

Chapter–7

In the Field

The besetting danger is not so much of embracing falsehood for truth, as of mistaking part of the truth for the whole.

Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, 66

7.1 Introduction

This chapter contains 10 sections. All are concerned with our field trips. Section 2 focuses on three selected Districts, selected Community Development Blocks and Gram Panchayats where the field studies have been conducted. Section 3 is on the activities of key NGOs that we studied in relation to our research. Section 4 indicates types of NRM projects. Section 5 gives an account of different profiles of our respondents. Section 6 presents the nature and distribution of attitudes and opinions that we studied. Section 7 explains the indices and scores that we used to measure empowerment. Section 8 presents our observations on empowerment of women in NRM projects both on the basis of quantitative and qualitative tools of research. Section 9 concludes the chapter.

7.2.1 The Area of Field Research: The Districts

West Bengal is bordered by three countries: Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh; and five Indian states: Sikkim, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattishgarh, Orissa, and Assam. Sikkim and Bhutan are located at the north of the state, Nepal at the northwest, Bihar, Jharkhand and Chhattishgarh at the west, Orissa at the southwest, the Bay of Bengal at the south, and Bangladesh and Assam are at the east. The districts that are located at the north of the Ganges—Darjeeling,

Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Malda, North Dinajpur and South Dinajpur—are often referred to collectively as North Bengal. Geographically, this area is divided into the Darjeeling Himalayan hill region, the Terai and Doors region, and the North Bengal plains. Administratively these districts are placed under the Jalpaiguri Division.

Table 5 : Districts & Population

Districts	Area in KM ²	Population	Density/KM ²
Coochbehar	3, 387	2,479,155	732
Darjeeling	3, 149	1,609,172	511
Jalpaiguri	6, 227	3, 401,173	546
Malda	3, 733	3, 290,468	881
North Dinajpur	3, 140	2, 441,794	778
South Dinajpur	2219	1503178	677

Source: Census 2001

Out of 6 districts we decided to spread our probe into 3 districts. Malda was ruled out because of its highest density of population among the 6 districts. Jalpaiguri was a better choice from NRM point of view for it has the largest area as well as population. Darjeeling would have been another choice because of its hill aspect, smallest population size and population density among 6 districts. But due to continued agitation and unrest for Gorkhaland stable NRM projects were not to be found there. So South Dinajpur being the next small district was our next choice. The third could be Coochbehar because area wise it was in the middle of the largest and the smallest. But since we had kept Malda out we selected North Dinajpur as the third district which had 3rd position in terms of population size and second position after Malda in terms of density of

population. So ultimately we zeroed in on three districts for further narrowing down. These were Jalpaiguri, North Dinajpur and South Dinajpur. We covered two CD Blocks in each of the districts covering altogether nine Gram Panchyats. The total numbers of CBNRM groups covered through our sample were 40 of which the total number of individual members covered in our interview was 432. The analysis presented in the tables and diagrams for 40 instances reflected composite group data of 40 groups.

Some more details about these districts may be necessary for proper perspective. In a Report (2002) by the Institute of Applied Manpower Research, New Delhi it was observed that the North Bengal region has been both economically and socially underdeveloped though there are inter-district variations. The region is predominantly rural. The districts of Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri and West Dinajpur are characterized by incidence of higher proportion of Scheduled caste population (well above the State average). In Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts, the Scheduled tribe population account for a sizeable proportion, i.e. 21.0 per cent and 13.8 per cent respectively as compared to the State average of 5.6 per cent. It may be noted that at the macro level it has been repeatedly noted that, that there is a negative correlation between indicators of development and incidence of Scheduled Caste and Tribal population. With reference to the three main civic amenities i.e. electricity, safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, the districts of North Bengal were poorly placed in comparison to the State of West Bengal. Being predominantly rural the access to the infrastructure is even more limited. Districts under North Bengal were characterized by lower literacy levels (50.13 percent in 2001) whereas in the rest of Bengal it was 61.7 percent. Darjeeling district recorded a literacy of over 64 percent. In addition to low levels of literacy there is also marked gender disparity. The educational composition of main workers in the

districts of North Bengal reveals the large preponderance of illiterate workers in comparison to the State as a whole. The relative proportion of educated (matriculate and above) in the districts of North Bengal (excluding Darjeeling) was far below the State average. In comparison to the State as a whole, the level of industrialization in North Bengal is very low. As per the income estimates available for the year 1995-96, the per capita income in all the districts of North Bengal was far below the State average. However, in Darjeeling, it was just below the State average. Over a period of time, i.e. during 1990-91 to 1995-96, the per capita incomes in all the districts have increased in the region but at a slower pace than that of the State. The situation of institutional credit is also poor in North Bengal as compared to the rest of the State, particularly when we consider deposit credit ratio and per capita industrial credit. That the districts of North Bengal have lagged behind with regard to a number of development dimensions for over two decades is clear from the preceding analysis. Darjeeling district is, however, better placed from among the districts of North Bengal region in almost all important indicators.

In terms of Human Development Indicators the relevant reports of 2004 on the selected districts reveal the general backwardness of these districts. Particularly the Dinajpur region comprising two districts of the North and the South Dinajpur, ranked 11th in terms of their combined health index of 0.62 and income index of 0.39, 15th in terms of their education index of 0.53, and 13th overall in terms of their combined human development index [HDI] of 0.51. Although District Human Development Report 2010 for all the North Bengal districts have not been completed the large picture of backwardness is likely to remain not radically different from 2004.

7. 2.2 The Blocks

From each of the three districts two Blocks were randomly selected. These turned out to be Kalchini and Alipurduar II in Jalpaiguri district, Itahar and Raiganj in North Dinajpur district and Balurghat and Tapan in South Dinajpur district. From the Block level record we could find the number of SHGs and derived our sample of SHGs at random after filtering out projects that were not concerned with Natural Resource Management. The presence of NGOs was noted in the Blocks. South Dinajpur Blocks had no significant NGO presence in NRM related projects. So we decided to balance our sample by taking into account equal number of SHGs which were directly managed by DRDC under SGSY and also by Line Agencies such as Forest Department and SHGs managed by the NGOs. The number of SHGs in each Block was in the range between 1000-2000. However, only about 30% of the projects of SHGs were concerned with NRM. In all 40 SHGs were selected (20 nos. under direct government programmes and 20 with NGOs as intermediaries) which had NRM based projects , 5 each from 6 Blocks whose members would be brought under as focus group for interview and administration of schedules to one randomly selected member of each group. On the whole about 432 SHG members were interviewed. The SHGs of course were all women SHGs but all the members did not belong to BPL categories.

