

Chapter V

AGENCIES AND ORGANISATIONAL UNITS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE HILL AREAS OF DARJEELING DISTRICT

A. INTRODUCTION

Before we take up a detailed discussion of the development agencies, it would be better to point out that the administrative arrangements provided for the development of the hill areas of Darjeeling district differ in many respects from those in the other districts of the State of West Bengal.

I. Before Independence : The special administrative arrangements for the hill areas started even before the passing of the Indian Councils Act, 1861, when it was a 'non-regulated area'. The Act of 1874 made it a scheduled district and remained so till 1919. The Act of 1919 declared Darjeeling a backward tract. It finally became a partially excluded area under the Government of India Act, 1935, and remained in that condition till Independence. The broad implications of these different acts were that the areas under these special provisions were not under the purview of general administration and were out of the administrative reforms introduced by the British Government from time to time.¹

II. After Independence : The administrative segregation of the district ended in 1950 with the passing of the Constitution of 1950 abolishing all the privileges of the Deputy Commissioner. A uniform administrative pattern was established in the hill areas

of the district as in the rest of Bengal. But, even after Independence, due to the interplay of various factors as we shall see shortly in the next section of this chapter, the State and the Central Governments decided to provide some special administrative arrangements for developing the hill areas of the district. Thus, the Hill Area Development Council and the Hill Affairs Branch Secretariat were established in 1973 making them responsible for coordinating and supervising the formulation and implementation of the Accelerated Hill Development Plan. At that time, the four-tier Panchayat system was also in practice in the hill areas as in the rest of West Bengal. The revitalization of the Panchayati Raj by the Left Front Government in 1978 established the three-tier Panchayati Raj System in the hill areas in conformity to the rest of the State. But in the hills, the Panchayati Raj Institution had to work side by side with the Hill Area Development Council with overlapping functions. The apex tier of the Panchayat structure, Zilla Parishad, did not enjoy and exercise its coordinating - for it had to work side by side with HADAC - supervisory and leadership powers to the extent its counterparts did in the rest of the State.

By the mid-eighties, Panchayati Raj had come to stay as a permanent feature of the State administrative system. By 1988, the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council² was formed under a tripartite agreement among the Centre, the State and the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), ending the 'Gorkha Land Movement' which was launched demanding the formation of a separate State in the

hills. With the formation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, the former Hill Area Development Council along with the Zilla Parishad was abolished. At present, all the functions of these organisations have been taken over by the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council. The Panchayat Samiti and the Gram Panchayat have ceased to function due to the GNLFF's objection to hold elections though the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Act 1988 and West Bengal Panchayat Amendment Act, 1988 have not invalidated them. However, these previous agencies of development have been included in this study keeping in view their significant implications on the public institutions of the present and the future in the hill areas and their development. For ^a ~~the~~ student of Public Administration, the interesting point to note and observe is that all these administrative changes in the hill areas have occurred at a time when the focus of development administration was shifting towards more participatory management and the decentralisation of the process of planning and implementation with a much sharper accent on equitable distribution of benefits of development. This Chapter hopes to make an objective, in-depth analytical assessment of the working of these agencies in the light of these changes.

B. FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENT FOR THE HILL AREAS

The three factors, administrative, political and planning, could be identified as responsible for the establishment of the 'Special Administrative Arrangement' in the hill areas of Darjeeling in the form of the Hill Area Development Advisory

Committee, the Hill Area Development Council and the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council. These factors have been analysed briefly in the following paragraphs.

I. Administrative : The treatment of the district in a special way under a separate administrative arrangements like 'Non-Regulated Area' 'Scheduled District' 'Backward Tract', 'Partially Excluded Area' during the British rule have induced a feeling in the people that their development and security rest in a separate administrative arrangement made specially for them. This sense might be said to be an unavoidable sequel to their long stay under a separate administrative set up. The demand for special administrative arrangement was reflected in the memoranda and representations made by different organisations in 1874, 1907, 1919 and 1935 submitted to the then British Government having far-reaching consequences even after Independence.²

II. Political³ : The demand for a separate administrative arrangement was continued and expounded by different regional and national political parties even after the passing of the Constitution of 1950 which brought uniformity in the administrative arrangement removing all kinds of special administrative arrangements. The long stay of the people under a separate administrative arrangement might have made this issue highly sensitive which no political parties could ignore. Almost all political parties propagated the demand for special administrative arrangement and developed their own versions of such administrative set ups. The

All India Gorkha League, the Communist Party of India (undivided), the Indian National Congress and later on Indira Congress and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) came out with their respective versions of administrative autonomy. The All India Gorkha League demanded 'Swayatta Shasan (administrative autonomy)' and the Communist Party of India (undivided) and later on the CPI(M) demanded 'Regional Autonomy'. The Congress(I) wanted 'Hill Autonomy' on the lines of the Pataskar Commission for Assam Hill people. The District Congress Committee, Darjeeling, made a resolution in 1970 urging to the Government of West Bengal for the need to take 'Special Measures' for the efficacious administration and the development of hill areas. The Pradesh Congress Committee, West Bengal had put the demand of 'Regional Self Autonomy' for Hill Areas in its election manifesto in 1971.

The Pranta Parishad and the G.N.L.F., which were established in 1980, launched the movement for a separate State. As the G.N.L.F.'s Gorkhaland Movement gradually became stronger, the Pranta Parishad's influence began to fade away by 1983. The 'Gorkhaland Movement' took a violent turn by 1985, by which time all the political parties were sidelined from the hill politics. The G.N.L.F. drew the attention of the national and state leaders and in 1988 a tripartite agreement was reached in the presence of Buta Singh, the then Home Minister of India, representing the Centre, Jyoti Basu, the Chief Minister of West Bengal, representing the state, and Subash Ghising, representing the G.N.L.F., with Inderjit Khullar, a journalist (presently, Member of Parliament

from the Darjeeling constituency) acting as a mediator following which the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was formed.

III. Planning : In the seventies when the demand for administrative autonomy was riding the crest in the Darjeeling hills, a shift in thinking in development administration was taking place, emphasizing the decentralized participatory thrust, distributive justice and equity aspects in the development process. The evident gap between the rich and the poor and also between different regions of the country brought changes in the strategies of planning. By the Fourth Plan period, the eradication of poverty and removal of regional imbalances became the central objectives of planning. The Draft Fifth Five Year Plan conceived of sub-plans for the Hill Areas, Desert Areas and Drought Prone Areas. It was also reckoned that the establishment of a sound planning and implementing machinery was crucial for the successful implementation of the development programmes aimed at the eradication of poverty and the removal of regional imbalances. The establishment of the 'Special Agency' in the hill areas of Darjeeling district for the planning and implementation of development programmes was in tune with the changes in development administration and planning requirements.

C. OPERATIONALISATION OF SOME ORGANISATIONAL CONCEPTS USED IN THIS STUDY :

Though the hill areas of the Darjeeling district have been provided with some special administrative organisations, it

would not be desirable to study them in isolation from the mainstream of the national polity and its development process. This is more so in view of the 'organisational gap' in the development process within the developing countries. In its vertical dimension, "there is hiatus between the problems and policies of the Government on the one hand and the communities for which they are intended on the other Horizontally, within rural communities, there is often lack of organized capacity to mobilize resources, to identify and solve local problems, to advise and make claims upon the Government concerning development needs."⁴ Herein lies the importance of linking local organisations which, while dealing with community needs, are expected simultaneously to interact effectively with Government units at different levels so that development will not remain "confined to urban industrial enclaves and to few rural show piece projects...."⁵

The components of the organisation like linkages, decentralisation, participation, coordination, communication and supervision, which we endeavour to analyse here in the context of the hill areas of Darjeeling, have to be studied in the broader context of the development process within the parameters of the political system and its values and goals which it seeks to realise. Rural development is in fact a part of the process of social transformation aimed at the realisation of equity goals and distributive justice. Therefore, the organisational elements have to be viewed not as an end in themselves, but as inevitable and essential components which are expected to lead the organisation to greater effectiveness and efficiency for the realisation of the organisations goal.

I. Linkage : India is neither a purely federal nor a purely parliamentary democracy. On the one hand, there exists a predominantly parliamentary democracy with the accent on linking different constituencies horizontally to the political system; on the other, the federal structure - as envisaged in the Constitution, and evolved during the last few decades - links the centre to the States vertically into a centrally dominated relationship.

Recent trends and shifts in development thinking have added a new dimension to this concept of linkage. A third tier or a 'Third Stratum' of the federal structure below the state is being visualised, which, to some thinkers, is a direction toward a Third Tier District Government.⁶ The Constitution Amendment Acts (73rd and 74th), while providing Constitutional recognition to the three-tier Panchayati Raj and Nagarpalikas (Municipalities), have opened up such a possibility. Thus the federal system of the polity has to be viewed as a continuous process of linkage between the centre, the States, the district, the block and the village.

Despite the cumulative trends towards centralisation in India in the relation between the Centre and States, we cannot keep our eyes closed to the recent changes in development policies and strategies which call for increased cooperation between the Centre and the States including the district, intermediate and village levels. The compulsions of the events are actually

moving the system towards some kind of functional and cooperative federalism. The failure of the trickle-down mechanism of the GNP model, the resurgence of the new political economy occasioned by the intensification of economic polarisation and social antagonism, and the need for equity-oriented development strategies, require neither centralised nor decentralised political and administrative structure, but a combination of both. The Centre, the State, the district, the intermediate and the village levels in the continuous linking process are not seen as antagonistic to one another and pulling each other towards the opposite poles, but supplementing, cooperating and drawing each other towards a point of equilibrium - the optimum point of centralisation and decentralisation.

The term 'linkage' has been conceptualised in this study keeping in mind the perspective developed in the foregoing analysis. It is not viewed as a device for control, but as a mechanism which facilitates better coordination, cooperation and collaboration among the linked elements, vertically and horizontally, towards achieving the maximum efficiency for realising the goals of the organisation without losing the relevance of the basic thrust and the aims of the political system in the development process.

II. Decentralisation : The creation of an efficient democratic and viable rural development administration is basic to the development of the country, and is an essential part of modernisation.

It does not merely mean the creation of a few institutions and revitalization of them to suit the expanding needs of development administration, but something more than that. It has to be viewed as a total transformation in the outlook regarding the power-relationship or a complete reorientation of attitudes towards the power-structure in the government. Two aspects of decentralisation have been important for the present study :

- (i) decentralisation within the administrative units and
- (ii) decentralisation through locally elected self-governing institutions like the Panchayati Raj.

III. Participation : Decentralization within the bureaucracy is needed not only for improving performance, but also for facilitating the participation of local organisations in rural development. Functionaries used to centralised authoritarian mode of working cannot be flexible and open in their dealings with the people as well as their representatives.

Local organisations are needed not only for satisfying the democratic aspirations of the people, but also for carrying out development process further by way of mobilizing resources, identifying local problems, advising and making claims and interacting effectively with the Government. As already mentioned, this study does not view the problem of centralization vs. decentralisation as exclusive categories, but emphasizes on the optimisation between the two. This allows the existence of strong and active organizations both at the central and local levels.

The rural development participation approach entails

a combination of (i) administrative decentralisation, (ii) local organisations, (iii) local leaders and (iv) para-professionals, creating an effectively balanced and reciprocating relationships between the government and rural communities.⁷ The emphasis in promoting rural development participation is not only on local autonomy but on linkages between national centres, regional centres and local communities on terms that are mutually determined.

IV. Coordination : Coordination is defined "as process of harmonising the activities of structures and individuals with a view to achieving organisational goals."⁸

It is now being increasingly realised essentially that coordination itself will be meaningful and effective to the extent that those responsible for coordination are in tune with organisational goals.⁹ With this perspective in mind, the present study would view the concept of coordination as a technical and collaborative system within and among the organisations. It is assumed that various departments, local organisations and the administrators and political leaders would not be at variance with one another and an attitude of 'empire-building' would be given up in tune with the latest ethos of development administration. Such assumption has emanated from the decisions of the Government to revitalize the Panchayati Raj and making them effectively operational. Indeed, a lot of emphasis on human resource development is being given which may develop an attitude of mutual trust and confidence that are required for effective coordination. The Standing Committees at the Zilla Parishad and the Panchayat Samiti levels, the Governing

Body of the District Rural Development Agency, the meeting of the erstwhile Hill Development Council and the Project Advisory Board of the Comprehensive Area Development projects are examples of the collaborative mechanism. The attempt to understand the process of coordination is basically to examine whether it is leading the organisation towards the greater efficiency for the realisation of organisational objectives.

V. Communication : The process of harmonising the activities of structures and individuals to a significant extent depends on communication. It is the central chord that binds the organisation.

In the context of rural development administration, an effective communication is required to be established within the organisation, among the organisations and with the beneficiaries for whom the organisations are created. Some suggest development of direct communication with the beneficiaries to get the feedback free of 'elitist perception'.¹⁰ For developmental purposes, a one-way, down the line, unilinear communication is disfavoured, and the need for upward communication is stressed. However, the present study defines communication as exchange of information in all directions, horizontal and vertical, which allow the members of the organisations as well as different organisations to form 'expectation' as to the behaviour of others so that the activities are directed towards the common goal of rural development. The organisations and individuals cannot and should not remain isolated from one another. Their function is not only to try to achieve the objective of particular organisation but should also direct

their organisational activities towards the achievement of the goals of the political system. Therefore, cross-fertilisation of ideas is needed if flexibility, innovativeness and adaptability of the organisation have to be developed. In this sense, communication is a process by which the "decisional premises are transmitted from one member to another,"¹¹ from one organisation to another and from one level to another.

VI. Supervision : Supervision is the function of assessing the activities that are being undertaken in accordance with plans and programmes. The objective is to supervise action in a manner that would help in disseminating information, imparting administrative and technical guidance, and thereby improving the skill of the supervised. In the ethos of the new accent on decentralised participatory management, it is not viewed as techniques of domination or 'empire-building' by the higher levels, but as a mechanism of increasing efficiency for achieving objectives in the spirit of cooperation and guidance. For example, the objective of supervision and control in the Panchayati Raj is to see that the system itself is growing, and in the meantime, the purposes for which these institutions have been created are duly fulfilled. Two aspects of supervision are important in this context :

(i) inter-institutional, i.e. the control exercised by the Government on the organisation, (ii) intra-institutional i.e. the higher body controlling the lower tiers.

Given the perspective outline in this section, we shall

now turn our attention to examine the agencies and organisations engaged in rural development in the hill areas of Darjeeling district in the light of the categories and variables mentioned above.

D. THE DARJEELING GORKHA HILL COUNCIL (DGHC)

Subsequent to the signing of the 'Tripartite Accord' between the Centre, the State the G.N.L.F., the West Bengal Legislative Assembly passed the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Act (DGHC), 1988. The Act repealed the Hill Area Development Council Act, 1976. The Act established the DGHC for the three subdivisions of the hill areas of Darjeeling including thirteen mouzas (each mouza consisting of a number of villages) in the Siliguri Subdivision of the district of Darjeeling.¹² The West Bengal (Panchayat) Amendment Act was also passed in December, 1988, dissolving the Zilla Parishad from the hill areas and establishing the Mahakuma Parishad for the Siliguri sub-division.¹³ The functions of the Zilla Parishad were to be taken over by the DGHC in the hill areas and by the Mahakuma Parishad in the Siliguri subdivision.¹⁴ However, the Act did not dissolve the Panchayat Samiti and the Gram Panchayat.

I. Objectives of the DGHC : In a narrow sense, if we go strictly by the DGHC Act, 1988, the objectives for the establishment of the DGHC were "the social, economic, educational and cultural advancement of the Gorkhas and other sections of the people residing in the hill areas of the district of Darjeeling."¹⁵ If looked at

in a broader sense, it may be regarded as an alternative political and administrative arrangement provided to the hill people for their demand of a separate state. The DGHC was the result of the political conciliation between the Central Government, the State Government and the GNLF. Thus it can be regarded as the manifestation of a political understanding which sought to end the political crisis in the hill areas and to bring the hill people into the mainstream of national polity. The DGHC, by allowing the participation of the people in local democratic and developmental processes, was expected to satisfy the urges and aspiration of the hill people for self-rule and autonomy.

II. Organisation of the DGHC : The following table 5.1 exhibits the organisational design of the DGHC.

Table 5.1

A General Council was formed as per Section 3 of the DGHC Act, 1988, consisting of 42 members of whom two-thirds (28) were elected by the people on the basis of adult suffrage from the territorial constituencies and one-third (14) of members nominated by the Government. The nominated members include "(1) the three members of the Legislative Assembly of the State of West Bengal elected from the constituencies of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong, and the members elected to the House of the people from the Darjeeling Parliamentary constituency, and (ii) the Chairmen of the municipalities within the hill areas" and other

Table 5.1

Organisation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council

CHAIRMAN
Chief Executive
Councillor-(C.E.C.)

DISTRICT
MAGISTRATE

Emergency
Construction
Cell

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OFFICER (C.E.O.)

District level Departments
whose sub-divisional heads/
office have been trans-
ferred to D.G.H.C.

Executive Council (E.C.)
Nominated by the Chairman
of whom 5 are from elected
members and 2 are from
Government nominees

Secretaries
(Executive Officers)

Sub-Divisional level
heads/offices not
transferred to D.G.H.C.

General Council (G.C.)

28 elected and 14
nominated members

Block Development Officer/
Office not transferred
to D.G.H.C.

COUNCIL
SECRETARY
AS PER
DGHC ACT
1988

ENGINEER

FINANCE
(who is also
the Project
Officer of
D.R.D.A.)

Supervisory Sub-Assistant
Engineers for each
28 elected Councillors

PLANNING

PERSONNEL

Panchayat Secretaries,
Job assistants (Village
level) transferred to
the D.G.H.C. but not
actually under its
control due to its
refusal to hold
Panchayat Elections
and involve these
functionaries.

nominated by the State Government providing due representations of the non-Nepali Communities like Bhutias and Lepchas.¹⁶

The Council is headed by the Chief Executive Councillor or the Chairman with a Vice-Chairman coming next in the hierarchy. There is an 'Executive Council consisting of the Chief Executive Councillor and the Vice Chairman as the ex-officio members and seven other members of the General Council of whom five are to be nominated by the Chief Executive Councillor from amongst the elected members of the Council and two to be nominated by the Government from among the nominated member.¹⁷

The Chief Executive Councillor assisted by the Chief Executive Officer who is the Principal Executive Officer of the DGHC appointed by the State Government in consultation with the Chief Executive Councillor. A Secretary has been appointed for the General Council under section 49 of the DGHC Act who looks after the establishment section of the Council and also acts as a Convenor. Besides these, four other 'Executive Officer have been deputed to the Council from the West Bengal Civil Service Cadre whom the DGHC has designated as the 'Secretaries' and look after various departments.¹⁸

III. Organisational Issues :

a. Linkages : Linkages in the context of the present study on DGHC may be viewed from three angles, namely, (i) linkage between the DGHC and the State Government, (ii) linkages within the DGHC and (iii) linkages between the DGHC and other agencies and departments.

The linkages between the national, regional and local Centres on mutually determined terms and the 'reciprocation' flowing therefrom are regarded as essential for rural development.¹⁹ A careful analysis of the DGHC Act reveals that there is no structural arrangement for linking the DGHC and the State Government into a working relationship though the Act contain some provisions which could facilitate such linkage if they work harmoniously. According to the Act, the General Council has to exercise its powers subject to general and specific directions of the Government.²⁰ Similarly, collaboration and consultations between the two is presumed in the exercise of the powers by the General Council under Section 25 for formulating and implementing integrated development plans for the hill areas. The Chief Executive Councillor representing the General Council has to consult the State Government in making appointments and rules and procedures.²¹

All these provisions, if they have to be made operational, will require effective linkages between the DGHC and the State Government. Unfortunately, in reality, effective linkages have not emerged so far due mainly to the acute differences between the State Government and the DGHC. It has been evident from the different reports and from the interviews with various sections of the functionaries and party leaders that the opposite and the conflicting stands taken by the GNLF that runs the DGHC and the CPI(M), the ruling party in the State, have been the major obstacles in developing the harmonious working relationship

between the two.²²

So far as the linkage between the DGHC and the district administrative set-up is concerned, as the organisational chart shown in 5.1 clearly shows, there is a linkage gap between the DGHC and the regular district administrative set-up. The District Magistrate is not organically linked to the DGHC. Similarly, the block organisation, the pivot of development administration, has been kept outside the DGHC and is not linked to it. In the absence of the linkage between the DGHC and the block organisation, the latter has been sitting idle since the inception of the DGHC, only implementing few schemes of the District (Council) Rural Development Agency.²³ It becomes obvious then, such horizontal and vertical linkage gaps have not facilitated effective coordination at these levels.

In its actual working, the General Council needs to be linked together with the sectoral departments if it has to effectively discharge its functions under Sections 24 and 25 for formulating and implementing integrated development plans. But the way transfers of departments from the State to the DGHC have taken place, effective working relationship, both horizontal and vertical, has not emerged. For example, while transferring the departments from the State Government to the DGHC under Section 19 of the DGHC Act 1988, a number of the district level officers/offices were not placed under the DGHC, only the subdivisional level officers/offices were brought under its

disposal.²⁴ This has created a horizontal linkage gap between the DGHC and the district administration set up and has affected the vertical linkages between the district level and subdivisional level sectoral departments that have been transferred to the DGHC.

The horizontal linkages at the block and the village level, too, have been affected in the present set up. The block machinery along with its field functionaries like the Village Level Workers, job assistants and the Panchayat Secretaries, etc. have not been linked up with the DGHC in practice, due to the moribund state of the Panchayat Samiti and the Gram Panchayat and DGHC's refusal to involve the block machinery in its development activities.²⁵ At present, the functions of implementing the development programmes are being performed by councillors with the help of sub-assistant engineers and clerks directly at the village level.

Such problems do not seem to have occurred so far as the intra-institutional linkages are concerned. The Executive Council, along with the Chief Executive Councillor, is the organic part of the General Council. It is elected by the General Council from among its members. The Chief Executive Office, i.e. the 'Principal Executive' heading the administrative functionaries has been directly linked to the Executive as well as the General Council. He has the right to attend all the meetings of these Councils and has been made responsible to the General Council through the Chief Executive Councillor.²⁶

b. Decentralisation : The basic concept behind the establishment of the DGHC was the creation of a viable self-governing institution responsible for bringing about socio-economic and cultural advancement along with the political stability and order by satisfying the aspirations and desires of the hill people for autonomy. Thus, the Council was expected to be the symbol of democratic decentralisation and development and an instrument of natural extension of democracy at the national and state levels. Such democratic decentralisation presupposes the transfer of authority to lower levels and sharing of the State functions and responsibility with the local people and geographical units which are so crucial to the whole process and meaning of development.

The General Council, according to the DGHC Act of 1988, consists mainly of members elected on the basis of adult suffrage from 28 Constituencies. There are 14 nominated members. The interest shown by the people on their self governing institution was evident during the first election to the General Council in which 98% of the voters reportedly cast their votes which is much higher compared to the general election to the Legislative Assembly and the Union Parliament.²⁷ The importance of the electoral process in democratic decentralisation has now been well recognised as a means of accelerating the process of 'empowerment' and 'conscientisation'.²⁸ It has also been found that the participation of the citizen in such electoral process gives him a sense of full and meaningful participation in the democratic process and makes him feel great powers and even "greater responsibility of being citizen in the democratic Republic", that is India.²⁹

By way of transfer of authority and sharing of the state function, the DGHC Act has enumerated the list of subjects over which the General Council has executive powers under Section 24 of the Act subject to the general or special direction of the Government on 19 different subjects such as agriculture, public health and hospitals, tourism, vocational training, public works - development and planning, construction and maintenance of roads, transport and its development, small scale and cottage industries, education - primary and secondary, animal husbandry, etc. The General Council has also been given the responsibility of formulating and implementing the integrated development plans and programmes in the hill areas under section 25 of the Act of 1988. The DGHC Act also provides for a 'Council Fund' by way of financial decentralisation, to be held by the General Council in trust and all funds realised or realisable under the Act are to be credited thereto.³⁰ All funds as may be allocated by the Central Government or the State Government for the Council are to be assigned to it and to be credited to the 'Council Fund'. The General Council has also been empowered to levy taxes notwithstanding any law of the West Bengal Legislature for the time being in force subject to the rules which the Government may prescribe.

These arrangements for decentralisation would be ineffective if they are not supported by subsequent improvements in procedures and structural adjustments from the point of view of organisational development for enhancing the capacity of the

organisation. For instance, after the revitalization of the Panchayati Raj, organisational development has been one of the main directions of the Panchayat activities in West Bengal.³¹ In case of the Panchayati Raj experiment, the West Bengal Government brought about improvements in procedures by amending and eliminating the undesirable rules and making the new ones; organised training camps and formed the District Planning Committees and the Block Planning Committees to make the decentralisation meaningful and effective.

But in case of the DGHC, which has replaced the Zilla Parishad and also enjoys the powers of implementing developmental activities under Sections 153, 154, 155, 157, 158, 160, 161 and 162 of the West Bengal Panchayati Raj Act 1973, such organisational innovations, structural adjustments and procedural improvements have not taken place.³² It appears, thus, that in the absence of organisational development, the decentralisation of planning and development functions under section 24 and 25 of the DGHC Act has not been very effective and meaningful.

Since, the DGHC has replaced the Zilla Parishad, the leadership function of the Zilla Parishad has also been transferred to it. It has also the powers to supervise and guide the Panchayat Samiti and the Gram Panchayat on policy matters. Unfortunately, the elections to these bodies have not been held so far after the formation of the DGHC in 1988. Due to the organisational gaps at the block and the village level, the people have been deprived of

the grass root democracy which they had been experiencing since the revitalization of the Panchayati Raj in 1978 by the Left Front Government.³³

C. Participation : At present, the DGHC is the only representative political institution at the district level in the hill areas. Being closer in touch to the local conditions and opinions than the Parliament, legislatures or ministers, it is an essential part of the fabric of democratic government. Like any other local or rural organisation, it has the potential of facilitating peoples participation because the elected councillors, have "active relationship"³⁴ with the locality which is established by the election process. The DGHC has been assigned the developmental functions at the district level, its decisions influence the lives of the people.

The Chief Executive Officer, along with the other 'Executive Officers' or 'Secretaries', is responsible to the General Council and is answerable to it through the Chief Executive Councillor. Though the Chief Executive Councillor along with his 'Executive Council' is responsible to the General Council, he holds crucial and powerful position exercising his executive powers. The present incumbent of the post, Subhash Ghising, through his control of the party organisation, has come out as a very powerful Chief Executive Councillor and holds a dominant and unchallengeable position over his Councillors.³⁵

The participation of the people at the intermediate and

the village levels in the developmental activities were to be ensured through their involvement in the working of the Panchayat Samiti and the Gram Panchayat as per the Act. But, as is already mentioned, they have been kept in suspended animation in the hill areas, therefore, at present, it is the Councillor who is directly linked to the village level and is responsible for implementing and supervising the development activities allocated to his constituency. He has also been made responsible for bringing out proposals and schemes to the DGHC level for their inclusion in the Hill Plans.³⁶ Though he is being assisted by a Sub-Assistant Engineer and a clerk, in the absence of the local rural organisations like the Panchayat Samiti and the Gram Panchayat and in view of the linkage gap between the DGHC and the block organisation, he has been relying mostly on his 'political party branches' at the village level for implementing development activities.³⁷ It is apparent from this, that developmental activities at the village level has become highly 'politicise'. It seems that the participation of the people is limited to the participation of the members of a particular political party.³⁸ It may also be asserted from the above analysis that the system has deprived the people of their participation in the developmental activities by way of making claims, identifying local problems and their solutions, and interacting with the district level organisation (like DGHC) and the Government through their local organisation like the Panchayat Samiti and the Gram Panchayat.

d. Coordination : The vertical coordination is essential to improve the working relationship between agencies at different levels - federal, state and local units with respect to development policies and their implementation. The horizontal coordination is concerned with harmonisation of activities between various organisational points and functional complementarity between various sectoral programmes.

In the context of the DGHC, due to the weak vertical linkages between it and the State Government, it is obvious that an effective and collaborative working relationship has not emerged. The problem of vertical linkage gap, and thereby vertical coordination, has been aggravated by the acute political differences between the G.N.L.F. run DGHC and the CPI(M) led Left Front State Government. Both have perceived the DGHC differently. The GNLF perceives the DGHC more as a 'mini-state government' and less as a local self-governing institution like that of the Zilla Parishad.³⁹ Such perception has manifested in its demand for 'mini secretariat' and its refusal to submit the 'account of spending' to the State Government and to hold the 'council audit'. It demanded that the Chief Executive Officer of the DGHC should be of the rank of the 'Chief Secretary' who is to be assisted by the other Secretaries heading the 19 departments over which the General Council has executive powers.⁴⁰ The State Government on the other hand, deputed a senior officer, who then was, acting as Secretary to the Panchayat Department, for the post of the Chief Executive Officer of the DGHC. But, soon owing to the

differences between the State Government and the DGHC, this senior officer holding the post of the Chief Executive Officer had to be withdrawn by the State Government. The DGHC Chairman, along with his Councillors, is reported to have alleged that the Chief Executive Officer was the agent of the State Government and was not working in the interest of the DGHC.⁴¹ The CPI(M) leaders, voicing the State Government's view, seemed to have taken the stand of the DGHC Chairman to be a ploy for diverting the attention of the public and the government from inefficiency and corruption in the working of the DGHC.⁴² The differences in perceptions were also manifested regarding the deputation of the four officers of the West Bengal Civil Service Cadres to the DGHC. The State Government deputed them to DGHC as 'Executive Officers'. But the G.N.L.F. and the DGHC leadership which perceive the DGHC as a sort of 'mini-state government', designated them as 'secretaries' which was obviously objected to by the State Government as a violation of the Governmental norms. The differences and disagreements over designations of these officers still persist.

It has already been established in the foregoing section that there are 'linkage gaps' at the district level and below between the DGHC and the District and Block administrative set up. The use of the horizontal linkage mechanism which facilitates horizontal coordination, such as 'the flow of paper work about a problem or a decision' and direct contact between the administrative functionaries of the DGHC and the other district level departments is more or less absent.⁴³ The linkage devices such as the task

forces or the Committees like the District Planning Committees, the Block Planning Committees and even the Standing Committees, have not been formed. It may be pointed out that elsewhere in West Bengal, the working of such committees in the Panchayati Raj set-up has more or less resolved the problem of dual control and other related problems of coordination.⁴⁴ The DGHC Act does not provide for Statutory Standing Committees as is provided by the West Bengal Panchayati Raj Act, 1973, in which, the elected and administrative functionaries from various departments and organisation get enough opportunity for interactions and thrashing out issues.⁴⁵

The problem of horizontal and vertical coordination and the question of dual command are also related to one of the ticklish issues - transfer of departments from the State Government to the DGHC. The transfer has not been systematic and seemed to have been done without proper thinking. For example, 'agricultural' is a subject under the General Council under Section 24 of the DGHC Act. While Subdivisional Agricultural Office/Officers have been transferred to the DGHC, the District level Agriculture office or the Principal Agricultural Officer has not been, on the ground that his authority transcends even to the Siliguri Subdivision in the plains which is not under the jurisdiction of the DGHC.⁴⁶ The result of this inconsistency has destroyed the unity of command and hierarchical chain, and the result is that, often, the subdivisional-level Agricultural Officers receive contradictory and cross-purposed instructions from the DGHC and the Principal

Agricultural Officer.⁴⁷ It appears, thus, from the above discussion, that it is not clear who, between the DGHC or the Principal Agricultural Officer, has the final authority notwithstanding the provision of the Act that agriculture is under the Council as per Section 24. Similar problems have cropped up in the 'tourism' sector. While many 'projects' such as 'Mirik Project' and other branches in Darjeeling have been placed under the DGHC, the Deputy Director, Darjeeling, has been kept outside the jurisdiction of the DGHC.⁴⁸ Such unsystematic transfer has also taken place in case of the 'Public Health and Hospitals' which is a subject under the DGHC list according to Section 24 of the Act of 1988. Only the health centres have been transferred to the DGHC, while the Sub-divisional level and the District level hospitals have remained under the State Control. These examples are not exhaustive. On the other hand, there are many departments whose district level as well as sub-divisional offices have been transferred. It seems that no objective criteria were followed while making such transfers.⁴⁹ Even the Block Development Office, an organisation which has been an integral part of the development administration, with more than 40 years of experience in implementing developmental programmes, has remained outside the jurisdiction of the DGHC which has been assigned the responsibility of implementing developmental programmes. Thus, the Councillors, with the help of only one sub-assistant engineer and a clerk, has been assigned the function of implementing

development programmes in their constituency (at the village level) directly.⁵⁰

One of the issues that generated controversy and conflict was finance. The DGHC is reported to have refused to submit the detailed accounts of its spending, hold 'Council Audit' and produce 'utilisation certificate' to the State Government after the end of the first financial year of its working.⁵¹ The State Government, then, it seems had decided to withhold the release of fund to the DGHC unless and until it submitted the 'audit account' and 'utilisation certificate'. The decision to withhold the fund, the 'Financial Embargo' as the GNLF termed it was taken in June, 1991 which continued till May, 1993.

