must be integrated with plans for development of agriculture, transport, mining, power and all other sectors of the economy.

Chapter VI

PLANNING AT THE SUB-DIVISIONAL LEVEL - A REVIEW

6.1 Introduction

The Government of Assam introduced decentralised planning from 1986, but actually the programme was executed from 1987-88, with the aim of reducing socio-economic disparities and for involving common people in it so that there is continuous association and dialogue between them and the planning and development authorities. As we have already seen (in chapter IV), the planning for most of the sectors of rural development like agriculture, animal husbandry and veterinary, sericulture, fishery, etc. is done at sub-divisional level keeping in view the local needs and potentialities, the infrastructure available and feasible within the budgetary constraints

and guidelines laid down by the State Government.

Part A

GENERAL

In this section, we will attempt to examine how plan allocations are made and how far the decentralised planning process at the sub-divisional and district levels have been successful and what types of constraints the sub-divisional planning unit has to face vis-a-vis a district unit in implementing their plan schemes. In this section, we would also like to give a brief review of the plan performance of the sub-divisional planning unit under agriculture and industry (and their allied sectors).

Table 6.1 and 6.2 show the plan allocation in different sectors and sub-sectors during 1987-88 to 1989-90.

Table 6.1
Plan Allocation by Major Sectors for Sibsagar Sub-Division
(Rs. in lakhs)

Major sectors	1987-88	% of Total	1988-89	% of Total	1989-90	% of Total
Agriculture & Allied	144.54	61.6	84.60	40.3	41.46	29.8
Industry & Allied	6.72	2.8	4.52	2.2	4.56	3.3
Services & others	83.33	35.6	120.57	57.5	93.04	66.9
Total	234.59	100.0	209.69	100.0	139.06	100.0

Source : District Planning Office, Sibsagar.
Planning & Development Department, Government of Assam.

Table 6.2

Plan Allocation by Detailed Sub-Sectors for Sibsagar Sub-Division (Rs. in lakhs)

Sub-Sectors	1987-88	%	1988-89	%	1989-90	%
Agriculture & Allied	144.54	100.0	84.60	100.0	41.46	100.0
i) Agriculture	47.75	33.0	13.65	16.1	4.04	9.8
ii) Minor Irrigation	71.62	49.6	49.75	58.8	23.24	56.1
iii) Animal husbandry	5.60	3.9	4.96	5.9	0.41	0.9
iv) Soil Conservation	2.37	1.6	1.58	1.9	-	-
v) Social Forestry	14.57	10.0	14.66	17.3	12.57	30.3
Industry & Allied	6.72	100.0	4.52	100.0	4.56	100.0
i) Industry	4.33	64.4	3.41	75.4	3.49	76.5
ii) Sericulture	1.90	28.3	0.60	13.3	0.58	12.7
iii) Handloom	0.49	7.3	0.51	11.3	0.49	10.8
Services & others	83.33	100.0	120.57	100.0	93.04	100.0
i) Education	41.53	49.8	38.62	32.0	38.31	41.2
ii) Health	10.30	12.4	10.00	8.3	-	-
iii) Water supply	6.83	8.2	6.83	5.7	2.14	2.3
iv) Community Development etc.	4.75	5.7	5.17	4.3	6.70	7.2
v) JRY, NREP, IRDP	-	-	49.70	41.2	45.60	49.0
vi) Miscellaneous	19.92	23.9	10.25	8.5	0.29	0.3

Source : District Planning Office, Sibsagar.
Planning and Development Department, Government of Assam, Dispur, Guwahati.

Table 6.1 shows the plan allocation by major sectors for Sibsagar sub-division. During 1987-88, out of the total outlay of Rs. 234.59 lakhs, agriculture and allied sector was allocated Rs. 144.54 lakhs (61.61 per cent), services and others sector Rs. 83.33 lakhs (35.5 per cent) and Rs. 6.72 lakhs (2.9 per cent) to industry and allied sector. In 1988-89 out of total expenditure of Rs. 209.69 lakhs, services and other sub-sectors was allotted Rs. 120.57 lakhs (57.5 per cent), agriculture and allied sectors Rs. 84.60 lakhs (40.3 per cent) and industry and allied sectors Rs. 4.52 lakhs (2.2 per cent). During the year 1989-90, out of the total expenditure of Rs. 139.06 lakhs, highest allocation was made to service and allied sectors, Rs. 93.04 lakhs (66.9 per cent), next, to agriculture and allied of Rs. 41.46 lakhs (29.8 per cent) and lowest allocation was made to industry (general) and allied sectors, i.e., Rs. 4.56 lakhs (3.3 per cent).

Table 6.2 shows the plan allocation amongst sub-sectors of the above three major sectors. In agriculture and allied sector, minor irrigation has been given highest allocation, namely Rs. 71.62 lakhs (49.6 per cent), Rs. 49.75 lakhs (58.8 per cent) and Rs. 23.24 lakhs (56.1 per cent) during 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90 respectively.

In industry and allied sector head, industry sub-sector has been allotted highest amount during the three

years. In 1987-88 Rs. 4.33 lakhs (64.4 per cent), 1988-89 Rs. 3.41 lakhs (75.4 per cent) and Rs. 3.49 lakhs (76.5 per cent) was allotted during 1989-90.

In service and others sector, during 1987-88, out of the total outlay of Rs. 83.33 lakhs, highest priority was given to education, Rs. 41.53 lakhs (49.8 per cent). In 1988-89, JRY, NREP and IRDP sub-sector has got highest priority, i.e. Rs. 49.70 lakhs (41.2 per cent) out of total outlay Rs. 120.57 lakhs. During 1989-90 also, the same sub-sector was allotted highest, Rs. 45.60 lakhs (49 per cent) out of the total outlay of Rs. 93.04 lakhs of this sector.

6.2 Agriculture

Considering the importance of agriculture, the Government seems to have judiciously transferred most of the schemes that come within the purview of decentralised planning to be taken up at sub-divisional level. However, as 95 per cent of the people of the district live in rural areas and a lion share of labour (more than 75 per cent) is absorbed in this sector, it is doubtful if adequate importance is attached to develop this sector as it warrants.

Proper implementation of decentralised planning actually began from 1987-88. During this year, out of the

total expenditure of Rs. 234.59 lakhs allotted for the sub-division, only Rs. 47.75 lakhs (20.35 per cent) was allotted to agriculture sector. In the subsequent two years 1988-89, and 1989-90, the expenditure of agriculture sector has been declined to Rs. 13.65 lakhs (6.50 per cent) and Rs. 4.04 lakhs (2.90 per cent). The decline of the percentage of agriculture sector, may be, as reported to us by the Sub-divisional Planning Unit, for horizontal coordination of different development activities. It means that sub-divisional planning wanted to take up many allied activities at the same time, thus reducing the share of pure agriculture activities. For the horizontal combination, beside agriculture expenditure for other sectors was also reduced in 1988-89.¹

The area and production of major crops in Sibsagar district has been shown in Table 5.7 at Chapter V. Here in Table 6.3 we would like to show the growth of paddy production in Sibsagar district during the period 1983-84 to 1989-90.

1. For example, in minor irrigation, the proportion of expenditure was reduced from 30.5 per cent (1987-88) to 22.0 per cent (1988-89) and to 16.8 per cent (1989-90); soil conservation from 1.0 per cent (1987-88) to 0.70 per cent (1988-89) and house site 1.79 per cent (1987-88) to 0.26 per cent (1988-89) and to 0.20 per cent (1989-90). The sectors where percentage of expenditure increased in 1988-89 compared to the previous year (1987-88) were fishery (0.12 per cent), cooperative (0.35 per cent), secondary education (2.80 per cent), adult education (0.68 per cent) and social forestry (0.30 per cent). The lion share (23.70 per cent) of total expenditure was transferred to IRDP and NREP programme.

Table 6.3

Trend of Paddy Production in Sibsagar District
(1983-84 to 1989-90)

Year	Area (ha.) both Ahu and Sali	% of change over previous year	Paddy production in MT	% of change over previous year
1983-84	114,528		167,429	
1984-85	117,927	+ 3.02	173,936	+ 3.8
1985-86	148,892	+ 26.18	151,887	- 12.7
1986-87	113,327	- 31.40	168,358	+ 10.8
1987-88	106,822	- 5.70	183,054	+ 8.7
1988-89	109,184	+ 2.20	191,007	+ 4.3
1989-90	110,267	+ 0.99	194,818	+ 2.0

Source : District Agriculture Office, Sibsagar

From table 6.3 it is seen that the area under paddy production (both Ahu and Sali) has varied from year to year. This is mainly for two reasons; one is due to heavy flood and drought. The other reason is the variation in the cropping pattern. For example, Ahu paddy is not cultivated by all and in every year.

The paddy production has increased over the years from 1983-84 to 1989-90 except the year 1985-86. The reason for decline of 12.7 per cent in 1985-86 over previous year is that till the month of June 1985, the

entire district has to face severe drought and from July to September devastating flood. From 1986-87 to 1989-90 the average annual rate of growth of paddy production was 6.45 per cent, notwithstanding a fluctuation in production on year to year basis. The main reason for this, as pointed out above, has been the recurring flood for last four years in succession.

Naturally, the most important reason for low productivity of agricultural production in the last few years is the occurrence of flood. The flood that occurred during last 5 years happened to be not only frequent but also more widespread and had a greater intensity. Thus, the regular phenomenon of flood led to severe magnitude which gripped the district, causing staggering damage to crops, houses, properties, agricultural holdings and toll to human and animal lives. Table 6.4 gives an indication of flood damage from 1981-1988.