7.2.3 The GPs & Locations

Some details about the Gram Panchayats and locations under study would be in order. The SHGs selected fell on Durlavpur GP of Itahar Block, , 9 Gauri GP of Raiganj Block, Santali GP, Garopara GP, Dalsingpara GP and Rajabhatkhaoa GP of Kalchini Block, Majerdabri GP of Alipurduar II Block, 4 Harsura GP of Tapan Block, and 6 Danga

GP of Balurghat Block. The specific locations of the in situ projects GP wise were as under;

Table 6 : Gps & Locations

GP	Location(s)
6, Danga (Dakshin Dinajpur) of Balurghat Block	Danga, Malanehal, Mahinagar, Raghunathpur, Hossainpur
4, Harsura (Dakshin Dinajpur) of Tapan Bloc	Malahar, Rajballav Chawk, Jagadish Bati,
Durlavpur (Uttar Dinajpur) of Itahar Block	Ashrafpur, Vating Gram,
9, Gauri (Uttar Dinajpur) of Raiganj Block	Garna, Nuripur, Rudrakhanda, Nanahar Gouri, Gouri
Majhirdabri (Jalpaiguri) of Alipurduar II Block	Uttar Panialguri, Sikiyajhora,
Shantali (Jalpaiguri) of Kalchini Block	Sarnamath, Kalchini, Purba Shantali
Garopara (Jalpaiguri) of Kalchini Block	Garopara
Dalsingpara (Jalpaiguri) of Kalchini Block	Ronbahadur Basti
Rajabhatkhoa (Jalpaiguri) of Kalchini Block	Garo Basti(Rava Line), Kalkut, Rajabhatkhoa , Gadadhar Forest Basti, Poro Basti

7.3.1 NGOs in Districts: LK.P.

In our field area we found LKP working in both Jalpaiguri and North Dinajpur. In Jalpaiguri district their areas of work were mostly tea gardens and forests where land rights in most cases were not

available to the members and hence the emphasis mostly was on projects like Bee-keeping, poultry, piggery , nursery, cattle rearing, vermicompost, mushroom production and the like which did not require agricultural land. In North Dinajpur however, land was not the problem and therefore concentration was on Agriculture, fishery, Potato farming etc.

7.3.2. Basundhara

The NGO organizes poor women into small self help groups so that they are economically self reliant. It has promoted SHGs in Alipurduar-I, Alipurduar-II and Kumargram block of Jalpaiguri district. Supported by NABARD they have also organized Farmer's Leadership Training Programme at Mahakalguri GP, Turturi GP and Tatpara GP under Alipurduar-II Block

7.3.3 Janaseva

Raiganj Janaseva Society having location at DEBINAGAR, RAIGANJ in the District of Uttar Dinajpur (West Bengal) works in many women related fields such as Women empowerment awareness camp, Literacy Health & Sanitation, prevention of child labour etc. on vermicompost through SRI technology, Environmental awareness camp, mother child health care camp, legal Aids, Anti trafficking, SHG group formation, ongoing two crèche unit, and annual sports for rural child. Most of the programmes were supported by NABARD, LKP, and SHG promotional forum. As far as NRM related projects are concerned the main areas are Agriculture, Kitchen Garden, Poultry and Goatery. In 2009-10 the highest number of SHGs formed by them was 393, in 9 ,Gouri GP , which was included in our field study.

7.4 SHGs & NRM Projects

No uniform database is available for NRM related SHGs in the Districts. However as a rough estimate it can be observed that in a

Block, regardless of gradings , the number of women SHGs range between 1000-2000, about 30% the projects of which belong to the category of natural resource management. In a healthy group members generally earn between Rs 140-270 per day. The normal NRM Projects were concerned with Agriculture, Kitchen Garden, Potato farming ,Poultry ,Goatery, Piggery, Bee-Keeping, Pisciculture, Vermicompost etc.

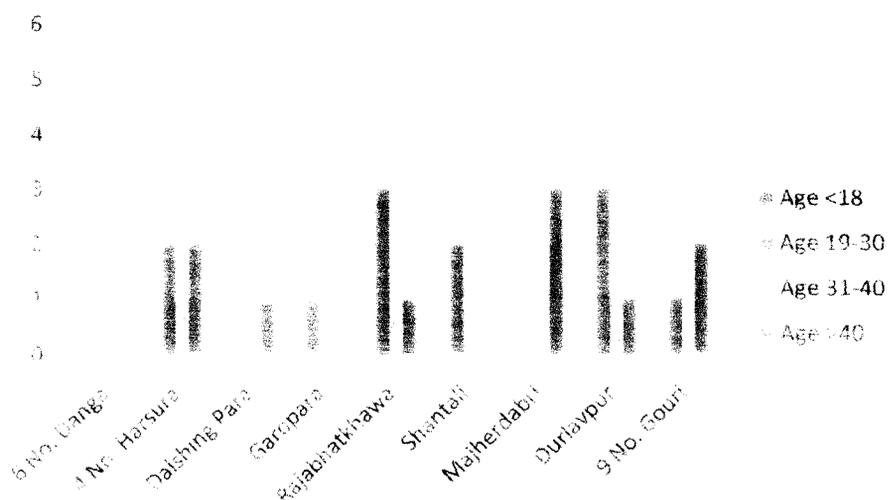
7.5 Profiles of Respondents

Following Table shows the age profiles of the respondents to our survey:

Table 7 : Age Profile of Women SHG Members

Category of SHG	District	Block	G.P.	No. of member	Age			
					<18	19-30	31-40	>40
GOVT	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balurghat	6 No. Danga	5			5	
		Tapan	4 No. Harsura	5		2	1	2
	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Daishing Para	1				1
			Garopara	1		1		
			Rajabhatkhawa	8		3	4	1
	NGO	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Shantali	5		2	3
Alipurduar-II			Majherdabri	5			2	3
Uttar Dinajpur		Itahar	Durtavpur	5		3	1	1
		Raiganj	9 No. Gouri	5		1	2	2

Source: Field Survey

Figure 4 : Age Profile of Women SHG Members

Most of the members appear to be aged between 35 to 40 years above the reproductive age group. Quite expectedly, most of them were married, the following Table shows the distribution.

Table 3 . Marital Profile of Women SHG Members

No. of member of SHG Co-1's NCC Category	Dist	Block	Village	No. of member	Marital Status		
					Married	Single	Divorced
GOVT	Raichini Dinajpur	Salughat	6 No. Dangga	5	5	0	0
			7 No. Harsura	5	5	0	0
	Jalpaiguri	Raichini	Dalshing Para	1	1	0	0
			Garopara	1	1	0	0
NCC	Jalpaiguri	Raichini	Rajabhatkhawa	6	6	2	0
			Shantali	5	3	1	1
	Uttar Dinajpur	Raiganj	Majherdabri	5	5	0	0
			Durlavpur	5	5	0	0
			9 No. Gouri	5	4	0	1