The differences also cropped up on the financial issue on certain procedural matters. After the receipt of the fund for 1989-90, the DGHC deposited the fund in commercial banks disregarding the State Government's normal procedure of keeping such fund in 'Treasury Office'. The argument given by the DGHC was that since the District Magistrate, in charge of the Treasury, was not a part of the DGHC set up, it had no obligation to deposit the money in the Treasury.⁵³ Obviously, to the State Government, this was a violation of procedures as well as a challenge to the State's authority.

The demand for an effective administrative set up or the mini-secretariat as the DGHC prefers to call it, started taking the form of an agitation by the end of 1991. The DGHC

leadership (which overlaps with the GNLF leadership) organised a mass rally for 'burning the copies of the DGHC Act : in July, 1992 and expressed dissatisfaction with the existing administrative set up alleging the Act to be against the spirit of the 'Tripartite Accord' reached between the Centre, the State government, and the GNLF. By the beginning of the next year, i.e., 1993, the DGHC reportedly closed down 13 out of its 19 departments under it and released the deputed officials to the State Government.⁵⁵ The GNLF Chief-cum-DGHC Chairman reported to have threatened to cut off ties completely with the State Government and restart the Gorkhaland Movement if the 'financial embargo' was not lifted and a new administrative set-up as demanded by him was not provided.⁵⁶ This time, the State Government showed patience, tolerance and genuine conciliatory gestures and the Chief Minister visited Darjeeling for talks in May 1993 when an agreement was reached to amend the DGHC Act so as to make it effective and remove the major irritants in its working. The proposed amendment according to a report is expected to provide for a 'mini secretariat' to be headed by a 'Principal Secretary' with 13 other Secretaries who will be of the rank of the Secretaries at the State level.⁵⁷

e. Communication : The problems of linkage gaps and coordination are related to the problems of communication. The different perceptions held by the State Government and DGHC on various issues did not facilitate interaction and the flow of information.

Again, the politicisation of almost all organisational and management issues, the weak and poor vertical and horizontal linkages and coordination seemed to have resulted in the formation of invisible political channels of communication within the DGHC as well as in its interaction with other agencies and departments.⁵⁸ The communication methods used between various points of the organisation such as the General Council, the Executive Council, the Chairman, the Councillors and between the elected and administrative wings, were predominantly political, informal and hidden.³⁹ Though modern management literature emphasizes the importance of the informal methods of communication, the hidden manner in which these were used in the DGHC, created problems. In view of the atmosphere of mistrust and lack of goodwill between various parties involved, the hidden and informal communication channels did not help in developing harmonious relationships.⁶⁰ Thus, due to such invisible communication channels, the principle of unity of command and span of control seemed to have faded away into insignificance further aggravating the problem of horizontal and vertical coordination.⁶¹

The communication methods followed in the functioning the DGHC were found to be of three types :

- (i) Among the Councillors - 'informal'
- (ii) Between Councillors and Administrative Officers - mixed, i.e. a combination of the formal and informal methods
- (iii) Among the Administrative Officers - 'formal'.

(iv) Between DGHC - (particularly Councillors) and the rural people - a mixture of formal and informal but mostly informal.⁶²

The predominant use of informal methods between the DGHC and the rural mass was because the political channel was mostly relied on for communication. As the Block Development Office with its extension machinery is not linked with the DGHC, it is the Councillor who is responsible for executing schemes at the village level with just one sub-assistant engineer and a clerk. Apparently, due to this linkage gap between the DGHC and the extension machinery of the work along with its field functionaries, the Councillors have increasingly relied on their 'party branches' at the village level and involved them in the implementation of developmental activities. Thus, it is obvious, that the linkage with rural people is established and maintained by the DGHC through this political channel which also serves as downward and upward communication channel. One advantage of this method has been the quick flow of information at the village level resolving the problems of delay to a significant extent.⁶³ But, it has been observed that such methods of communication have developed some sort of a 'spoils system' which gives weightage to political factors such as political affiliation and political allegiance depriving the people belonging to the other political parties from receiving the benefits of development.⁶⁴

f. Supervision : Supervision has a very crucial role to play in the working of any form of organisations. Viewed in the broader

context of development administration, it may be regarded as a means of providing overall leadership and disseminating information and development of skill of the lower-level functionaries by way of enhancing organisational capacity. In rural development, not only the autonomy of the rural organisations, but also the linkages between the national, state and local centres, are important so that their activities donot drift away from each other. This can be ensured to a significant extent through proper supervision and control mechanism, of course, without destroying the autonomy and local decision making authority.

Though the DGHC Act 1988 has attempted to provide sufficient autonomy to the DGHC, it has also put checks over it for supervision and control. These are by way of audit, inspection, suspension of resolutions of the General Council, delaying of budgets and dissolution of the General Council.

Section 60 of the Act states that in the discharge of its functions, the General Council of the DGHC shall be guided by such inspection or directions as may be given to it by the Government from time to time. The State Government has been given powers to make rules for the management of the 'Council Fund' and for the procedure to be followed in respect of payment of moneys into the said Fund, withdrawal of moneys therefrom, the custody of moneys there in and any other matter incidental thereto or connected therewith.⁶⁵ The Government has also been entrusted with the power under Section 54(2) to approve the budget of the DGHC or return to it for such modification as it may direct. However, if the approval of the Government is not received by the General

Council by the last date of the financial year, the budget shall be deemed to have been approved by the Government.

The Act empowers the Government to dissolve the Council, if in the opinion of the Government, the General Council has shown its incompetence to perform or has made default in the performance of, the duties imposed on it by or under this Act or under this Act or any law for the time being in force, or has exceeded or abused its power.⁶⁶

So far as the intra-organisational supervision is concerned, the Chief Executive Councillor has been provided with the powers of exercising administrative supervision and control over officers and employees of the General Council, and the officers and the employees whose services may be placed at the General Council by the Government.⁶⁷ But, these powers are subjected to the general or special resolution of the General Council or as the Government may by rules in this behalf prescribe. Though the Chief Executive Council has been given powers of supervision and control, he cannot take any disciplinary or other actions against any officials or employees but can only make reference to the Government through the General Council for appropriate action. Such provision in the Act, and the fact that the DGHC is manned by the deputed officials, seemed to have made the supervisory task difficult creating the problem of dual control and command.

The weak horizontal and vertical linkages and

coordination, as we shall see shortly, had been the major stumbling blocks in the way of supervising developmental activities. As already mentioned in our discussion on coordination, only the Subdivisional Level Officers/Offices of many of the departments were placed under the jurisdiction of the DGHC without properly linking the District Headquarters to it. This has created problems of supervision and control because it was not clear to the subdivisional and field staff as to whose authority - whether the DGHC or their departmental officers is final and binding to them. In such a situation, it is generally the District Magistrate whose authority and influence are sought for coordination and supervision. But, as we have already noted, the District Magistrate is not linked with the DGHC and hence, was also not involved in its activities.

On the basis of the discussions made in the foregoing sections, it may be observed here that the lack of effective working relationship between the DGHC and the State Government and the weak inter-organisational horizontal linkages and coordination have not been helpful in facilitating the supervision that would provide leadership, guidance, dissemination of knowledge and information for enhancing the capability of the supervised.

IV. INTEGRATED ANNUAL ACTION HILL PLAN UNDER DGHC :

The DGHC Act, 1988, empowers the General Council to formulate and implement integrated hill development plans and

provides executive powers over 19 subjects under Sections 24 and 25. The DGHC started functioning at a time when the nation's Seventh Five Year Plan was in the terminal financial year 1989-90. The First Annual Action Plan was formulated by the DGHC on a trial basis. It was stated by the Chairman of the DGHC that it underlines only the basic economic philosophy of the DGHC and the real planning based on the perspective analysis operationalising the philosophy would begin only with the Eighth Five Year Plan, 1990-95.⁶⁸

Unfortunately, this beginning was never made following the financial embargo and other acute differences between the DGHC and the State Government. The DGHC could function normally for only about a year under the First Annual Action Plan, 1989-90. By June, 1991, the financial embargo was imposed. Thus, the Five Year Plan (1990-95) including the Annual Action Plan for the year 1990-91, could not be finalised. On account of the controversy surrounding the 'Council Audit' and 'Account', no data are available on the expenditure of the First Annual Action Plan.

The 'Annual Report' or 'Review' is not also available on the working of the DGHC, therefore, we have depended on the information available from the Annual Action Plan document of 1989-90 and interviews and observation made during the field survey. This section intends to examine the main features of the Annual Action Plan of 1989-90.

The basic objectives of the First Annual Action Plan were the following :

- (i) To fulfil the minimum basic needs of the people,
- (ii) to improve the over-all infrastructural scenario by putting the foremost importance on roads, bridges, electricity, communication and irrigation,
- (iii) to reorient and expand the tourist industry in the most modern and scientific methods based on human psychological values,
- (iv) to give a proper check to the environmental degradation and to maintain the ecological balance,
- (v) to restore, preserve and develop the cultural, historical and scientific institutions which are of formidable interest to the hills,
- (vi) to increase opportunities for productive and gainful employments,
- (vii) to increase production in all spheres of economic activities at a higher rate,
- (viii) to improve the living standards of the people at all levels with special emphasis on the welfare of children, women and old physically handicapped people,
- (ix) to save the existing township from the congestions, squalor and slums through the process of decentralisation.⁶⁹

These developmental goals, according to the First Annual Action Plan document, have been designed giving due care to the larger national interest and were to be realised with the following basic development strategies :

- (i) Minimum rural transport facility and electrification and drinking water
- (ii) Emphasise development of water resources
- (iii) Strengthen and consolidate development administration
- (iv) Stress on the development for forest resources and the soil conservation
- (v) Emphasise the development of agro-based and modern low volume high value industries
- (vi) Accord overall priority to the development of agricultural sector
- (vii) Curb the population growth rate and initiate equal distribution of income
- (viii) Primary education purely based on child psychology and skill-based education
- (ix) Adult education conceptualised through Real Path Revolution
- (x) Priority in providing the universal scope to capture and channelise the instincts and aspiration of both the female and male youths
- (xi) Dispersal of the existing townships through the creation of mini-town, bazars and hats.

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The Table 5.2 shows the proposed sectoral and sub-sectoral plan outlays for 1989-90.

Table 5.2

Sectoral and sub-sectoral proposed Plan outlays

Year 1989-90

Primary Sector

Economic Services

I. Agriculture and Allied Services

(Rupees in lakhs)

| | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Crops Husbandry | 200 |
| 2. Soil and Water Conservation | 300 |
| 3. Animal Husbandry | 100 |
| 4. Dairy Development | 200 |
| 5. Fisheries | 50 |
| 6. Forestry and Wildlife | 300 |
| 7. Agricultural Research and Education | 50 |
| 8. Investment in Agriculture, Financial Institutions | 200 |
| 9. Cooperation | 200 |

Total : (I)

1600

II. Rural Development and Rural Employment

| | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Integrated Rural Development Programme | 300 |
| 2. Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP) | 100 |
| 3. Integrated Rural Energy Programme (IREP) | 200 |
| 4. Panchayat and Community Development | 400 |
| 5. Land Reforms | 100 |
| 6. National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) | 300 |

Total : (II)

1400

(Rupees in lakhs)

III. Irrigation

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| 1. Small Irrigation | 250 |
| 2. Minor Irrigation | 150 |
| <hr/> | |
| Total : (III) | 400 |
| <hr/> | |

IV. Energy

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------|
| 1. Power | 950 |
| 2. Non-Conventional sources of energy | 250 |
| <hr/> | |
| Total : (IV) | 1200 |
| <hr/> | |

Secondary Sector

V. Industry

| | |
|---|------|
| 1. Cottage and Small Industries | 500 |
| 2. Industries (other than cottage and small industries) | 800 |
| <hr/> | |
| Total : V | 1300 |
| <hr/> | |

Tertiary Sector

^v VI. Roads, Transport and Communication

| | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| 1. Roads and Bridges | 4150 |
| 2. Roads Transport | 200 |
| 3. Inland Water Transport | 50 |
| 4. Other Transport Services | 600 |
| 5. Helicopter Services | 1500 |
| 6. Communication Programme | 100 |
| <hr/> | |
| Total:VI | 6600 |
| <hr/> | |

(Rupees in lakhs)

VII. General Economic Services

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Tourism | 3200 |
| 2. Survey and Statistics | 200 |
| 3. Civil Supplies | 1000 |
| 4. Contingency Scheme Fund | 400 |
| Total : (VII) | 4800 |

VIII. Social Services, Education, Sports, Art, Culture, Literature, Women Welfare

| | |
|---|-------------|
| 1. General Education | 1600 |
| 2. Technical Education | 400 |
| 3. Youth and Sports Services | 600 |
| 4. Art, Culture and Literature | 200 |
| 5. Welfare of Women, Old People and Physically or handicapped | 200 |
| Total : (VIII) | 3000 |

IX. Health, Water Supply, Housing and Urban Development, Information, SC/ST Welfare

| | |
|--|-------------|
| 1. Alopahic medical facilities, Public Health, Ayurvedic Health and Research | 1600 |
| 2. Water supply and Sanitation | 1200 |
| 3. Housing | 400 |
| 4. Urban Development | 1000 |
| 5. Information and Publicity | 200 |
| 6. Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes | 200 |
| 7. Council Establishment and Building Schemes | 900 |
| Total : (IX) | 5500 |

(Rupees in lakhs)

X. Labour and Other Social Services

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Social Security and Welfare | 100 |
| 2. Stationary and Printing | 100 |
| <hr/> | |
| Total : (X) | 200 |
| <hr/> | |
| Grand Total : | 26000 |
| <hr/> | |

Source : First Annual Action Plan, 1989-90,
Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, pp.4, 5, 6.

Most of the hill areas in the hill district under DGHC jurisdiction are basically rural in nature. Within their rural characteristics, they differ in terms of climate, cropping pattern and employment pattern. For the majority of the rural inhabitants, the basic way of living has been agricultural. But the scope of extending the net cultivable area is limited due mainly to the topography and difficult hilly terrain. The land-man ratio in the hill area is 0.18 per acre, which is the lowest in the state whereas about 85% of the population depends on agriculture.⁷¹ Thus, the basic approach of the DGHC has been to bring about an all-round development with special emphasis on employment and income-generation. Therefore, agricultural and allied activities, along with various rural development programmes, have received almost equal attention. These activities had been allocated a sum of Rs.1,600 lakhs, while other rural development programmes had received Rs.1,400 lakhs, rural energy sector Rs.1,200 lakhs and small and minor irrigation Rs.250 and 150 lakhs respectively.

In view of the limited scope for extending agricultural area, the emphasis has been on productivity through the development of crop husbandry, the use of HYV and shifting of cropping pattern from traditional to cash crops like ginger, potato, mushroom, horticulture and sericulture. The development of animal husbandry is also emphasized, such as milch cows, piggery and poultry. A sum of Rs.200 lakhs had been set aside for dairy development. The Plan also sought to set up a Cooperative Union in the pattern developed by the National Dairy Development Board and Operation Flood II along with a cooperative milk union in the pattern of Anand Dairy Development in Gujrat.⁷²

The Annual Action Plan, 1989-90, gives due regard to rural development programmes which were to be implemented by the Central and State financial assistance. The fund allocated for this purpose was Rs.1,400 lakhs in the Plan. This includes Rs.300 lakhs for the Integrated Rural Development Programme, Rs.100 lakhs for the Drought Prone Area Programme, Rs.200 lakhs for the Integrated Rural Energy Programme, Rs.400 lakhs for the Panchayat and Community Development Programme, Rs.100 lakhs for land reforms and Rs.300 lakhs for National Rural Employment Programmes. It may be mentioned here in this context that the programmes like the Integrated Rural Development Programmes and National Rural Employment Programme were the result of the Government's concern for poverty and unemployment. The first one was started in selected districts in 1978 was extended to the entire country in the Sixth Plan as a centrally sponsored scheme. Its objectives was to help rural families identified below the poverty line to

take up self employment ventures, by acquiring either productive assets of appropriate skills, which would generate enough income to enable them to rise above poverty line. The National Rural Employment Programme was launched as centrally sponsored scheme in 1980 replacing the Food for Work Programme. It was intended to provide supplementary wage-employment to the rural poor on projects which would create community assets. The debate on the merits of IRDP vis a vis wage employment programmes has been going on recently.⁷³ Some scholars argue in favour of the wage-employment programmes on the ground that the poorest of the poor is not able to take up self-employment programmes under IRDP.⁷⁴ Therefore, they want it to serve only as a supplementary programme to the wage employment programme. While the others prefer IRDP which as a strategy endows people with productive assets and skills to the wage employment programmes which leaves them dependent on their employer for a livelihood.⁷⁵ However, a consensus seems to have emerged among the scholars that both types of programmes need better implementation for eliminating or alleviating poverty.⁷⁶ In the hill area, these programmes were implemented by the District Rural Development Agency and the Panchayati Raj Institutions which are now being implemented by the DGHC. The Drought Prone Area Programme is a sincere attempt to minimise the impact of drought and insulate areas against drought. It is an area programme with a thrust on development of irrigation sources, soil and moisture conservation, forestation, livestock development and development of sound dryland farming practices and their adoption. In the hill areas, the watershed

management, building of ponds and reservoirs in the drought-affected areas, along with providing farmers with drought resistant seeds, have been emphasized by the DGHC.⁷⁷ Under the Integrated Rural Energy Programme, the DGHC intends to encourage people for using various non-conventional and renewable sources of energy like bio-gas, solar and wind.

Besides these, the industry sector, too, has been accorded due priority in the Plan. Industry can play an effective role in employment and income generation and in raising the purchasing power of the people. This is more so in the hill areas in view of the limited scope for agricultural development. The hill areas have a great potential for the development of industry. The plan envisaged three-pronged industrial activities :

(i) cottage and small scale industries based on agro-based product and traditional handicrafts, (ii) industrial estates where under one roof many entrepreneurs could participate in variety of industrial ventures and, (iii) modern high-tech industries like electronics, soft-ware development, semi-conductors and other screw-driver industries.⁷⁸ For these sectors, a financial outlay of Rs.1300 lakhs had been allotted of which Rs.500 lakhs were for cottage and small industry and Rs.800 lakhs for others.

The development of agriculture and allied sectors, including the industries as mentioned above, and the success of rural development programmes, depend largely on the transport and communication facilities. In view of the sorry state of these facilities, the Plan has accorded the highest priority to

this sector. Thus, an appreciable sum of Rs.6,600 lakhs had been allocated for the construction of roads, bridges, helicopter services and other communication programmes. Tourism is one of the backbones of the hill economy. Thus, a sum of Rs.4,800 lakhs had been assigned to it.

Last, but not the least, the social and welfare services have also received due attention. Keeping in view the acute drinking water crisis, Rs.1200 lakhs had been allotted for the purpose of improving the drinking water supply.

V. CONCLUSION : An analysis of the objectives and the allocation of plan outlays of the First Annual Action Plan of the DGHC gives the impression that these were too ambitious. This is perhaps because the leadership in the DGHC perceives the organisation more as an autonomous 'mini-state government' than a local organisation like the Zilla Parishad, looking after the basic needs and implementing development activities of local nature. Such perception is not shared by the State Government and the difference had created problems that have crippled the organisation. However, compared to the previous Hill Plans formulated by the Hill Affairs Branch Secretariat and the Hill Development Council in collaboration, the DGHC approach seems to have an edge over them. Those Hill Development plans, as we shall see in the following section were no more than the compilation of the sectoral budgets; the Secretariat worked only as a mediator. But the Annual Action Plan by the DGHC has carefully set the objectives and has identified the major obstacles for realising them. The

Plan frankly admits the limitations and difficulties of laying physical targets (unlike the previous plans), due to the poor data base and nonavailability of information in many respects. Therefore, it seeks to undertake a thorough economic survey of the hill areas before setting the physical targets on the potential of the different areas and on available resources.⁷⁹

No such attempts were made by the previous organisations involved in the formulation of hill development plans.⁸⁰ For undertaking such surveys, the DGHC, intends to set up its own planning, monitoring and statistical divisions in the scientific and modern pattern. It also seeks to make a 'Survey Team' for feasibility studies for undertaking various development projects. In the field of education, it wants to restructure the course pattern in favour of the vocational education. It seeks to start a new adult education system called 'Real Path Revolution' which is oriented to develop the development psyche of the common people.⁸¹

It is difficult to evaluate the performance of the DGHC in the development of hill areas at this juncture because it has worked only for a year for realising the objectives it has set up for the development of hill areas. Due to the political and administrative reasons, such as 'financial embargo' or the lack of an effective administrative structure, the DGHC has not been implementing its programmes since June 1991. The differences between it and the State Government of financial and administrative matters have been so acute that nothing was done to enhance its

organisational capacity. However, a political rapprochement between the two as indicated by the recent agreement between the Chief Minister of the State and the Chairman of the DGHC to amend the DGHC Act, 1988 for revamping the DGHC by providing an effective administrative structure is expected to resolve the different issues that had crippled the organisation. This can go a long way in bringing about not only an all-round development of the hill areas but also in contributing to political stability and order. If successful, the Darjeeling experiment may become a model for many ethnic groups in the rest of the country for their development and induction into the main stream of national politics.

E. THE HILL AREA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (H.A.D.C.)

I. Background : The origin of the Hill Area Development Council can be traced to the formation of the Hill Area Development Advisory Committee in December, 1972, by the Congress Government headed by the then Chief Minister, Sidhartha Shankar Ray.⁸² The accelerated development of the hill areas commenced from the financial year 1973-74 as conceived in the Draft Fifth Five Year Plan. The Committee was formed with the objectives of ensuring effective coordination and speedy implementation of the 'Accelerated Plan for the Hill Areas'. The main function of the Committee was to advise the Minister-in-Charge of Hill Area Development. It was headed by a Cabinet Minister who was its Chairman and a Deputy Minister who acted as Vice Chairman. A

post of 'Hill Secretary' was created and was appointed from among the nominated members who acted as a liaison officer between the Council and other various sectoral departments. The Committee was a non-statutory body and lacked the necessary powers to fulfil its functions. When the Government decided to involve this body in the formulation of the Hill Plan, the necessity of making it more effective was felt. Thus, the Hill Area Development Council Act was passed in 1976. The Act of 1976 was amended by the Left Front Government in 1978 and was also made operational. This was the time when the Panchayati Raj Institutions were revitalized and assigned a leadership role in the implementation of rural development programmes in West Bengal.⁸³

A Hill Affairs Branch Secretariat was also opened up by the Development and Planning Department with the responsibility of formulating the Hill Plan in consultation with the Hill Area Development Council.

II. (a) Objectives of the Hill Area Development Council (HADC) :

The objectives of the HADC was to ensure effective coordination and speedy implementation of plans and programmes for the development of the hill areas. Underlining the objective of the Council, the then Chief Minister of West Bengal observed that the hill areas have been neglected for too long and that swift implementation of development scheme was necessary; he also stressed the importance of the two aspects of development work namely, (i) proper supervision and (ii) proper decentralisation of work.⁸⁴ It was

expected that with decentralisation, all work could be done in a better way from Darjeeling itself and better coordination could be maintained with various departments concerned. Section 8 of the Hill Development Council Act 1976 provided that the Council 'shall' be consulted by the State Government in formulating the Integrated Hill Development Plan for the hill areas and in its implementation. The Council was to be informed about the budgetary provisions made by the different departments of the State Government relating to the development of the hill areas. Thus, advising, coordinating and supervising the planning and implementation of the accelerated hill development plans were the main objectives of the Council.

The Council was seen as a great opening towards the achievement of maximum autonomy for the people of the hill areas. It was also expected that the Council would act as a cementing factor to bring together all like-minded political parties and groups to close up their differences to achieve the common goal of development.⁸⁵

(b) Objectives of the Hill Affairs Branch Secretariat (HABS) : The objectives of the Branch Secretariat were : (i) to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the development programmes, (ii) to guide and supervise various district level officers of different departments in the preparation of Annual Five Year Plans and (iii) to process and sanction schemes.⁸⁶ The Secretariat also had the duty of monitoring and evaluating the progress of the implementation of the development programmes. Thus, administrative

control of the 'Accelerated Hill Development Plan' was to be exercised by the Secretariat. The Secretariat was also required to maintain effective liaison with the members of the Hill Areas Development Council, various departmental heads and also with the public.

(c) Organisation of the Hill Area Development Council (HADC) and the Hill Affairs Branch Secretariat (HABS) : The need of an organisation for coordinating and supervising the formulation and implementation of the 'Accelerated Hill Plan' during the Fifth Plan period necessitated the formation of the HADC along with HABS at the district level. It was an adhoc arrangement; so the approach to organisation design lacked an integrated perspective as we shall see in course of our discussion. Though the HADC and HABS were concerned with the overlapping task of coordinating and supervising the formulation and implementation of developmental plans and programmes, the designing of the organisations had been such that they appeared to be separated and isolated from each other as if they were created for different purposes altogether. The organisational design of HADC and HABS have been exhibited in Table 5.3. We intend to deal with the organisational structures of HADC and HABS first, and then, secondly, to analyse the organisational issues and characteristics of HADC and HABS as parts of a common organisational framework with reference to the question of linkages, decentralisation, participation, coordination, communication and supervision.

Table 5.3

ORGANISATION OF HILL AREA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL AND HILL AFFAIRS BRANCH SECRETARIAT

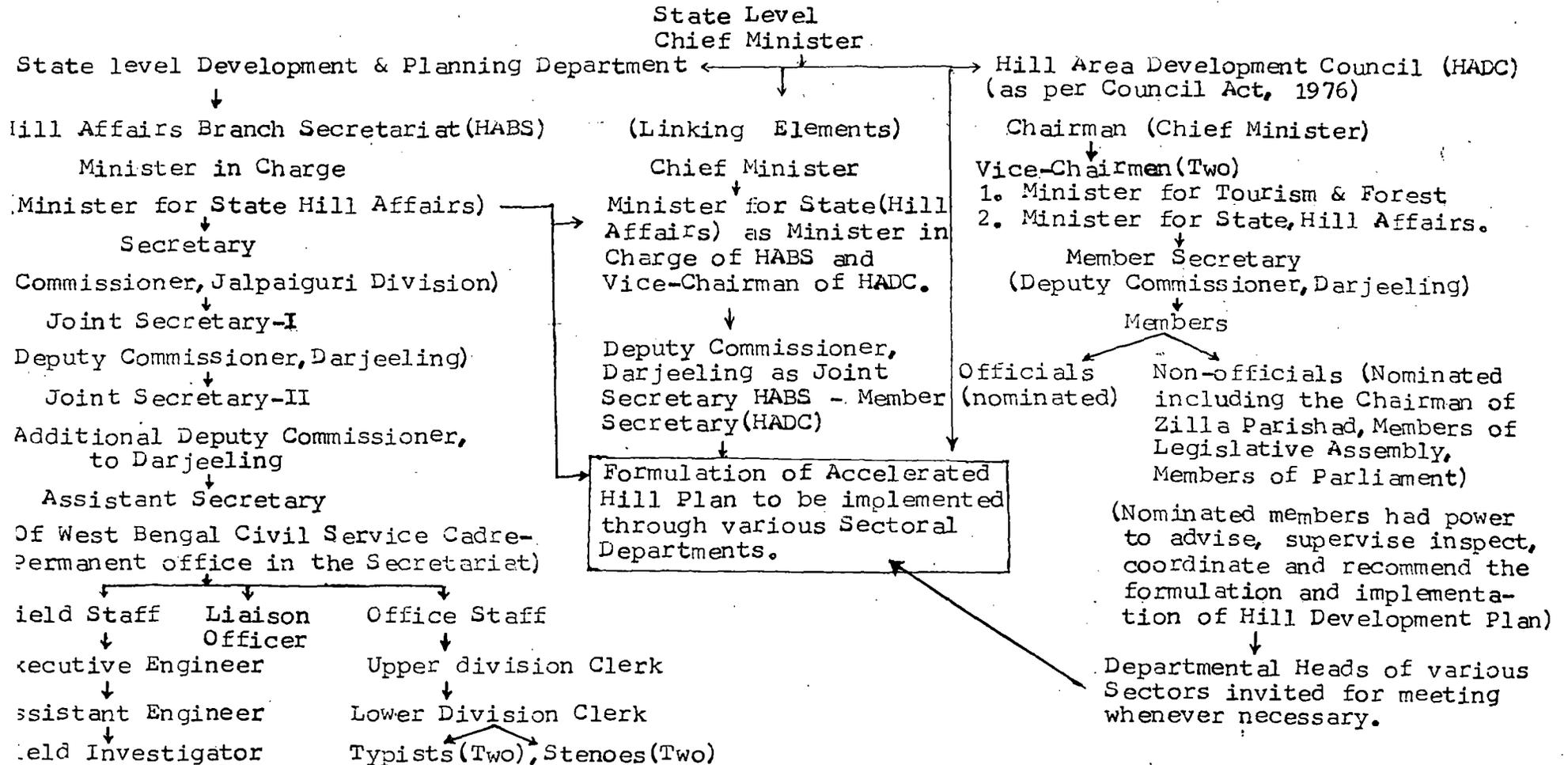
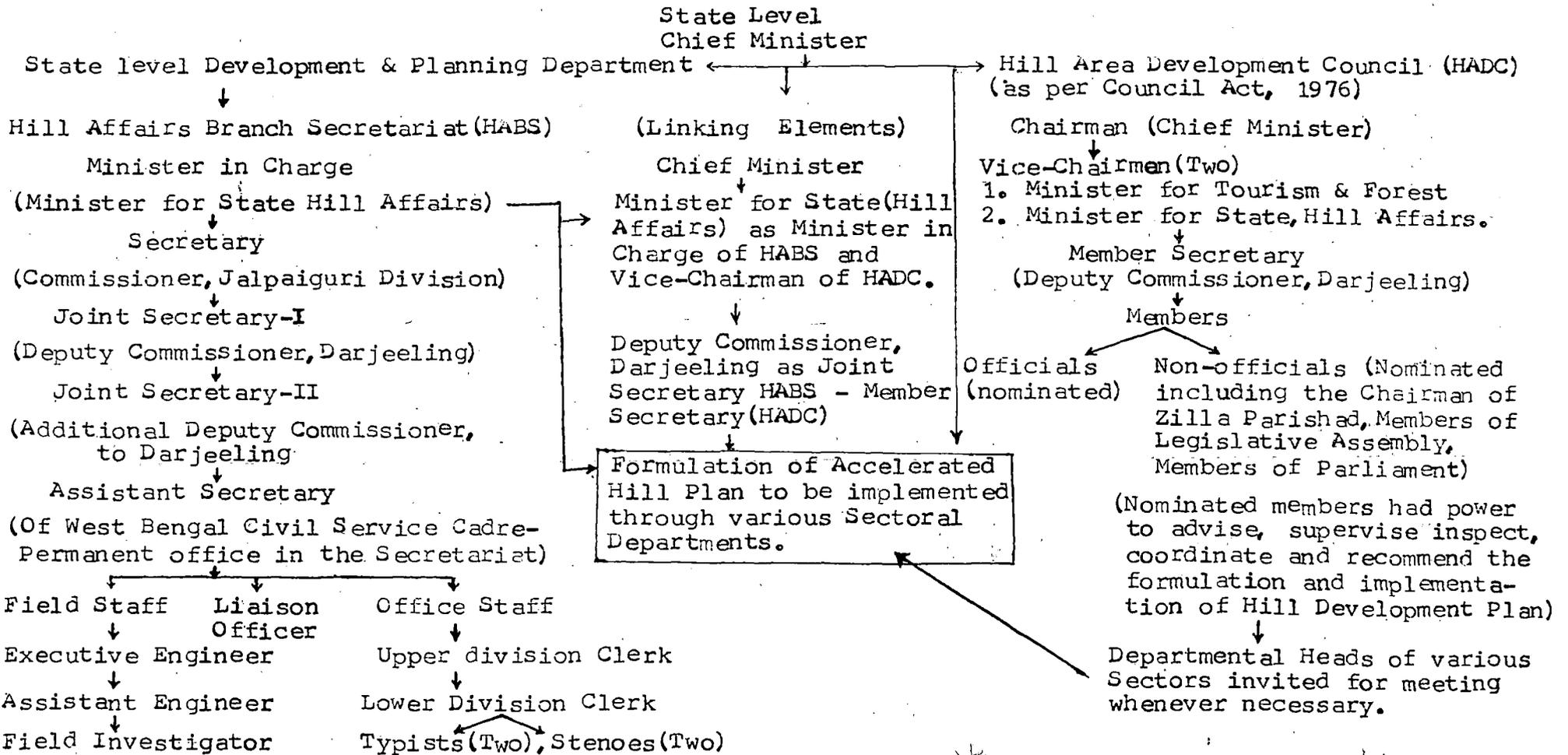


Table 5.3

ORGANISATION OF HILL AREA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL AND HILL AFFAIRS BRANCH SECRETARIAT



(i) HADC : The HADC was headed by the Chairman and two Vice-Chairmen. The Chief Minister of West Bengal was the Chairman of the HADC. The Minister for Forest and Tourism and the Minister for State, Hill Affairs, were the Vice-Chairmen. The Deputy Commission, Darjeeling, was the Member-Secretary.