The intensity of flood and the damage caused by it depends upon the time of waves and how long they last. The occurrence of such natural calamity in quick succession led to severe set back in the agricultural sector. Therefore, it appears that agriculture in this district is a gamble of monsoon.²

2. Flood control measures are taken by State Government from the fund allotted from central government. This is not within the purview of sub-divisional planning.

Table 6.4
Flood Situation in Sibsagar Sub-Division (1981-1988)

Paticulars	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Number of waves	2	3	2	5	2	3	5	4
Number of villages affected	201	319	179	246	101	350	345	289
Number of family affected	16,468	162,117	10,115	18,319	6,089	25,787	22,987	18,784
Number of Gaon Panchayats affected	13	22	17	21	11	23	20	18
Crop area in ha. affected	10,721	12,789	8,117	11,057	7,462	13,901	11,574	10,208

Source : Computed by the author from various official records of the office of the Chief Engineer, Flood Control Office, Guwahati, Assam.

6.3 Inputs in Agriculture

a) Pesticidos

A low rate of consumption of pesticides was also responsible for an erratic nature of production. Table 6.5 shows the declining rate of consumption of pesticides from 1986-87 to 1989-90. The overall decline in 1989-90 compared to 1986-87, is 32.56 per cent.

Table 6.5

Consumption of Pesticides under Sibsagar District from 1986-87 to 1989-90

Types of pesticides	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	% change in 1989-90 over 1986-87
Liquid	5435 litres	2116 litres	1612 litres	1597 litres	- 29.30
	2352 kgs.	2222 kgs.	975 kgs.	871 kgs.	- 37.10
Powder/dust	5582 kgs.	3983 kgs.	2187 kgs.	1872 kgs.	- 33.53
Fungicides	110 kgs.	76 kgs.	56 kgs.	49 kgs.	- 44.00

Source : District Agriculture Office, Sibsagar

6.3(i) Farm Implements

Utilisation of modern implements is an indispensable factor for increasing agricultural productivity. The Agricultural Engineering Department of the district has

produced the following agricultural implements from 1983-84 to 1989-90

Table 6.6

Production of Agricultural Implements in Sibsagar District
1983-84 to 1989-90

(in numbers)

Name of the Implements	1983-1984	1984-1985	1985-1986	1986-1987	1988-1989	1989-1990
Moulboard Plough	100	110	150	200	205	210
Moulboard Handle	120	130	145	200	200	220
Garden Rake	150	160	200	220	250	260
Hand Hoe	75	115	140	200	210	215
Prong cultivation	60	80	120	200	200	220
Total	505	595	755	1020	1065	1125

Note : Data for 1987-88 are not available

Source : District Agriculture Office, Sibsagar

Table 6.6 shows that production of different kinds of agricultural implements increased from 505 in 1983-84 to 1125 (55.11%) in 1989-90. But it could satisfy the requirement of only 2.51% of the cultivators in the district.

Technology will be of no avail in improving agriculture unless it is based on area specific need. In

this connection, we would like to mention a few examples from our field experience. In a tribal village of Disangmukh, under Sibsagar sub-division, we have seen that 15 M.B. ploughs were supplied to them by agricultural department for better cultivation. But out of 15 M.B. plough only 1 or 2 ploughs were properly used and others had been sparingly used. When they were asked about the reason for this, the respondents replied that as their area is sandy, it was not suited for them.

6.3(ii) Fertilizer

The use of fertilizer has been increasing to a great extent. The consumption of fertilizer in the district in the recent years may be seen from Table 6.7.

Table 6.7

Consumption of Fertilizer in Sibsagar District
1984-85 to 1988-89

Year	Fertilizer (MT)	% change over previous year
1984-85	570	
1985-86	1139	99.82
1986-87	1500	31.62
1987-88	1680	12.00
1988-89	1800	7.14

Source : District Agriculture Office, Sibsagar

The total consumption of fertilizer although increased over the years, yet the annual rate of growth is declining. However, the good effect of fertilizer is often neutralised by the occurrence of flood. Moreover, most of the small and marginal farmers are unable to purchase fertilizer despite the subsidised price.

6.3(iii) Irrigation

The irrigation facilities created in the district is for about 20,768 ha. as detailed below :

- i) 806 ha. of surface flow
- ii) 11,076 ha. under surface lift
- iii) 1,060 ha. under deep tubewell
- iv) 236 ha. under shallow tubewell
- v) 7,590 ha. under minor irrigation.

The estimate potential of all the schemes undertaken by sub-divisional planning unit under Sibsagar sub-division is 16,296 ha. upto June 1989. The Charaideo sub-division has created an irrigation potential of 8,499 ha. during the same period. The overall irrigated area under the district is 14.94 per cent of the net sown area. It remains a fact that 95 per cent of the crops raised depend not on irrigation facilities but on rains.

In our field investigation it was observed that

irrigation through shallow tubewells were provided for water facilities. Seven pumpsets were given in Dupani village in 1987 (at subsidised rate) to facilitate agricultural production, specially for Rabi crops. In the last year i.e. 1990, only two pumpsets were found in operation. The reason for unutilization of 5 pumpsets was that instead of increasing production they had reduced the production by 50 kg. per acre to unirrigated landholdings, because shallow tubewell contain too much iron which is not conducive for productivity. This shows that unless technology is suitable for local condition it does not help to increase productivity.

Regarding the utilization of agricultural input land distribution pattern plays an important role. Land distribution pattern in Sibsagar district (as shown in Table 5.8, Chapter V) shows that 45.6 per cent of the holdings are below 1 ha., 44 per cent is in between 1-2 ha. and only 10.4 per cent are 2 ha. and above. In other words, nearly 90 per cent land holding are below 2 ha.³ The group of farmers i.e., small and marginal farmers cannot afford to generate surplus over subsistence and hence capital formation for mechanisation is not easily possible for them. They have no chance to enjoy economies

3. The average size of the operational holding in the district is 1.26 ha. and that for Sibsagar sub-division and Charaideo sub-division is 1.42 and 1.10 ha. respectively.

of production and marketing.

The small and marginal farmers are gradually being impoverished through money lending, trading, etc. and other multiple channels of exploitation, i.e., higher prices of farm products during lean period and lower prices during post-harvest period. Lack of education and opportunities for additional and alternative sources of income are contributing factors for their continued poverty. Furthermore, their number is increasing day by day due to population explosion and less availability of land.

6.4 Industry

Although the Government of India recognised Sibsagar district as one of the backward districts of Assam, yet all types of special incentives are not extended for promotion of small scale industries. The type of incentives that have been provided for are : (i) training as local entrepreneurs through motivation camps; (ii) study tour, and (iii) rural artisans' programme for development of manpower resources. In order to boost up pace of industrial development, further incentives in the form of financial grants, power subsidies, interest subsidies, subsidies on cost of feasibility report, loans for rehabilitation of tiny units have also been provided

by sub-divisional planning.

The details of the type of industrial unit in the district are shown in 5.5(i) 'Non-Farm Sector', Chapter V. Except a few engineering workshops and repairing institutions, there are hardly any industry to produce goods and equipments needed by ONGC and by tea industries. It is not contended that the requirements of these industries should be substantially met by local produce only. In fact, that is neither feasible nor perhaps possible in the short run. But our point that local production, e.g. furniture household and semi durable products, etc. may be geared to the need of these industries and to that extent sub-divisional planning should take upon itself the responsibility of utilising local resources. However, from our field investigation we learned that the District Industry Centre (DIC) has made a master plan in this regard. The Draft Annual Plan 1990-91 of Sibsagar Sub-division shows that there are 251 numbers of registered tiny sector industries absorbing 993 persons, 90 small scale registered industries with employment potential of 1478 persons and 146 cottage industries generating employment for 1080 persons.

Table 6.8 shows the registered small scale industries in Sibsagar district upto 1988.

Table 6.8
Registered Small Scale Industries in Sibsagar District upto 1988

Type of Factory	Raw Materials	Employment in Mandays (per year)	No. of Factory	
			Sibsagar	Charaideo
Tea Estate Factory	Green leaves	27,86,700	22	35
Rice, Flour & Oil mills	Paddy, mustard seed, wheat, etc.	34,200	106	8
Press	Paper	3,600	12	-
Total		28,24,500	140	43

Source : Government of Assam, Planning and Development Department, 'Status Paper, Part B' Sibsagar, 1988-89.

From the above table we can easily understand that the tea estates have provided enough employment avenues in Sibsagar District.

Role of DIC

The activities performed by DIC in case of SSI unit and Handloom industries are shown in Tables 6.9 and 6.10.

Table 6.9

Sub-Divisionwise Beneficiaries Under the Scheme Loan to SSI Unit (in Rs.)

Year	Name of the Sub-Division	General		SC		ST	
		No. of Beneficiaries	Amount (in Rs.)	No. of Beneficiaries	Amount (in Rs.)	No. of Beneficiaries	Amount (in Rs.)
1986-87	Sibsagar	17	18,500	5	13,000	6	27,000
	Charaideo	5	8,500	5	8,000	-	-
1987-88	Sibsagar	28	33,000	5	7,200	5	9,900
	Charaideo	9	19,800	3	5,900	-	-
1988-89	Sibsagar	13	26,500	3	3,000	2	2,500
	Charaideo	10	20,500	1	2,500	-	-
							39,400

Source : District Industry Centre, Sibsagar (collected by the author)

Table 6.10

Sub-Divisionwise Beneficiaries under the Scheme of Loan to Handicraft Artisans (in Rs.)