Source: Field Survey

Figure 5: Marital profile of Women SHG Members

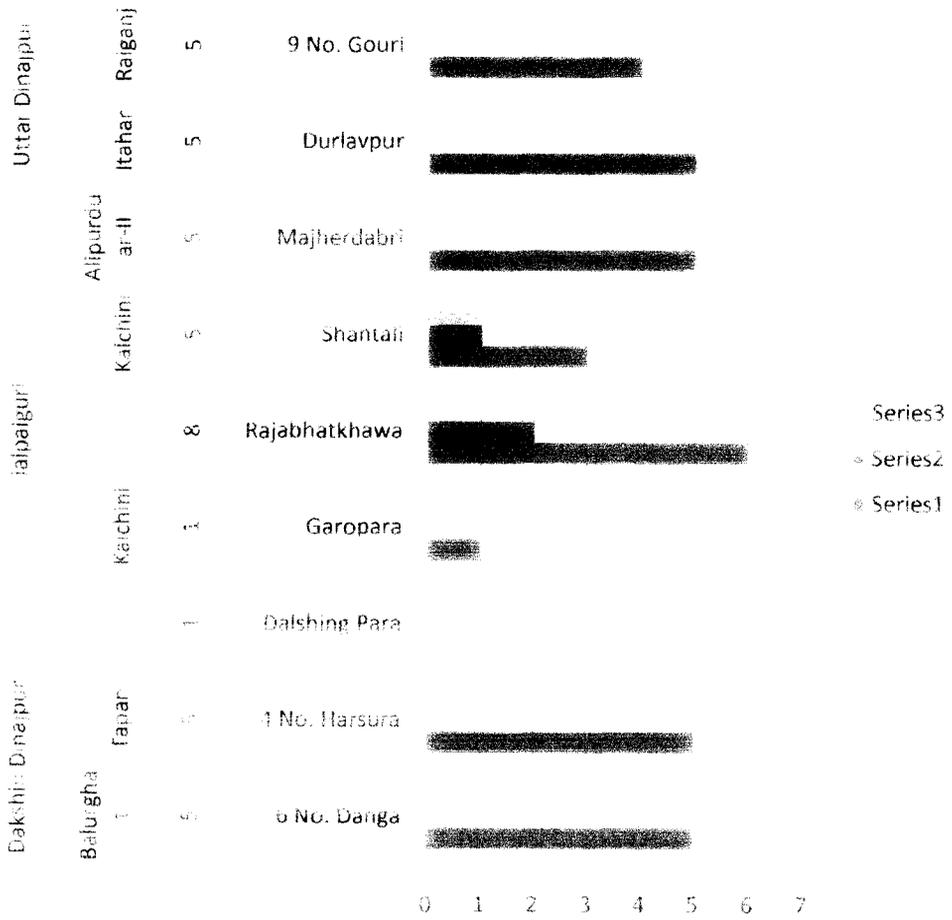


Table 9: Religion Profile of Women SHG Members

No. of member of SHG Govt. & NGO Category	District	Block	G.P.	No. of member	Religion		
					Hindu	Muslim	other
GOVT	Dakshin Dinaipur	Balurghat	6 No. Danga	5	5		
		Tapan	4 No. Harsura	5	2	2	1
	Jalpaiguri		Dalshing Para	1	1		
		Kalchini	Garopara	1	1		
			Rajabhatkriawa	2	2		
	NGO	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Shantali	5	5	
Alipurduar-II			Majherdabri	5	5		
Uttar Dinaipur		Itahar	Durlavpur	5	3		2
		Raiganj	9 No. Gour	5	2	3	

Source: Field Survey

The above Table shows that Hindus represent the major faith. But this in some areas of Muslim concentration like Tapan Block and Raiganj Block the situation was consistent.

Similarly, in Tribal majority areas of district of Jalpaiguri, as the Table given below shows, there was preponderance of ST members and SCs too in other areas of the District. In other words, the pattern did not deviate from overall demographic pattern of the area.

Table 10 : Social Categories Profile of Women SHG Members

No. of member of SHG Govt. & NGO Category	District	Block	G.P.	No. of member	Caste			
					Gen	SC	ST	OBC
GOVT.	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balurghat	6 No. Danga	5	3			2
		Tapan	4 No. Harsura	5	3	1	1	
	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Dalshing Para	1				1
			Garopara	1		1		
			Raiabhatkhawa	8	1		7	
	NGO	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Snantai	5	1		4
Alipurduar-II			Majherdabri	5	2	3		
Uttar Dinajpur		Itahar	Durlavpur	5		3	2	
		Raiganj	9 No. Gouri	5	3	2		

Source: Field Survey

When we consider Literacy and Education profiles of the SHG members, as the following Tables will show, our survey data reveal two facts which also conceal two facts. First the Tables below show that most of the members were literate and most of them attended schools. But in our case studies and focus group sessions we found that many were not functionally literate. Some could sign like drawn pictures. A minority of those who attended schools could rise to higher grades. The instances of total illiteracy and no-schooling could be found in significant numbers in Uttar Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri.

Table 11 : Literacy Profile of Women SHG Members

No. of member of SHG Govt. & NGO Category	District	Block	G.P.	No. of member	Literacy	
					Literate	Illiterate
GOVT	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balurghat	6 No. Danga	5	5	
		Tapan	4 No. Harsura	5	5	
	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Daishing Para	1	1	
			Garopara	1	1	
			Rajabhatkhawa	8	7	1
	NGO	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Shantari	5	4
Alipurduar-II			Majherdabri	5	2	3
Uttar Dinajpur		Itahar	Durlavpur	5	5	
		Raiganj	9 No. Gouri	5	4	1

Source: Field Survey

Figure 6 : Literacy Profile of Women SHG Members

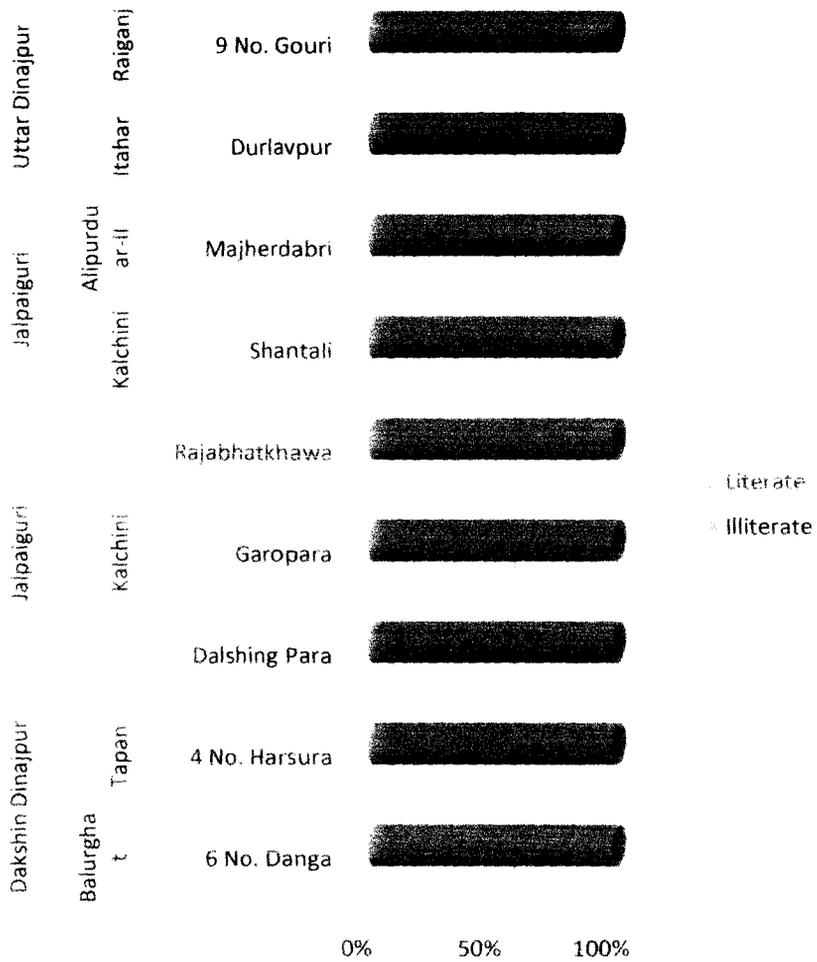


Table 12 : School Attendance Profile of Women SHG Members

No. of member of SHG Govt & NGO Category	District	Block	G.P	No of member	School Attendance	
					Yes	No
GOVT	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balurghat	6 No. Danga	5	5	
		Tapan	4 No Harsura	5	5	
	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Daishing Para	1	1	
			Garopara	1	1	
			Rajabhatkhawa	8	7	1
NGO	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Shantali	5	4	1
		Alipurduar-II	Majherdabri	5	2	3
	Uttar Dinajpur	Itahar	Durlavpur	5	5	
		Raiganj	9 No. Gouri	5	4	1

Source: Field Survey

Jalpaiguri and Uttar Dinajpur SHGs , as the following Table shows, were generally found to have outweighed SHGs in Dakshin Dinajpur in having larger-sized families. In most cases larger families involved high dependency ratio and less surplus income.