The Council consisted of ex-officio official members and and nominated non-official members. The ex-officio members consisted of (i) the Vice-Chairman of State Planning (ii) the Secretary to the Government of West Bengal, Department of Development and Planning (later on, in 1978 this was made a general seat), (iii) the Commissioner, Jalpaiguri Division. The nominated non-official members consisted of Member of the Union Parliament, Member of the State Legislative Assembly, Chairman of the Zilla Parishad and others from various professional background such as medical, legal, educational, managerial, literary and social work, etc. The term of office of the members was not fixed, but was subjected to rules made by the State Government from time to time. The Secretary and the staff of the Council were to be appointed by the State Government on such terms and conditions as may be prescribed. The Chairman had the power to decide the location and time of the meeting. In his absence, this was to be done by the Vice-Chairman and in the absence of the Vice-Chairman, members were to elect a President amongst themselves for the meeting.

(ii) HABS : The HABS was headed by the Minister for State, Hill Affairs, as Minister-in-charge of the Secretariat, who

was also the Vice-Chairman of the Council. He was to be assisted by the Secretary, Hill Affairs. The Commissioner, Jalpaiguri Division, served as the Secretary of HABS. The Additional Deputy Commissioner, Darjeeling, served as the Joint Secretary. Later on, the Deputy Commissioner, Darjeeling, was made the Joint Secretary-I and this Additional was made the Joint Secretary-II. A full-time Assistant Secretary was placed in the Secretariat with a permanent office to look into the matters of day to day administration.

There was one Executive Engineer, one Assistant Engineer and Field Investigator for assisting the members of the HADC for supervising the ongoing schemes. The other line staff included the clerks stenoes and other Class IV staff.

III. Organisational Issues

a. Linkages : From the organisational design presented in Table 5.3 it becomes clear that the vertical linkages were stronger than the horizontal ones. One of the linking elements was the Chairman of the HADC. The Chairman being the Chief Minister of West Bengal exercised the political as well as administrative control over the 'Minister in Charge' of the HABS who was also the Vice-Chairman of the HADC. Thus, the Chief Minister was in close link with both the HADC and HABS and provided leadership and control. Another point in the hierarchy was the Minister for State Hill Affairs who was both Minister-in-Charge (HABS) and the Vice-Chairman of HADAC.

His position was crucial in the organisation because he was the highest linkage point, both vertical and horizontal, the district level, being the highest incumbent in both the HABS and the HADC.

Administratively, the Deputy Commissioner, Darjeeling, was placed in a very crucial point in the linkage process. He was the Member Secretary of HADC and the Joint Secretary-I of the HABS and was assisted by Additional Deputy Commissioner who was the Joint Secretary II. The Deputy Commissioner had to play a significant coordinative role between the HADC and the HAB and also with other sectoral district level departments which were responsible for implementing the Hill Plan. The Deputy Commissioner also was vital for linking the whole arrangement with the State level authorities.

Without proper structural arrangement, it is difficult to establish and maintain the linkages. In addition to the above mentioned provisions, supervisory committees of the members were formed which also served as contact points between the different elements of the organisation. Besides these, the meetings of the HADC were held time to time in which the officials and non-officials had the opportunity to interact with each other. Last, but not the least, the 'directives' of the State government to the members also prescribed individual contact for specific tasks and for making connections.

It can be quite firmly asserted from the above

discussion that the vertical linkages were quite strong. But there were problems with horizontal linkages. There was no formal structural mechanism to facilitate the horizontal linkages. The only source of developing horizontal linkages were the meetings of HADAC. This was also hindered by the departmentalistic attitude of the sectoral departments as we shall see from our discussion on coordination a little later.

b. Decentralisation : With the establishment of the HADAC and HABS, it was thought, a great beginning had been made for the decentralisation of planning and implementation. Indeed, it was a positive step towards creating an organisational machinery which could fulfil the organisational gap at the district level and play a significant role in achieving the horizontal and vertical coordination and integration.

But, the concept of decentralisation used in the HADC was conceived in a very narrow sense of 'decentralisation of work' as is evident from the Chief Minister's speeches setting out the objectives of the Council.⁸⁷ The nominated members lacked the political legitimacy and support for becoming effective and vocal in performing their tasks. They could not be assertive and play any significant role in decision making. Though, the establishment of these organisations brought the decision-making points physically at the district level, the decision-making authority remained in the hands of the Chairmen and to some extent with the Vice-Chairmen belonging to the State Ministry. Besides, the Deputy Commissioner

exercised tremendous authority. The members, because, they were not elected representatives, could not become as effective as one would have desired in counterbalancing the authoritarian bureaucracy. The success of the whole machinery depended upon the leadership of the Chief Minister. But his busy schedule and serious engagement elsewhere in the State would not allow him to give as much time to the hill affairs as he would have desired. The members also depended on the support of the ruling party if they wanted effectively to influence the decision making. On the one hand, the presence of the Chief Minister in an organisation which consisted of the nominated members was an advantage in the sense that his presence boosted the status and respectability of the organisations making the district level authorities to take them seriously, but at the same time defeated the very purpose for which the organisations were formed, i.e., the decentralisation of work.

The Hill Affairs Branch Secretariat was responsible for the formulation of the Hill Plan in consultation with the Council. It had to do this on the basis of the allocation provided by the Planning Commission and the detailed directives given by the State Government and also the requirement of the sectoral departments at the district level. No planning decisions were taken by the HABS. Its role was that of a compiler of outlays of fund prepared by different departments and then submitting the same to the Planning Commission. The allotment made by the Planning Commission for the district would be

channelised to the other departments through the HABS. Its role in fact was like that of a 'funding agency' and in that it acted no better than a post office.

c. Participation : It has been made clear from the foregoing discussions that the organisational designs of the HABS and HADC were highly centralised with strong vertical linkages. They did not facilitate the participation of the lower level functionaries as well as of the members. The Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner, and the Additional Commissioner wielded considerable authority, and were the main actors in shaping the policies of the HABS and influence the HADC.

No mention had been made in the 1976 Council Act about the participation of the people or even the members except empowering the members to advise the Government after inspecting the sites. Thus, the involvement of popular element had been taken in a very narrow administrative sense. It was futile to expect popular participation from the involvement of the nominated members without any decision-making power. It was not obligatory for the officials of the HABS and other departments to accept and follow up the recommendation of the members. However, the creation of the HABS and the HADC, the presence of the Chief Minister along with his ministerial and state level bureaucrats once or twice a year in the district for formally finalising the formulation of the 'Accelerated Hill Development Plan' and other

related political and administrative activities, aroused tremendous interest, excitement and enthusiasm among the people. The local politicians, intellectuals, social workers and the local press closely watched the activities of the HABS and HADC. The wide coverage of the activities of the HABS and HADC by the local press generated a high level of awareness at least in the town areas and among the literate people. The political activities were also geared up and party meetings by different political parties served as an important medium of information. All these were by no standard a mean achievement. But as soon as the Chief Minister and the team went back to Calcutta, these activities too receded into the background and HABS and HADC functioned as normal administrative units.

d. Coordination : Coordinating and supervising the formulation and implementation of the Hill Plan by providing overall guidance to the Sectoral Departments at the district level were the main functions of the HADC and HABS. In the process, these three components, the HADC, the HABS, and the Sectoral Departments were expected to supplement each other's job.

The HADC brought together people with various backgrounds such as the Chief Minister and some other Cabinet Ministers, Members of the State Legislative Assembly of the State and the Union Parliament, the Chairman of the Zilla Parishad, political leaders of the district, State and District level administrators and others nominated non-official members hailing from the

administrative managerial, legal, medical and literary professions.

So far as the meetings of the HADC were concerned, the presence and the influence of the Chief Minister as the Chairman of the HADC guaranteed the attendance of the departmental heads and other officers. But regarding the day-to-day working, the problem of coordination cropped up and sometimes very acutely. This was because the sectoral departments worked according to the directives of their own headquarters in Calcutta, often ignoring the decisions taken in the Secretariat as it was not mandatory for the departments to abide by the decision of the Council or even the Secretariat. The members had only the power to recommend. Therefore, they had to look to the Chief Minister for making their recommendation effective. This was not always an easy task in view of the physical distance between the hill areas and the State Capital and the busy schedule of the Chief Minister.

One of the most important problems for the members in discharging their duties was the non-cooperation by the administrators of the various sectoral departments.⁸⁸ For example, the non-availability of the 'transport' (vehicle) and the needed information posed problems for members for fulfilling their duty of inspecting the work sites. It was the departments which had to provide all the required help to the members whenever they decided to visit the areas where developmental works were going on. When these problems were placed before the Chief Minister, he took

personal interest and directed the departmental heads to provide necessary cooperation to the members. This improved matters for some time but again the same old attitude came up and the members faced difficulties. In spite of the directives from the office as high as that of the Chief Minister, these problems remained unresolved, probably due to the wooden-headed attitude of the bureaucrats.

This was also due to the absence of any formal rules and procedures directing the departments that assistance to the members was mandatory. Neither was the Council held responsible for development works nor was the secretariat along with other sectoral departments made responsible to the Council.

One of the problems regarding the co-ordination of planning and development activities was the non-association of the Hill Council with the District Planning Committee formed in 1985 in spite of the member's demand to be associated with the District Planning Committee. In fact it was stated in one of the meetings of the Hill Advisory Committee that the Council and the District Planning Committee were distinct bodies and the question of associating them does not arise.⁸⁹

In the absence of a mechanism to co-ordinate the functions of the District Planning Committee and the Hill Council, the much-desired horizontal co-ordination and integration did not really materialise. A body which was to advise in planning and implementation of the 'Accelerated Hill Development Plan', was kept

out of the District Planning Committee. Therefore, the members had rarely any influence on the decisions of the District Planning Committee. Their role was limited in giving some individual proposals and complaints regarding a particular scheme in the meetings of the Council. These proposals lacked an integrated perspective. The members proposed schemes completely unaware of the requirements and perspective of the District Plan. They were more interested in bringing some schemes for their own area without reference to the overall needs of hill areas.

In a way, the council became a 'Complaint Box' organisations in which members competed with one another for fulfilling a particular demand in which they were interested. Instead of working as a 'body', members were involved in appeasing the concerned departmental officials and political parties. This was more for their 'survival' as members than for development works, because their term of office was not specified in the Council Act. It depended on the Government's decision.

This dependence of the members led them to 'play safe' to keep the membership alive which provided them with certain privileges, often other than those prescribed in the Act such as getting employment, transfers and also admissions to medical and engineering colleges for their kith and kin from the 'hill quota' which was also known as Chief Minister's quota.

The interplay of all these factors affected the enthusiasm of the initial years. The meetings which were so regularly held became irregular. It also became difficult for

the Chief Minister to give enough time for the affairs of the Council. The revitalization of the Panchayati Raj in 1978 added heavier load to the already busy Deputy Collector, who became Executive Officer of the Zilla Parishad, Member Secretary of the Hill Development Council, Joint Secretary II of the Hill Affairs Branch Secretariat and the Vice-President of the District Rural Development Agency.

Thus, the whole exercise of preparing the 'Accelerated Hill Development Plan' was no more than a purely administrative routine affair in which departments involved were in stiff competition and rivalry to get more fund. The integrated planning perspective receded in the background. No surveys were made on the existing and potential resources of the Area. Targets and priorities were fixed without proper assessment and careful analysis of the viability and suitability of the schemes in the Area. The sectoral schemes of different departments were prepared on the basis of directives from the departmental headquarters, often, ignoring the decisions taken in the secretariat and the Council.

Though the Secretariat was to have the administrative control of the implementation of the Hill Plan, the sectoral departments, made their own targets and set priorities. The Secretariat was considered only as a 'Funding Agency'. Once, the schemes were passed by the Secretariat, departments and agencies were on their own. They were not accountable to the secretariat

in practice. No information was available in the Secretariat on different aspects of the ongoing schemes such as their follow up, feedback and successes and failures. The officials in the Secretariat admitted that it is not their job to bother about implementation once a scheme is handed over to a particular department. Therefore, they should not be held responsible for any failures. In short, the functional aspect and its hierarchy was so prominent in the departmental set up that the area (Hill Area and Hill Plan) remained squarely subordinated to the functions or the subject matter of departments. This undermined the role of the Hill Affairs Branch Secretariat and Hill Area Development Council which were created to emphasize the overall development of the Area.

e. Communication : The problems of coordination which were discussed in the foregoing section were largely due to the ineffective and centralised communication system. The methods of communication followed were mainly (i) correspondence, (ii) reports of the supervisory committee (iii) report and review of progress of works (iv) telephone and (v) face-to-face contact. Of these, mainly the correspondence was followed. The centralised character of these organisations did not facilitate informal communication but relied heavily on the Government circulars and memos. Thus, down the line communication was encouraged. The Chairman of the Council, the Chief Minister of the State not being present at the district level, the members had to largely depend

on the Vice Chairman for day to day dealings. But even the Vice Chairman was busy with his political activities at the district level and below and his ministerial responsibilities. These factors made the members to rely on correspondence and face-to-face dialogue was rarely used as methods of communication.

One of the methods of communication used was the meetings of the Hill Council. In the initial years, when the frequency of the meetings was high, the use of 'correspondence' was less.⁹⁰

But in due course, these meetings became very irregular and were held only once or twice a year. Thus, the 'meeting' as a method of communication lost its effectiveness. It was the duty of the Secretariat to furnish information regarding the progress of the work to the members and to act as a liaison office. A monthly 'News Bulletin' in English and Nepali was published and distributed among the members including the various sectoral departments. But these bulletins contained mostly descriptions of the proposed schemes and the achievements of the Government and on how the ongoing schemes were progressing. They did not contain information on ongoing development works and other details which could be of some help to the officials and particularly the non-officials members of HADC in discharging their duties. The lack of information had been one of the main obstacles for the members in doing their work. To bridge this gap, the members were supplied with 'Progress Reports', 'Annual Reports', and 'Review of Works' on the insistence of the Chairman, the Chief

Minister of West Bengal. The members then rightly complained that these reports and reviews were faulty and also inadequate and did not depict a clear picture of the development works in progress. On many occasions, the facts and figures and other information were repetitions of the previous years' reports.⁹¹ The poor communication between the HAES and the HADC were highlighted by one of the members in a meeting of HADC who pointed out that after the submission of proposals or schemes or recommendation to the Secretariat, the members rarely received information as to which of their proposals or schemes or suggestions were accepted or rejected in the formulation of the Hill Development Plan.⁹² It can easily be discerned from the foregoing analysis that the methods and the nature of 'communication' required for performing the tasks of coordinating and supervising the development programme were quite inadequate.

f. Supervision : Supervision is one of ^{the} essential components of the organisation and management of development programmes. Without it, no programmes can be successful. Section 10 of the HADC Act 1976 empowered the members to inspect, survey or enquire any ongoing development schemes and make recommendations. The members were especially directed to 'inspect the sites' where work was going on and also to pay secret visits ... and check and see whether the different schemes are implemented in a proper way.⁹³ The Hill Secretary was directed to supply to the members a list of on-going development works. A 'Supervisory Team'

was prepared for each of the three hill sub-divisions of Darjeeling district which consisted of the members from the respective sub-divisions for 'Spot Visits' of development works. The team was required to submit its report to the Hill Secretary of the Chief Minister who in turn was to help the members and arrange such visits. Such spot visits could also be made by the supervisory team of one sub-division to another. The members also had the option of making individual visits. The supervision was to be made at least once a month. The reports of such visits were to be submitted to the State Government through the HABS.

But, the problems with these reports were that they were not taken seriously. As the Executive Engineer puts it, these reports lacked technical competence and the recommendation enclosed therein were the wishful desires of the members which were not practical.⁹⁴ The administrators thought that such supervision by laymen and their recommendation were unnecessary hassles. After all, they were not obligatory. This fact seemed to have been one of the major factors for the ineffectiveness of the 'Reports' submitted by the 'Supervisory Team' consisting of the members.

In addition to these factors, the non-co-operation by the departments was one of the reasons for ineffective supervision by the HADC members. It has already been pointed out that the non-availability of necessary information and transport was one

of the major stumbling blocks for the members for supervising the schemes. The problem of transport and lack of information had been a chronic problems of the organisation which remained unresolved till the dissolution of these bodies when the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council replaced them.

IV. THE ACCELERATED HILL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Though the Hill Affairs Branch Secretariat was established during the Sixth Plan period, planning for the 'Accelerated Hill Development' started in 1974-75 along with the formation of the Chief Minister's Hill Secretariat and the Hill Area Development Advisory Committee. It was claimed that prior to this, a low level of investment in the State Plan due to the paucity of resources had been responsible for overall backwardness of the area. The 'Sub-Plan' for the hill areas aimed to build up a minimum infrastructure requisite for meeting the needs of the under-developed economy of the hills. The Plan was sought to be partly funded from the State budget and partly from the Central assistance. This was to be channelled through the hill Secretariat of the Chief Minister and the Hill Development Advisory Committee and later on by the Hill Affairs Branch Secretariat and the Hill Area Development Council (HADC).

During the period 1974-75 to 1978-79 (i.e., the 5th Plan Period), a total of Rs.3721.10 lakhs was spent, of which Rs.1500.15 lakhs were from special central assistance and

Rs.2109.62 lakhs from the State Plan, and 111.33 lakhs from the Special Hill Affairs Budget.⁹⁵ The Hill Affairs Budget was a supplementary one meant for bridging the critical gaps under different sectors that may arise in course of the implementation of development plans.

During the Sixth Plan period, the responsibility for formulating, coordinating and supervising Hill Plan was given to the Hill Affairs Branch Secretariat. The Secretariat was to do this job in consultation with the members of the Hill Area Development Council. The overall objective and strategy for development was in line with the directives of the Planning Commission. The major emphasis was laid on projects that generate employment leading also to higher productivity. The secondary thrust had been on the development of infrastructure while social and community services received only minor attention.⁹⁶ Apart from agriculture, special emphasis was sought to be laid on boosting subsidiary income-generating occupations such as animal husbandry, horticulture, sericulture, social forestry, cottage and small industries. The strategy envisaged was increasing productivity through labour-intensive rather than capital-intensive programme.

The Seventh Plan objectives and strategies were to continue the thrust of the Sixth Plan, but with more emphasis on the achievement of the basic needs, such as food, fuel, water supply and health services, and infrastructural development within the framework of safeguarding and protecting ecological balance.

With these objectives, Rs.2476.0861 lakhs were spent during the first year of the Seventh Plan, i.e., 1985-90 the State, Hill Affairs and Central budgets contributing Rs.1450.264 lakhs, 100.00 lakhs and 925.84 lakhs respectively to the total amount. The anticipated and proposed outlay were Rs.2380.352 lakhs and 3339.601 lakhs for the years 1986-87 and 1987-88 of the Seventh Plan. But due to the disturbing situation arising out of the Gorkha Land Movement, the target of spending the earmarked amount seemed to have failed.⁹⁷

By 1985, HADC had become totally ineffective for all practical purposes, due mainly to the resignations of most of the members in the wake of the Gorkhaland Movement. Though the Hill Secretariat continued its functions, the office of the Minister-in-Charge of the Council was closed in Darjeeling, and the Minister had to work from the Calcutta Office and Siliguri where he stayed during the agitation period. Between 1985 and 1988, i.e., the period of political turmoil, none of the development agencies including the HADC and the HABS could function normally. Thus, the 'Accelerated Hill Plan' prepared by them also could not be effectively implemented. Therefore, we have decided to take the 6th Plan period, i.e. 1980-85, for our analysis.

A careful analysis of the hill plans found serious discrepancy in the figures shown in the statement of the sectoral allocations in annual action plans and shown in their reviews on the same items. Again, different items have been grouped together

under a particular heading very unsystematically. For example, in 1980-81 Annual Action Plan, soil conservation, irrigation, veterinary services, crop husbandry, agriculture marketing, horticulture, animal husbandry, West Bengal Forest Division Corporation Community Development have been clubbed together under one heading, Agricultural Development, and allocation had been made accordingly. In 1982-83, the Cinchona plantation, Government's sericulture farms, cooperation and small and cottage industries, have been brought under this heading. In 1983-84, no groupings had been made and these items were shown separately along with their allocations. In 1984-85, many items under the heading of Agricultural Development were taken out and shown separately under a different heading. Thus, animal husbandry got a separate place, sericulture farms, cinchona plantation and small and cottage industry were taken out from 'Agriculture Development' and brought under the heading of Industry. Again, the way, the statement of reviews of the plan allocations and expenditure have been shown in the Review Reports, does not allow anyone to get the clear picture. Instead of providing the review of expenditure on annual basis, the figures for two to three years have been clubbed together like 1978 to 1983, 1983-85 etc. The unsystematic grouping of the items, changes of item in the grouping and their arrangement of the statement of expenditure and allocation really makes it difficult to have a clear picture of the whole scenario. This was also one of the allegations made by the members of HADC to the officials in the HABS. Keeping in view these difficulties, the following analysis has been

made on the basis of the proposed allocation as shown in the abstract of the annual plans as available in the Mid-term Review of the Hill plan (1980-85) published in 1984. The table below shows the Sector-wise statement of the proposed allocation for the period 1980-85.

Table 5.4

It can easily be deduced from the Table 5.4 that inspite of the objectives of giving full attention to the activities of subsidiary sources of income and the development of cash crops, the plan allotments show slightly different picture. It may be mentioned here that development of horticulture, floriculture, rural industries are vital for realising the objectives of increasing employment generation and subsidiary incomes for the poor because the productivity of the traditional crops like paddy and maize is very low in the hill areas.⁹⁸ The scope for increasing it is also limited due to the unfavourable conditions for the development of agriculture. But the allocations made in the spheres mentioned above looks not only inadequate but also inconsistent and lop-sided as per Table 5.4. For instance, in 1980-81, only Rs.16.81 lakhs was earmarked for horticulture development, that too, declined in the subsequent years. Thus, the allotment in the sector was Rs.10.46 lakhs in 1981-83; 12.05 lakhs in 1982-83 and then a sudden rise in 1983-84 to 15.95 lakhs which again declined to Rs.10.70 lakhs in 1984-85. The Hill Affairs Budget which was to fill the critical gaps and accelerate

the pace of development, did not allocate any amount at all during the period except in 1983-84 which was a meagre sum of Rs.3 lakhs. The amount allocated for sericulture was meant for the Governments Sericulture Farms in Kalimpong, Bijonbari and Kurseong and had been included in the plan allotment as one of the item in industrial sector. No specific schemes for developing sericulture as one of the allied agriculture activities among small and marginal farmers were made. Floriculture, which is an integral part of the rural economy providing subsidiary income to the people did not find a place in the plan. Another sector which is related closely to rural development is crop husbandry. Though a fair amount had been allocated for this sector, there has been inconsistency regarding the allotment. In 1980-81 a sum of Rs.52.87 lakhs was allocated in 1981-82, Rs.75.91 lakhs in 1982-83 and Rs.85.41 lakhs in 1983-84 but the allotment declined in 1984-85 to Rs.81.96 lakhs. Such inconsistency is also evident in plan allocations for cooperative sector which were Rs.21.44 lakhs in 1980-81, Rs.13.91 lakhs in 1981-82, Rs.42.80 lakhs in 1982-83, Rs.22.00 lakhs in 1983-84 and Rs.21.75 lakhs in 1984-85.

The allotment for the provisions of drinking water after getting the one of the highest priority in which case the amount earmarked (Rs.85.82 lakhs) in 1980-81 rose to Rs.111.02 lakhs in 1982-83 but suddenly declined to Rs.74.93 lakhs in 1983-84 and to Rs.75.27 lakhs in 1984-85. This is really surprising and it is difficult to understand the logic behind such a step in view of the acute drinking water crisis in the hill areas. The allotment

Proposed Central allocation to the Accelerated Hill Plan prepared by Hill Affairs Branch, Secretariat to the Finance Commission, Central Government, State Government and Hill Affairs Budget

(Rupees in Lakhs)

| Sl. No. SECTOR | YEAR 1980-85 | | | | | Hill Affairs Budget share of the total budget in each sector to fill the critical gaps those may occur | | | | |
|---|--------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 1980-81 | 1981-82 | 1982-83 | 1983-84 | 1984-85 | 1980-81 | 1981-82 | 1982-83 | 1983-84 | 1984-85 |
| A. Agriculture | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. Crop Husbandry | 52.53 | 52.07 | 75.31 | 85.41 | 81.96 | 2.14 | NA | - | - | - |
| 2. Horticulture | 16.81 | 10.46 | 17.05 | 15.95 | 10.70 | - | NA | - | 1.00 | - |
| 3. Agriculture Marketing | 0.55 | 1.00 | 7.05 | 22.50 | 44.00 | - | NA | 4 | - | 3.00 |
| 4. Soil Conservation | 129.84 | 172.60 | 170.16 | 250.57 | 239.40 | - | NA | 3.00 | 3.00 | 3.00 |
| 5. Irrigation (Major & minor) | 71.69 | 60.50 | 106.90 | 163.00 | 158.37 | 2.00 | NA | 2.50 | 2.00 | 2.00 |
| B. 1. Animal Husbandry | 65.60 | 39.94 | 59.71 | 110.30 | 120.71 | 1.00 | NA | - | 3.00 | 3.00 |
| 2. Veterinary Service | 25.17 | 27.89 | 30.04 | 28.19 | 37.19 | 0.50 | NA | 4 | - | - |
| C. 1. Panchayat | 76.90 | 56.13 | 97.11 | 27.00 | 32.00 | 6.00 | NA | 7.50 | 5.00 | 5.00 |
| 2. Community Development | 16.00 | 12.00 | 24.00 | 24.00 | 25.00 | 0.50 | NA | 10.00 | 10.00 | 10.00 |
| D. Co-operation | 71.44 | 13.91 | 42.80 | 72.00 | 21.75 | 0.66 | NA | 2.00 | 2.00 | 2.00 |
| E. Industries | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. Mines and Minerals | 1.36 | 0.68 | 1.50 | 750 | 8.30 | - | NA | - | - | - |
| 2. Cinchona Plantation | 106.71 | 144.76 | 158.72 | 179.17 | 209.11 | - | NA | - | - | - |
| 3. Agriculture Farms | 34.74 | 28.52 | 40.77 | 45.25 | 46.25 | - | NA | - | - | - |
| 4. West Bengal Handicraft Development Corporation | 10.40 | 6.80 | 9.32 | 14.23 | 9.52 | - | NA | - | - | 2.00 |
| 5. West Bengal Small Industry Corporation | - | 18.84 | - | - | - | - | NA | - | - | - |
| 6. District Industry Centre | 17.22 | 24.35 | 12.75 | 13.80 | 13.08 | 4.00 | NA | 3.00 | - | - |
| 7. Handloom and Textiles | - | 0.37 | 4.25 | 0.65 | 0.70 | - | NA | - | - | - |
| 8. District Rural Development Agency | 2.50 | 1.65 | 19.34 | 28.50 | 31.50 | - | NA | 4 | 1.50 | 1.50 |
| F. Communication, Road and Transport | 102.59 | 119.59 | 134.39 | 139.50 | 98.00 | 8.00 | NA | 9.00 | 4.50 | 4.50 |
| G. Tourism | 35.21 | 30.27 | 34.05 | 31.50 | 31.80 | 1.00 | - | - | - | - |
| H. Social and Community Services | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. Education (General) | 36.20 | 47.99 | 38.17 | 52.35 | 59.60 | 5.00 | NA | 4.50 | 4.50 | 4.50 |
| 2. Education (Social) | 12.93 | 7.41 | 13.56 | 26.44 | 26.99 | 1.50 | NA | - | - | - |
| 3. Education (Technical) | 13.87 | 10.31 | 15.76 | 16.50 | 18.50 | 1.50 | NA | 2.50 | 1.50 | 1.50 |
| 4. Medical | 75.37 | 64.47 | 50.00 | - | - | - | NA | - | - | - |
| 5. Drinking Water | 05.52 | 111.50 | 40.85 | 74.93 | 75.27 | - | NA | 4.50 | 2.00 | 2.00 |
| 6. Scheduled Castes and Tribal Welfare | 8.83 | 15.80 | 24.00 | 25.10 | 20.03 | - | NA | - | - | - |
| 7. Municipal Services | 25.68 | 20.40 | 54.67 | 36.50 | 39.00 | 2.00 | NA | 12.00 | 12.00 | 12.00 |
| 8. Information and Cultural Affairs | 19.75 | 10.80 | 15.05 | 16.50 | 19.00 | 0.50 | NA | 2.50 | - | - |
| I. Forestry | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. Forest Division | 41.91 | 34.37 | 24.00 | 17.00 | 17.00 | - | NA | - | - | - |
| 2. West Bengal Forest Development Corporation | 64.92 | 104.73 | 122.11 | 130.43 | 124.69 | - | NA | - | - | - |
| 3. Flora & Fauna | 1.39 | 0.00 | 14.64 | 15.10 | 17.10 | - | NA | - | 4.00 | 4.00 |
| J. Comprehensive Watershed Management | - | - | - | 15.00 | 20.00 | - | NA | - | - | - |
| K. Research & Development | - | - | - | 6.00 | 6.00 | - | - | - | - | - |

Total 2,392,484 out of which 400,295 was from State Plan, 2071,770 from Central Assistance and 321.41 from the Hill Affairs Budget.

for information and cultural affairs have remained stagnant from Rs.19.75 lakhs in 1980-81 to Rs.19.00 lakhs in 1984-85 which have even declined once to 15.05 lakhs in 1982-83. The District Industries Centre is one of the most important agency for the development of small industries having significant bearing in the rural as well as small urban towns. Even the allotment for this sector had been inconsistent and lop-sided during the plan period. The allotment was Rs.17.22 lakhs in 1980-81, Rs.24.35 lakhs in 1981-82 which declined to Rs.12.75 lakhs in 1982-83 and has remained stagnant in 1983-84 and 1984-85 when it was Rs.13.80 lakhs.

One of the sectors which have received increased attention according to Table 5.4 was Community Development. The allocation in this sector has increased consistently from 1980-81 (Rs.18 lakhs) to Rs.25 lakhs in 1984-85. The Hill Affairs budget also added Rs.8 lakhs in 1980-81, Rs.10 lakhs in 1982-83 to 1984-85. In animal husbandry sector too, such qualitative increase has been maintained. From Rs.65.60 lakhs in 1980-81, the allocation has increased to Rs.120.81 lakhs in 1984-85. However, till 1982-83, the allocation was declining which were Rs.39.60 lakhs in 1982-83 and Rs.57.71 lakhs in 1982-83 compared to Rs.65.60 lakhs in 1980-81. The increase in the sector was made from 1983 which doubled to Rs.116.36 lakhs in the year and reached Rs.120.81 lakhs in 1984-85. Even in these sectors where some consistency in plan allocation has been maintained it is difficult to say that there has been a qualitative increase in the plan allocations without reservations. Because, a ten per cent increase per annum is regarded as normal and not as

addition to the previous years. The per annum increase in the allotment of the Hill plan as shown in the table does not exceed ten per cent in most cases.