Year	Name of the Sub-Division	General		SC		ST	
		No. of Beneficiaries	Amount (in Rs.)	No. of Beneficiaries	Amount (in Rs.)	No. of Beneficiaries	Amount (in Rs.)
1986-87	Sibsagar	6	6,000	5	9,400	7	15,600
	Charideo	2	2,000	2	4,000	-	-
1987-88	Sibsagar	8	12,000	6	6,700	5	9,900
	Charideo	2	7,000	2	5,000	-	-
1988-89	Sibsagar	4	8,875	3	3,000	2	2,500
	Charideo	4	5,000	-	-	-	-
							28,000

Source : District Industry Centre, Sibsagar (collected by the author)

Tables 6.9 and 6.10 show sub-divisionwise amount allotted and beneficiaries (general, scheduled caste and scheduled tribe) separately for each sub-division. The former one (Table 6.9) shows the beneficiaries under loan scheme to small scale industrial units and the later (Table 6.10) shows the loan to handicraft artisans.

The period covered in three years - 1986-87 to 1988-89. During these three years, as shown in Table 6.9, altogether 84 and 33 persons were benefited in Sibsagar and Charaideo sub-divisions respectively under loan schemes to small scale industrial units. A total sum of Rs. 140,600/- and Rs. 48,800/- were distributed as loan to different small scale industrial units in Sibsagar and Charaideo sub-divisions respectively. Of these a sum of Rs. 23,200/- and Rs. 39,400/- were distributed in Sibsagar sub-division to scheduled caste and scheduled tribe communities respectively; in Charaideo sub-division, the respective share of Rs. 16,400/- for scheduled castes were distributed, there being no scheduled tribe beneficiaries. However, in per capita terms the scheduled caste and schedule tribe beneficiaries were given a much higher amount. The same is true in case of loan given to handicraft artisans as may be seen in column 6 of Table 6.10. This shows that, given the assumption that,

scheduled tribes and also scheduled castes are economically backward than the general population, an increase per capita amount of loan given to scheduled caste and scheduled tribe communities were in the right direction.

Central Investment Subsidy Scheme 1986

The DIC has also taken initiative for expanding industrial sphere by giving subsidy/incentives to various industrial units. Table 6.11 and 6.12 show the performance of DIC in this regard.

Table 6.11 (page 170) and 6.12 (page 171) reflect the industrial units receiving subsidy under Central Investment Subsidy Scheme and expenditure incurred under Scheduled Caste and Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP), respectively, in Sibsagar and Charaideo sub-division. It will appear from the Table 6.11 that a subsidy of Rs. 44 lakhs could generate employment 131,400 mandays or 438 persons throughout the year. In other words an annual expenditure of about Rs. 10,000/- is a necessary cost for creating employment for 438 persons.

Table 6.11

Industrial Units Receiving Subsidy under Central Investment Subsidy Scheme - 1986

Name of the Unit	No. of Unit	Sub-Division	Amount of Subsidy (Rs.)	Per Year Employment Generation (Mandays)
Saw Mill	1	Sibsagar	77,299	8,100
"	2	Charaideo	1,76,450	9,900
Brick Indus.	2	Sibsagar	1,22,391	20,400
" "	1	Charaideo	81,522	10,200
Stone crushing	2	Sibsagar	1,65,758	6,000
" "	2	Charaideo	1,74,784	6,000
Paper printing or Printing Press	2	Sibsagar	63,501	4,200
Knitting & Tailoring	1	Sibsagar	56,880	3,000
Welding Workshops	1	Sibsagar	72,390	6,000
Flour Mill, Rice Mill	4	Sibsagar	15,75,683	8,100
Hotel	2	Sibsagar	7,21,398	7,200
Air Product	1	Sibsagar	2,50,000	8,100
Tea Indus.	1	Charaideo	8,26,721	9,600
Studio	1	Sibsagar	38,944	900
Spice Grin-	2	Sibsagar	Power line	1,800
Wooden Elect.	2	Sibsagar	Subsidy	2,700
Steel Fabric	2	Sibsagar		2,700
Weldings etc.	11	Sibsagar		16,500
	40	Sibsagar = 34 Charaideo = 6	44,03,721	1,31,400

Source : Official Record of District Industry Centre, Sibsaagar (computed by the author).

Table 6.12
Expenditure of Development Scheme 1986-87 and 1987-88 under Industry Department in Sibsagar Sub-Division (both SC/ST)

Name of the Scheme	Under SC Plan		Under TSP Plan or ITDP	
	Expenditure during (Rs.)		Expenditure during (Rs.)	
	1986-87	1987-88	1986-87	1987-88
Implant Training/Training Programme	Nil	2,622	Nil	2,200
Supply of Improved Tools	9,300	5,400	6,800	5,500
Prizes to best craftsmen/ Promotion scheme of Handicraft	1,500	750	750	750
Loan to S.S.I. Units	21,000	7,200	24,000	5,500
Loan to Handicraft units	15,000	5,000	18,600	5,000
Seed/Margin Money Loan to EMTC	Nil	5,200	Nil	4,400
Special Capital Investment Subsidy	20,000	41,232	Nil	21,372
Incentive Scheme	Nil	1,800	Nil	6,000

Source : District Industry Centre, Sibsagar (collected by the author)

6.5 An Evaluation of Performance of Sub-Divisional Planning

The difficulties of estimating the overall performance notwithstanding, we may note that industrial sector has relatively created more employment opportunities than agriculture. The agriculture sector, as we have noted, could not perhaps make much headway due to natural calamities. Technology and inputs given at subsidised rates and financial assistance could not overshadow the affect of natural disaster. Flood has been almost a recurring event in the two sub-divisions of the district. Increased fertilizer use has perhaps been more than neutralised the affect of the flood. The erratic nature of crop pattern and that of land use has been mainly due to exogenous factors namely flood and drought.

However, one redeeming feature in the otherwise not so bright picture is that the sub-divisional planning authority has taken up a few schemes allied to agriculture, namely, special rice production programme, Poor Agriculture and Small and Marginal Farmers' Programme, H.Y.V. Seed Distribution Scheme, Oilseed and Pulse Development Scheme, Land Reclamation, etc. These schemes notwithstanding the overall development in agriculture will, as we have noted, depend very much on the land distribution system over which, perhaps the sub-divisional planning authority have not got much to do.

This change has to be brought from above namely the State.

In our field investigation, we have also noted the problem faced by the sub-divisional planning authority in execution of certain schemes. For example, the biggest hurdle faced in the execution of the irrigation scheme appears to be the non-timely settlement of land assessment. In view of this, owners do not allow their land to be used as canals. Now had the sub-divisional planning authority been given full responsibility of settling the cases of land compensation, planning and execution of irrigation - a vital input for agricultural growth - would have been smooth. But, for administrative reasons, such cases are settled at the district level. For these and other reasons, as we have noted in Chapter III, that although as a unit of planning a sub-divisional planning mechanism would have been nearer to the people, but for administrative convenience and competence and expertise in planning formulation and its execution, it is perhaps better if the district instead of the sub-division is made a unit of planning.

Lack of coordination is another shortcoming for which district as compared to sub-division stands as a better unit of planning. This aspect has been highlighted by several interviewees in the course of our field

investigation.⁴

The problem of agricultural production is a problem of bringing about proper combination of soil, water, plants and people for production. A variety of factors are responsible for this state-of-affairs, most important of which, being natural, technical, economic, social, structural, institutional and administrative obstacles in the way of optimal utilization of our land resources. Lack of productive investment, inadequate marketing facilities for agricultural inputs and output, slow process of land reform policy, lack of area specific research, farmers' conservative outlook, ignorance, illiteracy, etc. stand in the way of modernizing agriculture. Only official organs are insufficient for spearheading the development process. Farmers must come forward to take up development works as their own for further output growth. Until and unless natural calamities are protected all efforts would be washed away by them.

Besides, to make agriculture more remunerative rather than subsistence, following steps should be taken :

1) For better quantitative production, provision of irrigation, HYVs, fertilizers and implements at concessional rate should be provided more than now.

4. Such lack of coordination has resulted in water-logging in many areas in the vicinity of agriculture fields ultimately affecting agricultural output.

2) Programme formulation and target fixation should be done, in view of the local situation, at the village level and mainly by local initiative.

3) Improvement of farm organisation and land management.

4) Providing workshops for repairing agricultural implements at least in block level.

5) Practical demonstrations should be made regularly and locally.

6) Provision of adequate credit management and selection of genuine beneficiaries.

7) Regular and constant supervisory visits of officials.

8) Whole-hearted approach on the part of officials as well as workers.

9) Upgradation of existing technologies.

In the field of industry, as we have noted certain specific activities like furniture making, woodcraft, packaging, manufacturing of semi-durable goods, development of handicraft industries, etc. may be geared up with local resources including manpower. Here also, as

we have noted already, sub-divisional planning authority has taken up a number of schemes, given adequate financial help to economically backward segments of population. Yet, it appears that there is scope to boost-up the activities further if production can be geared to meet the demands likely to originate from tea industry, ONGC, and petroleum industries in general located in the vicinity of the sub-division. A marketing mechanism, a channel of communication between the later, and the planning authority is necessary. For these tasks again, in our view, a district planning unit may be relatively better placed vis-a-vis a sub-division.

Part B

PROJECT EVALUATION

6.6 Introduction

This section deals with the concept of project evaluation and cost-benefit analysis on the two particular projects, namely, Brick Manufacturing Industry and Rice and Wheat Production.