Table 13: Family Size Profile of Women SHG Members

No. of member of SHG Govt. & NGO Category	District	Block	G.P.	No. of member	Family size		
					<5	10	>10
GOVT.	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balurghat	6 No. Danga	5	5		
		Tapan	4 No. Harsura	5	5		
	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Dalshing Para	1			1
			Garopara	1		1	
			Rajapathkhawa	5	5	3	
NGO	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Shantali	5	4	1	
		Ajipurduar-II	Majherdabri	5	1	4	
	Uttar Dinajpur	Itanar	Durtavpur	5	4	1	
		Raiganj	9 No. Gouri	5	3	1	1

Source: Field Survey

The respondents to whom schedules were administered showed a remarkably high rate of political involvement. Across three districts 85% of them admitted their membership of different political parties., the Jalpaiguri District showing the highest, 95% membership, followed by Dakshin Dinajpur with 80% membership and Uttar Dinajpur with 70% membership. The following Table reveals this:

Table 14 : Political Party Membership Profile of Women SHG Members

No. of member of SHG Govt. & NGO Category	District	Block	G.P.	No. of member	Member of Political Party	
					Yes	No
GOVT	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balurghat	6 No. Danga	5	3	2
		Tapan	4 No. Harsura	5	5	
	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Dalshing Para	1	1	
			Garopara	1	1	
			Rajabhatkhawa	8	7	1
NGC	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Shantali	5	5	
		Alipurduar II	Majherdabri	5	5	
	Uttar Dinajpur	Itahar	Durlavpur	5	2	3
		Raiganj	9 No. Gouri	5	5	

Source: Field Survey

Figure 7 : Political party Membership of Women SHG Members

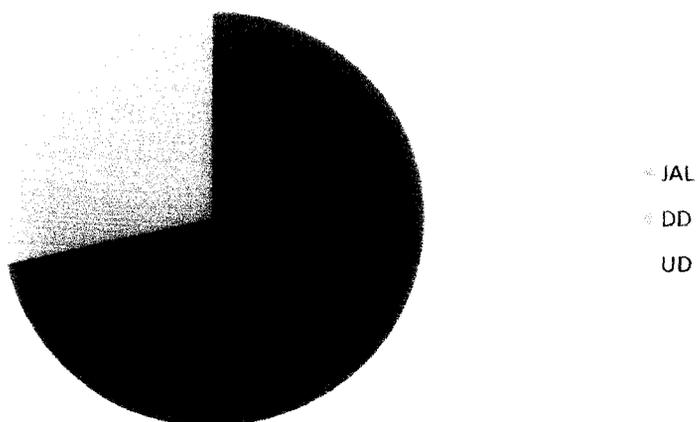


Table 15 : Kin or Relative in SHG

No. of member of SHG Govt. & NGO Category	District	Block	G.P.	No. of member	Percentage (%) of relatives as SHG Member				
					Upto 25%	25 – 50%	50 – 75%	Above 75%	None
GOVT	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balurghat	6 No. Danga	5	1				4
		Tapan	4 No. Harsura	5	1				4
	Jaipalguri	Kalchini	Dalshing Para	1					1
			Garopara	1	1				
Rajabhatkhawa			8	2	2			4	
NGO	Jaipalguri	Kalchini	Shantali	5	1	1			3
		Alipurduar-II	Majherdabri	5					5
	Uttar Dinajpur	Itahar	Durlavpur	5	3				2
		Raiganj	9 No. Gouri	5	3		1		1

Source: Field Survey

Table 16 : Members' Drop Out

No. of member of SHG Govt & NGO Category	District	Block	G.P.	No. of member	Percentage (%) of drop-out member as SHG Member				
					Upto 25%	25 – 50%	50 – 75%	Above 75%	None
GOVT.	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balurghat	6 No. Danga	5	3				2
		Tapan	4 No. Harsura	5	2				3
	Jaipalguri	Kalchini	Dalshing Para	1					1
			Garopara	1					1
Rajabhatkhawa			8	3				5	
NGO	Jaipalguri	Kalchini	Shantali	5					5
		Alipurduar-II	Majherdabri	5					5
	Uttar Dinajpur	Itahar	Durlavpur	5	2				3
		Raiganj	9 No. Gouri	5	2				3

Source: Field Survey

7.6 Attitudes and Opinions

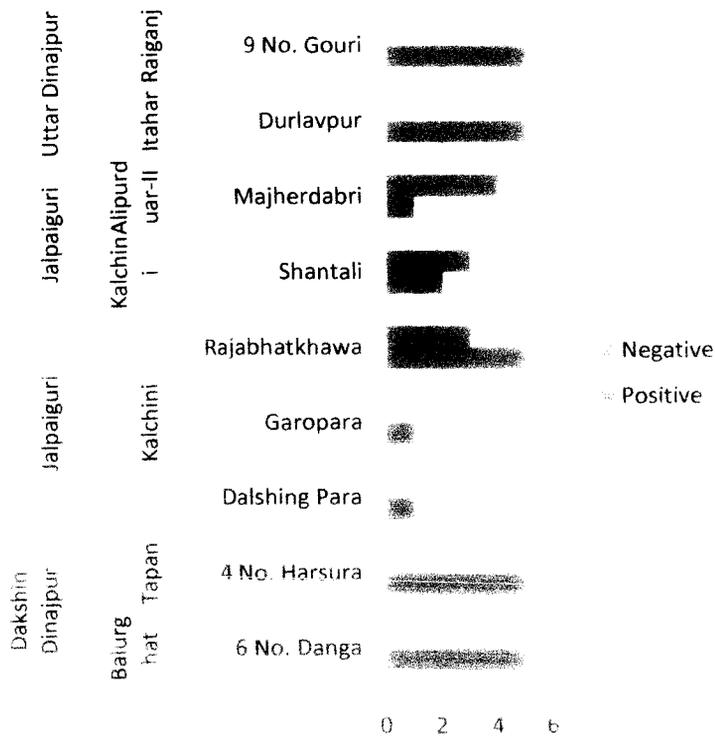
The SHGs need group bonding as a condition of success. While members of SHGs in NRM projects in South Dinajpur and North Dinajpur revealed 100% positive attitude to their fellow members and did not find faults with them in Jalpaiguri District the situation was 1:1, 50% positive. The following Table may be noted:

Table 17 : Attitude of Group members to Fellow Members

No. of member of SHG Govt & NGO Category	District	Block	G.P.	No. of member	Attitudes of Group Members	
					Positive	Negative
GOVT.	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balurghat	6 No. Danga	5	5	
		Tapan	4 No. Harsura	5	5	
	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Dalshing Para	1	1	
			Garopara	1	1	
			Rajabhatkhawa	8	5	3
	NGO	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Shantali	5	2
Alipurduar-II			Majherdabri	5	1	4
Uttar Dinajpur		Itahar	Durlavpur	5	5	
		Raiganj	9 No. Gouri	5	5	

Source: Field Survey

Figure 8 : Attitude of Group Members to Fellow Members



Respondents found no fault with Panchayat support in South Dinajpur with 100% members satisfied with Panchayat. In Jalpaiguri the satisfaction index was 60%. In North Dinajpur the negative mood about Panchayat was found prevailing with only 40% members showing a positive attitude to Panchayats.