The sectors in which qualitative increase of the plan allocation have been noticed were soil conservation, irrigation and the District Rural Development Agency. The soil conservation sector has received one of the highest amount compared to other sectors. It received Rs.129.84 lakhs in 1980-81 which, reached upto Rs.239.40 lakhs in 1984-85. Similarly, on irrigation the allotment increased from Rs.71.69 lakhs in 1980-81 to Rs.158.37 lakhs in 1984-85. For D.R.D.A., the allocation in 1980-81 was Rs.25.50 lakhs which rose upto Rs.31.50 lakhs in 1984-85.

On the basis of the above analysis, it can firmly be asserted that an integrated approach to the Accelerated Hill Plan was absent. The inconsistency in the allotment in almost all items indicate that they were made on adhoc basis. A long term perspective was missing. That is why we found a sudden increase or decrease of allotment on particular sectors throughout the plan period. There was no qualitative increase in plan allotment with one or two exceptions. This has in a way confirmed the observation made previously while dealing with organisational aspects of HABS and HADAC in this chapter, that these organisations acted as compilers of the budgets of sectoral departments, without bothering to look at their linkages to each other and the overall requirements of the hill areas and its economic potential. The 'Accelerated Hill

Development Plan' thus, was not the result of a well thought over plan in the real sense of the term. The HAES has acted in practice only as a 'funding agency' or as a post office which received the fund from the central and the state level and distributed it to the departments at the district level.

V. Conclusion : The HADAC and HAES were established in the wake of a shift in the cases of approach of Five Year Plans, particularly since the Fifth Five Year Plan when special sub-plans for the Hill Areas, the Desert Areas and other backward areas were formulated. The objectives of such plans have been to remove the regional disparities in the development process. However, the political factor has also been one of the determining factors behind the formation of these organisations which were to satisfy the urges and the aspirations of the hill people for autonomy. But, decentralisation was conceived in a very narrow and limited sense in the working of these organisations as 'decentralisation of work' and 'inspection of sites' through the nominated members. In view of the strong vertical and weaker horizontal linkages and coordination, these organisations failed to become effective agencies of development. Being organisations consisting mainly of officials (bureaucrats), and nominated members, the political significance of these organisations was negligible. They could not satisfy the local demand for autonomy. The dissatisfaction of the people gradually became pronounced by the 1980s that led to the formation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council in 1988.

F. THE PANCHAYATI RAJ EXPERIMENT IN WEST BENGAL

I. Introduction : Though the village Panchayat as a corporate unit dates back to Vedic times, the origin of the Panchayati Raj System as a unit of local self-government can be traced to the introduction of the Community Development Programme and National Extension Service. Community Development was "conceived, planned and initiated as people's self help programme."⁹⁹ The programme was designed to transform the social and economic life of the villages through the active participation and initiative of the village community.

The failure of the Community Development Programme to achieve such objectives led the Government of India to appoint a Team to look into the matter under the Chairmanship of Balwant Rai Mehta. The report of 1958 came out with the Panchayati Raj Scheme as a corrective to the shortcomings of the Community Development Programme. It is an unfortunate commentary on the working of the Panchayat system in India that, they have been utterly neglected and most of the States have been "lukewarm to the process of democratic decentralisation" allowing the Panchayats to "languish without powers and resources."¹⁰⁰

The neglect of these local institutions was obvious in a political system which had favoured parliamentary government, centralized federal structure and centralized planning for fulfilling its socio-economic and political problems. As a result, these institutions were not given constitutional protection

as the provisions for them were made in Art. 40 of the non-justiciable, non-enforceable, 'Directive Principles' in Part IV of the Constitution. The Article directs that "the State shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government." As such, the Panchayati Raj institutions are "exposed to assaults from political, planning and bureaucratic sources."¹⁰¹

The performance of the Panchayati Raj has been affected by structural and operational deficiencies. Indira Hirway, for instance, has listed four structural inadequacies of the Panchayati Raj in India on the basis of the available literature on the subject.¹⁰² She has pointed out that, in the first place, "the distribution of functions and responsibilities among the Panchayati Raj and departments of state and central government has not been made on the basis of any sound rationale"; secondly, the Panchayati Raj has "limited support of expert staff for planning, implementation or monitoring of various development programmes"; thirdly, "there is a strong tendency towards centralisation in the country though there is talk of decentralisation of planning"; and lastly, "the financial powers of the Panchayati Raj institutions are extremely limited."¹⁰³ Due to the socio-economic and political structure of the rural society, the Panchayati Raj, in practice have not been able to involve the rural poor in development activities either as beneficiaries or as decision-makers on any significant scale - in fact, an intensive study of the working of these institutions

has found that the Panchayats were serving the interest of the rich and the big farmers and the majority of the poor had practically no say in the decision making process of the Panchayat.¹⁰⁴

The changes in the political climate of the country brought about by the defeat of the Congress-I Party in 1977 strengthened the demand for democratic decentralisation. The new government formed by the ruling Janata Party appointed the Asoka Mehta Committee in 1978 to review the situation to recommend an institutional design for Panchayati Raj. The Committee expressed full faith in the Panchayati Raj. It stated in unequivocal terms that if the imbalance in political power in rural India has to be corrected, these institutions should be revamped and fully involved in the development process. The democratic process of the Panchayati Raj through "empowerment" and "conscientisation" will strengthen the weaker sections and make them assertive and vocal. It recommended a four-tier system of Panchayats with the Zilla Parishad at the apex responsible for planning and implementation of development programmes. Unfortunately, the Committee Report was not given a trial. Again, the breakdown of this Government and its defeat in 1980 national election by Congress-I completely sealed any chance of this report being considered for acceptance. However, the Report and the period in which it was submitted, "reflected a mood of positive orientations"¹⁰⁵ to revamp and strengthen these institutions in the light of this Report in many parts of the country. Most noted among them are West Bengal, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat,

followed by Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. Fortunately, such mood seemed to have been carried on by the Union Parliament too by enacting the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts, providing Constitutional recognition to the Panchayati Raj institution and the Nagarpalikas (Municipalities) respectively. However, the critics point out that these Acts, as they were passed separately, have constitutionalised and continued the rural-urban-dichotomy and fall short of expectations of integrating the structures of these institutions that could have gradually led the system towards a third tier district government.¹⁰⁶ The Acts also belied hopes of a genuine decentralisation of planning as the 74th Amendment Act has given Constitutional Status to the District Planning Committee with powers of consolidating the plans prepared by these institutions and limited them to the preparation of Draft Plans.¹⁰⁷

II. a. The West Bengal Experiment : The West Bengal scenario in the sixties and the middle seventies was no better than the rest of India. After initially adopting a four-tier Panchayat structure unlike the recommendation for three tiers by Balwant Rai Mehta Team, these institutions were allowed to be languished by the Government. The four-tier system was established with the passing of the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1957, supplemented by West Bengal Zilla Parishad Act, 1963. It consisted of the 'Gram Panchayat', the 'Anchal Panchayat' above it, the Achalik Parishad at the third tier and the Zilla Parishad at the apex.

However, in the absence of political will and a genuine devolution of powers, the four-tier system did not fructify. The lower two tiers became moribund right from the beginning, and the upper two tiers were left in a state of suspended animation as no elections were held for 14 years till 1978, in West Bengal, excepting in 1958 for the Panchayats, and in 1963 for the Zilla Parishads. These institutions were not linked up organically with the real state of affairs in the rural areas. In fact, they were "financially hamstrung and state government officials exercised powers of minute supervision, reflecting the centralization that had characterised much of local government in India."¹⁰⁸ An attempt to revitalize these institutions was made in 1973 by enacting the West Bengal Panchayati Raj Act, 1973. However, nothing was done to invoke this Act and implement its provisions. It was only when the Left Front Government came to power in 1977 that the decision was taken up to invoke this Act by making suitable modifications. Since then, elections have been regularly held in five-yearly term. The first election was held in 1978. In its bid to facilitate democratic decentralisation and involve the Panchayat bodies in the development process, a large number of functions and responsibilities have been assigned to them with the possible corresponding authority, resources and other back-up supports. The basic assumption behind these moves has been that both from political and social economic development angles, it was imperative to decentralise power, planning process and development activities below the state level.¹⁰⁹

b. Structures and Functions of the Revitalized Panchayati Raj

in West Bengal : The 'Act of 1973 supplied the necessary institutional basis and working arrangement for the revival of the Panchayat system in West Bengal since 1978. In tune with the 'Balwant Rai Mehta Team Report', a three-tier institutional structure consisting of the Gram Panchayats, Panchayat Samitis and Zilla Parishads is in force at present in West Bengal. The organisational design of the three-tier Panchayats is presented in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5

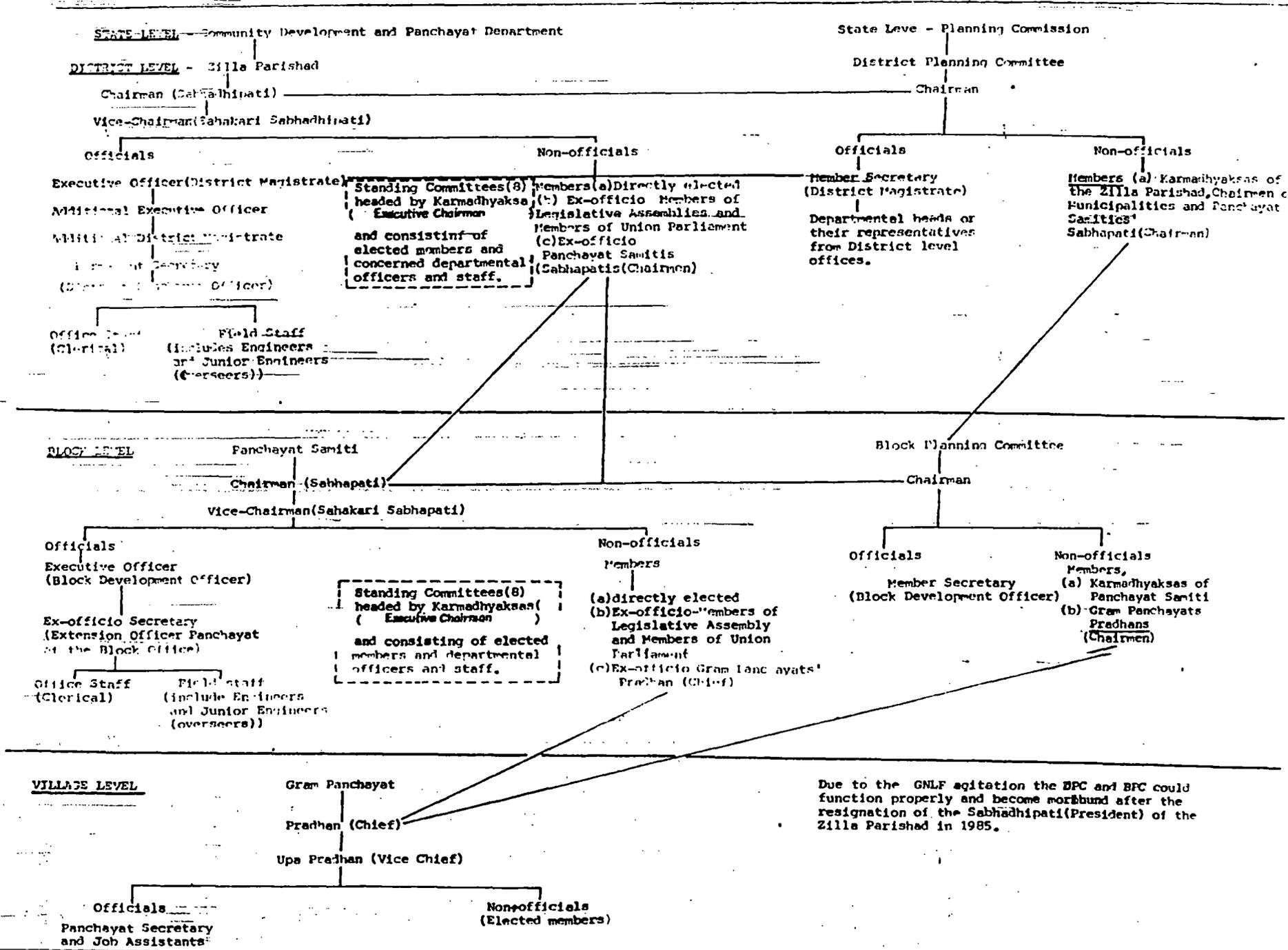
(i) **Gram Panchayats** : The Gram Panchayats constitute the lowest tier of the Panchayati Raj covering an aggregate population of 8000 each. Above them are Panchayat Samitis, constituted at the block level, and at the highest level, i.e. district level, there is a Zilla Parishad for each district of the State. The Gram Panchayat is headed by the Pradhan (Chief) and the Upa-Pradhan (Vice-Chief). It consists of a minimum of seven and maximum of twentyfive members elected by the people directly. The Panchayat Secretary and the Job Assistants help the Pradhan in the discharge of his functions and the developmental activities of the Gram Panchayat.

(ii) **Panchayat Samiti** : The Panchayat Samiti is the intermediate structure at the block level in the three tier structure. It consists of the following members :

- (a) Pradhans of the Gram Panchayats within the block ex-officio,
- (b) a maximum of three elected members from each Gram on the

Table 5.5

Organisation of the three-tier Panchayats, Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samiti and Gram Panchayat as per the West Bengal Panchayati Raj Act 1973 and its subsequent amendments brought out by the Left Front Government since 1978 for their revitalisation.



basis of adult franchise, (c) members of the Lower and Upper House of the Union Parliament and the members of the State Legislative Assembly elected thereto from a constituency comprising the block or part thereof, but who are not ministers. The members elect a Sabhapati (President) and a Sahakari-Sabhapati (Vice-President) from among themselves. The Panchayat Samiti is headed by the Sabhapati assisted by the Executive Officer and an Ex-Officio Secretary belonging to the West Bengal Civil Service.

(iii) Zilla Parishad : The Zilla Parishad, the apex body of the three-tier structure, is headed by the Sabhadhipati (Chairman) and the Sahakari-Sabhadhipati (Vice-Chairman) elected by the members of the Zilla Parishad from amongst themselves. The District Commissioner is the 'Executive Officer' of the Zilla Parishad who is assisted by a full-time Additional Executive Officer of the rank of Additional District Magistrate. Below him, is a full-time ex-officio 'Secretary' who happens to be a generalist civil servant from the West Bengal Civil Service.

According to Section 140 of the Act of 1973, the Zilla Parishad consists of the following members; (i) Sabhapatis of the Panchayat Samitis with the district, ex-officio; (ii) two members each from the blocks within the district, by direct election by voters; (iii) members of the House of the People and the Legislative Assembly of the State elected thereto from a constituency comprising the district or any part thereof, but not ministers; (iv) members of the Council (not ministers) who reside in the district.

(iv) Standing Committees : Both the Panchayat Samiti and the Zilla Parishad function through eight standing committees, namely, (i) finance and organisation, (ii) public health, (iii) municipal functions, (iv) agriculture, irrigation and cooperation, (v) education, (vi) small industries, relief and public welfare, (vii) development planning and land reform, and (viii) fisheries and animal husbandry, for carrying out diversified developmental functions. Each Committee is headed by a member elected as Karmadhyaksha (Executive Chairman).

III. Organisational Issues : After the revitalization of the Panchayat Institutions in West Bengal, these are now actively involved in developmental activities at the district level and below (as we shall see in our discussion on their functions). The Zilla Parishad now has become the kingpin of the developmental activities at the district level and below. Therefore, an examination of the various organisational issues of these bodies in the context of their new role will be both interesting and useful.

a. Linkage : Rural organisations can serve as linking organisations between the problems and policies of the Government and the communities for which they are intended. The thrust at present in rural development administration is not only on local autonomy but also on linkages between national, state, regional, and local centres. The Panchayati Raj in this context is being viewed as a third tier in the linkage structures of our federation, the

Central Government, the State Government and the third 'stratum' of Panchayati Raj. Viewed broadly in such manner, the Panchayati Raj Institutions "operate as part of the local political system" and are "organic parts of the total political structure through which Indian democracy functions."¹¹⁰

The three-tier Panchayati Raj structures are organically linked with one another. The Pradhan (Chief) of the lowest tier is linked to the intermediate level Panchayat Samiti by making him the ex-officio member of the latter. Again, the Sabhapati (Chairman) of the Panchayat Samiti has been made the ex-officio member of the apex tier, the Zilla Parishad. In this way, the vertical linkages have been established. In order to establish and maintain horizontal linkages, the Act of 1973 provides for the creation of 8 Standing Committees both at the Zilla Parishad level and the Panchayat Samiti level. These committees serve as linking points for the members and the officials in the respective levels and facilitates interaction between them. Since the Panchayat bodies are now involved in the formulation and coordination of the District and the Block Plans, the linking of these bodies with the other departments has been done through the District Planning Committees and the Block Planning Committee which are headed by the Chairmen of the Zilla Parishad and the Panchayat Samiti. Vertical linkage between the District Planning Committee and the Block Planning Committee is established by making the Chairman of the Panchayat Samiti a member of the former. Again, the Pradhan (Chief) of the Gram Panchayat has been made the member

of the Block Planning Committee linking it to the Gram Panchayat. Till now, such planning Committee has not been formed at the Gram Panchayat level. On the official side, the Executive Officer of the Zilla Parishad is linked to the District Planning Committee by making him its Member-Secretary. Similarly, the Executive Officer of the Panchayat Samiti has been made the Member Secretary of the Block Planning Committee.

b. Decentralisation : Decentralisation, in the context of the Panchayati Raj, can be viewed in the two interrelated dimensions : (i) democratic decentralisation, i.e., the Panchayati Raj bodies as units of self-governing institutions, (ii) decentralisation of development administration, i.e. use of these institutions for formulating and implementing development plans at the local levels. In India, commitment of the political system to democracy, development and decentralisation was embodied in a paradigmatic sense in the Panchayati Raj institutions. ¹¹¹

The Left Front Government, after coming to power in 1977, decided to revamp these institutions. By now, four consecutive elections had been held (78-83, 83-88, 88-93 and the recent election in May, 1993) on the basis of the political ideology and recognised party symbols. Thus, at present, democratic decentralisation through these institutions is taken seriously. They are being looked upon as a means to usher in a new social order for socio-economic transformation and also to enable the people to govern themselves.

In order to allow a genuine decentralisation of development administration through the Panchayati Raj institutions, the main direction of the State Government's policy has been threefold, (i) organisational development, (ii) development of human resources and (iii) effective implementation of rural development programmes.¹¹² To increase the organisational capacity of these institutions by way of organisational development, the State Government modified the structures to make them suitable to local conditions. It has been largely successful in removing legal hurdles and has constructed or expanded buildings and offices of the three tiers. The Government, simultaneously with improving the supporting services to these institutions, provided functionaries like Job Assistants, Panchayat Secretaries and the Village-Level Workers. In the field of human resource development, the State Government has given serious efforts in organising training camps to develop the capacity, skill and overall knowledge of the functionaries to tackle the problems of rural development, the aim being to create a motivated and skilled leadership at various levels so that the decentralisation of development administration can be meaningful.

For facilitating the decentralisation of planning, the State Government constituted the Block Planning Committees (BPCs) and the District Planning Committees (DPCs) in 1985, nominating the Sabhapatis and the Sabhadhipatis of the Panchayat Samitis and the Zilla Parishads respectively as their respective heads. The Gram Pradhans and the Karmachyakshas, along with Block level

officials of different departments, were made members of the BPC, and likewise, the Sabhapatis of Panchayat Sanitis, Chairmen of Municipalities, Karmadhyakshas of Zilla Parishads, along with heads of the different departments at district level, were made members of DPC with BDO and DM acting as 'Member Secretary' to BPC and DPC respectively. Budgetary provisions of the different departments for district level items were disaggregated and communicated to the DPC with similar exercises having been done for blocks and municipalities. Within these budgetary parameters, known as divisible outlay, the DPC was given power to formulate its own plan. District Plan was drawn on the basis of specific schemes included in the sectoral plans prepared by functional working groups of the DPC along with the specific schemes appearing at the block and municipal levels. Any scheme, the location and effects of which were limited within a Block, must come under Block Specific Schemes and the decision of the BPC on it would be taken as final. The DPC could meet the critical gaps between fund-requirements and fund available from diverse sources. An untied fund, namely District Plan Scheme (DPS) fund, was placed entirely at the disposal of the DPC with effect from 1985-86 over and above the divisible outlay.

c. Participation : Like decentralisation, participation also is viewed in the two interrelated dimensions, (i) participation of the people in the democratic process, (ii) participation in development process by way of participation in the formulation and implementation of rural development plans and as beneficiaries. In

operational terms, the participation of the people in the democratic process is ensured in India through the elections to the Panchayati Raj Institutions in which local people have interest and an active and closer involvement than in the elections for legislative assemblies and the Union Parliament. The election activities as well as the newly assigned development functions of these institutions at lower or the village levels create enthusiasm and incentive for the people in the functioning of these bodies in which they are able to influence the course of resource allocation. The regular holding of the election to these institution thus can be regarded as a move in the desired direction. The interest of the people in such self-governing institutions is reflected by the massive turnout of the voters in all the four elections held so far which is higher than the Assembly and the Parliamentary elections.

The participation of the people in the development process is operationalised by the active involvement of the functionaries in the formulation and implementation of development plans through their representatives in these three-tier Panchayat bodies. The villagers working for infrastructural development programmes like the construction of primary schools, village roads, digging of wells and canals and soil conservation programmes and social forestry and others through National Rural Employment Programmes, Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programmes and other such programmes, not only participate in development activities but

also receive benefits directly in the form of wages and food supply. In West Bengal, it has already been mentioned that the Panchayats have been increasingly assigned such functions.

One of the main criticisms of the working of Panchayati Raj in the past and in the present has been that it is characterised by the dominance of higher castes and has an elitist bias. It was pointed out that it acts as 'gate keeper' not allowing the poor and the weaker sections to participate in the development process. But the experiences in West Bengal and in some other states do not fully bear out these criticisms. Notwithstanding these criticisms, it can be observed from the working of the Panchayati Raj that the democratic power through empowerment and 'conscientisation' has enabled the middle class youths to capture the leadership which is called as 'shuffling of elites' by experts.¹¹³ The achievement of West Bengal in land reforms, especially in redistributing surplus vested land to the landless cultivators and weaker section, has been significant.¹¹⁴ The trends in the recruitment in political leadership and the distribution of tickets during election show that a large number of poor and weaker sections including women are being given preference.¹¹⁵

Thus, it can be asserted that to a significant extent, the presence of empowerment and conscientisation has been able to diversify the leadership at all levels in West Bengal and is making it more representative. Indeed, as an eminent scholar on the subject observes, 'Panchayati Raj' is Development Administration plus a political component, the elected functionaries manning

Panchayat bodies, brought into being and shuffled through democratic processes have, besides their stipulated administrative responsibilities, a distinct political role and contributions flowing therefrom." ¹¹⁶

d. Coordination : Coordination is necessary for harmonising the activities of an organisation. In Indian politico-administrative structure of development administration at the district level and below, which resembles the matrix organisational structure to a significant extent, the District Magistrate as a generalist civil servant has been the kingpin for coordination. The arrangement was not effective, and particularly with regard to the working of Panchayat institutions, it created problems of dual control and command. The deputed officials of the sectoral departments in the Zilla Parishad and the Panchayat Samiti and the Block Development Office had accountability not only to the Zilla Parishad and the Panchayat Samiti but also to their respective parent departments. Again, the political element, i.e., the elected members of these institutions, were not happy with the way the administrative elements under the leadership of the District Magistrate enjoyed paramount authority. These features of the district administration created problems of horizontal as well as vertical coordination.

After the revitalisation of the Panchayati Raj in West Bengal, these problems have been tackled quite effectively by the State Government. Now, the Zilla Parishad has been made the Chief Coordinator of development functions at the district level and also

a kingpin for vertical coordination at the block and village level. The District Collector acts as Executive Officer of the Zilla Parishad, but his paramount authority has been eliminated. A full-time Additional Executive Officer of the rank of Indian Administrative Service has been provided.

One of the structural arrangements for coordination in the working of these bodies is the creation of eight standing Committees in the Zilla Parishad and the Panchayat Samiti levels. Since the Karmadhyaksas (Executive Chairman) of these Standing Committees are the elected members, different officials who are also the members of the Committee have to work under the elected Chairman. This, too, has significantly resolved the issue of horizontal coordination. By making the Sabhapati of the Panchayat Samiti a member of the Standing Committees, the vertical coordination is ensured in developmental activities. Similar arrangements have been made at the Block level and the Pradhans of the Gram Panchayats have been made members of the Standing Committees.

Coordination in planning the development programmes has been ensured by establishing the District Planning Committees and the Block Planning Committees whose Chairmen are the Sabhadhipati (Chairman) of the Zilla Parishad and the Sabhapati (Chairman). The Additional District Magistrate has been placed at the disposal of the Zilla Parishad for maintaining an effective coordination of development functions. The State Government constituted a high level Cabinet Committee in 1980 which also recommended that the

services of different departments be put at the disposal of the Zilla Parishad for the formulation and implementation of development programmes assigned to it.

In the initial years, there were some problems of coordination between the officials and the non-officials of the Panchayat institutions. The officials who were in a predominant position, felt a sense of injured pride and lost prestige as they now had to work under the non-officials who were the policy-makers. But the persistent policy of the State Government of giving leadership to the Panchayati Raj bodies and various procedural steps taken by it, has to a large extent resolved the issue. The four successive elections held so far has made the officials appreciate the legitimacy and the people's verdict behind the elected functionaries. Again, close interaction between the two in the working of the Panchayat Samiti has helped in developing a working relationship between them. Different departmental heads and the members of the Zilla Parishad are the members of the various Committees like DPC and BPC. The functional groups of such Committees prepared specific schemes which are included in the sectoral plans. The District Plan is prepared on the basis of such specific schemes in the sectoral plans. The District Plan Scheme, an untied fund, was placed at the disposal of the District Planning Committee with effect from 1985-86 to meet the critical gaps between fund requirements and fund available from diverse sources.

These steps and the new approach of the working of the

Panchayats in West Bengal, thus, have significantly re-solved the problems of dual command hitherto existing at the District level. Now, the Zilla Parishad is at the apex of development administration. It has been given the crucial role of coordinating the formulation and implementation of District Plan and programmes through its almost unlimited powers and other structural devices such as Standing Committees, Planning Committees and District Plan Scheme.

e. Communication : In the new scheme of the working of the Panchayati Raj in West Bengal, communication plays a very vital role. It is the life-line of any organisation. Without it, an organisation becomes ineffective as it provides the members information allowing them to coordinate their activities with those of others and to know what others are doing. Owing to the lack of a viable, integrated and well-oriented national policy on communication, the methods and style of communication which are in use are not in tune with the changing role of development administration in which political elements constitute an integral part. The meetings of different Standing Committees of the Zilla Parishad, and the Planning Committees formed one of the media and mechanism of communication for the members. Vertically, the directions given by the State Government through circulars, and memos to the Zilla Parishad, and through it, to lower institutions, and also directly to the lower levels, serve as means of

communication. It is perhaps an unfortunate commentary that even the Panchayat institutions emphasize the formal methods of communication, such as correspondence, etc. rather than informal, face-to-face, or traditional, local area-based communication which could be more effective in village situations.

Since political parties are now directly participating in these bodies which are formed on the basis of elections fought on party symbols, they also act as communication media. It has been found that in those Panchayats where one particular party has control in all the three tiers of Panchayat institutions, there has been less of communication problems, compared to those where different political parties have come to power in different tiers, thereby creating a situation of divided authority. Different layers of the structures of political party have served as communication channels among the three tiers of Panchayat institutions. There has been a great deal of feeling of interdependence and cooperation among these tiers in such cases.

But this has created the problem of informal invisible communication, which, often bypasses the formal organisational channels.¹¹⁷ It is not that informal channels of communication run counter to the working of such organisations which are predominantly political, but in the absence of national and state level policies on communication for rural development, these informal channels mostly covert and operate below the surface. Such hidden methods may not be conducive to the working of these bodies which require interdependence and cooperation from many

quarters.

Another aspect of the communication problem related to the working of these organisations is the communication with the rural poor. Here, too, we lack a well-integrated and sound communication policy. The election campaigns, party meetings, radios, televisions, local papers and bulletins taken out by these institutions serve as means of communication. Besides, there are beneficiary committees which hold meeting from time to time and impart information.

Keeping in view the emergent needs of the development administration, a keen observer on the subject, S.N.Roy, has advocated for the formulation of a national policy on 'development-support communication' taking into account the suitability of specific forms of such development communication system for the regional and local conditions.¹¹⁸

f. Supervision : Supervision is one of the most important variables of organisational working for rural development. A general control is required from the top, "yet there must be flexibility at the bottom"; but if there is "too much autonomy from control, rural development may go astray...."¹¹⁹ An attempt has been made in the Panchayati Raj system in West Bengal to get the right mixture. Supervision is not taken purely as a 'control mechanism' or as an 'empire-building' device, but as a method of disseminating information, guidance and thereby increasing the overall capacity of the organisation. The inter-institutional

control and supervision (i.e. the State Government's vertical control and supervision) is done through the government's policy circulars, memos, audit inspection, and powers of removing the incumbents, etc., and by placing the State Government's officials in key positions in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The devices like the Standing Committees, District Planning Committees, and the Block Planning Committees, where the State Government's officials, both generalists and technical experts, guide and assist the elected members, have been used for Government's control and supervision. But a 'collaborative work culture' is being developed by making it compulsory for the Government servants to follow the policy decisions of the elected bodies and by making both the elements work together in development matters. Thus, they have been made interdependent on each other and therefore, supervision is not taken as an 'authoritative control mechanism'.

The intra-institutional control and supervision are maintained by making the Zilla Parishad, the chief coordinator and supervisor with supervisory powers over the two lower levels. It also had the crucial duty to advise the State Government on all these matters. Section 163 of the West Bengal Panchayati Raj 1973 provides that it shall be the duty of the Panchayat Samiti and the Gram Panchayat to give effect to any directions of the Zilla Parishad on matters of policy or planning for development. Similarly, the Panchayat Samiti exercises general power of supervision over the Gram Panchayat and it will be obligatory on the part of the latter to give effect to the directions of the Panchayat Samiti on matters of policy planning for development.

But the spirit behind these in the working of these institutions at present is not of controlling or empire building by dominating the lower tiers, but of guiding, leading and disseminating information with a view to enhancing the capacity of each of the tiers.

IV. Functions of the Panchayats :

a. Gram Panchayat : The powers and duties of Gram Panchayats cover a wide range of local activities and are divided into three broad categories, viz. obligatory, discretionary and assigned functions, under Section 19, 21, 20 respectively of the Panchayati Raj Act, 1973. Some of the prominent obligatory duties of the Gram Panchayat under Section 19 are :

Sanitation, conservancy and drainage and the prevention of public nuisances;
curative and preventive measures in respect of malaria, smallpox, cholera or any other epidemic; supply of drinking water and the cleansing and disinfecting the source of supply and storage of water;
the maintenance, repair and reconstruction of public tanks, common grazing grounds, burning ghats, and public graveyards;
organising voluntary labor for community works and works for the improvement of its area; the control and administration of the Gram Panchayat Fund, the imposition, assessment and collection of the taxes, rates or fees;
and the protection and repair of buildings or other property vested in it.

Section 21, likewise, enumerates 21 discretionary duties and responsibilities, some of which may be cited :

maintenance of lighting of public streets;
beautification of such streets;
sinking of wells and excavation of ponds and tanks;
introduction and promotion of cooperative farming, cooperative stores, and other cooperative enterprises, trades and callings; construction and regulation of markets, fairs and local exhibitions of produce of home industries

and local handicrafts; assistance to agriculturists in the matter of obtaining State loan and its distribution and repayment;
promotion and encouragement of cottage industries;
regulation of the production and disposal of foodstuffs and other commodities;
establishment and maintenance of libraries and reading rooms;
organisation and establishment of clubs and other recreational centres;
maintenance of records relating to population census, crop census, cattle census, and census of unemployed persons and of other statistics; fire assistance; burglary and dacoity prevention; any other local work or service of public utility which is likely to promote the health, comfort, convenience, or material prosperity of the people.