The term 'evaluation' is used more formally to denote the process of analysing a number of plans or projects with a view to searching out their comparative advantages and disadvantages and the act of setting down

the findings of such analysis in a logical framework.⁶ In other words, evaluation assesses the overall project effects, both intentional and unintentional and other impact. The major focus is to find out the areas of comparative success or failure both in programme implementation and its impact and to identify the factors responsible for success and failure.

6.7 Purpose and Significance

The purpose of project evaluation is to help the planner or the policy maker in choosing between alternative projects of development on the basis of an evaluation on their relative costs and returns. As far as costs are concerned, an estimate is to be made of direct as well as indirect costs. It is necessary to work out the direct cost of a project, i.e. the value of inputs - raw materials, energy, labour of various skills. This apart the indirect cost of a project are also to be estimated and included in cost benefit analysis. As in the case of cost, benefit can also be of direct and indirect type. The usual approach to estimate direct benefit is firstly, through the market value of output produced, and secondly, through the cost of producing the same/other output in some alternative manner.

5. Lichfields M. and Whitbread, M., Evaluation in the Planning Process, Pergamon International Library, Oxford, first edition, 1975, p. 4.

Decision takers require information about the social welfare consequences of proposals to help them to form a sound based choice. Evaluation also generates evidence for policy makers to use in defending their decisions as well as in the process of arriving at them. Thus the primary justification for undertaking evaluation analysis is that they assist the process of decision-taking. Evaluation has been characterised as a learning process, whereby in the endeavour to secure evidence of the advantages and disadvantages of particular plan designs, new insights are obtained which lead to the generation of superior alternatives.

Another justification for measurement of evaluation is that it reduces the extent of subjective judgement, although this can never be eliminated because uncertainty inevitably surrounds the quantification of forward looking estimates.⁶

The significance of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system has increased in recent years with the growing emphasis on reaching the benefit of development to the rural poor through anti-poverty programmes. The second major impetus to the growing interest in M&E over the past

6. Ibid., p. 99.

four decades relates to an important cause of the failure of development efforts. Thus, monitoring and evaluation as a tool for effective coordination and implementation of development programmes help the planners, decision makers and implementors at all stages of programme implementation.⁷

6.8 Cost-Benefit Analysis

Cost-benefit analysis is a tool in project evaluation or project appraisal. The essence of this method is to determine all costs incurred by and all benefits received from the project throughout its life. In measuring these costs and benefits both private and social costs and benefits are taken into account. A project yielding benefit/cost ratio 1 or higher is considered desirable. In the case of more than one project involved, the projects have to be ranked according to their benefit/cost ratios. The one with highest benefit/cost ratio should be implemented first.

In our analysis we have taken two projects, namely, a) Brick Manufacturing Industry and b) Rice and Wheat Production. Let us first discuss the Project A with few assumptions regarding certain given conditions.

7. Maurya, R.D., 'Rural Development : Monitoring and Evaluation, A Conceptual Framework', Journal of Rural Development, NIRD, Hyderabad, India, Vol. 8(5), pp. 497-499, 1989.

6.8(a) Brick Manufacturing Industry

Given Conditions

1. Total area of land 3 acres (cost : Rs. 48,000/-)
2. Material cost (in the initial year Rs. 20,000/-)
3. Labour shed cost (Rs. 19,000/-)
4. Total wage cost (Rs. 2,04,000/- assuming men employed throughout the year 10,200 mandays x Rs. 20/- per day). For 5 years (10,200 x 5 = 51,000 mandays).
5. Brick production 3 lakhs per year and annual income Rs. 3,60,000/- (at the rate of Rs. 1,20,000 per lakh).

Assumptions

1. Depreciation cost Rs. 3000/- per annum (5 years = Rs. 15,000/-)
2. 10% interest rate (on fixed cost and variable cost)
3. 10% price escalation per annum.
4. 5% operational loss, i.e., default in receipt of payment etc., and 5% for tax/donation etc. (5% + 5% = 10% from gross earnings)
5. Project life 5 years. But for alternative agricultural production it would take another 5 years, i.e., 5 + 5 = 10 years.

On the basis of the above 'Given Conditions' and 'Assumptions', we analyse the cost-benefit of Brick Manufacturing Industry in Table 6.13.

Table 6.13
Project A

Brick Manufacturing Industry

Year	Fixed Cost			Variable Cost					Operational loss 5% + tax, donation etc. 5% = 10% of TR	Income Total Revenue from Bricks	Cost Total cost (7+8+9)	Profit Total profit (10-11)
	Land Purchase 3 acres of agri-cultural land	Depre-ciation of agri-cultural land	Shed, Labour housing etc.	Material cost power, coal etc.	Labour cost	Interest const @ 10%	Cost without operational loss etc.	8				
1	48,000	3,000	19,000	20,000	2,04,000	29,400	2,94,000	36,000	3,60,000	3,59,400	600	
2	-	3,000	-	22,000	2,24,400	24,940	2,49,400	39,600	3,96,000	3,13,940	82,060	
3	-	3,000	-	24,200	2,46,840	27,404	2,74,040	43,560	4,35,600	3,45,004	90,596	
4	-	3,000	-	26,620	2,71,524	30,114	3,01,144	47,916	4,79,160	3,79,174	99,986	
5	-	3,000	-	29,282	2,98,676	33,095	3,30,958	52,707	5,27,076	4,16,760	1,10,316	
Total	48,000	15,000	19,000	1,22,102	12,45,440	1,44,953	14,49,542	2,19,783	21,97,836	18,14,278	3,83,558	

Annual Average Profit

76,711.6

6.8(b) Rice and Wheat Production

As an alternative of Brick Manufacturing Industry in the second project we take Rice and Wheat Production (Project B). Our given conditions and assumptions are :

Given Conditions

1. Land is 3 acres (as in the case of Project A).
2. Employment: 2 men for 5 months and 50 mandays as casual labour ($30 \times 5 \times 2 + 50 = 350$ mandays).
3. Wage Rs. 15 per day. Therefore, 1 year wage is Rs. 5250 (350×15).
4. Project life is 10 years.
5. Per acre cost of production of inputs (other than labour) is Rs. 400. Therefore, 3 acres cost is (400×3) = Rs. 1200 in the first year.

Assumptions

1. 10% price escalation per annum.
2. Double cropping, i.e. Wheat and Rice
 - a) Rice production 5 quintals per acre and price of rice per quintal is Rs. 300. Therefore, income from rice from 3 acres of land is ($5 \times 3 \times 300 =$ Rs. 4,500 in the first year).
 - b) Wheat production 4.8 quintals per acre and price per quintal is Rs. 250. Therefore, first year's income from wheat from 3 acres of land is ($4.8 \times 3 \times 250 =$ Rs. 3,600).
3. Depreciation cost is half of the Project A,⁸ i.e., 50 per cent per year. As the life of Project B is 10 years, therefore total depreciation cost is ($1,500 \times 10 =$ Rs. 15,000).

⁸. Half of the cost of the Project A is Rs. 1,500/- per year, because in agriculture land not much affected as that of Brick Manufacturing Industry.

Table 6.14

Project B

Rice and Wheat Production

Year	Investment in 10 yrs. (Rs.)					Income Generation in 10 yrs.			Profit (Net)	
	2	3	4	5	6	Income from Rice Production	Income from Wheat Production	Total income (7+8)	Total Profit (9-6)	10
1st Yr.	5,250.0	1,200	645.0	6,450.0	7,095.0	4,500	3,600	8,100	1,005.0	
2nd Yr.	5,775.0	1,320	709.5	7,095.0	7,804.5	4,950	3,960	8,910	1,105.5	
3rd Yr.	6,352.5	1,452	780.4	7,804.5	8,584.9	5,445	4,356	9,801	1,216.1	
4th Yr.	6,987.5	1,597	858.4	8,584.5	9,442.9	5,989	4,791	10,780	1,338.1	
5th Yr.	7,686.0	1,756	944.2	9,442.0	10,386.2	6,587	5,270	11,857	1,470.8	
6th Yr.	8,454.5	1,931	1,038.5	10,385.5	11,424.0	7,245	5,797	13,042	1,618.0	
7th Yr.	9,299.5	2,124	1,142.3	11,423.5	12,565.8	7,969	6,376	14,345	1,779.2	
8th Yr.	10,229.0	2,336	1,256.5	12,565.0	13,821.5	8,765	7,013	15,778	1,956.5	
9th Yr.	11,251.5	2,569	1,382.0	13,820.5	15,202.5	9,641	7,714	17,355	2,152.5	
10th Yr.	12,376.5	2,825	1,520.1	15,201.5	16,721.6	10,605	8,485	19,090	2,368.4	
Total	83,662.0	19,110	10,276.9	102,772.0	113,048.9	71,696	57,362	129,058	16,010.1	

6.9 Comparative Advantage of Qualitative Assessment of Projects A and B

If ranking or listing of the projects in some order of priority is considered, it is possible to rank the projects on the basis of qualitative judgement as well. Here it is important to assess the relative significance of various factors and though it is not possible to express these values in money terms, yet one may attempt to give each of these factors a certain weightage which would help in estimating their relative significance and assigning them a rank in the list of priorities.

Here, we attempt to arrange the Project A and Project B in order of priority by assigning hypothetical values. This can be illustrated by a simple arithmetical example.

Let the objectives of the projects be expressed as :

- Y - Increase in income
- E - Increase in employment
- I - Increase in indirect effects.