More or less the same pattern was found in attitudes toward administration or officials. 100% members had no complaint against administration in South Dinajpur. Jalpaiguri showed 66.7% positive attitude to administration and officials while members in North Dinajpur had a low opinion about administrative support with only 40% positive opinion. The following Table may be seen in this context:

Table 18 : Attitude of Group members to the Officials

No. of member of SHG Govt. & NGO Category	District	Block	G.P.	No. of member	Attitudes of Official	
					Positive	Negative
GOVT	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balurghat	6 No. Danga	5	5	
		Tapan	4 No. Harsura	5	5	
	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Dalshing Para	1	1	
			Garopara	1	1	
			Rajabhatkhawa	8	5	3
	NGO	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Shantali	5	2
Alipurduar-II			Majherdabri	5	1	4
Uttar Dinajpur		Itahar	Durlavpur	5		5
		Raiganj	9 No. Gouri	5	4	1

Source: Field Survey

The pattern is more or less same with regard to Panchayat with Uttar Dinajpur leading in negative attitude to Panchayat. The table below may be seen:

Table 19 : Attitude of Group members to the Panchayats

No. of member of SHG Govt & NGO Category	District	Block	G.P.	No. of member	Attitudes of Panchayat Role	
					Positive	Negative
GOVT.	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balurghat	6 No. Danga	5	5	
		Tapan	4 No. Harsura	5	5	
	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Dalshing Para	1	1	
			Saropara	1	1	
			Rajabnatkhawa	5	5	3
NGO	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Shantali	5	4	1
		Alipurduar-II	Majherdabri	5	1	4
	Uttar Dinajpur	Itahar	Durlavpur	5	1	4
		Raiganj	9 No. Gouri	5		5

Source: Field Survey

Attitudes and opinions of SHG members were also collated with reference to certain reaction statements. The following Tables may be noted for distribution of these reactions:

Table 20 : Reaction of Group members to the Statements

No. of member of SHG Govt. & NGO Category	District	Block	G.P.	No. of member	If a meeting of SHG is called, then all the members will attend that meeting				
					Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly Agree
GOVT	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balurghat	6 No. Danga	5	5				
		Tapan	4 No. Harsura	5	4	1			
	Jalpaiguri	Kaichini	Dalshing Para	1	1				
			Garopara	1		1			
			Rajabhatkhawa	5	5	3			
NGO	Jalpaiguri	Kaichini	Shantal.	5	5				
		Aipurduar-II	Majherdaon	5	5				
	Uttar Dinajpur	Itahar	Durlavpur	5	1	4			
		Raiganj	9 No. Gouri	5	5				

Source: Field Survey

Table 21 : Reaction of Group members to the Statements

No. of member of SHG Govt. & NGO Category	District	Block	G P	No. of member	The SHG does not function well because members do not work for the group				
					Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
GOVT	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balurghat	6 No. Danga	5				5	
		Tapan	4 No. Harsura	5		3		2	
	Jaipalguri	Kalchini	Dalshing Para	1					1
			Garopara	1				1	
			Rajabhatkhawa	8	1	3	2	2	
NGO	Jaipalguri	Kalchini	Shantali	5	2	3			
		Alipurduar-II	Majherdabri	5		5			
	Uttar Dinajpur	Itahar	Durlavpur	5		4			1
		Raiganj	9 No. Gouri	5				3	2

Source: Field Survey

Table 22 : Reaction of Group members to the Statements

No. of member of SHG Govt. & NGO Category	District	Block	G.P.	No. of member	If I complained to the Officials about any matter of SHG then they would take immediate action				
					Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
GOVT.	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balurghat	6 No. Danga	5	4	1			
		Tapan	4 No. Harsura	5		2			
	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Daishing Para	1	1				
			Garopara	1		1			
			Rajabhatkhawa	8	2	2	4		
	NGO	Jalpaiguri	Kaichini	Shantail	5	1	2		2
Alipurduar			Majherdabri	5	1	2	2		
Uttar Dinajpur		Itahar	Durlavour	5		4			1
		Raiganj	9 No. Gouri	5	4	1			

Source: Field Survey

Table 23 : Reaction of Group members to the Statements

No. of member of SHG Govt. & NGO Category	District	Block	G.P	No. of member	If we were allowed to form SHG as we wanted then we would have performed better				
					Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly dis-agree
GOVT	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balurghat	6 No Danga	5	3	2			
		Tapan	4 No. Harsura	5		5			
	Jalpaiguri	Kaichini	Dalshing Para	1	1				
			Garopara	1		1			
			Rajabhatkawa	8	2	3	2	1	
	NGO	Jalpaiguri	Kaichini	Shantali	5	2	3		
Alipurduar-II			Majherdabri	5			4	1	
Uttar Dinajpur		Itahar	Durlavpur	5		4		1	
		Raiganj	9 No. Gouri	5	2	2		1	

Source: Field Survey

Table 24 : Reaction of Group members to the Statements

No. of member of SHG Govt. & NGO Category	District	Block	G.P	No. of member	It is only for subsidy that most people join SHG				
					Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
GOVT.	Dakshin Dinajpur	Baurghat	6 No. Danga	5				2	3
		Tapan	4 No. Harsura	5		1		4	
	Jaibaiguri	Kaichini	Dalshing Para	1					1
			Garopara	1				1	
			Rajabhatkhawa	8	2		2	4	
NGO	Jaibaiguri	Kaichini	Shantai	5	1	1	2		
		Alipurduar-II	Majherdabri	5	5				
	Uttar Dinajpur	Itahar	Durlavpur	5		2		3	
		Raiganj	9 No. Gouri	5		2		3	

Source: Field Survey

Table 25 : Reaction of Group members to the Statements

No. of member of SHG Govt. & NGO Category	District	Block	G.P.	No. of member	Other Micro-Financing Schemes without subsidy are more effective and are proving more popular				
					Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
GOVT	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balurghat	6 No. Danga	5				2	3
		Tapan	4 No. Harsura	5		3		2	
	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Daising Para	1					
			Garopara	1					
			Rajabhatkhawa	8			4	4	
NGO	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Shantali	5			1	3	1
		Alipurduar-II	Majherdabri	5			1	1	3
	Uttar Dinajpur	Itahar	Durlavpur	5		2		3	
		Raiganj	9 No. Gouri	5	1	2	1	1	

Source: Field Survey

Table 26 : Reaction of Group members to the Statements

No. of member of SHG Govt. & NGO Category	District	Block	G.P	No. of member	Party political considerations determine group formation and gradation				
					Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
GOVT	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balurghat	6 No. Danga	5				2	3
		Tapan	4 No Harsura	5		1		4	
	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Dalshing Para	1	1				
			Garopara	1		1			
			Rajabhatkhawa	8	2		1	1	4
NGO	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Shantali	5	1			1	3
		Alipurduar II	Majherdabri	5					5
	Uttar Dinajpur	Itahar	Durlavpur	5		1		2	2
		Raiganj	9 No Gouri	5		2		1	2

Source: Field Survey

Some observations from the above Tables may now be made. SHG members across districts generally feel positive about attendance in meetings which indicates a high degree of involvement of the members with group matters. In some areas of Tapan Block of Dakshin Dinajpur, Kalchini Block and Alipurduar II Blocks of Jalpaiguri, and Itahar Block of Uttar Dinajpur, however, members tend to feel negative about cooperation from other members and hold their non-cooperative attitudes as a reason for performance below expectation. But not everywhere. In Raiganj Block of Uttar

Dinajpur members are appreciative about other members' cooperation. On the whole then the opinions about fellow members are divided. Moreover, opinions have not always been consistent. For, instance, we found that members of SHGs in Uttar Dinajpur were quite critical about officials and panchyets. Yet most of them feel that officials tend to take prompt action in cases of complaint. About other areas of course one can say the opinion about officials is generally positive.