Section 20 lists the other duties and functions that may be assigned by the State government. These relate, inter alia, to :

primary, social, technical or vocational education;
rural dispensaries, health centres and maternity and child welfare centres;
irrigation;
grow-more-food campaign;
care of the infirm and the destitute;
rehabilitation of displaced persons;
bringing of waste land into cultivation;
promotion of village plantations;
cooperative management of land and other resources of the village;
implementation of land reform measures in the area;
field publicity for developmental work and welfare measures.

b. Panchayat Samiti : Sections 109 to 117 of the Act of 1973 entrust a wide range of activities to the Panchayat Samiti. These are related to development programmes including agriculture and allied fields and to the undertaking or execution of schemes, or giving financial assistance or management of any institutions relating to rural development. Its primary duty is to coordinate and integrate the developmental plans prepared by the Gram Panchayats. It exercises the power of supervision over the Gram

Panchayat in the block and it will be obligatory on the part of these authorities to give effect to the direction of the Panchayat Samiti on matters of policy planning for development.

c. Zilla Parishad : Section 153 outlines a long list of powers and functions of the Zilla Parishad, along similar lines as those of the Panchayat Samiti. However, the Zilla Parishad is the final supervising, coordinating and integrating authority for the developmental activities of the two lower levels, and it has the crucial duty to advise the State Government on all such matters. As Section 160(3) shows, its range of powers is virtually unlimited, covering all conceivable aspects of rural development, since it is enjoined to 'exercise, such other powers, perform such other functions or discharge such other duties as the State Government may, by general or special order direct.

The plans and programmes of rural development are implemented by the Panchayati Raj Institutions through the various departments, such as, Development and Planning, Relief and Welfare, Revenue, Panchayats and Community Development, Education(Primary) Health and Family Welfare, Cottage and Small Scale Industries, Food and Supply, Youth Services etc. The programmes such as, (i) Rural Work Programme, (ii) Food for Work Programme and National Employment as well as Rural Housing for Landless, (iii) Rural Water Supply, (iv) Integrated Rural Development Programme (v) Jawahar Rozgar Yozna and various other schemes, have been assigned to the Panchayati Raj institutions. These

programmes and the area of activities of these three tiers could be broadly divided into five categories ;

(i) infra-structural activities like construction and repair of village roads, culverts, primary schools, Panchayat Ghars (building and offices) etc.

(ii) activities relating to the minimal needs of rural areas, like the Special Nutrition Programme, Rural Water Supply and Rural Housing;

(iii) Creation of 'mandays' for the vast number of the rural unemployed and underemployed in the Rural Works Programme and Food for Work Programme;

(iv) various activities relating to resource-mobilisation by management of ferries, local markets and the development of vested tanks and ponds into pisciculture;

(v) basic institutional reforms, an important area of operation and activity like helping the implementation of land reforms programmes such as the distribution of vested lands to the landless agricultural workers and recording of share croppers and allottees of vested lands.¹²⁰

Thus we see that, theoretically, at least, in West Bengal the ground for a genuine democratic decentralisation by way of revamping these institutions has already been well prepared. In the beginning, these institutions had responded quite efficiently during the food crisis in 1978 and the problem of severe drought later on. This had led the Government to believe that if the

powers and functions were developed on to these institutions, they could perform more efficiently and effectively than in a centralised, top-down planning system.

The initial years, or rather the first term of office, 1978-83, were one of consolidation in the field of administration, finance, devolution of programmes, monitoring and evaluation of Panchayat activities. The second term (1983-88) was to be one for taking off for new era of development and democracy when the developmental activities were intensified. We saw an enormous expansion of Zilla Parishad works with additional new fund making it the energizer, coordinator and planner of rural development. The third phase, 1988-93, has been to some extent years of disappointment as reports of corruption, charges and mismanagement came to the surface and ~~was~~ were reported in the press. But this may not undermine the seriousness of revitalization of the Panchayat System as in such a "massive enterprise involving uninitiated people, failings may not be uncommon and indeed may be unavoidable." One can reasonably expect that in the current fourth phase, 1993-98, that has just begun, the lessons of ~~past~~ experience would help the Panchayats become the real ~~driving~~ driving force behind a massive rural development programme.

V. Panchayati Raj Experiment in the Hill Areas of Darjeeling :

The beginning of local government in Darjeeling can be traced to the establishment of the District Board on April, 1922. Prior to this, many functions of the District Board were discharged by the Deputy Commissioner in his capacity as the administrator of

the Darjeeling Improvement Fund, which was established in 1864. The 'Improvement Fund of Darjeeling' was a very peculiar administrative arrangement meant for the general improvement of the area, which gave extensive powers of control to Deputy Commissioner on local affairs, such as village sanitation, medical relief, conservation and veterinary services.

A four-tier Panchayat structure, with the Zilla Parishad at the apex, took over the District Board from 25th November, 1964, till the Panchayati Raj election of 1978 when the revitalized three-tier Panchayat system came into effect under the provision of the West Bengal Panchayati Raj Act of 1973.

Thus, a uniform pattern of the four-tier, and subsequently, the three-tier Panchayat system was in vogue in the hill areas as in the rest of Bengal till the formation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council in 1988. There were 76 Gram Panchayats, 10 Panchayat Samitis and a Zilla Parishad in the district, of which 58 Gram Panchayats and 8 Panchayat Samitis belonged to the hill areas. The remaining Gram Panchayats and Panchayat Samitis are situated in the plain areas of Siliguri Subdivision of the district and are still continuing under their apex body called Siliguri Mahakuma Parishad.¹²² Of the four successive elections held so far since 1978, only the first (1978) and the Second (1983) were held for the hill areas. The third and the fourth ones were not held because the Zilla Parishad was abolished and the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council had started functioning under the Act of 1988. Due to the strong

opposition from the Gorkha National Liberation Front, even the elections to the Panchayat Samiti and the Gram Panchayat could not be held.

The results of the first two elections were stunning to all. The Left Front and the Communist Party of India Marxist(CPI-M) were not swept into office with overwhelming majority in the hill areas in the way they did in the other district of West Bengal. A group of independent candidates supported by the All India Gorkha League captured most of the seats in the Gram Panchayats and Panchayat Samitis in the hill areas. In the plain subdivision of Siliguri, most of the seats in all the three tier were bagged by the Left Front. However, no political parties were able to get a clear majority in the Zilla Parishad. In all, there were 38 seats in the Zilla Parishad out of which 20 were to be filled by direct election, 10 by the ex-officio members who were the President of the Panchayat Samitis, 4 members of Legislative Assemblies of the State and 2 members of the Central Parliament.

The Zilla Parishad in the first term had 14 CPI(M) members, 11 independent members supported by the AIGL, 9 Congress-I, 2 independent candidates and 2 government nominees. Due to an understanding reached between the Congress-I and AIGL, a leader of the group of independent candidates was elected as the President and a Congress-I candidate as the Vice-President of the Zilla Parishad.

No political party got the majority of seats in Zilla Parishad again in the second election. However, due to the factional

feud in the Congress-I, ¹²³ the CPI-M got the opportunity to come into the forefront which supported the group of independent candidates backed by the AIGL selecting their leader, the sitting President as the New President. A CPI(M) candidate was elected as the new Vice-President.

VI. Organisational Issues of the Panchayati Raj in the Hill Areas

of Darjeeling : The three-tier system of Panchayati Raj in terms of the 1973 Act was in vogue in the hill areas or in the rest of the State till 1988, with a uniform pattern of organisational design and related problem. But, unfortunately, in the hill areas, the Zilla Parishad did not enjoy the status and the prominence as its counterparts in the plain areas. This is because of the existence of the Hill Area Development Council which was formed in 1972 and modified in 1978 by an Amendment Act. The Hill Area Development Council was at the centre-stage in the hill areas as it has been assigned the responsibility of formulating, coordinating and supervising the Accelerated Hill Development Plans. In spite of the State Government's policy in general to assign these functions to the Panchayati Raj all over the State, including the hill areas, they were relegated into the background. The following organisations issues were peculiar to the working of these institutions in the hill areas which had adversely affected the working of these institutions.

(a) Decentralisation : In spite of the policy of the Government to assign the leadership role to the Zilla Parishad on development

sphere in the State, the Hill Area Development Council enjoyed higher political status and greater administrative acceptance among the different departments and agencies due to the presence of the Chief Minister of the State as Chairman, Minister for State Hill Affairs as Vice-Chairman and District Magistrate as Member Secretary. It had a permanent Assistant Secretary who was a senior Civil Servant from the West Bengal Civil Service. Though the District Magistrate was the Executive Officer of the Zilla Parishad, it was alleged by the President of the Zilla Parishad (in an interview with this researcher) that the District Magistrate had on so many occasions ignored the directives of the Zilla Parishad and listened to the members of the Hill Development Council. Notwithstanding the possibility of a bit of exaggeration in such allegations, it was unbecoming of a State where decentralisation is so seriously taken to have given prominence to a body consisted of nominated and coopted members at the cost of the elected Panchayat institutions. It was as if the State Government was decentralising powers from the front door via the Panchayats and taking it back via Hill Development Council to the Ministry. This showed the validity of the argument of scholars, at least in the context of Darjeeling hill areas, that "behind the formal acceptance of the idea of local autonomy there exists a well entrenched but subtle resistance to any radical change of balance of power in favour of local self-government institutions."¹²⁴

b. Coordination : The existence of the two parallel 'Statutory Bodies' at the district level with overlapping functions of formulating, coordinating and supervising the developmental plans

aggravated the problem of coordination and supervision.

Comparatively, at that time, the Panchayati Raj institutions, particularly the Zilla Parishad, had been made the 'chief coordinator' and 'supervisor' at the district level all over West Bengal through various measures such as the creation of District Planning Committee, Block Planning Committee and changes in the procedures, which made it compulsory to place departmental officer at the disposal of the Zilla Parishad for implementing its programme.¹²⁵ These measures were important to solve the problem of coordination arising out of 'dual command' in the district administration. But due to the confusion and misunderstanding and conflict between the Zilla Parishad and the Hill Area Development Council, these problems of coordination remained unresolved compared to the rest of the State. The other organisational issues like linkages, participation communication and supervision being of similar nature have not been taken up in this section as they have been dealt previously in the section on organisational issues of the Panchayati Raj in West Bengal.

VII. Panchayat Activities in the Hill Areas of Darjeeling :

As already stated in the introduction to this Chapter, the revitalized three-tier Panchayats did not get enough time and opportunities to prove their worth in the development process in the hills. The first term of office (1978-83) was completed smoothly, but the second term (1983-88) ran into troubles due to the fall-out of the 'Gorkha Land Movement' as the large number of members resigned en masse at the call of the Gorkha National

Liberation Front. And with the resignation of the President of the Zilla Parishad in the first quarter of 1985, the Panchayat system became largely ineffective and moribund. The three-tier Panchayati system ended officially after the formation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council with the jurisdiction in the three hill subdivisions of the district, with the exclusion of Siliguri Subdivision that falls in the plain areas. In the light of these changes, this section will try to make an objective assessment of the Panchayat's activities in the hill areas.

The effective implementation of the accelerated rural development plans has been the most important functions of the Panchayat institutions in West Bengal including the hill areas. The objective of these programmes was to improve the quality of life of the rural people.

The Panchayat institutions in the hill areas of Darjeeling implemented different schemes sponsored by the Central as well as the State Government. They were as follows -

- National Rural Employment Programme (NREP)
- Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP)
- Rural Housing and Rural Water Supply (RHRWS)
- Relief and Social Welfare including the programmes for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes.

These programmes were related to infrastructural development and employment-generation in rural areas. The beneficiaries and priorities of these programmes were selected by the Panchayats and were implemented directly or through the Block Officer and the

District Rural Development Agency (DRDA). These infrastructural programmes included the development of rural link roads providing market outlets to the rural hinterland. As the rural areas have insufficient communication and transport facilities, such programmes assume tremendous importance in view of the difficult hilly terrain and topography. Under both National Rural Employment Programmes and Rural Landless Employment Programmes, the following categories of schemes had received priorities in the hill areas during 1978-79 and in 1980-85 (Seventh Plan).

- (i) Small Irrigation and Channel Construction,
- (ii) Flood Control and Anti-water Logging Schemes
- (iii) Land Reclamation and Soil Conservation
- (iv) Construction and repair of village roads, pony roads, suspension bridges, and carpetting of roads,
- (v) Soil Conservation and Jhora and Khola (Small Streams) Protection
- (vi) Construction and repair of Primary Schools and Panchayat Ghars.

The following Table 5.6 presents the statement of the achievements and the expenditure incurred by the Panchayats in the hill areas of Darjeeling.

Table 5.4

Achievement and Total Volume of Expenditure Incurred by Panchayats
in the Hill Areas of Darjeeling during 1979-87

| Sl. No. | Items | Y e a r s | | | | | | Rupees in lakhs | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| | | Expenditure incurred | | | | | | Anticipated | |
| | | 1979-80 | '80-81 | '81-82 | '82-83 | '83-84 | '84-85 | 1985-86 | '86-87 |
| A. State Plan | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. | Local leadership development | 0.88 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2. | Infrastructural Development* | - | 15.23 | 36.13 | 70.11 | 14.00 | 10.00 | 12.00 | 12.00 |
| B. Hill Plan | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. | Local Leadership Development | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2. | Infrastructural Development | - | 6.00 | 6.00 | 10.00 | 10.00 | 10.00 | 1.00 | - |
| C. Central Assistance | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. | Local Leadership Development | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2. | Infrastructural Development | - | 35.67 | 20.00 | 22.00 | 18.00 | 17.00 | 6.12 | 22.53 |
| Total | | 0.88 | 56.90 | 62.13 | 102.11 | 42.00 | 37.00 | 19.12 | 34.53 |

A total of Rs. 300.14 lakhs was sent during 1980-85.

* Infrastructure Development activities included Remunerative assets scheme (loan) creation of permanent assets, construction of roads, bridges including R.C.G. and Suspension, carpetting of roads, protection of small streams (Khola) and Jhora, Small irrigation and Panchayat buildings.

Source : Plan for Darjeeling Hill Areas 1980-85, A Mid-term Review and Annual Action Plans, 1984-85, Vol. II, Hill Affairs Branch Secretariate, Darjeeling, Government of West Bengal.

It is clear from the Table 5.6 that the main thrust of the activities of the Panchayats in the hills had been infrastructural activities as mentioned above. During 1980-85, an amount of Rupees 300.14 lakhs was spent on infrastructural activities like remunerating assets schemes, creation of permanent assets, construction of roads, bridges, protection of small streams, small irrigation and Panchayat buildings. There also included drinking water scheme which in the hill areas meant for digging of small canals locally known as 'Kulo' which also serves as a water resource for cultivation. The expenditure during the period 1980-85 as per the Table shows a consistent and qualitative rise till 1983-84. It was Rupees 56.90 lakhs in 1980-81 including the Central assistance, State Plan and Hill Plan budget, 62.13 lakhs in 1981-82 and 102.11 lakhs in 1982-83. But there has been a sudden decline in these items to Rupees 42 lakhs in 1983-84 and 37 lakhs in 1984-85 as the effects of the gradually developing 'Gorkha Land Movement' were becoming pronounced. By 1985-86, when the movement reached its peak, even the anticipated amount for expenditure came down sharply to Rs.19.12 lakhs. No information is available on whether this amount was really spent. The fate of the anticipated amount for expenditure in 1986-87 also is not known. By 1988, the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council came into being replacing the Zilla Parishad. But no elections for the Panchayati Samiti and the Gram Panchayat have been held in Darjeeling hills due to the opposition of the GNLF even when the Panchayat elections to these bodies were held in West Bengal in May, 1993.

The importance of the human factor in development is well-recognised. This is so in case of the Panchayati Raj which needs better motivated, skilled and aware of leadership at each level for the effective discharge of responsibilities. The Government of West Bengal, with an objective to promote and enhance such qualities, organised different training programmes, seminars, symposia and brought out handbooks and journals. These endeavours were also made in the hill areas. But it is astonishing to find out according to Table 5.6 that the amount spent in this field was so meagre compared to the amount spent in the other sector. Only a sum of Rs.0.88 thousand was spent for 'developing leadership and management skill' in the period between 1979 to 1980. Even at the peak of the Panchayat activities in the hill areas, i.e. 1981 to 1983, the expenditure incurred for this purpose was nil. In spite of the State Government's emphasis in this field, it is surprising to notice such a lack of importance in this respect in the hill areas. This is also evident, as we shall see, from the empirical findings (in the next Chapter) according to which a very negligible number of respondents have received training.

With regard to organisational development, which is one of the main aspects of the Panchayati Raj activities, the hill areas have lagged behind. Besides removing pitfalls in replicating or transplanting structures not suited to local conditions and overcoming legal hurdles, the State Government created the District Planning Committees and Block Planning Committees for effective decentralisation of planning and implementation of rural development

programmes and enhancing the capabilities of these institutions. But in the hill areas, the organisational developments of these institutions were affected by two factors, namely,

(i) the existence of a parallel body (Hill Area Development Council) at the district level along with the Zilla Parishad with overlapping functions, not only creating problems of coordination but relegating the Zilla Parishad into the background, (ii) the Gorkhaland Movement due to which a mass resignation of the members of the three-tier institutions took place along with the Sabhadhipati (Chairman) of the Zilla Parishad rendering the District Planning Committee and the Block Planning Committee ineffective. Now they are working at the Siliguri Mahakuma Parishad level.

VIII. Conclusion : The foregoing analysis shows that the working of the Panchayats in the hill areas has been most effective and successful in the sphere of infrastructural development compared to the other two aspects (i.e. organisational development and human resource development. This is, by any standard, no mean achievement notwithstanding many charges of corruption mostly related to tenders for the schemes and abuse of construction materials. Considering the short span of time within which the Panchayats achieved this feat, we may conclude that if these institutions had been allowed to continue, they would have grown in their stature and provided an effective means of democratic decentralisation at the grassroots level.

G. DISTRICT RURAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY, DARJEELING

I. Introduction : The late sixties and the early seventies saw the rapid introduction of new agricultural strategy to tackle the problems of crisis in food production. Despite the contribution of this new strategy in bringing about a sizeable increase in agricultural production and ushering in the 'Green Revolution', many of these programmes were largely concentrated in areas with better resource-endowments. There was apprehension and a perception that improvements in agricultural production and income were by-passing the rural poor and aggravating the already existing economic disparities among the farmers and regions of the country. The All India Rural Credit Review Committee was set up to look into the matter which suggested that special attention should be focussed on less affluent cultivators. Thus, in order to reverse the trends brought out by the Green Revolution, a number of initiatives were taken. Among them, the Small Farmer Development Agency (SFDA) was one which was introduced in the beginning of the Fourth Plan.

The SFDA, Darjeeling, was registered as an autonomous body on 5.12.1969 in tune with the national framework. The programme was predominantly credit-oriented and the role of the agency was that of a coordinating and catalytic agent. The target groups were categorised into three :

- (i) Small Farmers with land-holding below 5.00 acres
- (ii) Marginal Farmers with landholding upto 2.5 acres of unirrigated land

(iii) Agricultural labourers, having homestead and deriving more than 50% of the total income from agricultural activities.

The Agency prepared bankable schemes for these 'target groups' and provided subsidies. But it became apparent towards the end of the Fifth Five Year Plan that these programmes were not yielding the desired results. As SFDA was a land-based programme, it automatically excluded landless labourers and rural artisans who made up the poorest section of the rural society. Hence, the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was introduced which aimed at improving the standard of living of the poorest sections of the society. With the introduction of the IRDP, the District Rural Development Agency was established in Darjeeling on 10.6.1981 and the SFDA was merged into it.

From June, 1990, it was named Council Rural Development Agency (C.R.D.A.). The 'Council' here refers to the hill areas of Darjeeling district under the jurisdiction of the DGHC.

II. Organisation of C.R.D.A. (D.R.D.A.) : The organisational design of the C.R.D.A. has been exhibited in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7

Organisation of the Council (District) Rural Development Agency (C.R.D.A.)
Darjeeling*

State Level Coordination Committee

C.R.D.A. Darjeeling

Governing Body

President (Chairman, Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC))

Vice President (District Magistrate)

Member Secretary/Project Officer also Finance Secretary of DGHC

Assistant Project Officers

Cooperation, Monitoring, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Accounts

Office Staff

Field Staff

Clerical including upper lower division and IVth Grade staff

2 Field Investigators

Block Development Officer with Block Development Officer as head

Integrated Rural Development Programme's Sub-Committee

Chairman Councillor, DGHC

Member Secretary (B.D.O.)

Members consisting of block staff, departmental representatives, Banks and field staff like Panchayat Secretary, Job Assistants and Village level workers.

Beneficiaries (People)

* The Agency was named as Council Rural Development Agency in place of District Rural Development Agency. Previously, before the formation of the DGHC, the Chairman of the Governing Body was the Sabhadhipati (Chairman) of the Zilla Parishad. And the Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Integrated Rural Development Programmes was the Panchayat Samiti Sabhapati (President). Earlier, the D.R.D.A. also covered the two blocks in Siliguri, how the CRDA's jurisdiction is only in the areas that come under DGHC.

a. Structure and Linkages : The C.R.D.A., Darjeeling, consists of a Governing Body whose members consist of representatives from various departments, such as Sub-divisional Officers of the three hill sub-divisions, Kalimpong, Kurseong and Darjeeling; Lead Bank Officer; Central Bank of India, Administrator; West Bengal State Cooperative Land Development Bank Ltd., Calcutta; Project Officer, Multiple Cropping, Darjeeling; Deputy Director, Animal Husbandry Programme, Darjeeling; General Manager, District Industries Centre, Darjeeling; District Planning Officer, Darjeeling; Assistant Registrar, Cooperative Societies, Darjeeling; Special Officer, Tribal Welfare, Darjeeling; Chairman of Darjeeling District Bank Ltd., Kalimpong; Besides, the Council included Members of the Legislative Assembly and Union Parliament, one of the executive Councillors and three persons nominated as members of the Governing Body.

The Chairman of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council has been made the President of the Governing Body. Previously, this post was occupied by the Sabhadhipati (Chairman) of the Zilla Parishad. The District Magistrate of the District is the Vice-Chairman and the Project Officer is the Member-Secretary of the Governing Body. The linkage between the Agency and the Gorkha Council is established not only through the Chairman but also through the Project Officer who has been made the 'Finance Secretary' of the DGHC. The Project Officer is the overall in-charge of the administrative staff and is responsible for the execution of the

programmes. He is assisted by the 5 Assistant Project Officers dealing with cooperation, monitoring, agriculture, animal husbandry and accounts sections. There are two field investigators for supervising the scheme at the field level.

The near-skeletal clerical and statistical staff and a handful of officers are generally attached to the D.R.D.A. because it gets its scheme implemented through the Block Development Office, Panchayat Samiti and various other departments and agencies engaged in rural development activities. The linking pin among all of them is the I.R.D.P. sub-committee constituted at the block level in which representatives of the CRDA, Block Development Office, DGHC (Councillors) Banks, and other sectoral departments meet and discuss the various aspects of the Integrated Rural Development Programme. The Chairman of the sub-committee is one of the 'Executive Councillor's of the DGHC hailing from that particular block. Previously, the Sabhapati (President) of the Panchayat Samiti used to be the Chairman of the Sub-Committee. The Block Development Officer is the Member Secretary of the Sub-committee. The State Government's link and control on the Agency is obvious which has been established and maintained by its control on 'Governing Body' consisting predominantly of the Government Officials of various departments as mentioned above. The Project Officer being an executive from West Bengal Civil Service is directly linked with the district administrative set up under the District Magistrate who is the Vice-Chairman of the Governing Body. Thus, we find

strong vertical linkages in the Agencies set up.

However, the horizontal linkages have been found to be weak between the Agency and the functionaries of the various departments. The Agency depends on the support of the Block Development Office and other departments and banks for implementing its programmes. The link between the Agency and the Block office is established through the District Magistrate and the Block Development Officer, the first as the Vice-Chairman of the Agencies Governing Body and the second, as the Chairman of the IRDP Sub-Committee. On the non-official side, the Chairman of DGHC who is also the Chairman of the 'Governing Body of the Agency' is linked to the block level through the 'Executive Councillor' of the IRDP sub-committee. Such linking in practice can be considered as loose in view of the busy schedule of the Chairman of the DGHC and District Magistrate. In operational terms, such linkages have not been able to facilitate the horizontal coordination as we shall see later in our discussion on coordination.

b. Decentralisation : Behind the establishment of the DRDA(CRDA) merging, Small Farmer Development Agency and Marginal Farmer Development Agency and Agricultural Labourers Programmes in the District, there was the search for an "organisation that would not only respond to the local needs but also be an instrument of national policy goals."¹²⁶ One of the reasons for making the C.R.D.A.(D.R.D.A.) a registered society was to make it function in a flexible non-authoritarian manner unlike the bureaucracy of the

Government. That is why a commercial system of audit is followed in place of the official audit system.

Despite being a registered society, the D.R.D.A. is managed by government functionaries on deputation who adapted all that the Government had to offer in terms of rules and regulations but violated them as and when they were uncomfortable for them. Besides, the Agency has to go through the plethora of guidelines from the Central and State Governments as well as the Hill Secretariat. For all practical purposes, therefore, DRDA was a 'Government Agency'. As the President of the Zilla Parishad, ex-officio President of the D.R.D.A. (till 1985) observed once, 'a Government Circular carried more force than the Governing Body.' These circulars and guidelines provide detailed instructions about what should be the schemes or procedures for obtaining loans and how coordination is to be achieved.¹²⁷ The Agency prepares annual actions plans within the overall framework of the Central Government's directives and for fulfilling the objectives in broad areas identified by the Central Government in agriculture, irrigation, animal husbandry, cooperatives and rural industries. The working of the C.R.D.A. was found highly centralised. The staff look to the Project Officer for each and every decision that has to be made in their functioning. Even for a small piece of job, for example, the distribution of 'prescribed forms for loan and subsidy', they need permission from the Project Officer. This has been witnessed personally by this researcher who was also refused in his request to two clerks for a copy of Annual Action

Plans which were lying in one of the tables unused, covered with dust. The clerks could not take the decision to give it and pointed out that the Project Officer had specific orders not to give any prescribed forms and the published Annual Plans and Reports to anyone without his permission.

c. Participation : The participation of the people in the working of the D.R.D.A. was ensured by including the elected representatives, such as, the Sabhapati of the Zilla Parishad, the Karmadhyaksa (Executive Chairman) of one of the standing committee of the Zilla Parishad, the Members of the Legislative Assembly and the Union Parliament and other nominated members in the Governing Body. But the majority of the members of the Governing Body are the departmental heads and their representatives. This makes it virtually a bureaucratic organisation. Besides, the members of the Gram Panchayat and the Panchayat Samiti were involved in the identification and selection of beneficiaries and in the finalisation of the schemes. They were also involved in monitoring and evaluation. However, at present, the Panchayat institutions are not functioning.

The management of the D.R.D.A. is basically in the hands of the Project Officer performing the day-to-day supervisory tasks because the Governing Body meetings are just the formalities with government circulars or the Collector's decision flowing from such circulars forming the basis for decision-making. It was very rarely that the majority of the members attended the meetings. Most of the elected members being engaged in political and other activities relating to their own organisations, remained absent

most of the time. The non-official members never showed interest in the Agency's activities. For example, a non-official member never attended the Governing body meeting. The utter negligence and indifference to popular participation by the authorities concerned is evident from the fact that his membership in the Governing Body was retained for nearly 10 years from 1981-83 to 1989-90.

d. Coordination : The strong vertical linkages in the working of the Agency, as is evident from the section on linkages in the foregoing paragraphs, has facilitated effective vertical coordination in the working of the Agency. But the weak horizontal linkage has resulted in weak horizontal coordination. For example, for providing credit, the agency depends on the selected banks. Due to the non-payment of Rs.1.30 lakh in 1982-83 and 2.28 lakhs in 1988-89 by the District Central Cooperative Credit Bank to the D.R.D.A., many individual beneficiary schemes failed. One of the implementing wings of the Agency was the Panchayat Samiti along with the Block Development Office. It has been seen that on so many occasions, due to the non-submission of the 'Block Plan' from the Block Office, the Agency's 'Annual Action Plans' could not be prepared. The Sub-divisional Officer had to intervene when such problem arose in Kalimpong I Block, and then only the Plan could be received by the Agency from this Block.¹²⁸ The main purpose of these ^{IRDP sub-committee} meetings seemed to have been finding the ways to fulfil the physical targets set previously. These targets are set with the intension of providing credit to a certain number of beneficiaries who include the 'Old beneficiaries'

normally called 'the Old Cases' for whom the 'Second Dose' assistance was provided and the 'New Cases' who were to be provided with the 'First Dose assistance'. The 'Second Dose' Assistance is very important in IRDP, because it is intended to maintain or sustain the generation of additional income that might have been created by the First Dose. But the Second Dose can be provided only after the credit for the First Dose has been partly repayed. Due to the non-payment of this required credit, it was difficult for the field functionaries to achieve the number of 'Targets' fixed. However, it was found in the meeting of the IRDP sub-committees, in Kalimpong and Kurseong (which were attended by the present researcher twice), that the Block Development Officer and the Extension Officer were instructing the field staff to cover the required number of Old and 'New' cases by any means as the financial year was ending soon. The job assistants and other field staff stated their difficulties of achieving the target, particularly in respect of 'Old Cases', due to the refusal of beneficiaries who were unable to repay the required amount of credit. The Block Development Officer and the Extension Officer ordered the field staff to try to convince the old beneficiaries for accepting the Second Dose and in case they could not, provide credit to 'the new cases', to arrange the papers as if they had covered the Second Dose. The accent on achieving physical targets was so much that the quality and the impact of the programme on beneficiaries seemed to have been ignored in every stage of the implementation of programmes.

c. Communication : As an organisation which is centralised and non-participatory with bureaucratic predominance, the Agency has relied mostly on down-the-line communication system which was formal and mostly in the nature of correspondence, in the form of memos, circulars, orders and detailed guidelines from the Central Government, State Government and the Hill Affairs Branch Secretariat (in the past). However, at present, since the Project Officer himself is the Finance Secretary of the DGHC, the Communication problem has greatly accelerated between the DGHC and the C.R.D.A. But the 'Governing Body' is still predominantly manned by the deputed officials of the sectoral departments with very little participation of the few non-official nominated members. Thus, the meetings of the Governing Body tended to become so formal that the members were not able to maintain flexibility and informality in their participation in those meetings. The bureaucratic formal hierarchical authoritarian ethos and culture hindered the development of these 'meetings' into effective medium of flexibility and informality in their participation in those meetings. The bureaucratic formal hierarchical authoritarian ethos and culture hindered the development of these 'meetings' in becoming effective flexible and two-way communication channels.

The methods and styles of communication between the Agency and the IRDP subcommittee were also formal, mostly based on correspondence. It has already been seen in our discussion on IRDP sub-committee, how the Block Development Officer and

the Extension Officer controlled the proceedings and ordered the field functionaries to increase the number of the 'Old Cases' and the 'New Cases' without bothering to listen to the field staff's problem. This shows that the upward communication from the lower level is neither encouraged nor entertained. Such attitude has often resulted in providing assistance to wrong persons or the wrong schemes to the persons. The annual reports and reviews and also annual action plans contain mostly the sectoral allocations and achievements of physical targets and do not provide an insight into the functioning of the organisations and their problems. In short, it can be said on the basis of the above analysis that the upward communication and flexibility required has been missing in the working of the C.R.D.A.

d. Supervision : The structural weakness, i.e. weak horizontal linkages and coordination as mentioned in the previous sections and centralised bureaucratic (manner in which the Agency functions) administrative system have not facilitated the effective supervision as a means of enhancing the organisations capacity by control, guidance and dissemination of knowledge to lower levels. The Agency depended in the past, i.e., till 1988, on the Panchayats (at the intermediate and the village level) and the Block Office which was its implementing wing. But due to the weak coordination and linkages among them, the Block functionaries have many times ignored and did not bother to follow the instructions of the Project Officer of the Agency.¹²⁹ There were many letters and

memos by the Project Officer requesting the Block Development Officer to follow the guidelines which often have not been followed. At present, the C.R.D.A. depends on the Councillors of DGHC at the block level and below along with the Block officials for implementing its programmes. The President of the C.R.D.A. has direct supervisory powers over the Councillors because he is also the Chairman of the DGHC. But the Block office which is the pivot of development administration at this level has been kept out of the purview of the DGHC and is not included in the list of the departments which have been transferred to the DGHC by the State Government. Therefore, there is a linkage gap which creates problems for supervision. It is not understood, why the Block Office which has been linked so closely and effectively with the Panchayat Institutions and the Block Development Officer who has been made the Executive Officer of the Panchayat Samiti in every block in Bengal, has been completely delinked with the DGHC whose Chairman is also the President of CRDA.