Project A will yield increase in the above three items (Y, E and I) and this is indicated by Y_1 , E_1 and I_1 . Similarly, Project B will yield Y_2 , E_2 and I_2 . A value has to be attributed to these increases. Let these be p, q and r. Then the valuation of the -

Project A will be $V_1 = Y_{1p} + E_{1q} + I_{1r}$, and that of Project B will be $V_2 = Y_{2p} + E_{2q} + I_{2r}$. We assume that the capital invested $k_1, k_2 \dots k_n$.

In order to calculate the total value contribution of the two projects, we have to fix relative values for the objectives.⁹ Let us suppose that an increase in income of Rs. 1 lakh = 1000 mandays creation = Rs. 50,000 indirect benefit. Then the valuation of the Project A and Project B would be :

<u>Project A</u>	<u>Project B</u>
$Y_1 = \text{Rs. } 21.98 \text{ lakhs}$	$Y_2 = \text{Rs. } 1.29 \text{ lakhs}$
$E_1 = 51,000 \text{ mandays}$	$E_2 = 3,500 \text{ mandays}$
$I_1 = \text{Rs. } 50,000$ (assumption)	$I_2 = \text{Rs. } 12,500$ (assumption)

Then,

$$\text{Project A} = 21.98 + 51.00 + 1.00 = 72.98$$

$$\text{Project B} = 1.29 + 3.50 + 0.25 = 5.04$$

For comparative analysis, as land cost of Project B is not assumed so land cost of Project A should be avoided. In that case then the total cost of Project A would be Rs. 18.14 lakhs - 0.48 lakhs = 17.66 lakhs.

9. U.N., Programming Technique for Economic Development, Bangkok, 1960, pp. 35-39.

Like that as depreciation cost of Project A is included in Table 6.13 or calculated as Rs. 15,000 (Rs. 3,000 per year for five years), so the depreciation cost of Rs. 15,000 (Rs. 1,500 per year 'x 10) of Project B should be included now (as we have not calculated in Table 6.14) with the earlier total cost, i.e. Rs. 1.13 lakhs. Therefore, the total cost of Project B would be Rs. 1.13 lakh + 0.15 lakhs = 1.28 lakhs.

If the total cost of production of Project A is Rs. 17.66 lakhs and that of Project B is Rs. 1.28 lakhs, then the relative cost of two projects (A & B) will be :

$$\text{Project A} = 72.98 \div 17.66 = 4.19:1 \text{ (Benefit Cost Ratio)}$$

$$\text{Project B} = 5.04 \div 1.28 = 3.93:1 \text{ (Benefit Cost Ratio)}$$

∴ Project A > B.

It should be remembered that the values are fixed (as above) in somewhat arbitrary manner depending on the above assumption. Also, only relative values are indicated in respect of the projects. Thus if the objective of the project (planning) change, i.e., if greater importance is attached to employment generation than to income creation, then the cost benefit ratio of the two projects would change to the extent that the

effect of one on the employment creation would differ from that of the other. We can also calculate the average return on investment (ARI) of the above two projects thus:

Average Return on Investment

ARI = Total income - Total investment \div project life. So,

$$\text{Project A, Rs. } 21,97,836 - 17,66,278 \div 5 = 86311.60$$

$$\text{Project B, Rs. } 1,29,058 - 1,28,048 \div 10 = 1010.00$$

$$\text{Project A} = \frac{86311.60}{1766278} \times 100 = 4.89$$

$$\text{Project B} = \frac{1010.00}{128048} \times 100 = 0.79$$

\therefore Project A, Average Return on Investment = 4.89

Project B, Average Return on Investment = 0.79

As an alternative to brick manufacturing the land could have been utilised for farming. Although, in case of Project A the land will remain unutilised for the period of next 5 years, yet, the Project A is preferable to Project B from the economic point of view as far as subsequent employment generation (51,000-3,500 = 47,500) is concerned. Moreover, if there is a net gain of

employment, the income flow in the villages also would be higher. As a rough estimate this will be to the tune of Rs. 9,50,000. This again will have some multiplier effect for further growth on output, employment and income. Therefore, the subsidy given to such projects or establishment of such projects by Sub-divisional Planning and Development Council will have a positive return.

From the welfare point of view, however, the need of the Rice and Wheat Production (Project B) might intensify although the Average Return of Investment is comparatively lower than that of the Brick Manufacturing Industry (Project A). It would depend upon the decision of the planners.

Chapter VII

CONCLUDING OBSERVATION

7.1 Need for Decentralised Planning

There is an increasing realisation of the unsatisfactory performance of the centralised planning, and, therefore, there appears to be a strong case for planning at the grass-roots for a country of the size and diversity like India. In this country, there is a growing body of people specially the weaker sections who are not satisfied with the formulation of the plan at the national or state level and viewed that this type of planning cannot take a proper account of local initiative and the felt needs of the people. In fact, this type of planning can never harness local resources to the maximum. This is particularly true in a backward state like Assam where the

organs of the State have to play a vital role in initiating and sustaining economic development. For example, if the economy is to be fully integrated, the planning for the mobilization of under-employed resources, especially labour, utilization of natural resources for reducing disparities of income, and for better performance of beneficiary-oriented programmes, the success of planning can be achieved more systematically and more fully by decentralised planning particularly in the district level.

Experience of various states proved that there are numerous inherent and built-in difficulties in attempting the formulation and execution of well connected plans at village, gaon panchayat, block, sub-division and district level. It must be noted that decentralised planning cannot be applied in all spheres of economic activities. At the same time, it should be admitted that translation of above conceptual formulation into action would imply radical structural change in planning and in implementation systems. Unless Indian Federal Constitution clearly defines and delineates the relationship between the various tiers - district and sub-division, sub-division and block, block and the district, block and panchayat - at the actual operational level, decentralised planning would remain rather vague. How can

the planning process descend if autonomy is not given either at the state level or in turn to organs below the state?

7.2 Decentralised Planning in Different States

Some states like Karnataka, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Jammu and Kashmir and West Bengal have made appreciable progress in district level planning. Gujarat has made considerable progress at taluk (block) level.

Decentralised planning performance varies from state to state and the progress has not been uniform. This is due mainly to: i) difference in district level planning machinery; ii) varying interest evinced by the state leadership; iii) wide-spread intra-state economic disparities; iv) inability of transfer of power and authority to a large numebr of districts in Bihar, U.P. and Madhya Pradesh.

7.3 Sub-Divisional Planning at Sibsagar Sub-Division/ District - An Evaluation

Coming to our study we found that sub-divisional planning at Sibsagar district was not really so much decentralised as it should be. Based on our field investigation we found that out of 62 respondents who were asked how the information for the planning was collected, as many as 45 (72.6%) replied that the information was

collected above the sub-division level. Only 17 (27.4%) replied that the same was collected from the level below the sub-division.¹ From this, it appears clearly that planning mechanism is still a matter of direction from above. It is for this reason, inter-alia, that we strongly feel that the minimum level at which planning can be formulated is the district and not the sub-division. While saying this, we hasten to add that on principle, decentralised planning at the sub-divisional level would be better than that at the district level, for one simple reason that the former is closer to the rural people than the latter. For another, administration infrastructure-wise there seems to be very little difference between the two units. However, in the long run it should be the objective of decentralised planning to make the unit of planning as close to the people as possible without affecting efficiency of plan formulation and implementation. Therefore, based on our present information we are of the opinion that while the district level planning unit is made responsible for preparing and implementing the plan at present, ultimately, it should be the objective of the planners to make the sub-division a planning unit.

1. Field investigation (Appendix B).

Secondly, our reasoning for making district as a unit of planning stems from the fact that, as we have found in our investigation, priorities of planning are fixed from above the sub-divisional level, i.e., to say district level upward. Out of 58 respondents, 40 (69%) respondents were of the opinion that the priorities in sub-divisional planning are dictated either from the district office or from the state administration of Planning and Development Department. Only 18 (31%) respondents opined that the views of the Block, Panchayat as well as of Sub-division were also considered.

Thirdly, as far as the people's participation in plan formulation is concerned we find that, as already stated in Chapter IV, an overwhelming majority, as many as 24 (89%) out of 27 members in the sub-divisional planning were ex-officio members belonging to district level, development officers, sub-divisional officers, Lead Bank officer, MPs/MLAs etc. Even the 3 members who were presumably taken from the local areas, were not appointed as members till the day of our investigation. This clearly shows extreme apathy for participation of local people, which, in our view, is an indispensable necessity to make the decentralised planning meaningful and purposeful. In this connection, we would like to suggest that the composition of membership in the sub-divisional

planning (or in the district planning unit) should be based in proportion to the asset holding of the people of the area. We have seen the size of landholding in Chapter V (Table 5.6). Here under, we would like to show the broad composition of the population on the basis of these holdings :

<u>Landholding size</u>	<u>% of population</u>
Less than 1 hectare	45.6
1-2 hectare	30.4
2 above hectares	9.0
Landless and Marginal Farmers	10.0
Agricultural labourers	5.0

Unfortunately, the present composition of the sub-divisional planning and development council does not give any weightage whatsoever on the above composition in selecting members. One wonders how the people's involvement will be realised if the planning process is done on the advice and guidance of people who have a weak nexus with the rural communities.

Fourthly, planning presupposes command over resources including financial resources. At the present moment it appears that the sub-divisional planning and development council has not been empowered with sufficient financial autonomy. If planning at the sub-divisional

level is to succeed, this will call for financial autonomy to SDPC as far as the projects of which they are responsible for implementation are concerned. Autonomy also will give responsibility and such responsibility may bring certain amount of awareness in the matter of fixation of priorities within certain constraints of financial allocation. The existing financial power given to the Divisional Commissioner should be made more flexible so that he is not required to seek approval from the higher authority too often.