Table 27 : Views on Administrative Support

No. of member of SHG Govt & NGO Category	District	Block	GP	No. of member	Satisfaction with the Administrative support		
					Yes	No	Not sure
GOVT.	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balurghat	6 No. Danga	5	5		
		Tapan	4 No. Harsura	5	3	1	1
	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Dalshing Para	1	1		
			Garopara	1	1		
			Rajabhatkhawa	8	8		
NGO	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Shantali	5	5		
		Alipurduar-II	Majherdabri	5	5		
	Uttar Dinajpur	Itahar	Durlavpur	5	4		1
		Raiganj	9 No. Gouri	5	5		

Source: Field Survey

More clear opinion is available regarding bureaucratic control and lack of freedom which, most feel, act as fetters and more flexibility would have ensured better performance of SHGs. Opinions are generally balanced regarding the role of subsidy with a slight majority feeling that subsidy is not the chief motivating factor in joining SHGs. This view is consistent with another response to a

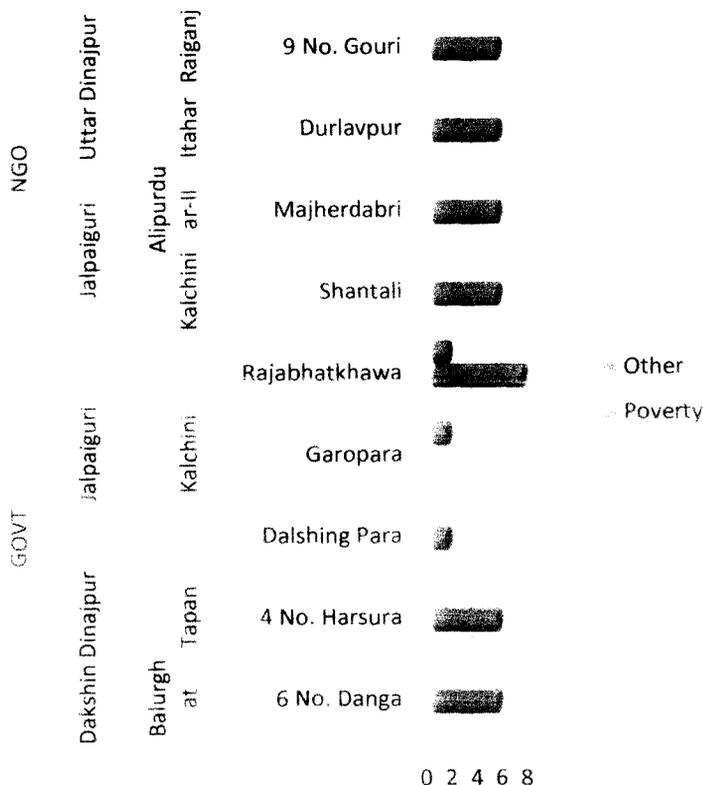
question on the main reason behind joining SHG where majority, as revealed from the following Table, consider poverty as the driving force behind joining SHG.

Table 28 : Motivating Factor behind Joining SHG

No. of member of SHG Govt. & NGO Category	District	Block	G.P.	No. of member	Factor Behind joining SHG	
					Poverty	Other
GOVT	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balurghat	6 No. Danga	5	5	
		Tapan	4 No. Harsura	5	5	
	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Dalshing Para	1	1	
			Garopara	1		1
			Rajabhatkhawa	8	7	1
NGO	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Shantali	5	5	
		Alipurduar-II	Majherdabri	5	5	
	Uttar Dinajpur	Itahar	Durlavpur	5	5	
		Raiganj	9 No. Gouri	5	5	

Source: Field Survey

Figure 9 : Motivating Factor Behind Joining SHG



But the respondents also tend to think that schemes without subsidy, like micro-finance, are not necessarily more effective or better performing. Interestingly, with high level of political party membership most of the members reject the proposition that party political consideration determine group formation and grading. Respondents were asked to identify the areas where their income has caused some impact in terms of decision making, the areas being Food and Nutrition of family members, education of minor, family health etc. and in this respect the members , as clear from the

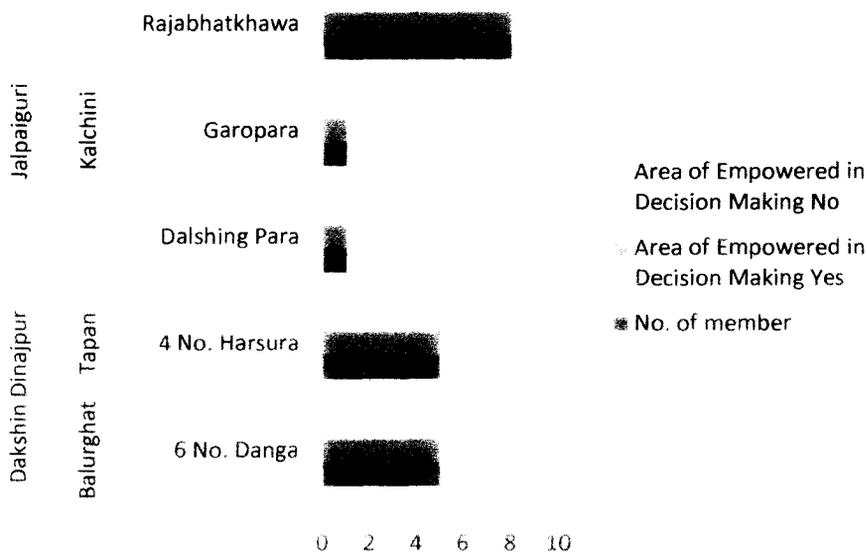
following table, felt that their earning have enabled them to influence decision in all matters.