The ineffective supervision as a result of these weaknesses has resulted often in the wrong selection of schemes and beneficiaries.¹³⁰ For example, Mahta Singh Lohar who is a Goldsmith had been given a scheme in photography in a poverty stricken village of Singrimitan where he had to run the photography business on credit and found it difficult to realise it. He also could not repay the bank loan. Similarly, a tailor, Chandraman Dorjee was provided Dairy Milch Cattle who failed to improve

his standard of living through this scheme due to his lack of experience in maintaining it.

The way the monitoring was done also shows the casualness and a total disregard for norms. The Block Development Officer or the Extension Officer Panchayat instruct the village level functionaries such as, the Panchayat Secretary and the Job Assistants or would request the Gram Panchayat Pradhan or the members to inform the beneficiaries about the visit of the team for evaluation and to gather them in a suitable place, for example, a school or some village play ground or in the house of some influential villager. On the day fixed, a team of functionaries would visit that village where the beneficiaries have gathered. All the 'schedules' would be filled up and the required paper work would be done. When asked about the futility of such an exercise, the officials pointed out that it is practically impossible to adhere to all the norms of doing such work with the available staff support and time. They also expressed that their responsibilities and functions had increased tremendously with all the paperworks they have to undergo due to the C.R.D.A. plans and programmes.

The emphasis on quantitative aspects of the implementation of I.R.D.P. is evident from the fact that on the basis of the performance of fulfilling physical targets, the D.R.D.A., Darjeeling was placed 5th in 1984 and 3rd in 1985-86 in West Bengal. The irony of the whole state of affairs is that it was

in 1985-86, that a mass resignation of elected members of the three tier institutions had taken place at the call of the G.N.L.F. during the Gorkhaland Movement. If participation and involvement of the Panchayat bodies had meant anything in the D.R.D.A.'s activities, then the rating of D.R.D.A. in the ^{third} ~~2nd~~ position in terms of the performance amongst the other districts of West Bengal is absurd. How could an agency whose main implementing arms were the Panchayat Samitis and Gram Panchayats achieve such a high rating accomplishments without its arms, that too in politically abnormal and volatile situation. This may be one example of the apathy of administrators towards people's participation of the entire system of development administration in India.

III. DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES OF CRDA

The basic objective of the DRDA is to identify the target-groups and to ascertain their problems in its area with the twin objectives of generating additional employment and raising the income levels of the identified Target Group. For this purpose, it has to draw up model plans for solving their problems. It also has to form annual and five year district plans as per guidelines to be issued by the Central and State Government from time to time. The DRDA executes such plans for the benefit of the target group either directly or through Panchayat bodies or others in coordination with the existing agencies engaged in this direction in the field, whether private,

public bodies or the cooperative societies, commercial Banks and similar institutions and administration. It also reviews the progress of the execution of these activities as well as the effectiveness of the benefits directed towards 'Target Group'.

Since, the DRDA, Darjeeling, changed its nomenclature as Council Rural Development Agency (CRDA) only from June, 1990, whereas the period covered in this study also take into account its activities before this period. Therefore, we will continue to use the term DRDA and CRDA interchangeably for our discussion.

The DRDA basically implemented three types of works :

- (i) area-based
- (ii) target group or family-oriented programmes which are properly referred to as "individual beneficiary schemes" and
- (iii) a mixture of the two.

Under the area-based programme, the DRDA, Darjeeling, implemented those programmes which were financed by Central Government under Accelerated Hill Development Plan. The individual beneficiary schemes came under Government of India's Integrated Rural Development Programme which included the erstwhile Training and Rural Youth for Self Employment for Schemes (TRYSEM) as well as Special Component Plan Schemes for Scheduled Castes and Tribes which were tied to productive loans, special UNICEF-sponsored programmes for women and children. Programmes where the area approach and target group approach was both intermingled included the Small Irrigation

Scheme, Special Animal Husbandry Scheme and infra-structural development.

It is important to point out that the Central Government financed the whole SFDA programme. When it was merged into the IRDP, the financial responsibility of the Programme was shared equally between the Centre and the States. The finance from the Hill Affairs Branch Secretariat came mainly to fill up the critical gaps during the implementation of these programmes and for implementing Hill Development Programmes. In all these programmes, the initiative has come from the Central Government.

The main thrust of the activities of the Agency came from the IRDP programme. It was directed exclusively at the poorest of the poor. It aimed at eradicating poverty by a massive investment for self-employment to identified families in each block to raise them above poverty line. The DRDA, Darjeeling, like others in the rest of the country, had become responsible for identifying prospective beneficiaries for providing credit and a veritable subsidy on the loan through bank.

The SFDA was concerned with small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers. The Darjeeling SFDA identified 49,922 families of which 10,573 were small farmers, 22,543 were marginal farmers and 16,806 were agricultural labourers. The identification was based on land-holding. After the introduction of the IRDP, a new set of guidelines to identify the beneficiaries were issued

which were again revised during the Seventh Plan period. According to the revised criteria, target groups are now categorised as :

- (i) Destitutes - Annual Income upto Rs.2265
- (ii) Very Very Poor- Annual Income from Rs.2265 to 3500.
- (iii) Very Poor - Annual Income from Rs.3501-4800.
- (iv) Poor - Annual Income from Rs.4801 upto 6400.

Since the purpose of the programme was to raise families above the poverty line, the guidelines pointed out that the basis criteria to be used to identify the beneficiary should be family income.

The 'cut-off' line for identification was Rs.4,800/- as annual income. However, in order to ensure that poorest of the poor got the assistance first, it had to be seen that families with annual income level upto Rs.3500 were assisted first. After all the families had been assisted in a block, then only families with income higher than that could be taken into considerations. From the Sixth Plan onwards, the DRDA, Darjeeling, in line with the national framework, set a target of assisting 30% woman under IRDP.

The statement of schemewise plan outlays has been presented in the following table.

Table 5.8

Schemewise Plan Outlays, 1981-90

| Scheme | 1981-82 | 1982-83 | 1983-84 | 1984-85 | 1985-86 | 1986-87 | 1987-88 | 1988-89 | 1989-90 |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1. Agriculture | 88.10 | 55.09 | 88.86 | 90.85 | 73.52 | 68.67 | 102.63 | 104.28 | 114.51 |
| 2. Animal Husbandry | 42.95 | 51.83 | 91.86 | 150.38 | 104.27 | 116.40 | 169.23 | 160.86 | 210.15 |
| 3. Sericulture | - | - | - | - | 1.24 | 2.00 | 12.30 | 13.00 | 14.50 |
| 4. Industry and Business Sector | 26.17 | 32.97 | 3.64 | 72.32 | 75.50 | 36.22 | 93.51 | 119.94 | 169.46 |
| 5. TRYSEM | - | 5.00 | 5.00 | 5.00 | 7.50 | 4.50 | 2.30 | 3.80 | 4.05 |
| 6. Survey and Vikas Patrika | - | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 0.96 | 1.50 | 1.50 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| 7. Infrastructure Development | 5.00 | 12.00 | 1.98 | 12.18 | 14.91 | 11.32 | 18.71 | 9.75 | 20.88 |
| 8. Small Irrigation | 30.60 | 39.15 | - | 19.50 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 9. Strengthening of co-operatives | 2.00 | 34.00 | - | 40.00 | 40.00 | - | - | - | - |
| 10. Bee-keeping | 3.30 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 11. Pisciculture | - | 1.69 | - | 5.10 | 11.38 | 20.33 | 28.30 | 25.90 | 26.83 |
| 12. Administration | 5.80 | 7.00 | 4.88 | 7.00 | 7.50 | 7.50 | 8.50 | 8.50 | 8.50 |
| Total | 186.92 | 239.73 | | 403.40 | 279.75 | 436.98 | 436.98 | 447.03 | 569.95 |

Sources : Annual Action Plans of District Rural Development Agency, Darjeeling 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86, 1986-87, 1987-88, 1989-90.

With a view to fulfilling the over activities, the Central Government identified broad areas such as improved agricultural practices, minor irrigation, animal husbandry, cooperative institutions and training of rural artisans for small industry and business. Within this broad framework, the DRDA in Darjeeling had been concentrating on agriculture, animal husbandry, industries and business sector. Because of the limited scope to extend agricultural activities and agricultural production in the hill areas, the main efforts were on arresting landslides, soil conservation, proper terracing of land with inward slope, walling and construction of disposal channels. Since the cultivation of traditional crops like rice, maize and millet were uneconomical, the DRDA had decided to include horticulture, floriculture and the cultivation of cash crops like potato, ginger and vegetable seeds in the agriculture sector. But, it is the animal husbandry that has been receiving the highest priority with the allotment in this sector increasing sharply from Rs.42.95 lakhs to Rs.210.15 lakhs between 1981 to 1990.

The increase was qualitative in the sense that it had been consistent excepting the years 1985-86 and 1986-87 when the allotment for it had been Rs.73.52 lakhs and Rs.68.27 lakhs respectively. This decline during these years might have perhaps been due to the extreme political instability as the Gorkhaland movement had reached its climax during this period. Next to animal husbandry was agriculture which had received high

priority in allotment which was Rs.33.10 lakhs in 1981-82 and rose to Rs.114.50 lakhs in 1989-90. Its increase had been similar to that of animal husbandry. The industry and business sector had received Rs.26.17 lakhs in 1981-82 which rose to Rs.109.46 lakhs by 1989-90. This was another sector where there had been a qualitative increase in the allotment. With allotment of a small amount of Rs.1.69 lakh from 1982-83 pisciculture sector has received Rs.26.83 lakhs in 1989-90 showing a consistent increase in the allotment. Sericulture sector was not in the agenda till 1985-86 but had been increasingly receiving the allotment from 1985-86. It was Rs.1.24 lakh, 1985-86 but rose to 14.50 lakhs by 1989-90 within a span of three years. It was a quantitative increase of the Agency's programmes but the increasing outlay also denotes the qualitative increase of the allotment on the programme.

However, bee keeping and the strengthening of the cooperatives had been taken out of the Agencies programme. The bee keeping sector was provided Rs.3.30 lakhs in 1981-82 but after that had received no allotment.

For strengthening of cooperative, the Agency has allotted Rs.2.00 lakhs in 1981-82, Rs.34.00 lakhs in 1982-83 and Rs.40 lakhs in 1982-83, and Rs.40.00 lakhs in both 1985-86 and 1986-87 and none from subsequent years. Thus, the Agency had shown inconsistency in allotment in these sectors.

These plan outlays were made for providing credit to the beneficiaries from the banks like Darjeeling District Central

Cooperative Bank, Central Bank of India which is the Lead Bank of the area and other Commercial Banks. Mainly three types of loans were provided, the short-term, the medium term and the long term. The amount of loan and subsidy under various schemes is shown in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9

Amount of subsidy under various Schemes, 1981-90

(Rs. in lakhs)

| SCHEMES | Y E A R S | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 1981-82 | 1982-83 | 1983-84 | 1984-85 | 1985-86 | 1986-87 | 1987-88 | 1988-89 | 1989-90 |
| 1. <u>Agriculture</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| a. Loan | - | 33.30 | 57.01 | 57.51 | 48.85 | 45.06 | 68.74 | 69.49 | 77.75 |
| b. Subsidy | 13.15 | 18.20 | 31.65 | 32.54 | 24.67 | 23.61 | 33.89 | 34.79 | 36.83 |
| 2. <u>Animal Husbandry</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| a. Loan | - | 33.19 | 60.21 | 99.16 | 69.68 | 77.41 | 112.80 | 107.22 | 143.70 |
| b. Subsidy | 13.00 | 18.19 | 31.65 | 50.34 | 34.59 | 28.99 | 56.43 | 53.64 | 66.45 |
| 3. <u>Sericulture</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| a. Loan | - | - | - | - | 0.83 | 1.29 | 8.20 | 8.65 | 10.07 |
| b. Subsidy | - | - | - | - | 0.41 | 0.71 | 4.10 | 4.65 | 4.43 |
| 4. <u>Industry & Business Sector</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| a. Loan | - | 21.23 | 9.02 | - | 50.37 | 36.22 | 62.24 | 79.98 | 113.65 |
| b. Subsidy | 7.27 | 11.84 | 4.62 | - | 25.13 | 20.30 | 31.27 | 39.96 | 55.81 |
| 5. <u>Survey & Vikas Patrika</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| a. Loan | - | 1.00 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| b. Subsidy | - | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 0.96 | 1.50 | 1.50 | 1.00 | 1.00 |

Table contd...

| SCHEMES | Y E A R S | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 1981- 82 | 1982- 83 | 1983- 84 | 1984- 85 | 1985- 86 | 1986- 87 | 1987- 88 | 1988- 89 | 1989- 90 |
| 6. <u>Infrastructure Development</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| a. Loan | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| b. Subsidy | 5.00 | 12.00 | 11.98 | 12.18 | 6.53 | 10.44 | 8.79 | 5.52 | 12.42 |
| 7. <u>Small Irrigation</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| a. Loan | - | 6.86 | - | 10.60 | - | - | - | - | - |
| b. Subsidy | 15.00 | 18.20 | - | 8.90 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 8. <u>Strengthening of Cooperatives</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| a. Loan | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| b. Subsidy | 2.00 | 2.00 | - | 2.00 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 9. <u>Book-keeping</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| a. Loan | 3.30 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| b. Subsidy | 1.00 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 10. <u>Pisciculture</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| a. Loan | - | 1.05 | - | 3.44 | 7.59 | 7.30 | 20.33 | 17.26 | 17.89 |
| b. Subsidy | - | 0.53 | - | 1.66 | 3.79 | 4.05 | 7.77 | 8.64 | 8.94 |
| 11. <u>Administration</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| a. Loan | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| b. Subsidy | 5.80 | 7.00 | 4.88 | 7.00 | 7.50 | 7.50 | 8.50 | 8.50 | 8.50 |
| 12. <u>TRISEM</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| a. Loan | - | 5.00 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| b. Subsidy | - | 5.00 | 0.96 | 5.00 | 7.50 | 4.50 | 2.30 | 3.80 | 4.05 |

Sources : D.R.D.A. Annual Action Plans for 1981-82, 1982-83, 1984-85,
1986-87, 1989-90.

The allotment pattern in the above Table 5.9 is a reflection of the allotment in Table 5.8 on schemes allotments. We have seen that animal husbandry, agriculture, industry and business sector, pisciculture and sericulture receiving higher priority in allotment in Table 5.8. Similarly, the loan and subsidy provision on various schemes in Table 5.9 show the consistent attention given to these sectors. As in case of Table 5.8 on schemewise allotment of plan outlay, this table (5.9) on subsidy shows a decline in allotment on beekeeping and strengthening of Cooperative sectors.

The following table 5.10 shows the credit provided to the identified families under IRDP during 1981-89.

Table 5.10

Schemewise Credit provided to the Identified Families under IRDP 1981-89.

(Rs. in lakhs)

| SCHEME | Y E A R S | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------|
| | 1981-82 | 1982-83 | 1983-84 | 1984-85 | 1985-86 | 1986-87 | 1987-88 | 1988-89 |
| <u>Agriculture</u> | 4.27 | 9.62 | NA | 15.63 | 7.97 | 5.56 | 4.87 | |
| <u>Animal Husbandry</u> | 3.58 | 28.263 | - | 37.63 | 43.82 | 68.09 | 115.04 | |
| <u>Sericulture</u> | - | - | - | 0.08 | - | - | - | |
| <u>Industry and Business Sector</u> | - | 2.73 | 5.83 | 1.44 | 13.82 | 26.88 | 25.11 | |
| <u>Infrastructure</u> | 4.06 | 2.39 | - | 6.53 | 5.08 | - | - | |
| <u>Survey</u> | 0.80 | 0.55 | - | NIL | NIL | - | - | |
| <u>TRYSEM</u> | - | 0.11 | - | - | - | 0.74 | 3.72 | |
| <u>Pisciculture</u> | - | - | - | 16.02 | - | - | - | |
| <u>Minor Irrigation</u> | 8.97 | 0.53 | - | - | - | - | - | |
| <u>Special Animal Husbandry</u> | 9.35 | 0.53 | - | 0.65 | - | - | - | |
| <u>Subsidy Risk Fund</u> | 0.19 | 0.37 | - | - | - | - | - | |
| <u>Others</u> | - | 0.11 | - | - | - | - | - | |
| <u>Administration</u> | 2.71 | 3.05 | - | 5.95 | 7.20 | 7.72 | 10.89 | |
| Total | 34.00 | 48.62 | | 78.72 | 78.50 | 112.05 | 160.95 | |

Sources: D.R.D.A. Annual Action Plans, 1984-85, 1985-86, 1987-88, 1988-89, 1989-90, Darjeeling.

According to the table, the credit provided on agricultural programme is diminishing. In 1981-82, it was Rs.4.27 lakhs with a slight increase in 1985-86, since then it has been reduced every year and in 1988-89, it was only Rs.4.87 lakhs. The flow credit in respect of animal husbandry is the highest of Rs.115.04 lakhs compared to any other programme. This is a trend in the right direction in view of the limited potential agriculture in the hill areas. The credit flow to the industry and business sector has more or less consistently risen excepting 1985-86, the year of political turmoil. The allotment had increased from Rs.2.73 lakhs in 1982-83 to Rs.28.11 lakhs in 1989-90. But all other programmes like special animal husbandry scheme, subsidy risk fund, minor irrigation and pisciculture had stopped receiving any allotment since 1986-87. Here, the pisciculture sector may be regarded as the extreme case which had received no allotment all the years except on 1985-86, which was Rs.16.02 lakhs. This might have been because of political disturbances in the hill areas in that particular year.

Under the IRDP, the identified families were provided loan and subsidy by the Agency. A statement of number of 'old and new cases' of families covered by the Agency has been provided in the following table 5.11.

Table 5.11

Review of Progress made under DRDA, Darjeeling
No. of Old and New Cases assisted, 1980-89

| (Rs.in lakhs) | | | | | | | |
|---------------|------|------|--------|-------|-------|--------|---------|
| Years | SC | ST | Others | Total | Women | Loan | Subsidy |
| 1980-81 | NA | NA | - | 3925 | NA | - | 23.137 |
| 1982-82 | NA | NA | - | 2127 | NA | - | 16.43 |
| 1982-83 | NA | NA | - | 5351 | NA | - | 43.36 |
| 1983-84 | NA | NA | - | 9244 | NA | - | 66.88 |
| 1984-85 | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 1985-86 | 849 | 1163 | 3019 | 5031 | NA | 116.00 | 123.97 |
| 1986-87 | 1271 | 908 | 2049 | 4588 | NA | 108.42 | 65.30 |
| 1987-88 | 1805 | 974 | 2992 | 5771 | NA | 177.86 | 100.30 |
| 1988-89 | 1254 | 1194 | 3862 | 6310 | 1583 | 256.45 | 145.61 |

Sources : Annual Action Plans, 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86, 1986-87, 1987-88, 1988-89, D.R.D.A., Darjeeling.

In 1980-81, assisted cases numbered 3925 which increased to 9244 by 1983-84. The subsidy provided to these cases was Rs.23.13 lakhs in 1980-81, which rose to Rs.66.88 lakhs in 1983-84. A separate statement of subsidy and number of cases on scheduled castes and Tribes and women are not available till 1984-85. In 1985-86, out of the total 5031 number of cases, 849 (16.88%) (23.12%) were scheduled castes, 1163 were Scheduled Tribes. The number in has increased from in 1988-89 to 1254 (19.87%) in case of scheduled castes, 1194(18.92%) Scheduled Tribes and 1583 (25.09%) in case of women with the

exception of the year 1986-87 when the total number of cases declined to 4588.

The table does not show a separate statement of loan and subsidy for each of these categories. However, the total amount of loan and subsidy to the total number of cases had been increasing consistently, excepting the year 1986-87. The loan amount in 1985-86 was Rs.116.00 lakhs; Rs.108 lakhs in 1986-87; Rs.177.86 lakhs in 1987-88 and Rs.256.45 lakhs in 1988-89. Similarly, the subsidy amount also show an increase from Rs.123.97 lakhs in 1985-86; Rs.65.30 lakhs in 1986-87, Rs.100.30 lakhs in 1987-88 and Rs.145.61 lakhs in 1988-89.

On the basis of the analysis made so far, we can say that the Agency's allotment of fund to different programmes had been quite consistent and has shown qualitative increase of the allotment barring a few. The main thrust had been on animal husbandry, agriculture, industry and business sector and sericulture.

IV. Conclusion : The D.R.D.A. (CRDA) Darjeeling has suffered like its counterparts in the rest of the country from the strong vertical linkages and overcentralisation which leave little room for local adjustments required for making the plan to suit the local needs. As in other DRDA's, the Darjeeling, DRDA has a large number of bureaucrats in its Governing Body. The deputed Government officials man the project. Thus, it acts like any other Government department. The predominance of these officials

did not facilitate flexible participatory management of programmes.

Comparatively, the Darjeeling DRDA has performed quite satisfactorily in terms of achieving physical targets such as amount of credit provided and the number of families covered as it was placed 5th in 1984 and 3rd in 1985 amongst the DRDAs in West Bengal. However, it has to be mentioned that targetry has been one of the major constraints of the rural development programmes in India from which DRDA in Darjeeling also suffers.

H. THE WEST BENGAL COMPREHENSIVE AREA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (CADC) - A STUDY OF KALIMPONG PROJECT

I. The Experiment in West Bengal : The Integrated Rural Development Programme is now a major component of India's development strategy. It was conceived as a broad-based attack on rural poverty and though now well-established, it was a descendant of administrative experiments that tried to grapple with the problems of departmentalism and red tapism. It was also the result of the realisation, particularly from the Third Plan onwards - the improvements in agriculture production and incomes were bypassing the rural poor and indeed serving to marginalise them even further. By the seventies, a number of policy initiatives had been taken to combat these problems, of which the Comprehensive Area Development Corporation in West Bengal was one that was designed to provide immediate income to poverty stricken families through increased agricultural

productivity.

The West Bengal Comprehensive Development Corporation came into existence in 1974 in terms of the West Bengal Comprehensive Area Development Act of 1974, as an autonomous body. The Chief Minister is the Chairman with the Minister of Agriculture as the Vice-Chairman. One of the nominated social scientist members of the Organisation is the Executive Vice-Chairman with several other ministers and senior secretaries as its members. The Corporation has received recognition of the Government as a powerful organisation.

The objective of the Corporation was to identify and select specific and viable areas for establishing the projects and making a comprehensive development strategy to uplift the poor by the development of agriculture, dairy farming, poultry, pisciculture, cottage industries and rural infrastructure, viz. roads, communication, electric power, water irrigation, marketing facilities and finance, so as to serve as a model for the other areas in the state. Another objective was to give effect to the Directive Principles of State Policy embodied in the Indian Constitution - "Ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good", and that "the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment."¹³¹ It was envisaged that the number of the Comprehensive Area Development Projects (CADP) would increase in such a way that in a few years' time, the entire

country-side of West Bengal would be covered by such projects.

The Corporation's approach to rural development seeks to meet the modernisation of agriculture without imposing heavy burden on the state budget and thereby to find a solution to the problem of poverty and backwardness in India. The emphasis is on eco-viability, bankability, self-reliance, modernisation and package-approach on the one hand, and the creation of an organisation which is sponsored by the Government, yet independent of it. During its career, the Corporation has passed through two distinct phases :¹³²

- i. Period upto 1977 : Planning, legislation and building the infrastructure under the then Congress(I) Government
- ii. Period 1978 onwards : work under a new regime, Left Front Government towards more decentralisation and participation.

It has already been stated that the Left Front Government in 1978 decided to revitalise the Panchayat system in West Bengal and not only introduced the three-tier Panchayat institutions, but also made them the pivot of rural development activities. In tune with this marked shift in the approach to rural development, the objectives, programmes and style of functioning of the CADG also underwent some changes. It was decided not to extend the project in the new areas and to accept unconditionally the leading role of the elected representatives of the people. The Corporation Act was amended in 1979 by the Left Front Government to bring about changes in

the working of CADC and to involve Panchayats in the CADPs. Under the Left Front Government, the CADC Programme is guided by six main principles, such as (i) identification with rural poor, (ii) making the programme comprehensive, (iii) planning with Panchayats (popular participation in rural development), (iv) experiment and research, (v) coordination with other agencies, (vi) area planning. ¹³³

II. The Experiment in the Hill Areas - the Kalimpong-I

Project-Organisation : The Comprehensive Area Development Project - Kalimpong -I was started from 1976. It covers an area of 10,340 acres of geographical areas of which 7,623 acres are net cultivable land. There are seven mouzas under the jurisdiction of the Project with 39,480 people. The Project is headed by the Project Director assisted by a Deputy along with five Junior Technical Officers (JTO).

The Project Director concentrates on developing relations with the Panchayats (at present with the Councillors of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council), district authorities, headquarter and other agencies, monthly reports, operation of Project Advisory Board and District Comprehensive Area Development Council and the implementation of development programmes. The Deputy Director is engaged in office management, personnel coordination among various sections, accounts and statistics and information etc. The Junior Technical Officers look after their own specialist area and one required to maintain

regular contact and correspondence with their respective professional superiors at the headquarters, but are subjected to the discipline of the Project Director. Below them are the village organisers for respective Khasmahal or Mauza falling under the notified area of the CADP. The village organiser is the man on the spot with face-to-face contact with the villagers. His area of activities is very wide which includes office work, loan collection and repayment; coordination and teaching in adult centres at centres for tribal women field trials and demonstrations, village meetings, statistical work, water management, supervision of construction work, community gola, special schemes, agricultural work including animal husbandry, pisciculture and rural industries.

A District Comprehensive Area Development Council has been set up at the district level to add and advise the Kalimpong I project along with the other projects in the district. A Project Advisory Board has been formed at the Project level for formulating the general guidelines and the policies of the Project and to ensure people's participation through the Panchayats. The President of the Zilla Parishad is the Chairman of the district level council. The President of the Panchayat Samiti was the Chairman of the Project Advisory Board but now an Executive Councillor of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council has been made the Chairman of the Project Advisory Board, in the hill areas following the formation of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council in 1988. In the district level Council as well as in the Project

Advisory Board, the representatives of the people, sectoral departments and the CADP officials have been included.

A Farmer Service Cooperative Society has been set up and so associated with the CADP, Kalimpong which consists of a 12 member Board of which 3 are nominated and 9 are elected by members. The Project Director and the Deputy Project Director are the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Society. A Junior Technical Officer is the Managing Director of the Society. The organisational design of the CADP Kalimpong is presented in the following table No.5.12.

Table 5.12.

III. Organisational Issues

a. Linkages : The organizational Chart in Table 5.12 shows stronger vertical linkages than the horizontal ones. The Chairman of the Corporation (the Chief Minister of West Bengal) is linked to the project level through the Vice-Chairman (Minister for Agriculture) below whom is the Executive Vice-Chairman (a social scientist appointed by the Government) in charge of the administration of the Corporation and 'Adopters' of the different projects. The adopters are the senior officers who are the technical experts (such as agriculturists, engineers, etc.) in charge of particular projects with full responsibilities of its activities. The Adopter acts as liaison officer between the Project and the Head Office reporting directly to the Executive Vice-Chairman.

Table-5.12

Organisation of West Bengal Comprehensive Area Development Corporation-Kalimpong-I Project.

State Level

Chairman (Chief Minister)
 Vice-Chairman (Minister for Agriculture)
 Executive Vice-Chairman (a social scientist appointed by the Government)
 Senior Technical Officers- (who also act at 'Adopter' of a particular Project)
 Adopter (one senior Technical Officer appoint as Adopter)

Project Level

Kalimpong Project

District Comprehensive
 Area Development Council
 (Advisory Board)

Farmer Service Cooperative Society

Project Advisory Board

Project Director ↔ Chairman
 Deputy Project Director ↔ Vice Chairman

Chairman
 (Sabhapati (President)
 Panchayat Samiti till 1988)
 (Now Councillor of DGHC after
 1988)
 It consists of elected and
 administrative elements
 (representative of various
 sectoral departments)

5 Junior Technical Officers (JTO)

1 2 3 4 5
 Organisation, Agriculture, Engineering, Animal husbandry, Inputs

Managing Director (JTO Inputs)

Board

7 Village Organisers (V.O.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 Kalimpong, Bongbusty, Dungra, Sindepong, Pudung, Echay, Bhalukhop

(Elected & nominated members)

(These are notified Khasmahals or Mouzas or number of villager)

Project Director (Member Secretary)

The Project Director reports to the 'Adopter' at the head office but is in charge of the Project and is linked to the lower levels through his Deputy and Junior Technical Officers. The Junior Technical Officers also act as 'Adopters' at the Project level and in charge of a particular notified area under the Project. The 'Adopters' at this level are linked to the Village Organisers who are in charge of Khasmahal or villages under notified areas and act as liaison officers between the Project and the village level. However, being a small organisation, the Project Director has direct contact with the village organisers without any difficulties.

The 'Project' is also nicely linked with the Farmers Service Cooperative Society (FSCS) which is a part of the project organisation. The Project Director has been made the Chairman of the FSCS and the Deputy Project Director is the Vice-Chairman. The Junior Technical Officer is the Managing Director. In this way, strong vertical and horizontal linkages have been established and maintained between the Project and the FSCS.

But horizontal linkages are found to be weak in terms of links and relationship of the Project with other organisations and departments on whom the success of the Project depends. In order to develop effective linkages with the Panchayats, section 16 of the WBCADC Act, 1974 in 1979 has been amended and close linkages with the Panchayat has been established. According to it, the President (and the Vice-President) of the Panchayat

Samiti within the notified areas has been made the Chairman of the Project Advisory Board. And Pradhans of the Gram Panchayats within notified Area have been made the members. However, in Kalimpong I Project, since Panchayats are not functioning in the hills, a Councillor of DGHC, within notified area, has been made the Chairman of the Project Advisory Board. The members of Legislative Assembly from the constituency comprising the notified area or part thereof also have been made the members of the Board. By way of developing linkages, the Block Development Officer having jurisdiction over the notified area, Sub-Divisional Officer, one representative from the Farmers Cooperative Society, one representative of Lead Bank, in Kalimpong I, the Central Bank of India, the Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies within the notified area and six coopted members including the representatives of marginal farmers, small farmers, labourers and sharecroppers, have been included in the Project Advisory Board. A District Comprehensive Area Development Council has been established consisting of the district level functionaries of the departments mentioned above in connection with the Project Advisory Board.

b. Decentralisation : Decentralisation in the context of the West Bengal Comprehensive Area Development Corporation has to be seen as decentralisation of formulation and implementation of the Comprehensive Area Plan and administrative decentralisation at the project level. Self-reliance and area planning is one of the main objectives of the Corporation. Thus, the objectives

are to design area plan and at the same time seek self-reliance of the project areas. The area plans are expected to be formulated on the basis of extensive discussion in the Project Advisory Boards and not simply in terms of the number of schemes and the amount involved thereon. The basic point about these plans is that these should not be imposed from above, but should be largely based on the felt needs of the local population.

Although great stress was laid on the freedom to prepare comprehensive local plan and on flexibility of work, the CADP was managed by government functionaries (particularly the Project Director and Deputy Project Director) and adopted many government procedures, rules and regulations. The Project Director of Kalimpong-I project in one of his reports observes that the various booklets, circulars and guidelines suggest to work in a decentralized manner "but it appears today that there is a tendency to centralise the working of the project."¹³⁴ Though there is a circular from headquarters defining duties and responsibilities of respective officers for various disciplines, "officers are not very conscious about the same and there is a tendency to pass all bucks including minor issues to Project Director which creates problem for him to function in a desired level of efficiency."¹³⁵ The report speaks for itself and needs no elaboration.

c. Participation : The CADC seeks to closely involve the Panchayat leaders in every respect, such as decision on recruitment,

location of facilities, identification of beneficiaries, disbursement and repayment of loans, distribution of water and other inputs, and deciding on priorities when formulating an area programme for a particular project. But close relationship with Panchayat does not imply close relationship with the parties which the Panchayat represents but the close relationship with the local Panchayat irrespective of its party affiliation.¹³⁶ Again, close relations with the Panchayat as a collective entity is emphasized, and not with individuals constituting the Panchayat. It also does not mean abrogation of the statutory responsibilities of the Project Director. The present approach is a recognition of the principle that rural development cannot be imposed from the top and the role of leadership should belong to the representatives of the rural people in the Panchayats.