Fifthly, regarding the examination of selecting the best unit of planning we have found in our field investigation that district should be the best unit of planning in present socio-political set up. Out of 62 respondents, who were asked what should be the best unit of planning, 33 (53.2%) respondents replied that district is the best unit, 18 (29%) were of the view that sub-division should be the planning unit, 8 (13%) were in favour of development block and only 3 (4.8%) were of the opinion that Gaon Panchayat as the most suitable unit of planning. Sifting the information given by the respondents as to the reason why they prefer district to others, i.e., sub-division, block or panchayat, they informed us that district is the most convenient geographical unit where most units of public

administration can be found under almost one roof. Moreover, district is the result of history and has stood of the time.

In our view also it is this somewhat comprehensive nature of the spheres of the activities that makes the district a suitable unit for planning and development. If the overall development of the sub-division or district is to be thought about in an integrated way, it is essential to think the district as the best unit of planning which should serve as nuclei around which various developments in the area will revolve. This can only be done if the area is not too large and too heterogeneous to be considered as a unit of planning. The newly created districts in Assam perhaps have satisfied this criteria (most of the earlier sub-divisions are now a district).

It may be mentioned here that even the Planning Commission has also suggested that, pending clear-cut delimitation of regions for specific purposes, planning at the district level may be most effective for the best possible utilisation of local resources and ensuring popular initiative and cooperation to realise the plan targets.²

2. Government of India, Planning Commission, Seventh Five-Year Plan, 1985-1990, Vol. II, p. 414.

The emphasis on provision of more advanced services and facilities will, along with other factors mentioned below, make the district more important unit of planning than sub-division, block or panchayat level. Decentralisation is much more feasible at district level because :

Firstly, the district has the full complement of district level officers who could provide the specialist assistance needed for drawing up local plan and making fruitful modifications in schemes drawn up at the state level.

Secondly, for effective communication between the state and local levels, the district is more suitable than the sub-division, etc. as a unit of planning. The State Development Departments will find it much more feasible to deal with a limited number of districts and district level officers than with large number of sub-divisions, blocks, or gaon panchayats and their officials.

Thirdly, as conditions within most districts are fairly homogenous, the need for making further modifications in programme to suit the requirement of particular sub-division/block/gaon panchayat would be comparatively small after the pattern of programme has been decided at the district level.

Finally, attention to integrated area development and securing appropriate interaction between towns and villages is an important objective of district level planning.

while arguing in favour of district as a unit of planning, we do not necessarily mean that it should also be a unit of implementation. The latter can and perhaps, in many cases, should be levels below a district. The point, therefore, is that we should strike a path which would combine the centralised direction and guidance with decentralised implementation of various programmes of development.

Finally, we may conclude that decentralised planning is not as simple as it may appear to be. If Government has the will, people shall have the way.

APPENDIX 'A'

(Mainly relating to Chapters III & VII)

FINDINGS FROM OUR FIELD INVESTIGATION

Objectives

In order to obtain an overall picture of the planning process in Sibsagar sub-division (SDPC) a set of structured questionnaire (on the basis of preliminary unstructured interviews with the State Planning Board, District Planning Cell, Block and Gaon Panchayat and also non-officials connected with the planning process) were canvassed and the response of the respondents is discussed here. It is expected that it would provide a meaningful dimension to the interpretation of the problem, at least to some extent.

The main objective of the present study is to examine:

1. How information is collected for sub-divisional planning? Whether it is above the sub-divisional level, i.e., District/State Planning Board, etc. or below the sub-divisional level, i.e., village, gaon panchayat or development block.
2. Whether priorities are fixed from above or below ?
3. What is the evaluation procedure of sub-divisional planning?
4. What should be the lowest level of planning unit and why?

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

In our study, the following five categories of respondents were interviewed :

1. The officials in the district 'core group'¹
2. The officials in the SPDC (Sub-divisional Planning & Development Council)
3. The B.D.Os in the Sub-division
4. Gaon Panchayat Secretary
5. Head of the village (Gaon Burah)

The questionnaire canvassed is given in Appendix 'D'.

Of the above mentioned five categories question No.IV was canvassed to only category 2 (i.e. SPDC members) while category 5 (i.e., Head of the village - Gaon Burah) was asked only question No. III. In the case of sampling also we took only 4 Gaon Burahs out of 50 because, the rest seemed to have no knowledge about the planning process and they did not respond to our questions. Table A-I shows the number of respondents by status :

-
1. Core group is a professional body headed by Deputy Commissioner and consist of the District Planning Officer as the Vice-Chairman and Sub-divisional Officers (Civil) and Sub-divisional Planning Officers of the sub-divisions and the Project Director, DRDA as members. The function of Core Group is to make draft paln (for the sub-division) and place it before SPDC.

Table A-I
Number of Respondents by Status

Respondents' Status	Can- vassed	Out of	% of canvassed
District Core Group	6	7	85.7
SDPC Official	27	27	100.0
B.D.Os	7	7	100.0
Gaon Panchayat Secretary	18	22	81.8
Head of Village (Gaon Burah)	4	50	8.0
Total	62	113	55.0

1. Sources of Information

One important prerequisite for planning is obtaining of relevant information. With this in view, we are to examine whether the source of information of sub-divisional planning is taken from above or below. Except category 5 (Gaon Burah) others were asked about how necessary information are collected. Their response is given in Table A-II.

Table A-II

Sources of Information for Sub-Divisional Planning

Respondents	Village	Gaon Panchayat	Dev. Block	Sub-division	Above sub-div./ district/ Plan. Board
Core Group (6)			1	1	4
SDPC (27)			2	3	22
B.D.Os (7)			1	2	4
Gaon Panchayat Secretary (18)		1	1	3	13
Gaon Burah (4)			1	1	2
Total (62)		1	6	10	45
100		(1.6%)	(9.7%)	(16.1%)	(72.6%)

Table A-II shows that out of 62 respondents 45 (72.6%) replied that the information was collected from above the sub-division and 17 (27.4%) respondents opined that the same was collected from below, i.e., sub-division, block and gaon panchayat. It may, however, be mentioned that of the latter group 10 (16.1%) were of the opinion that information was collected from sub-division, 6 (9.7%) from development block and 1 (1.6%) from Gaon Panchayat. Therefore, we may come to the conclusion that a major source of information was from above and not from the grass-root level.

2. Fixation of Priorities

Our next task was to assess how priorities are fixed. After all, the basic objectives of any plan - centralised or decentralised - are : (i) maximisation of production by optimum utilisation of natural resources including labour and capital and thereby increasing productive efficiency (growth efficiency) and (ii) attaining social justice through minimising levels of inequality between social classes (distributive justice). Given these objectives, there may be alternative options or ways to achieve them. However, within a definite time frame, options have to be narrowed down limiting the choice to a few targets for which, a priority has to be fixed as the most desirable and feasible solution to the problem relating to the felt needs of the locality. Keeping all these in view, the basis for fixation of priorities were examined with reference to whether priorities are fixed according to the views/direction of :

- a) SDPC
- b) State Planning Board
- c) Development Block
- d) Gaon Panchayat

The distribution of responses, according to the above mentioned four views/direction are shown in Table A-III.

Table A-III

Fixation of Priorities of Sub-Divisional Planning

Respondents	Gaon Panchayat	Development Block	SPDC	State Planning Board/District Planning Cell
Core Group (6)			1	5
SDPC (27)		1	2	24
B.D.Os (7)		1	2	4
Gaon Panchayat Secretary (18)	2	4	5	7
Total 58	2 (3.5%)	6 (10.3%)	10 (17.2%)	40 (69.0%)

Table A-III, shows that out of the 58 respondents (excluding Gaon Burah) 40 (69.0%) were of the view that the priorities in sub-divisional planning are dictated either from the district planning cell or from State Planning Board. Only 18 (31%) respondents opined that the views of the SPDC, block as well as of panchayats were also considered. Out of 18 (31%) respondents, 10 (17.2%) were of the opinion that priorities are fixed according to the views of SPDC, 6 (10.3%) opined for block and 2 (3.5%) respondents were for gaon panchayat.

4. Evaluation Procedure

Evaluation is needed for making assessment of the performance and impact of a programme or a project which

has already been launched. To understand the evaluation procedure about planning at the sub-divisional level, all the categories of respondents (except Gaon Burah) were asked what yardstick they generally follow, and who made the evaluation and what is the time period of evaluation. To be precise, the question asked was whether evaluation was done on the basis of :

- a) Financial only
- b) Physical verification only
- c) Both (a) and (b)
- d) Utility creation point of view, or
- e) Evaluation is not done.

The respondents views are given in Table A-IV.

Table A-IV
Evaluation Procedure of Sub-Divisional Planning

Respondents	Financial only	Physical verification	Both (1) and (2)	Utility creation	Evaluation is not done
Core Group (6)	1	1	1	-	3
SDPC (27)	5	3	2	1	16
B.D.Os (7)	1	1	1	1	3
Gaon Panchayat Secretary (18)	2	2	6		8
Total (58)	9 (15.5%)	7 (12.1%)	10 (17.2%)	2 (3.5%)	30 (51.7%)

Table A-IV reveals that the evaluation procedure of the sub-divisional planning as opined by various categories of respondents differs from one to another. Out of the 58 respondents, 30 (51.7%) respondents opined that in actual practice evaluation is rarely made. 10 (17.2%) respondents were given their opinion that in most cases both financial and physical verification are done, 9 (15.5%) respondents opined that financial evaluation, 7 (12.1%) of them viewed physical verification and only 2 (3.5%) respondents opined that evaluation is made from the point of view of utility creation also.