Table 29 : Participation in Family Decision Making

No. of member of SHG Govt. & NGO Category	District	Block	G.P.	No. of member	Empowered in Decision Making	
					Yes	No
GOVT.	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balurghat	6 No. Danga	5	5	
		Tapan	4 No. Harsura	5	5	
	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Dalshing Para	1	1	
			Garopara	1	1	
			Rajabhatkhawa	8	8	
NGO	Jalpaiguri	Kalchini	Shantali	5	5	
		Alipurduar-II	Majherdabri	5	5	
	Uttar Dinajpur	Itahar	Duriavpur	5	5	
		Raiganj	9 No. Gouri	5	5	

Source: Field Survey

Figure 10: Participation in Family Decision Making



7.7 Empowerment Indices and Scores

The criteria of participation and empowerment were formulated in terms of broad based understanding of the concepts. While no comparable indices and scoring patterns could be found in relation to NRM we decided to construct such indices in relation to SHG members of NRM projects. The scores were weighted following standard statistical procedures. Economic Status, for example were scored with standard procedures on the basis of such criteria as Family Size, Percentage of earning members in the family, dependency ratio, family income, ownership and nature of dwelling house, ownership of land, loan repayment, savings, productive use of income and credit. Education status was computed by weighted indices like literacy, including reading and writing, numerical abilities, school attendance in terms of levels of education and training. Scores of Education Status were combined with such other indices to derive Social empowerment indices (SEI) as the nature of SHG in terms of social homogeneity and heterogeneity of memberships where a high

proportion of kins and relatives in a particular SHG was for instance weighted negatively compared to positive weight given to outbound social orientations such as involvement with and awareness of social issues. Similarly Economic empowerment indices (EEI) such as range of member's influence and authority over deciding family matters, member's nature of economic enterprise etc were combined with scores of Economic status in a weighted manner. Indices of Political empowerment (PEI) included different relation with political party such as support and membership, participation in meetings, processions etc. as well as political and administrative knowledge of the members. The total scores obtained for Education Status, Economic Status, Economic Empowerment, Social Empowerment and Political Empowerment were then computed with equal weight to derive scores of Overall Empowerment Status (OES). While necessary statistical procedures could never overcome fully the problems of reliability and validity of quantitative research the uniform application of these indices and scores across different types of SHGs, both NGO managed and those directly managed by the line agencies was at least expected to generate a valid comparative estimation of outcome in two different scenarios. Effort was also made to cross test the results with qualitative tools such as focus group interviews of SHGs and interviews with Resource Persons and other relevant respondents to balance our observations. Below we present the distribution of Scores for a clear picture:

Table 30 : GPs and Empowerment

Govt./NGO	District	Block	G.P.	No. of member	Status						
					Eco Stat.	Edh Stat	EI	SEI	PEI	OES	GP(%)
Govt.	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balughat	6 No. Danga	5	431	255	428	353	260	1727	69.08
		Tapan	4 No. Harsura	5	413	250	429	285	330	1707	68.28
	Balpaiganj	Kaichini	Dalshing Para	1	75	60	88	80	70	373	74.6
			Garopara	1	57	70	69	80	60	336	67.2
			Rajabhatkhawa	8	495	350	614	422	420	2301	57.52
NGO	Balpaiganj	Kaichini	Shantali	5	411	300	437	314	315	1777	71.08
		Alipurduar-II	Majherdabri	5	281	100	341	261	220	1203	48.12
	Uttar Dinajpur	Itahar	Durlavpur	5	382	190	426	203	240	1441	57.64
		Raiganj	9 No. Gouri	5	399	190	431	230	340	1590	63.6

Source; Field Survey

Table 31 : Blocks and Empowerment

Govt./NGO	District	Block	No. of member	Status						
				Eco Stat.	Edn. Stat.	EEI	SEI	PEI	OES	GP(%)
Govt.	Dakshin Dinajpur	Balurghat	5	431	255	428	353	260	1727	69.08
		Tapan	5	413	250	429	285	330	1707	68.28
	Jaipajpur	Kalchini	10	627	480	771	582	550	3010	60.2
NGO		Kalchini	5	411	300	437	314	315	1777	71.08
		Alipurduar-II	5	281	100	341	261	220	1203	48.12
Uttar Dinajpur	Itaha	5	382	190	426	203	240	1441	57.64	
	Raiganj	5	399	190	431	230	340	1590	63.6	

Source; Field Survey

Table 32 : Districts and Empowerment

Dist.	Type of SGH	No. of member	Status						
			Eco Stat.	Edn. Stat	EEI	SEI	PEI	OES	Dist. (%)
DD	Govt.	10	844	505	857	638	590	3434	68.68
Jalpaiguri		10	627	480	771	582	550	3010	60.2
Jalpaiguri	NGO	10	692	400	778	575	535	2980	59.6
UD		10	781	380	857	433	580	3031	60.62

Source: Field Survey

7.8. Observations on Empowerment

It has been found that in South Dinajpur where the NRM programmes were all managed by the Government Line agencies the average score of Overall Empowerment obtained was 68.68 , which was marginally on the higher side than those of the two other districts, North Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri where NGOs were involved. In North Dinajpur the average score of Overall Empowerment was 60.62 and in Jalpaiguri 60.2. From this one is likely to derive an idea that NGOs have actually failed as catalysts. But a little more analysis will reveal a different picture. In our Field research Jalpaiguri was the district where we could obtain a ground to segregate the Government managed and NGO managed programmes and the scores obtained by the members. When we isolate the NGO managed programmes the average of Overall Empowerment Scores become marginally different , 59.6 in relation to 60.2. If we allow the point that all NGOs might not have been equally effective we get a more significant

result. In Jalpaiguri, where Lok Kalyan Parisad worked, the average score of Overall Empowerment Status was 71.08, much higher than both the district average of 60.2 and average of NGO managed projects which was 59.6. The low average of NGO managed projects was a function of low average scores obtained in projects managed by Basundhara which was 48.12. Even when we look at North Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri where the former was totally NGO managed and Government managed programmes of Jalpaiguri both reveal the same average score of Overall Empowerment, i.e. 60%. But when we isolate the area of North Dinajpur under the management of another NGO, Janaseva, the score is higher, i.e., 63.2. From these while we cannot reach any conclusive evidence about the positive influence of NGOs in obtaining a higher score of Overall Empowerment Status another piece of micro-level information tends to project such a positive evaluation. Kalchini Block in Jalpaiguri district provides a setting where we could compare both Government managed SHGs and NGO (LKP) managed SHGs. In Kalchini Average Scores of NGO managed SHG members was 71.08 compared to Average Scores of Overall Empowerment status of Government managed projects which was 60.2. The higher average score of South Dinajpur might have been due to some other factor which created a contrast between South Dinajpur on the one hand and North Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri on the other.

The lower average scores of two districts of North Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri in relation to South Dinajpur could be explained by certain offsetting conditions. WBHDR(2004) showed that North Dinajpur lagged behind South Dinajpur in several vital spheres of human development including education, basic healthcare and livelihood. The aggregate literacy rate for North Dinajpur in 2001 amounted to 48.6 percent as against 64.5 percent for South Dinajpur, with a differential female literacy rates being more striking, 37.2 percent for

North Dinajpur and 55.1 percent for South Dinajpur. Similarly North Dinajpur revealed a lower staffing ratio compared to South Dinajpur in primary schools. The District Domestic Product (DDP) taken in per capita terms amounted to Rs. 11,183 per person for North Dinajpur as against Rs. 14,579 per person for South Dinajpur. Undoubtedly the human development situation in North Dinajpur is more desperate than that of South Dinajpur. More details of backwardness of specific zones and sub regions of North Dinajpur are provided by WBDHR 2010.

Jalpaiguri's topographical features also have certain uniqueness from development point of view. Flood situation has been a recurrent feature in the monsoon. In 1992 Jalpaiguri district became home to Buxa National Park, which has an area of 117 km² (45.2 sq mi).[11] It is also home to Gorumara National Park, which was established in 1994 and has an area of 79 km² (30.5 sq mi). Apart from the national parks, the district contains three wildlife sanctuaries: Buxa (located adjacent to its namesake national park), Chapramari, and lastly Jaldapara, which it shares with Cooch Behar district. The forest villages within the forest areas suffer from several difficulties like lack of communication facilities, growing incidence of man-animal conflict and absence of land rights.