In Kalimpong I, the Panchayat leaders were actively involved, but later, there have been problems between the CADP officials and the Panchayat leaders, as we shall see in our discussion on coordination. One of the main and the first objectives of the Corporation was identification with the rural poor and providing their basic needs such as food shelter, health, education, work, etc. In other words, the village poor are to be made the main components of rural development. The small farmers, marginal farmers, landless labourers and agricultural labourers were made members of the Project Advisory Board to ensure their representation and participation. However, the record reveals that most of the beneficiaries in wool-knitting

programme were not from the poor group, but belonged to middle income group and most of them were from Kalimpong town.¹³⁷ In regard to the charge that the poor are being neglected, the Project Director reports, "since the rural women lack training and skill in knitting, the CADP was compelled to provide the facility to women from the town and from middle level income group in order to save the programme."¹³⁸ It must be pointed out in this context that CADP earns quite a good deal of profit from selling woollen garments. But the first principle of identifying with rural poor is openly violated here.

The lack of popular participation and comprehensiveness in planning is reflected in the programme of introducing HYV paddy known as CI-5310. In 1981-82, 82-83 and 83-84, the CADP launched this programme of introducing HYV CI-5310 in about 3 to 4 hundred acres of paddy cultivable land. Despite the satisfactory increase in production, the farmers started rejecting this variety and opted for the local variety. By 1985-86, no one was using this variety. Later on, it was revealed that the HYV variety usually gets ready for harvest about a month before. At that time, the local variety which is predominantly grown is unripen. Therefore, all the birds of the area would concentrate in the pockets where HYV variety is ready and feed on these crops leaving very little for the farmers. Secondly, the HYV variety, because of its being small plant would give very little hay unlike the local variety creating fodder problem for the farmers. In view of the deforestation and scarcity of fodder, the farmers prefer

to grow local variety of paddy which also supplies enough hay which can be used as fodder for cattles. This programme, designed purely in productivity terms, had failed to take into consideration linkages between one problem and another in village life. If CADP had taken an integrated approach, they should have been able to identify the link between the cultivation of local variety and the fodder problem and planned the programmes accordingly. The lack of comprehensive and integrated approach was also evident in the HYV programme for maize. In Bongbusty, in the areas where the HYV maize was to be introduced, actually the farmers had already abandoned maize cultivation. This because monkeys in search of food from the denuded jungle situated in the Relli River bank below this village would come to the village and start uprooting the maize plants after they grow about 1 or 2 ft. high and chew them up.¹³⁹ Unaware of, or overlooking this fact, the CADP distributed HYV maize and the villagers received them and used for the food purpose instead of for cultivating them. The facts mentioned above also make it clear that the involvement of the villagers and the linkage of the CADP with them is very poor. There is a serious communication-gap. The CADP has failed in ensuring the suitability and viability of the programmes.

d. Coordination : The vertical coordination is quite strong which is being facilitated by the strong vertical linkages as mentioned before. The activities of the Projects are coordinated by the 'Adopter' at the head office who is in direct control of the project. At the Project level, the Project Director is the overall

coordinator. Being the Chairman of the FSCS, he coordinates the activities between the Project and the FSCS.

But there have been problems regarding horizontal coordination inspite of a great deal of emphasis put by the Corporation on flexibility and on the need to maintain informal contacts with officers of other agencies at the Project level. The Corporation has also been aware of the need for increasing efficiency of productivity and to avoid overlap and duplication of unnecessary paper work and wastage. The CADP guidelines direct the projects to be flexible and not to follow procedural rigidities in order to offer quick service to the beneficiaries. At the project level, in practice, this has not been the case. For example, the procedure of taking a loan from the Farmers' Service Cooperative Society attached to CADP and also DRDA is longer for the beneficiaries within the notified area than others outside the jurisdiction of the CADP. In other areas, a farmer would apply for the loan through Primary Agricultural Cooperative Credit Society or the Gram Panchayat and get it through them directly. In case of CADP areas, one has to apply first to CADP along with recommendation of the Gram Panchayat to sanction the loan. Then, the CADP would send it to F.S.C.S. The F.S.C.S. after taking a resolution to provide the credit would send it to the District Central Cooperative Bank through the Project Director. The Central Co-operative Bank, then, after sanctioning, would give it back to the CADP for the final disbursement which would be made by F.C.S.C. in the presence of the village organiser.

Thus, loans have generally been delayed.

The problem of delay in course of time had become very acute due to the differences that cropped up between the CADD, Panchayat and District Central Cooperative Credit Bank as is evident from the memoranda submitted by the members of the Gram Panchayat to the President of the Panchayat Samiti (the Chairman of the Project Advisory Board) and the proceeding of the Board ~~on~~ meetings. The members had protested against the rule that in the notified area, the CADD should be involved in all development schemes. They had pointed out that the Panchayat was going their own work or implementing their own programmes and the CADC their own, so the latter should not interfere in the business of the former. There were instances when the CADC and the Panchayat were thinking in terms of same programmes, but whereas the CADD had identified different beneficiaries in their proposals, the Panchayat had identified their own. This had created problems which were reflected in the meetings of the Project Advisory Board.

There were problems between the CADD and F.S.C.S. and the Central Cooperative Credit Bank about the disbursement, repayment of loans and the nature of the schemes involved. Thus, in 1984, about 15 beneficiaries' loans were not disbursed by the CADC and F.S.C.S. even after they were sanctioned by the Central Cooperative Bank by withholding no-objection certificate. Anyone within the notified area, applying for the credit to

agencies other than the CADP, has to produce no-objection certificate from the Project Officials.

The Project Advisory Board was entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining coordination among agencies and panchayats. But in the Kalimpong Project, the attendance of its members in the meeting has not been good. In spite of the circulars from head office and by the Chief Secretary to all departmental officers to attend the meetings, the officers were reluctant to attend the meetings and would be present only if pressurised by the subdivisional officer.

e. Communication : The work of the Corporation both at the headquarter level as well as at the Project level involves close contact and understanding with a large number of organisation, departments and agencies. Thus a great deal of stress is laid on informal contacts with all who are involved. Therefore, informal methods of communication are also accepted openly by the Corporation because it is felt that circulars sent from head office "either do not reach in time and even if these do, a local officer reluctant to follow the instruction can always find enough loose ends in order to give an interpretation which differs from that intended by his head office."¹⁴⁰ Such circulars are no substitute for understanding at the personal level with officers of other agencies. Thus, face-to-face dialogue and thrashing of issues is important which are often ignored in favour of detailed and often meaningless notings on files, rules and procedures. It is good that CADP has

been one organisation that has formally accepted informal methods of communication as important communication channels. Unfortunately, at the Project level in Kalimpong I, as are evident from our discussion on Coordination, decentralisation and participation, rigidity in procedures and rules is still maintained predominantly. That means, the formal methods of communication is still followed widely like any other government department in which correspondence is the main method of communication.

The communication gap with the rural people is evident from the failure of HYV programme in which CAPP had decided to go along with the Plan without being aware of its implications. The C1-HYV paddy and HYV Maize programme in Bongbusty as illustrated previously (while discussing participation) failed totally due to the communication gap between the various departments and with the local people.

f. Supervision : The overall coordination and supervision of the Project is done by the 'Adopter' at the head office. At the Project level, the Project Director is the Chief Coordinator and supervisor. The effective vertical linkages and coordination facilitates the effective supervision with the Project. The close link and contact between the Project Director and a small number (five) of Junior Technical Officers and (seven) village Organisers donot create much of the problem for supervision over the staff by the Project Director. As a captain of the team, the Project Director leads the team by providing necessary leadership, dissemination of

knowledge and guidance for enhancing the efficiency of the organisation. The Project Director does all these by organising 'weekly meetings' of the village organisers in which free and frank discussions take place. The assessment of the work done is made in these meetings. The 'Monthly Staff Conference' is also organised where the Project Director, his Deputy, Junior Technical Officers and Village Organisers participate.

But, so far as the supervision of the sanctioned schemes to the individual villagers or a group of villagers is concerned, the Project faces some difficulties. A major constraint in this regard is the shortage of the village organisers. One village organiser is given the responsibility of supervising a mouza or a khasmahal which consists of many villages. Considering the hilly terrain, climate and topography, a mouza or a khasmahal for a village organiser will be too big an area to cover and maintain his schedule and fulfil a wide gamut of his responsibilities. Therefore, he has not been able to visit a particular area frequently as is required for effective supervision, guidance and control. The Project Director himself has reported, that, before posting a person in Kalimpong Project, "there should be careful consideration in selection, since the person concerned has to work in a climate, topography and language which is quite different than any other part of West Bengal. . . . moreover treatment of different programmes had also to be different than any other projects. For all practical purposes a person should be physically fit and mentally alert."¹⁴¹ Such remark from the Project Director

stem from the tendency of the Headquarter to appoint persons from the plains and the urban background who donot have the inclination to work in the rural sector not to speak of the remote villages of the hill areas.

IV. PLANS AND PROGRAMMES

The main source of the fund and schemes of the CACP-Kalimpong-1 is the West Bengal Comprehensive Area Development Corporation. It also started receiving funds and schemes from the Hill Area Development Council from 1980 and from the Darjeeling District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) from 1982. The Farmer Service Cooperative Society (F.S.C.S.) associated with the CACP has also taken over the responsibility of granting short-term and medium term loans. The D.R.D.A. subsidy is also provided on loans which are available on the following :

(i) goatry, (ii) milching cow, (iii) Bullocks, (iv) piggery (v) Jhora Protection, (vi) Sericulture, (vii) Poultry, (viii) Land reclamation and (ix) orange orchards. The Short-term loans are available for crops like (i) vegetable seeds, (ii) cauliflower seeds, (iii) ginger and (iv) paddy. The CACP-Kalimpong has been implementing a wide variety of programmes such as,

(i) agriculture including horticulture, cash crops like ginger, black pepper, fruit orchards, high yielding variety programme on paddy, maize vegetables, seed production, medicinal plants and spices etc.

- (ii) comprehensive watershed management programme like jhora protection
- (iii) animal husbandry including improvement of breeds
- (iv) irrigation
- (v) soil Conservation, (a) bench-terracing
(b) jhora Protection
- (vi) drinking water supply
- (vii) Rural Housing
- (viii) Rural link roads
- (ix) small scale industries - (a) Wool knitting
(b) Oil Ghani.
- (x) Consumer stores and service centres
- (xi) adult education and also UNICEF Programme for women and children including non-formal education
- (xii) Community gola, to provide grain and other basic needs during lean season.

The amount of expenditure by the CADP on these schemes rose from 1 lakhs 56 thousand and 6 hundred in 1978 to Rs.19, 20, 399.43 lakhs in 1983. The following Table 5.13 shows the schemewise expenditure of the CADP, Kalimpong.

Table 5.13

Schemewise statement of expenditure of the CADP-1, Kalimpong 1978-83 (Rs. in thousands)

| S1. No. | Scheme | 1978-79 | 1979-80 | 1980-81 | 1981-82 | 1982-83 |
|---------|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| 1. | Administrative Contingency & Miscellaneous | 1,07,600.00 | 1,32,609.00 | 2,27,000.00 | 2,41,000.00 | 4,63,569.00 |
| 2. | Agriculture including storage and pesticides | 42,500.00 | 55,000.00 | 1,85,240.00 | 7,37,064.00 | 32,574.18 |
| 3. | Animal Husbandry | - | - | - | 53,053.00 | 30,200.00 |
| 4. | Training | 500.00 | 1,770.00 | 3,240.00 | - | - |
| 5. | Special schemes and community Gola | 1,000.00 | 9,000.00 | 5,500.00 | (included in agriculture) | 8,000.00 |
| 6. | Soil Conservation | - | 21,287 | - | 1,41,593.00 | - |
| 7. | Pipe Irrigation | - | 1,17,100.00 | 1,80,250.00 | 2,14,855.00 | 52,282.23 |
| 8. | Tribal Sub Plan | - | 41,000.00 | 91,000.00 | - | - |
| 9. | Basic Needs Programme including health - | - | 6,000.00 | 39,600.00 | - | - |
| 10. | Adoptive Trial | - | 1,000.00 | - | - | - |
| 11. | Ghani Oil | - | - | - | 25,242.00 | - |
| 12. | Drinking Water | - | - | - | 2,37,840.00 | 2,51,639.60 |
| 13. | Hydrums | - | - | - | 30,560.00 | - |
| 14. | Fruit Processing | - | - | - | 99,450.00 | - |
| 15. | Jhora Protection and Augmentation - | - | - | - | - | 3,68,947.00 |
| 16. | UNICEF, Health and Nonformal education - | - | - | - | - | 2,38,888.00 |
| 17. | Link Road | - | - | - | - | 33,300.00 |
| 18. | Ginger Processing & Const. of unit - | - | - | - | - | 2,56,000.00 |
| TOTAL | | 1,56,600.00 | 4,04,766.00 | 7,34,590.00 | 15,91,657.20 | 19,20,399.43 |

Source : Project Director's Report - 1984, CADP, Kalimpong-1.

Note : As all the papers of the CADP-Kalimpong-1 were burnt down by the G.N.L.F. activists during the height of the Gorkhaland Movement, no records are available. The 'Project Director's Report', on which the above table is based has been made, was made available to the researcher by the Chairman of the Project Advisory Board who had resigned from the post by Feb., 1985. That is why, the table presents the statement of expenditure upto 1983.

An analysis of the programme launched by the CADP and the nature of the expenditure incurred by it clearly show that they were adhoc, piecemeal and inconsistent in their approach. The expenditure in each year has been shifted from one item to another without allowing any particular scheme to have a definite impact with the few exceptions. Agriculture is one in which there has been some consistency in expenditure pattern. In 1978-79, a large proportion of Rs.42,500 was spent for it from the total budget of Rs.1,56,600.00. It rose to Rs.55,000 in 1979-80, Rs.185,240 in 1980-81 and to Rs.737,664 in 1981-82 but declined to Rs.32,574.18 in 1982-83. The special schemes on community gola was provided Rs.1,000 in 1978-79 which increased in 1979-80 to Rs.9,000 but subsequently declined to Rs.5,500 in 1980-81 and 8,000 in 1982-83. These two items had only been provided fund in 1978-79 administrative and miscellaneous expenditure was as high as Rs.1,07,600.00 in that year. From 1979-80, there has been quantitative increase in the programme of the Project and many new programmes were added. This may perhaps explain the subsequent decline in expenditure on agriculture and community gola. In 1979-80 soil conservation received Rs.21,287, pipe irrigation, Rs.1,17,100, basic needs programme, Rs.6,000, adoptive trial, Rs.1,000 and Tribal sub-plan Rs.41,000. Among them, soil conservation did not get any allocation in 1980-81 and got Rs.1,41,593 in 1981-82 and again none in 1982-83. The tribal subplan was provided Rs.91,000 again in 1980-81, but subsequently it has received none. Similarly,

basic needs programme, after being initiated in 1979-80, received Rs.39,000 compared to previous year's Rs.6,000 but subsequently none in the following years. The adaptive trial was introduced with Rs.1000 in 1978-79 and was withdrawn from the following years. Certain new schemes have been introduced from 1981-82 such as ghani oil, drinking water, and fruit processing. But fruit processing after receiving Rs.99,450 in that year suddenly was not provided any fund in the following years. The scheme on Ghani oil also got Rs.25,242 in 1981-82 and none afterwards. Only the drinking water scheme introduced in the year 1981-82 was continued and the expenditure had risen on it consistently from Rs.2,37,840 in 1980-81 to Rs.252,639.60 in 1982-83. A sum of Rs.368,947 was spent on jhora protection, Rs.256,000.00 on ginger processing and construction of unit and Rs.33,300.00 on link road in 1982-83. This year the amount on agriculture has declined as mentioned previously. Even then, Jhora protection is related to the agriculture because this protects the terraces of the field.

VI. Conclusion : The approach and the principles of the West Bengal Comprehensive Area Development Corporation are in tune with the recent emphasis on the decentralised participatory management of rural development. It sought to be adaptive and flexible so as to develop informal (not necessarily avoiding formal) rapport with the other agencies involved in rural development for effective coordination. The corporation also

accepts the leadership role of the Panchayat on principle. Unfortunately, the experience of Kalimpong-1 Project show that it has not been able to practice the principles of the Corporation. It has not been able to do away with departmentalistic methods and mentality. It follows detailed procedures in its dealing with the beneficiaries. It emphasizes on achieving physical targets and qualitative aspects are not seriously taken into considerations. As our illustration on the H.Y.V. programmes by the Project reveal that it has not been able to communicate effectively with rural populace and involve them in its planning. It has not been able to prepare its plans on the basis of the felt needs which is one of its main objectives.

However, the CADP had some success in its wool knitting programme. But the problem with this programme had been that the main beneficiaries were the women of the middle income group from the Kalimpong town and not the rural poor from the rural areas. It is to be noted that identification with rural poor is one of main objectives of the West Bengal Comprehensive Area Development Corporation.

I. COOPERATIVE CREDIT ORGANISATION - DARJEELING DISTRICT

CENTRAL CO-OPERATIVE BANK LIMITED

I. Introduction : One of the main constraints on the development of small farmer agriculture in India is the lack of access to cheap institutional credit. Thus, credit cooperative movement in India was introduced in 1904 primarily as a welfare measure

with the aim of providing funds to small and marginal farmers at low interest rates to reduce their dependence on powerful local money-lenders. The Cooperative Credit Societies Act of 1904 provided for the formation of credit societies, particularly for furtherance of agricultural credit. The Act of 1912 gave legal protection to the credit societies. Before independence, the Cooperative movement was more or less restricted to agricultural credit which was its primary concern.¹³⁸

The founders of Planning in India after Independence conceived cooperatives as instruments of economic development of the disadvantaged, particularly in the rural areas. But no qualitative changes in the institutional structure of the Cooperative societies were made as the immediate objectives were of rehabilitation and consolidation.¹³⁹ However, in view of the problems of small and marginal farmers and their exploitation by money lenders who took exorbitant interest rates the Rural Credit Survey Committee was appointed. The Committee published its report in 1954, which noted that "the problem is not one of reorganisation of cooperative credit as of the creation of new condition in which it can operate effectively and for the benefit of weak."¹⁴⁰ It further recommended that the main causes of the limited progress of the movement was that the movement did not, especially in initial stages, take the life of the individual as a whole. The Second Five Year Plan took into account the recommendation of the Rural Credit Survey Committee which suggested an integrated approach to the problem of rural

cooperation with adequate state support and protection. Again, the National Development Council in 1958 deliberated on the issue, and, on the basis of the decision arrived at, the State Governments were given broad indication of the policy to be followed in respect of the development of cooperatives.

One of the main features of the policy was that the primary function of the village cooperatives will be the provision of short and medium term credit supply of agricultural and other production requirements and the marketing of agricultural produce. The coordination between the Panchayats and Cooperatives was also emphasized. In terms of this policy, the cooperatives should be organised on the basis of the village community as the primary unit.

With the greater accent on increasing the food production during the 1960s, increasing emphasis has been placed on the cooperatives as providers of production credit. Therefore, the 'crop loan system' was designed to strengthen official supervision over the disbursement and recovery of loans and to encourage borrowers to use them productively.¹⁴¹ Even then, the role of Cooperative credit societies has remained as the providers of the cheap credit.

II. The Cooperative Movement in West Bengal : The Cooperative movement in West Bengal has not been as successful as in some of the other Indian States such as Gujarat, Maharashtra, Punjab and Tamil Nadu.¹⁴² As in the case of those states where cooperative movement is yet to be a great success, one of the main problems

of the cooperative credit institution in West Bengal is the heavy overdue of cooperative credit. The Study Team on Overdues of Cooperative Credit Institutions, appointed by the Reserve Bank of India in 1972, which published its Report in 1974, stated that the "lack of will and discipline among the cultivators to repay loans was the principal factor responsible for the prevalence of overdues in cooperatives. Defective lending policy pursued by cooperatives, the apathy of management in taking quick action against recalcitrant members, and absence of favourable climate, were other contributory factors."¹⁴³ The Report further drew the attention to the intervention of external forces such as loan waivers, concessions in various forms towards repayment of principal, and payment of interest, which have affected the recovery-performance of these institutions. Amongst the other problems, related to the working of these institutions, the limited credit-flow to the needy rural people is one. The flow of credit to the tenants, sharecroppers, landless agricultural labourers and rural artisans is about 3 to 5% only.¹⁴⁴ The benefits of the cooperative credit societies have also been uneven in different states. For instance, in West Bengal, as also in U.P., Orissa, Bihar and Assam, the farmers are getting much less credit facilities than those farmers in Gujrat, Punjab, Haryana and Tamil Nadu.¹⁴⁵

Realising these weaknesses of the cooperative movement, considerable attention was given to rebuild the cooperative credit

societies. Even then, "the primary credit society has continued to remain the weakest link in the entire cooperative structure."¹⁴⁶

In West Bengal, some attempts were made to revamp the cooperative institutions and the West Bengal Cooperative Societies Act 1973 was passed. But the Act was not seriously applied by the then Congress Government. It was only after the Left Front Government came to power in 1977 that serious attention was given to revamp these bodies. However, in the process, the Panchayat got the first priority and the steps to revamp cooperatives were taken only in the mid-1980s. In 1983, the West Bengal Cooperative Societies Act was passed which repealed the Act of 1973. Subsequently, in 1987, the West Bengal Cooperative Societies Rules were formulated to strengthen the cooperative societies. One of the main features of the Act of 1983 was that it sought to involve the Panchayat at different levels in the cooperative movement.

The main objectives of this Act were (i) to give a healthy impetus and a sense of purpose for the cooperative movement in West Bengal, (ii) to promote thrift, self-help and mutual aid amongst people with needs and interests in common, (iii) to provide for clean, devoted and efficient management relevant to the needs of, and infuse a new life into, the cooperative societies in West Bengal, (iv) to diversify their activities, put them on sound financial footing, and ensure democratic functioning, (v) to generate employment, (vi) to increase production in all sectors of life including

agriculture and industry, (vii) to bring about economic and social regeneration including better and happier condition of living for the weaker sections of the community; and (viii) to bring them within the fold of the cooperative movement. ¹⁴⁷

III. Organisation of the Cooperative Credit in the Hill Areas of Darjeeling District : At present, a three-tier federal structure of cooperative credit societies operate in West Bengal as in the rest of the country. The State Cooperative Bank, West Bengal, is at the apex. It finances and controls the District Central Cooperative Banks below it in the federal structure. It serves as a link between the NABARD (previously the Reserve Bank of India) and the District Cooperative Central Banks and Primary Agricultural Cooperative Credit Societies. The State Cooperative Bank obtains its working fund from its own share capital and reserves, deposits from the general public, and most importantly, loans and advances from the NABARD.

The State Cooperative Bank holds its general meetings by convoking representatives called 'delegates' on the following basis :

- "(i) One delegate for every Central Bank and one delegate from the area of operation of each Cooperative Central Bank (if any) amalgamated with the State Cooperative Bank in terms of the scheme drawn by the State Government;
- (ii) one delegate for every member apex society;
- (iii) one delegate for every category of other member societies provided that where the number in category exceeds 50, there shall be one delegate for 50 or fraction thereof, and
- (iv)

(iv) one representative of the State Government. ¹⁴⁸

The Board of Directors are elected in such meeting. The directors elect a Chairman for themselves. Below the State Cooperative Bank are the District Central Cooperative Banks which generally function at the district level. The Organisation of the cooperative banks at the district and the primary credit societies all over West Bengal is uniform. Thus, we intend now to turn our attention to the Darjeeling District Central Cooperative Bank (DDCCB) and its affiliated Primary Agriculture Credit Societies (PACS). The analysis of these societies in the Darjeeling district will also highlight their general nature and working in West Bengal as a whole.

The DDCCB functions at the district level, and at present, 65 PACS are affiliated with it. It is headed by a Chairman who is assisted by the Chief Executive Officer deputed from the State Government. The Board of Directors have full control over the administration and business of the society. They are elected by the delegates sent in the General meeting by the PACS.

The following Table 5.14 exhibits the organisation of cooperative credit in the hill areas of Darjeeling.

a. Linkages : The organisation of the Cooperative credit, as the Table 5.14 shows, has strong and effective vertical linkages. The tiers in the federal structure of the cooperative credit societies or banks have been organically linked with one another. The 65 Primary Agricultural credit societies at the village level are the

Table 5.1

Organisation of Cooperative Credit - District Central Cooperative Bank(DCCB) and affiliated Primary Agricultural Credit Societies in the Hill Areas of the Darjeeling District. The pattern is similar to that of other parts of the State

| | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| Registrar of State Cooperative Societies, West Bengal (Supervision and Control) | NABARD (Providing the overall leadership at the national level) | | |
| Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies Darjeeling : (Supervision and Control) | West Bengal State Cooperative Bank | | |
| | Darjeeling District Central Cooperative Bank(DCCCB) | Technical Group for preparing Scale of finance consisting of | |
| | Chairman | i. CEO of DCCB as convenor | |
| | Vice-Chairman | ii. Principal Agricultural officer | |
| | Board of Director's elected by the 'Delegates' representing agricultural and non-agricultural cooperative societies as well as consisting of the Government nominee. | iii. Subdivisional Agricultural Officer | |
| | Chief Executive Officer(CEO) | iv. All Bankers | |
| | Deputy Managers | v. Lead Bank | |
| Cooperative Inspector Supervision at the field level and link with Block Development Office | Account Section | Loan section | vi. Assistant Registrar of Co-operative Societies |
| | Junior Officers | | vii. Progressive Farmers. |
| | Supervisors | | |
| | 4th Grade staff | | |
| | Primary Agricultural Cooperative Credit Society | | |
| | Chairman | | |
| | Vice-Chairman | | |
| | Board of Directors | | |
| *In Kalimpong-I block where comprehensive Area Develop. Pro. is on the Farmer Service Co-op. Society is working. For its orgn. See Table 5. | elected by the members directly or through 'delegates' from a particular area, section, constituency etc. and consisted of nominees by the Government and the Gram Panchayat or Panchayat Samiti | | Panchayat Samiti |
| | Members of the PAC* | | Gram Panchayat |

affiliated members of the Darjeeling District Cooperative Central Bank with headquarter in Kalimpong subdivision. They elect delegates to be sent to the general meeting of the DDCCB. The general meeting of the Central Cooperative Bank is held by inviting all the 'delegates' (representatives) on the following basis :

- "(i) one delegate for every cooperative society affiliated to the bank concerned; (ii) one delegate for every 100 individual members or fraction thereof, where individual persons are enrolled as members; (iv) one representative of the State Government." ¹⁴⁹

The 'delegates' from the PACS as well as from other cooperative societies elect the Board of Directors of the DDCCB. The DDCCB in its part is linked to the State Cooperative Bank and send its 'delegates' in the State Cooperative Bank. The State Cooperative Bank is guided by the policies and leadership of the NABARD at the national level.

The horizontal linkages are established and maintained by linking various agricultural and non-agricultural societies by allowing them to elect their representatives in the Board of Directors. For instance, out of the 12 directors of the Board of DDCCB, six are elected from the Agricultural Societies, three from Non-agricultural Societies and the remaining three from the State Government. There is a 'Technical Group' for preparing 'Scale of Finance' which also horizontally links the DDCCB with the district level and subdivisional level agriculture departments, commercial banks including the Lead Bank, i.e. the Central Bank

of India, and with progressive farmers. The PACS, along with the DDCCB, is linked to the Block Development Office through the Cooperative Inspector who is placed in the Block Office but is linked as Supervisor with the Cooperative Societies. The sanctioning of loan and loan amount for the PACS members needs the approval of the Cooperative Inspector.

At the village level, PACS have been linked to the village level with the Gram Panchayat by making a provision under Section 27 of the West Bengal Cooperative Societies Act, 1983, for nomination by the Gram Panchayat. But after 1985, due to the resignation of all the Panchayat members during the Gorkhaland Movement, no nominee of the Panchayat were there in the 'Board' of the PACS. At present, as the election to these bodies have not been held in the hill areas, the Councillor of DGHC, belonging to a particular village under the PACS, is being nominated.

b. Decentralisation : The Second Five Year Plan enunciated the role of cooperatives as that of providing economic development on democratic lines. This is particularly so, as the Report of the Working Group on Panchayats and Cooperatives has stated that if a socialistic pattern of society has to be realised "a large number of decentralised units in agriculture and industry"¹⁵⁰ are essential.

The development of the Cooperatives has taken place along with the Panchayat Institutions. The Cooperatives have been

conceived as instruments of self-help and mutual help among the poor. The non-exploitative character of cooperatives, voluntary nature of the membership, the principle of one-man one-vote, decentralised decision-making, and self-imposed curbs on profits make them suitable for being an instrument of economic development. They can combine the advantage of private ownership with public good.

The DDCCB and the PACS in Darjeeling, like their counterparts in the rest of Bengal, are registered cooperative bodies with power to acquire, hold and dispose of property to enter contracts, to institute and defend suits and other legal proceedings, and to do all things necessary for the purpose for which it is constituted. They have been provided with a wide range of decision-making powers. All the administrative and policy decisions are taken by the 'Board of Directors'. According to Rule 48 of the West Bengal Cooperative Societies Rules 1987, the 'Board' of a Cooperative Society shall have full control over the administration and the business of the society. In case of any difference between the Board and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) on any affairs of the society, the decision of the Board is final though the C.E.O. may be allowed to record his dissent and may also refer it to the Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies under Rule 55 of 1987 West Bengal Cooperative Societies rules.

However, the decision-making powers of the Cooperative Societies are limited by the following factors;

1. According to Section 29, the Registrar may direct the Board

to call a special meeting of the Cooperative Society to dissolve the 'Board' if he is satisfied that the cooperative society is 'mismanaging its affairs'. The meaning of the expression 'mismanagement' includes 'wilful disobeying or failing to comply with any lawful orders or directions issued by the State Government. Similarly, Section 30 gives the Registrar the power of dissolving the Board and appointing administrator.

ii. The nominees of the Government in the Board keeps a close watch on the activities of the Cooperative Society. As per Rule 60 of the West Bengal Cooperative Societies Rules 1987, the duties of the Government nominee are (i) to attend the meetings of the Board, (ii) to watch that Government policies are implemented; (iii) to register notes of dissent in all matters if he is satisfied that they are not in the interest of the society; (iv) to keep the Registrar and Government apprised of such resolutions, if adopted by the majority, and (v) to register their notes of dissent when the meeting of the Board seeks to pass a resolution contravening any express order of the State Government or any rules of the Act.

iii. The financial dependency of the Cooperative Credit Societies on the State Government and on the apex body to which they are affiliated curbs the autonomy of the societies. At the district level as well as at the village level they have not grown as viable financial institutions. The PACS are absolutely depended on the supply of finance by the DCCB. The DCCB through its

'Technical Group' prepares the 'Scale of Finance' (estimates of cost per acre per crop for a year) and on its basis finances the PACS. At present, about 15 PACS have not been able to receive any finance due to their failure to repay their 40% of the debt. Because, according to the existing rule, those PACS which fail to repay 40% of the loan are not eligible for further borrowing. As has already been pointed out, the huge overdues of the Cooperative societies have been one of the major constraints of the cooperative movement. The DDCCB, on the other hand, depends on the State Cooperative and the State Government for finance. The State Cooperative itself is dependent mostly on the NABARD and then on the State Government. Such financial dependency has centralised the decision-making powers of the cooperatives to a significant extent.

Another major constraint of the Cooperative Credit societies to become an effective decentralised economic and administrative unit is the poor organisational development. They lack trained manpower. In case of the DDCCB and the PACS as well, it was found that not a single functionary has been sent to any training programme during the last 15 years. No training camps or refresher courses have been organised. Unless the organisational capacity is enhanced, how can one expect these societies to be effective and efficient? Even the lack of trained manpower makes them dependent on the higher bodies and the State Government.