In informal discussion, some of the responsible officials informed us that, due to lack of personnel and technical problems evaluation was rarely made.

Yet, the respondents agreed with the view that there are three procedures of monitoring and evaluation, i.e., by :

- a) Quarterly Review meeting of SPDC
- b) Monthly Review meeting of District Development Committee
- c) Physical Monitoring by District Planning Cell.

5. Unit of Planning

What could be the lowest level of unit for

decentralised planning? This was an examination of the hypothesis that lower the level of planning unit, the nearer it is to grass root level decision making process. The result obtained from the respondents is given in Table A-V.

Table A-V
Desired Level of Planning Unit by Respondents

Respondents	Lowest Level of Planning Unit				
	Village	Gaon Panchayat	Development Block	Sub-Division	District
Core Group (6)			1	2	3
SDPC (27)		1	3	8	15
B.D.O. (7)			1	2	4
Gaon Panchayat Secretary (18)		1	2	5	10
Gaon Burah (4)		1	1	1	1
Total (62)		3 (4.8%)	8 (13.0%)	18 (29.0%)	33 (53.2%)

Table A-V shows that out of 62 respondents 33 (53.2%) have given their opinion that district should be the lowest level of planning unit (in present circumstances), 18 (29%) viewed that it should be the sub-division (which is functioning), 8 (13%) respondents opined for development block and 3 (4.8%) respondents were

in favour of Gaon Panchayat. But, no one responded for village as a unit of planning. In fact, except Gaon Burahs majority of the others were in favour of district.

Sifting the information given by the respondents to the reasons why they prefer one to the other as unit of planning, we note below in brief the important points :

District

- i) It has past experience (administrative)
- ii) It has adequate administrative staff, i.e., available of technical and knowledgeable personnel.
- iii) Coordination would be easier in comparison to other level.
- iv) From the point of view of resources it has more economic viability and close relation with states.
- v) Plan formulation and implementation could be done by the same unit.

Sub-Division

- i) It is more closer to the people than the district.
- ii) Divisional heads are available for making a plan.
- iii) More homogeneity may be expected than district.

Block

- i) It has some past experience in development activities.
- ii) Nearer/closer the people than sub-division or district.
- iii) It is neither a very small nor a very large administrative unit with a suitable mix of population from urban and rural background.

Gaon Panchayat

- i) Grass-roots organised institution
- ii) Local problem could be highlighted in plan formulation.

No one was in favour of village as a unit of planning. As one respondent commented, in present circumstances, not to say of villages but even panchayats are not in a position to be unit of planning.

Table B-I
Income of Anguri Anchalik Panchayat (1969-70 to 1972-73)
(in Rupees)

Item	1969-70	% of total	1970-71	% of total	1971-72	% of total	1972-73	% of total
<u>Grants-in-aid from the Government</u>								
1. Agriculture and Veterinary	17,000.00	29.9	15,000.00	28.7	10,000.00	17.4	18,377.75	24.8
2. Irrigation and reclamation	15,000.00	26.4	8,000.00	15.3	12,000.00	20.9	16,000.00	21.6
3. Rural health and sanitation	1,000.00	1.8	3,000.00	5.7	5,000.00	8.7	7,000.00	9.5
4. Education	1,000.00	1.8	1,000.00	1.9	3,000.00	5.2	3,000.00	4.1
5. Social Education	1,000.00	1.8	1,000.00	1.9	3,000.00	5.2	4,371.25	5.9
6. Communication	2,000.00	3.5	5,000.00	9.6	9,000.00	15.7	10,355.00	14.0
7. Travelling allowance of President and Vice-President	3,000.00	5.3	2,000.00	3.8	-	-	-	-
<u>Anchalik Panchayat Fund</u>								
8. Land Revenue share and market sale proceeds	11,793.46	20.7	12,253.46	23.5	10,478.46	18.2	10,478.46	14.2
9. Taxes	1,020.00	1.8	1,000.00	1.9	956.00	1.7	427.50	0.6
10. Others	4,000.00	7.0	4,000.00	7.7	4,000.00	7.0	4,000.00	5.5
Total	56,813.46	100.0	52,254.46	100.00	57,434.46	100.0	4,009.96	100.0

Source : Collected and computed by the Author from Sibsagar Mahkuma Parishad, Sibsagar

Table B-II

Expenditure of Amguri Anchalik Panchayat (1969-70 to 1972-73)

(in Rupees)

Item	1969-70	% of Total	1970-71	% of Total	1971-72	% of Total	1972-73	% of Total
Agriculture and Veterinary	27,000.01	48.13	21,878.48	41.8	18,206.07	35.7	29,701.82	39.7
Rural health and Sanitation	2,008.58	3.58	659.36	1.3	5,911.17	11.6	3,548.00	4.7
Education	3,705.85	6.60	70.22	0.1	1,323.60	2.6	1,914.16	2.6
Social Education	1,058.19	1.88	1,235.10	2.4	1,907.13	3.7	3,195.61	4.3
Communication	5,326.70	9.50	8,409.55	16.1	310.00	0.6	6,840.50	9.1
Pay and other allowances of panchayat staff	14,000.00	24.95	15,000.00	28.8	8,657.84	17.0	21,507.00	28.7
Travelling allowance of anchalik panchayat members	3,000.00	5.36	4,000.00	7.6	5,100.73	10.0	5,700.00	7.6
Construction	-	-	1,000.00	1.9	7,266.40	14.3	1,150.00	1.5
Others	-	-	-	-	2,264.17	4.5	1,327.42	1.8
Total	56,099.33	100.0	52,252.71	100.0	50,947.11	100.0	74,882.09	100.0

Source : Collected and computed by the author from Sibsagar Mahkuma Parishad, Sibsagar

Table B-III

Receipts of Mahkuma Parishads (Assam)

(Rs. in lakhs)

Source of Receipts	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83 R.E.	1983-84 R.E.
Opening balance	139.1	131.4	144.1	140.6
Grants from Sub-divisional Rural Development Fund	45.8	49.8	66.6	52.8
Other Government grants including matching grants under sections 69(i)a and b	177.6	189.2	204.2	281.5
Proceeds of taxes cesses and other assessments	39.1	37.8	57.1	78.7
Loans and advances including loans raised by Mahkuma Parishad	27.3	11.2	13.0	18.0
Sale proceeds	63.5	80.9	73.4	90.8
Other receipts	81.3	102.3	102.7	119.0
Fund received in respect of transferred schemes etc.	155.1	185.6	152.6	180.8
Total	728.1¹	788.2	813.7	962.2

R.E. = Revised Estimate; B.E. = Budget Estimate

Note : Excluding M.P. of Tezpure, Mongaldoi and DhemajiSource : Government of Assam, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, 'Economic Survey, Assam 1985-1986'.

Table B-IV

Expenditure of Mahkuma Parishads (Assam)

(Rs. in lakhs)

Heads of Expenditure	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83 R.E.	1983-84 B.E
Salary and wage, pension/ gratuity	159.0	163.7	170.2	321.3
Travel expenses	141.7	15.7	16.2	19.3
Office expenses including publication, etc.	8.5	6.9	7.7	9.2
Rent, rates and taxes	13.2	13.5	15.5	26.6
Major and Minor works	126.5	153.4	188.4	248.8
Machinery, equipments, tools and plants, Motor vehicle and Maintenance	17.4	18.6	7.2	18.8
Interest/dividend	3.2	2.4	12.0	4.3
Other charges including write off and losses	7.5	115.2	116.3	11.8
Expenditure in transferred schemes, etc.	111.7	161.9	160.1	183.4
Closing balance	140.1	136.9	120.1	88.7
Total	728.8	788.2	813.7	932.2

Note : Excluding Mahkuma Parishads of Tezpur, Mangaldoi and Dhemaji

Source : Government of Assam, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, 'Economic Survey, Assam - 1985-86

R.E. = Revised Estimate; B.E. = Budget Estimate

Table B-V
Income of the Nitai Gaon Panchayat under Subsagar Sub-Division (in Rs.)

Year	Land Revenue Share	Local Tax	Sale of Pounds	Ghat	Marketing of share (M.P.)	Marketing Private	Agricultural seeds, medicines etc. grants	Equalisation Fund (M.P.)	Common poll (M.P.)	Fishery	Previous balance	Construction of roads, bridges grants	Bank interest	Office building grant	Total
1980-81	8,400	4,567	1,248	-	7,510	-	2,652	5,000	1,000	433	3,997	1,960	8	10,000	46,775
1981-82	9,682	4,381	1,002	156	5,767	-	529	9,349	1,000	-	1,187	-	-	5,000	38,053
1982-83	7,778	7,801	619	168	4,205	-	245	2,000	1,500	-	86	2,801	-	8,000	35,203
1983-84	7,778	8,805	1,288	260	6,256	555	229	2,000	1,250	-	185	-	-	8,000	36,606
1984-85	11,322	6,309	1,025	258	4,805	867	-	-	1,000	-	683	-	2	1,960	28,231
1985-86	29,338	13,504	891	677	4,468	-	-	-	-	441	826	1,770	5	200	52,120
1986-87	9,613	8,998	940	1,087	6,214	-	-	17,920	1,500	2,288	232	-	9	-	48,801
1987-88	12,248	10,142	1,188	1,509	5,000	1,992	-	5,000	-	1,934	487	-	7	-	39,507
1988-89	-	9,439	581	-	5,000	4,163	-	7,000	2,000	3,255	379	-	8	-	31,825
1989-90	16,551	5,472	280	1,531	1,500	1,020	-	-	-	260	805	2,500	13	6,879	36,811

Note : M.P. = Mahkuma Parishad

Source : Collected by the author from the official records of Nitai Gaon Panchayat

Table B-VI

Expenditure of Nitai Gaon Panchayat (under Subsagar Sub-Division)

1980-81 to 1989-90 (in Rs.)