Jalpaiguri also has large number of tea gardens. It has 14 big and several small tea gardens. Sickness of these tea gardens has been an endemic feature of this district which has led to many starvation deaths. In June 2007, Sabyasachi Sen, Trade and Industry Secretary, Govt. of West Bengal admitted that poverty is the cause for a high number of deaths in the tea gardens of West Bengal. According to Sen the highest number of deaths, 68, was reported from Kalchini Gardens. In the tea gardens the workers do not have any land rights and little avenue for livelihood generation when gardens become sick. In view of the above the relatively better

scores obtained the government managed NRM projects in South Dinajpur need to be counterbalanced by certain adverse conditions in two other districts before reaching any conclusion about limited significance of NGOs as catalysts of Overall empowerment of women in NRM projects.

The distribution of scores of Education Status, Economic status, Economic Empowerment Index (EEI), Social Empowerment Index (SEI) and Political Empowerment Index (PEI) may now be taken into account.

We subjected the scores to multivariate analysis to have an idea of the degree of interrelationships and the results were as under:

Rank Correlation Coefficient between Economic Empowerment Index(EEI) and Social Empowerment Index (SEI) is 0.361, between Social Empowerment Index (SEI) and Political Empowerment Index (PEI) is 0.2895 and between Political Empowerment Index (PEI) and Economic Empowerment Index(EEI) is 0.4215.

A high coefficient of correlation between PEI and EEI indicates a high degree of interdependence between economic empowerment and political empowerment. Economic empowerment sets the precondition to political empowerment and vice versa. The next high degree of interrelationship is observed between EEI and SEI that hints to the fact that economic empowerment does influence the social status and empowerment of women and those women who enjoy an enhanced social position within the family and society, are likely to be economically empowered as well. Probably the two act as an enabling condition to each other. However, a low interrelationship is observed between SEI and PEI that indicates political

empowerment may not always act as an enabling condition to social empowerment and vice versa.

The scores of Overall Empowerment Index (OEI) that we analysed earlier suggested that the HDI position of a district showing the general level of development might set a conditioning factor for the observed scores of empowerment of women in NRM projects where a single factor of the presence or absence of NGOs could not be given absolute importance.

Observations from data analysis need to be balanced by certain impressions from our case studies and focus group research. These may be enumerated as follows:

- Women were generally found to have considered NRM projects as being successful in ensuring better livelihood opportunities than they would have got without these projects. This is found consistent with a current favorite strategy of poverty reduction, a pro-poor and safety net argument, because of the privileging of small-scale insiders (labor intensive, surpluses retained locally, maximization of internal trade transactions) to the exclusion of outside capital (which would lead to mechanization, loss of artisanal jobs, enclosure, privatization, export of profits and re-investment elsewhere).
- Multitasking seems to have been more rewarding economically. Several case studies conducted by us reported that active members spread out from basic NRM project; say a piggery, to nursery, vermicomposting, floriculture or mushroom cultivation.
- SHGs in Forest Villages or forest fringe villages of Jalpaiguri district were found to have problems with projects for which environment was inhospitable. The absence of land rights and threat from wildlife proved to be genuine obstacles. Elephant

raids to paddy fields are common, particularly in Boro-Crop season. Even poultry was difficult to run due to leopard attacks. But the members' spirit was high and they achieved considerable success with apiary and mushroom cultivation and often black pepper plantation along with bettlenut plantation. In Dinajpur districts therefore agriculture based projects and animal husbandry could be main types of NRM projects.

- Women in general admitted better time management between household work and project work , their own little adaptation of different techniques, a point highlighted by a line of argument favorable to CBNRM, the benefits of the small: efficient resource use and allocation, locally appropriate technologies and the successful application of indigenous technical knowledge (ITK), because local ecological specificities can be addressed by local experience and experimentation, adaptive agricultural practice, wildlife and hunting practices and forest use, local farmer networks etc.
- Lack of literacy wherever present was perceived to be a genuine difficulty to activities necessary for project work, like banking activities and record keeping. But in many cases the groups were seen smothering out the hitches as one liberate member would complement the excellent management skill of an illiterate partner.
- Several case studies by us reported that activities through SHGs helped the members gain popularity and leadership qualities and raised their expertise. Many active members also became NGO personnel, Resource Persons for Gram Panchayat or even Gram Pradhan. Some members belonging to BPL category were seen to have sent their wards to private English medium schools. This was in line with the familiar argument

CBNRM can initiate a benign cycle of effective participation, empowerment and the development of political confidence and expertise (drawing on Mamdani's (1996) work "from subject to citizen") financial independence, as the "fulcrum for democratic change" (Ribot, 2001).

- It is debatable whether this financial independence was making a dent to patriarchy. Women who were now consulted over family matters were not sure whether their voices would prevail if contradicted by the male members of their family. But some cases of single,/widowed/divorced women did show that their SHG involvement gave them not only confidence but also social respect.
- There are also external forces, the control and management by government agencies and funding organizations which often are found relevant to failure of the NRM projects on sustainability count. In our case studies in Jalpaiguri forest areas such as Poro Basti we found a whole SHG group under SGSY ultimately taken over by the Forest Department in Damanpur Range for exhibiting their own Departmental work without working for new group creation. In a reverse instance an SHG initially formed by the Forest Department lost its motivation due to management and support problems and ultimately moved under SGSY. Sustainability is often found lacking in NRM projects but this may not always be intrinsic to NRM. In case of Jalpaiguri Forest Department surely failed as a facilitator.
- It was found that Subsidy component was crucial for supporting NRM but not sufficient alone. NABARD projects lacked subsidy component and were generally found to be stagnating in our case studies. However subsidy which is an

integral feature of Forest department's projects and SGSY projects did not ensure livelihood benefits or sustainability uniformly.

- Our studies clearly show that CBNRM should be viewed much broader than the narrow confines of its origin which are perceived to be rooted in concerns for wildlife resources. It is noted that rural livelihoods and the environments that support them are complex (Turner, 2004). This complexity cannot be captured by a focus on economic benefits of CBNRM alone; it needs to include both tangible and intangible benefits. Our study found women in CBNRM projects participate both in System and Life World, they learn the rules of earning a livelihood . are as much motivated by the pursuits of money and power (Cognitive interest) as by norms of group responsibility and sharing (Regulative interest) and the opportunity they get to combine their homes and hearths and places of work according to their taste (Expressive interest). They feel the colonizing effect of system rationality, occasionally unnecessary bureaucratic restrictions, lack of vital facilities but they also resist and empower themselves.

7. 9. Conclusion

In the previous 9 sections we gradually introduced the areas under our field research. To a large extent these were concerned with proportions and percentages, so called 'number munching' but not fully. We also brought side by side our findings from case studies and focus group interviews. There have been many observations some of which would be relevant to our research questions and we would attempt to round up our observations in the next and final chapter. On the whole this chapter compels us to take a relook at

CBNRM as originally conceived as a state mediated conservationist tool to one that relates to the everyday management of use and access to natural resources with the social, political, institutional and livelihoods implications.