Year	Payment of salaries of employees	President remuneration and TA	Employees TA	Office equipments etc.	Agricultural seeds, pesticides	Payment of loan and tax commission	Water supply	Festival	Construction of road and bridge	Miscellaneous	Rural sports	Office Building	Total	Expenditure for Employees Salary, TA, Establishment etc. out of total expenditure (rough estimate)
1980-81	18,287	3,230	730	250	858	1,616	1,827	1,000	240	-	-	18,693	46,731	41,433 (88.66%)
1981-82	15,743	3,749	1,571	-	417	1,551	55	338	50	681	279	13,553	37,987	35,167 (91.50%)
1982-83	25,282	2,333	1,571	-	-	992	-	321	2,092	-	200	160	30,951	27,346 (88.40%)
1983-84	21,379	2,343	1,515	-	-	1,711	-	-	-	-	-	389	27,337	25,625 (93.73%)
1984-85	48,467	9,538	4,856	-	100	2,351	-	751	200	100	-	-	66,363	62,861 (95.00%)
1985-86	40,952	7,247	3,662	-	-	2,663	-	-	200	-	100	-	54,824	51,863 (94.60%)
1986-87	36,598	1,125	6,560	-	-	3,889	-	-	-	-	-	-	48,172	44,283 (92.00%)
1987-88	33,351	-	1,300	-	-	3,544	-	229	-	629	50	-	39,103	34,651 (88.61%)
1988-89	26,049	-	850	447	-	835	-	-	-	123	27	-	28,331	26,899 (95.00%)
1989-90	37,554	-	1,200	100	100	2,248	-	-	-	202	137	240	41,781	38,994 (93.30%)

Source : Collected by the author from official records of Nitai Gaon Panchayat

Table B-VII

Receipts of Gaon Panchayat (Assam)

(Rs. in lakhs)

Sources of Receipts	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83 R.E.	1983-84 B.E.
Opening balance	13.5	14.8	13.3	11.7
Allotment out of the Sub-Divisional Rural Development Fund	40.2	65	48.9	77.5
Sums assigned by the Mahkuma Parishad	41.5	40.7	46.3	71.7
Other contribution from Government	33.9	25.1	55.7	147.5
Contribution from any local authority or private individual	2.9	5.2	4.8	13.2
Proceeds of taxes, cess fees or rates	19.9	17.8	30.1	52.3
State proceeds	14.3	13.4	21.7	33.5
Sums received by way of loan or gift	3.2	2.4	3.9	8.0
Proceeds of fees, taxes, etc. levied & collected by the Panchayat Adulot	2.1	2.5	3.3	14.3
Other receipts	10.5	13.9	25.9	46.9
Total	182.0	201.3	253.9	476.6

R.E. = Revised Estimate; B.E. = Budget Estimate

Note : Number of reporting Gaon Panchayats = 495Source : Government of Assam, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, 'Economic Survey, Assam - 1985-86'

Table B-VIII

Expenditure of Gaon Panchayats (Assam)

Heads of Expenditure	(Rs. in lakhs)			
	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83 R.E.	1983-84 B.E.
Slary	90.5	102.4	139.9	285.4
Wages	-	-	-	-
Travel Expenditure	25.2	14.9	17.3	33.0
Office expenses	7.5	7.9	8.0	11.6
Payment for professional and special services	4.1	4.5	5.4	7.4
Rates and taxes	1.6	3.2	3.8	5.2
Publications	0.6	1.5	1.5	2.0
Major works	6.8	21.1	27.5	50.8
Minor works	16.2	11.8	15.6	23.1
Machinery & Equipments, Tools and Plants	0.8	0.9	0.4	1.3
Motor vehicles	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.8
Maintenance	0.9	0.8	1.3	1.8
Interest/Devident	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.3
Pension/Gratuity	-	0.4	0.5	3.9
Written off/Losses	0.7	0.4	0.6	2.4
Other charges	10.8	20.9	14.8	22.7
Closing balance	15.7	10.0	16.6	24.9
Total	182.0	201.3	253.9	476.6

Note : Number of Reporting Gaon Panchayats = 495

Source : Government of Assam, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, 'Economic Survey, Assam - 1985-86', p. 97.

APPENDIX 'C'
(Relating to Chapter VI)

Handloom and Powerloom Industry

The particulars regarding Handloom, Powerloom triles are given in Table 6.9.

Table C-1
Handicraft Industries in Sibsagar District
1986-87 to 1988-89

Name of Handicrafts (Registered)	No. of Units	Mandays Creation per year
Cane and Bamboo	45	15,000
Wood carving	15	4,800
Knitting and Embroidery	105	31,500
Decorative Textiles	14	6,600
Brass Metal	1	600
Loin Loom	6	1,800
Silver ornaments	2	1,200
Carpets	4	1,500
Mirizim and Mishing dress	4	1,200
Musical Instrument	2	600
Musk and Theatrical Performance	2	1,200
Total	200	66,000

The District Industry centre has undertaken various schemes for the industrial development in the district and the names of the schemes and number of beneficiaries are given in Table C-II.

Source : District Industry Centre, Sibsagar
(computed by the author)

Table C-II

Various Schemes under District Industry Centre, Sibsagar
from 1986-89

Name of the Schemes	No. of beneficiaries	Facilities
Self-Employment to educated unemployed	356	Bank loan
Supply of Improved Tools	74	Grants-in-Aid
Training Programmes :		
a) Study Tour	106	Rs.100/200
b) Important training	37	Training
c) Promotional Scheme of Handicraft	4	Training
d) Prize to best craftsman	60	Rs. 150/-
Rural artisans programme	190	Training
Udyog Sahayak	127	Training

Source : District Industry Centre, Sibsagar
(computed by the author).

Table C-III

Gaon Panchayatwise Position of Drinking Water Supply in Sibsagar Sub-Division by Water Supply (PHE) Division*

Name of Gaon Panchayat/ Mauza	Total No. of Census Villages	Total Population as per 1971 Census	Total No. of Problem Villages	Total No. of Problem Villages covered before 1986	Total No. of Problem Villages covered 1986-1989	Total villages covered
A. Sibsagar Development Block						
1) Betbari	24	20,552	23	14	9	23
2) Hahchara Nagarmahal	24	15,118	24	16	8	24
3) Silakuti	49	37,012	47	29	18	47
4) Bokata	31	23,984	30	24	6	30
B. Amguri Development Block						
1) Godhulibazar	27	23,530	25	9	16	25
2) Jakaichuk	36	20,719	34	23	10	33
3) Morabozar	24	20,194	22	8	13	21
4) Salaguri	28	21,094	26	15	11	26
5) Meteka Bongaon	15	11,139	15	10	4	14
C. Demow Development Block						
1) Thowra.	48	35,260	43	34	9	41
2) Nitaipukhri	29	19,585	29	25	4	29
3) Panidihing	34	12,722	29	25	4	29
4) Kowarpur	57	31,291	52	47	5	52
Total	426		399	279	107	394

Source : Public Health Engineering (PHE) Division, Sibsagar, collected by the author.

* The Table does not include Nazira Development Block as the same is under Nazira PHE Division, not under Sibsagar PHE Division.

APPENDIX 'D'

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PLANNING FROM BELOW OR ABOVE

- 1) The officials in District Core Group
- 2) The officials in the SPDC
- 3) The B.D.Os in the Sub-Division
- 4) Gaon Panchayat Secretary
- 5) Head of the Village (Gaon Burah)

Name of the Respondent :

Designation :

Address :

Question No. I :

What is/are your source/sources of collection of information for preparation of Sub-Divisional Plan (To all other than category 5 - Gaon Burah)

- | | |
|---|-----|
| a) From villages | [a] |
| b) From Gaon Panchaya | [b] |
| c) From Development Block | [c] |
| d) From Sub-Division | [d] |
| e) From above Sub-Division (i.e. District/
State Planning Board) | [e] |

Question No. II :

How priorities of Sub-Divisional Plan are fixed? (All categories except Gaon Burahs)

- | | |
|--|-----|
| a) On the basis of SPDC direction | [a] |
| b) On the basis of State Planning Deptts./
District Planning Cell Direction | [b] |

- c) On the basis of Development Block [c]
- d) On the basis of Gaon Panchayat [d]

Question No. III :

What are the procedures of reporting/monitoring/evaluation of your projects/schemes/programmes ?

- a) Financial only [a]
- b) Physical verification only [b]
- c) Both (a) & (b) [c]
- d) Beneficiaries/creation of utilities points of view. [d]

Who made the evaluation and generally what is the time period ?

Question No. IV :

What should be the best unit of Planning? (below the state level)

- a) Village [a]
- b) Gaon Panchayat [b]
- c) Development Block [c]
- d) Sub-Division [d]
- e) District [e]

Why [] should be the best unit of planning?

Reasons
.....
.....

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