The interplay of these different factors has encouraged a dependency culture. Thus, even for minor problems, the

Cooperative societies look to the Government or their apex bodies for help and support. Again, the provisions of the Act of 1983 and Rules of 1987 make the Cooperatives to comply with the Government Order and policies, making nonsense of the concept of self-help and mutual help and economic democracy.

c. Participation : The concept of participation in the context of the cooperative credit societies takes three forms -

(i) Participation of the people, (ii) participation of the official functionaries and (iii) participation of the lower-level cooperative societies in the activities of apex societies.

At the village level, in the PACS, a villager can become member by paying a nominal admission fee of 1/- and Rs.10/- as share. The members have the powers to elect the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors elect a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman from amongst themselves who are accountable to the Board. In case of a PAC with the number of members exceeding 1500, the members elect the delegates areawise, sectionwise or constituencywise. The 'delegates' can attend the general meeting of the Society where they will elect the Board of Directors.

The participation of the people at the DDCCB level is ensured through the participation of the 'delegates' from the PACS and other non-agricultural societies who participate in the general meeting of the DDCCB. The major policy decisions are taken in such meeting and the Board of Directors are also elected. So far as the DDCCB is concerned, most of the elected 'delegates'

from different societies used to attend the general meeting. They also showed keen interest in the activities of the DCCB and were articulate.¹⁵¹ But at the PACS level, the attendance of the members in the general meeting was very low.¹⁵² The 'Directors' and the Chairmen have to go from house to house to persuade members to attend the meeting. The members show interest only for receiving the loan. Their participation, thus, was limited to taking loans, and they did not show any interest in other activities and difficulties faced by the PACS. This low level of awareness, the lack of cooperative sense and zeal, have been the major stumbling blocks of the cooperative movement in the hill areas.

Unlike, many other rural organisations, one good thing about the working of the Cooperative society is that it allows the participation of the administrative functionaries in policy-decisions. The Act of 1983 allows the employees to elect and send one of their representatives in the 'Board' of the society as Director, if the total number of the employees is not less than ten.¹⁵³ Again, Section 27(4) of the 1983 allows the Chief Executive Officer to be the ex-officio member of the Board if he is paid by the Society from its own fund. Both the conditions being present in the DDCCB, the representatives of the employees have been included in the Board. The DDCCB also allows its employees to take 'housing loan' which is deducted from their salary. This has also been one of the incentives for the employees to take keen interest in the activities of the DDCCB.

d. Coordination : The strong vertical linkages facilitate strong and effective vertical coordination of the structures of the cooperative institutions. So far as the intra-institutional vertical coordination is concerned, within the DCCB (also within the PACS), the problem of 'dual command' has been resolved, though the society depends to a significant extent on the deputed officials of the State Government. The overall supervising and coordinating powers are assigned to the 'Board' which exercises these through the Chairman. The Chief Executive Officer who is deputed from the Government has to consult and seek the approval of the Board for manning administrative decisions. Even for the job assignment, transfer of desks, and other decisions related to the employees the approval of the Board is needed.

Though the inter-institutional vertical linkages between different layers of cooperative credit structure are well established, in practice, some problems of vertical coordination have cropped up. For example, the DDCCB on many occasions suffered due to the delay of 'finance' or 'approval' of its programmes by the State Cooperative Bank. As the DDCCB in the hill areas provides 'crop credit loan' to PACS' member, the non-availability of finance in time had affected the working of the PACS. It was pointed by the Chief Executive Officer that inspite of being informed about the variations in the cropping seasons (pattern also) between the hills and the plains, the State Cooperative Bank has failed to appreciate the problems and has made a uniform schedule of releasing agricultural loans to the central cooperative banks. This has delayed the

distribution of crop loan to the farmers in the hill areas where agricultural season starts early as the rainy season also starts earlier.

But the 'delayed credit' was not only due to the lack of coordination between the State Cooperative Bank and the DDCCB. It had a lot to do with the poor horizontal coordination between the various agencies involved in the ~~prograx~~ process. The DDCCB has formally well-established horizontal linkages with the block office, district and subdivisional level agriculture departments, commercial banks and the comprehensive Area Development Projects through its 'Technical Group' that prepares the 'Scale of Finance' for the PACS. But due to the lack of cooperation and proper coordination between these linked elements, often, the scale of Finance had not been prepared in time. The flow of credit takes place only after this is prepared and it has to be prepared on an annual basis in view of the fluctuating costs. The delay in preparing the 'Scale of Finance' has also affected the timely distribution of credit.

There were instances when even after the preparation of the 'Scale of Finance', the credit flow has not been smooth. This was due to the delay in approving the 'credit limit' which specifies the maximum credit a farmer can receive. It involves the PACS, the Cooperative Inspector of the Block Office and Supervisor of the DDCCB. The lack of coordination or even the carelessness of these elements involved in sanctioning credit

has resulted in the 'delayed credit'.

In the areas under the jurisdiction of the comprehensive Area Development Project, Kalimpong 1, the farmers have suffered due to the conflict between the DDCCB and the Farmer Service Cooperative Society. Even when all the procedures were completed, the DDCCB did not release fund to the Farmer Service Cooperative Society in 1983.¹⁵⁴

e. Communication : The importance of communication in the Cooperative Credit Organisation which provides agricultural credit is immense. If the credit is not received in time by the farmers, the financial assistance becomes meaningless. The 'crop loan system' is geared to meet the seasonal needs of the farmers for cultivating a particular crop in a particular season. So far as the DDCCB is concerned, at the district level, there is no serious communication problem. The 'delegates', the Board of Directors and the Senior Officers are well-articulated and well-informed. They rely heavily on informal methods and face-to-face contact and make frequent visits to the Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies in Darjeeling and in the headquarter of the State Cooperative Bank, Calcutta. But serious communication problems crop up at the PACS level. The members from the villages have not been in close contact with the DDCCB and wholly relied on the information provided to them by the 'Board' or their 'delegates' in the PACS. The members have been reluctant to attend the

'general meeting' of PACS and thus deprived themselves of being informed and being aware of its activities. The directors of the Board and the 'delegates' are not fulltimers, and are not in a position to inform and guide the members always on account of their unavoidable preoccupations elsewhere, in home or in their professions. But, for the members, the only source of communication is the 'delegates' and 'directors'. There is a serious communication-gap at the PACS level due to these reasons. A formal communication machinery is highly needed at this level. It has been pointed out that the 'delegates' and 'directors' have to go from house to house to induce the members to attend the general meeting.

The 'communication' problems have also occurred between the DCCB and the PACS. The farmers need credit mostly during the agricultural seasons, which generally start from early June when the rainy season starts. But this is a period when communication becomes most difficult due to heavy rains and in view of the difficult hilly terrain. Heavy landslides occur as the rainy seasons reaches its peak which is also the main agricultural season for paddy and other crops. For these reasons, postal or the physical (person to person) contact between the DCCB and the PACS become less and less. If the decisions are taken before the rainy season starts and schedules are fixed, these problems are reduced. But, as we have seen, from our discussion on coordination, maintaining the schedules fixed beforehand is not always possible. Hence, not only did delay occur in providing

credit but many farmers had been left out of the credit programme. Thus, poor communication has been one of the major obstacles in spreading the cooperative movement in the hill areas.

f. Supervision : The Chairman, or, in his absence, the Vice-Chairman, has the full control over the administration and business of the society. He supervises the functions of the society on behalf of the Board. He also has the power to call for any record of the society or any report from the Chief Executive Officer or the Secretary to satisfy himself that the affairs of the society are being managed in accordance with the resolutions of the Board. This has to be done by the Chairman without contravening the decisions taken in the meeting. Thus, the ultimate supervisory powers in the DDCCB (also of PACS) rest in the hands of an elected Chairman who is accountable to the Board. He is regarded as the captain of the team and the leader.

With regard to the inter-institutional supervision, the State Cooperative Bank provide the overall guidance and the leadership. The objective is to disseminate information and knowledge to the Central Cooperative Banks so that their capability is enhanced. The DDCCB, is therefore, bound by the general directives and the policies of the State Cooperative Bank. The DDCCB supervises and guides the 65 PACS in the hill areas. But supervision at this level has not been developed well in the sense of dissemination of information and knowledge for improving the capacity of the supervised. It looks like a control device.

The Cooperative Inspector and Supervisory staff of the DDCCB are placed in headquarter and rarely go to the field. The members of even the PACS officials have to come to the headquarter office for obtaining their approval of the credit limit. They go to the village on the day of 'credit disbursement' fixed beforehand in consultation with PACS. They are treated as 'big boss' with food and beverages and often provided with the 'percentage'(cash) out of the disbursed amount so that the 'credit limit' and the 'credit' are approved in time.

Besides these supervisory measures and above all of them, it is the State Government which directs and controls the activities of the cooperative societies in general. The Registrar of the Cooperative Societies has been empowered to dissolve the Board and reconstitute it under Section 29 and 30 of the West Bengal Cooperative Societies Act, 1983, if he is satisfied that the Board is not working according to the policies of the Government and mismanaging the affairs of the society. The State Government as one of the shareholders nominates one person in the 'Board' of the Society. The nominee of the Government has to see that the Cooperative Society follows the Government institutions, directives and policies and note his dissent in the meeting. These functions are performed by a nominee under Rule 60 of the West Bengal Cooperative Societies Rules 1987. His job also is to apprise the Government about the activities of the Government. Section 49 of the Act of 1983 provides that the State Government can issue directives to any cooperative society to modify its policies in

the manner specified in such directives or to take such other action as the State Government may consider necessary or expedient in the interest of the society or a class of cooperative societies or of the cooperative movement in general.

It is clearly discernible from the foregoing analysis that such control measures of the Government have converted the cooperative into a government department with all the rigidities and limitation associated with such a government department. They have officialised the movement and the control of the bureaucracy has been increasing. This is not to say that government guidance and leadership is not needed, but making the cooperatives perpetually dependent and subservient to it has had adverse impact on the cooperative movement whose objective is self-help, mutual help, and economic democracy.

IV. FUNCTIONS OF THE DDCCB

The main functions of the DDCCB in the hill areas have been to provide cheap credit to the poor farmers through the PACS for their requirement in agricultural and allied activities. It has also been providing credit to non-agricultural cooperative societies, such as transport cooperative society, engineering cooperative society and marketing cooperative society which are its members. The interest rates taken on credit to these non-agricultural societies are higher than the PACS. The idea behind providing credit to these non-agricultural societies was that the profit earned could be utilised for providing cheap

credit to the farmers. In this section, it is intended to deal with the functions DDCCBS relating to the provision of credit for agricultural and allied activities which have a direct bearing on rural development.

Before taking up this exercise, it would be better to point out some difficulties faced during the collection of data from DDCCB. Despite frequent visits to the DDCCB headquarter and requests made to the Chief Executive Officer (C.E.O.), official records were not made available. Secondly, the annual service credit plan or annual reports had not been published by the DDCCB till 1990. However, the DDCCB started preparing the Service plan since 1991 which had been taken care of in this analysis. Under the circumstances, one had to rely on the official records which were not made available by the C.E.O. despite his promises and assurances. A senior staff who had seen the researcher going there offered his help out of sympathy and supplied some records and the copy of the Service Plans for 1991-92 and 1992-93. The previous records were not tracable, and he could get hold of the proposed allocation of 1984-85. It was told that most of the records of the previous years were under the custody of the Chief Executive Officer.

The following Table 5.15 shows the statement of proposed credit to different sectors during 1984-85, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Table 5.15

Rs.in thousands

| Sl. No. | Item | YEAR Credit provided | | |
|---------|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------|---------|
| | | 1984-85 | 1991-92 | 1992-93 |
| 1.1 | Zinger | 420 | 3825 | 9625 |
| 1.2 | Potato | 375 | 1115 | 6758 |
| 1.3 | Cardamom | 180 | 520 | - |
| 1.4 | Cauliflower & Cabbage | 80 | 110 | - |
| 1.5 | Orange Orchard | 49 | 50 | - |
| 2.1 | Cattle Purchase | 606 | 1920 | 11732 |
| 2.2 | Piggery | 46 | 210 | 2046 |
| 2.3 | Poultry | 35 | 180 | - |
| 2.4 | Fishery | 30 | 186 | 4060 |
| 2.5 | Sericulture | 82 | 120 | - |
| 2.6 | Floriculture | - | 120 | - |
| 3.1 | Land reclamation | 34 | - | - |
| 4.1 | Blacksmithy | 7 | - | - |
| 5.1 | Grinding machine | 4 | - | - |
| 6.1 | IRDP, Knitting machine | - | 25 | - |
| 7.1 | Biogas | 0.25 | 9 | - |

Source : For 1991-92, 1992-93 - Service Area Credit Plan, DDCCB.

For 1984-85 - Budgetary Records from the file of DDCCB.

From the table, it is evident that the main thrust of the DDCCB had been providing cheap credit on crops like zinger and potato. The DDCCB has shown consistency in credit allocation to these crops. The increase has been qualitative in the sense that special attention is being given to these crops consistently. The amount provided for zinger was Rs.420 thousand in 1984-85 which rose to Rs.3285 thousands in 1991-92. The proposed amount for 1992-93 is Rs.9625. Similar consistency and increase in credit allocation is found in case of potato. The proposed credit for it has risen to Rs.6758 thousands in 1992-93 from the spent Rs.1115 in 1991-92 which was only Rs.375 in 1984-85.

It may be mentioned here in this context that these are some of the main crops grown in the hill areas. The climate and soil are favourable to these crops. Thus, the emphasis of the DDCCB on these crops is appreciable. Unfortunately, as the Table 5.15 shows, the DDCCB has ignored two other important horticultural items. The first is 'orange' on which only Rs.0.49 thousand in 1984-85 and Rs.50 thousands in 1991-92 was provided and it did not receive any allocation in 1992-93. Secondly, 'cardamom' which also is a cash crop for the hill farmers, has been ignored. It also does not find place in 1992-93, after receiving Rs.180 thousand in 1984-85 and Rs.520 in 1991-92. Similarly, vegetable crops like cauliflower and cabbage have been taken out of the Service Plan in 1992-93, though Rs.80 thousand in 1984-85 and Rs.110 in 1991-92 had been allocated for these crops.

The other major areas in which the DDCCB has been consistently allocating credit are cattle purchasing, piggery and fishery. From Rs.606 thousands in 1984-85, the credit provided for cattle purchasing has risen to Rs.1920 thousands in 1991-92 with a further increase in credit proposal in 1992-93 to Rs.11732 thousands. In 1984-85, the credit provided to piggery was Rs.46 thousands which rose to Rs.210 thousand in 1991-92. The proposed credit on piggery has increased by leaps and bounds to Rs.2046 in 1992-93. The importance of fishery now is being increasingly realised in the hill areas. This is also reflected in the DDCCB allocation of credit. The allocated credit for fishery was only Rs.30 thousand in 1984-85 which has geometrically increased in 1991-92 to Rs.186 thousands. In 1992-93, the credit proposed for fishery was a staggering amount of Rs.4060 thousand compared to the previous years. The other items such as sericulture and floriculture which are also important means of subsidiary incomes for the farmers had been taken out of the credit plan in 1992-93, though they were allocated credit till 1991-92. Similarly, the credit provision had been taken out for land reclamation, black smithy, grinding and knitting machine and biogas etc. in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

From the above analysis, it appears that the DDCCB has decided to focus mainly on selected items such as ginger and potato among the crops and cattle purchasing, piggery and fishery. The positive sign is that the production of ginger and potato as well as milk have been increasing consistently since the last few years. 155

V. Problem of Loan Recovery : Though the Cooperative institutions have expanded in the hill areas of Darjeeling in the last two decades to cover practically all sectors of the economy, the cooperative credit sector mainly has proved to be more popular in the hill areas since the 1980s, which is evident from the 60 to 70 per cent of recovery of loan by 1983-84.¹⁵⁶ This was the result of the revitalization programme initiated in the late seventies to rescue the DCCB which feared liquidation in 1971.¹⁵⁷ The loan recovery was not a serious problem before the Gorkhaland agitation started. The loan recovery of the DDCCB was severely affected due to the call of the Gorkha National Liberation Front to the farmers for 'Non-payment of the Loans'. Since 1985, as the Gorkhaland Movement got stronger, the loan recovery declined. At one stage, the DCCB again reached a situation in which it was on the verge of liquidation. But the 'loan waiver' by the V.P.Singh Government provided relief to the DDCCB to the tune of Rs.2.77 crores. The State Government and the State Cooperative Bank also took sympathetic stand on the DDCCB in view of the abnormal political situation. By 1989, the decision of revitalizing the DDCCB was taken and the provision of financing it was made despite its failure to repay 40% of its borrowing. Thus, by March 1992, the DDCCB was able to provide Rs.21.50 lakhs short term loan and Rs.77.25 lakhs medium term loan to the members. Out of these loans, only Rs.2.47 crores have been recovered by November, 1992 against the target of at least recovering 40% of the loan.

One thing that has to be borne in mind is that the problem of loan recovery is not only in case of agricultural loans. The problem, according to the Chairman of the DDCCB, is more acute in case of non-agricultural loans on Transport and Engineering sectors. The non-recovery from these sectors according to the Chairman amounts to crores of rupees. But the Chairman refused to divulge the exact amount involved. Therefore, it is futile to blame the 'defaulter poor' farmers only who failed to repay the loan. Their non-recovery amount as per the Chairman is far less than by the non-agriculturalists such as transporters (Buses and Taxi owners) and Engineers (Contractors). In the context, it may be pointed out here that various studies also have shown that the large farmers have been the 'worst defaulters'.¹⁵⁸

VI. Conclusion : Cooperative Credit Organisations have been operating more or less successfully in the hill areas despite a few snags and problems such as 'delayed credit' and 'leakage' in the form of percentage (cash) to be given to the officials by the farmers from the loan amount. But such leakage has not been a large scale phenomenon as has been evident from the interviews with many social workers. Nevertheless, these problems could have been solved as the awareness of the people on the Cooperative activities grow. But at a time when these societies were showing some signs of stabilizing themselves during early 1980s, the Gorkhaland agitation started which gave the call for 'Non-payment of the Loan'. This has affected the working of the DDCCB. However,

the recent agreements between the Gorkha National Liberation Front and the State Government may gradually help the DCCB to compensate whatever it has lost in the past.

J. EVALUATION

Development administration in the hill areas has passed through four distinct phases.

I. The Period between 1950-72 - With the passing of the Constitution Act of 1950 the special administrative arrangements and the special privileges of the District Magistrates was abolished. Since the late fifties, as in other parts of West Bengal, a four tier system of Panchayati Raj was established. In this period, the District Central Cooperative Credit Bank was also established along with the Small Farmer Development Agency in 1969.

But the four-tier Panchayati Raj never was allowed to function effectively. They were kept in a moribund State. This period saw the problem of dual command in the district and the block level administration. The DDCCB nearly was liquidated in 1971 due to its failures to recover the loan and heavy overdues. There was problem of Coordination between the S.F.D.A. and DDCCB.

II. The Period between 1972-78 - This phase was very crucial as it saw the establishment of Hill Development Council in 1972 which was made statutory by the Hill Areas Development Council Act

1976. A Hill Affairs Branch Secretariat was also formed. The creation of these agencies was in tune with the developments at the national level when special sub-Hill Area plan was conceived by the Planning Commission particularly from the Fifth Five Year Plan. These agencies sought to fulfil the organisational gap at the district level and fulfil the hillmen's demand for autonomy. They were given the powers of coordinating and supervising the hill plans.

III. The Period between 1978-88 - By 1978, the three-tier Panchayati Raj was introduced by the Left Front Government. But the Hill Development Council and the Hill Affairs Branch Secretariat were not dissolved. This aggravated the already existing problems of coordination in the district level administration. Though, this problem was settled in the rest of West Bengal by making the Zilla Parishad, the leader and the Chief Coordinator of the development administration, the continuation of the Hill Development Council with nominated members and overlapping functions with the Zilla Parishad created conflict between the elected and the nominated members.

In this period, the District Rural Development Agency was established by merging the erstwhile SFDA and MFDA in 1981. As the three-tier Panchayati Raj was revitalized by this time, they were involved in its working. The Comprehensive Area Development Project, Kalimpong-I was also established in this period. This organisation also had to work in collaboration with the Panchayat.

Thus, this was the period, which witnessed the proliferation of the agencies at the district level and below. As our analysis of these organisations had shown, this has created problems of coordination and control. The major irritant in the process of decentralising development administration in the hill areas was the problem of coordination and conflict between the Zilla Parishad and the Hill Area Development Council. This problem was peculiar to the hills, as in the rest of the State, the Panchayati Raj Institutions had emerged as viable decentralised units of development administration.

IV. 1988-onwards : This phase is crucial in the evolution of development administration from the point of view of the emergence of an autonomous council, the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC), which combines the characteristic of regional or self-government and a developmental agency. The political significance of this Council is also very important as it was the result of the political reconciliation between the Gorkha National Liberation Front that led the Gorkhaland Movement and the State Government in which the Central Government acted as the guarantor.

The DGHC was given power of formulating and implementing the developmental plans for the Hill areas. A list of 19 subjects was transferred to the Council. The creation of the DGHC might have solved the hitherto existing problems of coordination and the need for a decentralised administrative set up for the hill areas, but, unfortunately it lacked the administrative machinery. The

linkages both vertical and horizontal were not established properly without which it was difficult to carry out the development function. Added to these shortcomings, the acute political differences and conflicting attitude of the DGHC and the State Government made the matter worst. The DGHC, therefore, in its initial stages could not function in a normal manner. However, these problems have been well recognised and identified by the State Government as well the DGHC leadership and agreements have been reached to bring amendment to the DGHC Act to provide it with administrative machinery to make it viable and effective.

Finally, it may be observed on the basis of our analysis in the previous sections that development administration in the hill areas has undergone qualitative and quantitative changes. It is in a transitional phase and definitely moving in the direction of being more and more decentralised and participatory.

Notes and References

- 1 For details, see Chapter IV, Section on Political Process and Political Development of this Dissertation.
- 2 Government of West Bengal (1988), The Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Act, 1988, (Calcutta, Law Department), The Act established the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council and repealed the Darjeeling, Hill Areas Development Act, 1976.
See also, Government of West Bengal (1988). The West Bengal Panchayat (Amendment) Act, 1988 (Calcutta, Law Department).
The Act has dissolved the Zilla Parishad from the Hill Areas keeping the Panchayat Samiti and the Gram Panchayat in tact. It has established a Mahakuma Parishad replacing the Zilla Parishad for Siliguri subdivision.
- 3 For details, see Chapter IV, op.cit.
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- 5 Ibid.
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See also Mukharji (1993). "The Politics of Self-Government, The Third Stratum (II and III)" in The Statesman, (Calcutta), May 16-18, 1993.

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- 8 Shiviah, M.(1977). "Implementation of Rural Development Programmes and Implementation System", Behavioural Sciences and Community Development (Hyderabad : NIRD (March, Vol.II, No.1), p.12.
- 9 Ibid.
10. Ray, Amal (1976). Organisational Aspects of Rural Development (Calcutta, World Press), p.16.
- 11 Simon, Herbert, A.(1976). Administrative Behaviour (London : Collier Macmillan), p.154.
- 12 The Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) Act 1988, op.cit., Section 2(1).
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- 14 Ibid., Section 185A(2).
- 15 The DGHC Act, 1988, op.cit. See Introduction, p.2343.
- 16 Ibid., Section 5(1) (2) (3).
- 17 Ibid., Section 34 and 38(1).
- 18 This Information was gathered from an interview with the Council Secretary.
- 19 Meister, Development Communaire cited in Uphoff Norman T. et.al. op.cit.
- 20 The DGHC Act, 1988, op.cit., Section 24.
- 21 Ibid., Sections 49 and 50.

- 22 The Observation is based on the interviews with Councillors and the local CPI(M) leaders, and reports published in various national daily Newspapers like The Statesman, The Times of India and The Telegraph etc. from the compilation of the Documentation Centre, Centre for Himalayan Studies, (Darjeeling; University of North Bengal).
- 23 My visit to the Block Office and discussion with the officials revealed that the DGHC did not involve them in implementing programmes.
- 24 For details, see section on Coordination of this Chapter.
- 25 The GNLF has been opposing elections to the Panchayat Samiti and the Gram Panchayat. It was revealed in the interview with Councillors that they feel that the Panchayati Raj set up along with the block machinery to be pro-State Government and Pro-CPI(M).
- 26 The DGHC Act, 1988, op.cit., Section 48(2)(4).
- 27 The Telegraph, (Calcutta, Jan.14).
- 28 Shiviah, M. (1986). Panchayati Raj - A Policy Perspective (Hyderabad : NIRD), p.12.
- 29 Singhvi, L.M. (Chairman) (1985). Concept Paper on Panchayati Raj, (New Delhi : Government of India, Ministry of Agriculture).
- 30 The DGHC Act, 1988, op.cit., Section 52.
- 31 For details see Ray, S.N. (1985) "The Panchayati Raj Experiment in West Bengal" in Merkl, Peter, H. (ed) New Local Centres in Centralized States (University Press of America).
- 32 The information gathered from my visits to DGHC and interviews with Councillors and officials.

- 33 My impression during the field survey when most villagers were of the view that the Panchayats Samiti and the Gram Panchayat should be made to work again.
- 34 Institution of Local Government Studies (1985). The Purpose and Character of Local Government Appendix 'B' (Birmingham : Introductory Paper No.3) in Reading Material, (Hyderabad, NIRD). Being a Reading Material for Trainees, it does not contain year of publication.
- 35 Interview with the Council Secretary.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 From my discussion to various sections of the people during my field work in the study area.
- 39 The Statesman, (1991). (Calcutta) 27th, Nov. reported about the demand for 'mini-secretariat' by the DGHC. It was also learnt that the DGHC has designated 'Executive Officers' as Secretaries during my visit to the office.
- 40 The Telegraph, (1992). (Calcutta), 24th March, carried reports about the refusal of the Government of West Bengal to provide the 'Mini-Secretariat', - rather the Government appointed the Hill Advisory Committee to look into the matter.
- 41 Interview with Councillors.
- 42 The CPI(M) Party meeting organised in Kurseong on 1st May, 1993 where some State level leaders participated has placed such views. The observation has also been made on the basis of the researchers' impression of the discussion with some CPI(M) leaders.

- 43 For the conceptual analysis of horizontal and vertical linkages, see Daft, L. Richard (1986), Organization Theory and Design, (St. Paul : West Publishing Co.), pp.222-23.
- 44 For details, see section on the Panchayati Raj of this Chapter.
- 45 The improvements of 'Coordination' in the district administration has been evident in the working of the Panchayati Raj in West Bengal. See, Chakraborti, Rijurekha (1992). "Panchayat Experiment in West Bengal", West Bengal (Calcutta) (April, 16, Vol. XXXIV, No.4). See also Ray, S.N. (1985), op.cit.
- 46 Interview with the Council Secretary and the Sub-divisional Agricultural Officer, Kurseong.
- 47 Interview with officials of the Sub-divisional Agricultural Office, Kurseong.
- 48 Interview with Council Secretary.
- 49 Some district level departments have been transferred to the DGHC simply because the District headquarter is located in the hills, for example, the irrigation department, where an equally important and related department, say, District level Agricultural department has not been transferred.
- 50 Interview with Councillor.
- 51 The Telegraph (1991). Calcutta, 18th April.
- 52 Interview with Council Secretary.
- 53 Interview with 'Finance Secretary' of the DGHC who is also the Project Director of the District (Council) Rural Development Agency.
- 54 The Telegraph (1992). (Calcutta) July, 22nd.

- 55 A pamphlet was distributed by the G.N.L.F. informing the closer of the departments to the people.
- 56 The Statesman, (1992). (Calcutta) 28th September.
- 57 The Sunchari (1993). (Siliguri, A Nepali daily), 24th June.
- 58 The observation has been made on the basis of interviews with officials and non-officials. For theoretical discussion on this theme related to the working of the Panchayati Raj. See Childyal, U.G. (1971). "Panchayati Raj - Its face and mask", Journal of National Academy of Administration (July-Sept. Vol. XVI, No. 3), pp. 43-56.
- 59 Based on interviews and impression of field survey.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Ibid., See also Childyal, U.G. op.cit. for theoretical discussions.
- 62 Interview with Council Secretary.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 Based on the field survey and interviews.
- 65 The DGHC Act of 1988, op.cit. Section 52(7)
- 66 Ibid., Section 61.
- 67 Ibid., Section 37(1)
- 68 The Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (1989-90), First Annual Action Plan (Darjeeling), P. Foreward by the Chairman.
- 69 Ibid., p. 1.
- 70 Ibid., p. 3.
- 71 Hill Plan, 1984, op.cit., p. 9.
- 72 The DGHC Annual Plan 1989-90, op.cit., p. 21.

- 73 For details, See Nayar, Rohini (1991). Rural Poverty in India. (Bombay : Oxford University Press), pp.262-66.
- 74 Rath, N. (1985). "Garibi Hatao" can IRDP DOIT?" Economic and Political Weekly (Feb.) cited in Ibid., p.263.
- 75 Dantwala, M.L.(1985). "Garibi Hatao" can IRDP DOIT?" "Strategy Options", Economic and Political Weekly(March) cited in Ibid., p.264.
- 76 Nayar, Rohini (1991), op.cit., pp.262-66.
- 77 The DGHC Annual Action Plan, op.cit., p.25.
- 78 Ibid., p.37.
- 79 For details, see, the section on the Hill Development Council of this Chapter.
- 80 The DGHC Annual Action Plan, op.cit., p.61.
- 81 Government Order (G.O.) No.6273/26, 4/72, Governor of West Bengal establishing the Hill Area Development Advisory Committee (HADAC).
- 82 For details - See Section on the Panchayati Raj of this Chapter.
- 83 Proceedings of the first meeting dated 5.11.72.
- 84 A letter from the then Minister for State, N.B.Gurung, to Mr.Harish Mukhiya, a member of HADAC dated 2.2.73.
- 85 Hill Affairs Branch Secretariat (1984), A Mid Term Review of Integrated Hill Plan 1980-85 (Darjeeling), P.Introduction.
- 86 The Chief Minister of West Bengal outlining the objective of the HADAC explained the idea on decentralisation to the members in the 3rd meeting held on 26th June, 1975.
- 87 Memoranda submitted by ^{Mr.} Santosh Gurung, a member of the Hill Area Development Council (HADAC) to the Chairman on the non-availability of transport and required information, dated 19.6.1978.

- 89 When the District Planning Committee (DPC) was in the formative stage, the members of the HADC demanded their inclusion or association of the HADC to DPC which was refused by the Chairman in the meeting held on 29th October, 1984.
- 90 A letter by D.N. Pradhan, a member of HADC and a retired Project Director of S.F.D.A. requesting the members for close interaction instead of relying on memoranda, letters etc.
- 91 The figures given in the 'Annual Plans' do not tally with figures in the 'Reviews on Expenditure'.
- 92 Memoranda by Santosh Gurung - op.cit. Complaints about not being informed as to which of the proposals of the member of HADC were included or excluded in the Hill Plan.
- 93 Resolution of the Meeting of the Hill Council, the third meeting of the year 1982.
- 94 Reply given by the Executive Engineer on being asked why the report of the 'Supervisory Team' of the members of the HADC was being ignored.
- 95 Hill Affairs Branch Secretariat (1980-81). Integrated Annual Hill Plan (Darjeeling), pp.1 and 9.
- 96 Hill Plan (1980-85), op.cit.
- 97 Reply given by Mr. A. Lama, Assistant Secretary, HADC, in an Interview.
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- 100 Rao, G.V.K. (Chairman) (1985). Report of the Committee to Review the Existing Administrative Arrangements for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation Programme (CAARD). (New Delhi, Government of India, Ministry of Agriculture), p.44.
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- 105 Shiviah, M. (1986). Panchayati Raj - A Policy Perspective (Hyderabad : NIRD), pp.5-6).
- 106 Mukharji, Nirmal (1993), op.cit.
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- 111 Ibid., p.301.
- 112 Ibid., pp.315-16.
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- 117 Childyal, U.G. (1971), op.cit.
- 118 Ray, S.N. (1992). Communication and Rural Development India : The Changing Perceptions and the Search for a New Public Policy, (Shimla : Indian Institute of Advanced Study/New Delhi : Manohar Publication).
- 119 Grow, David and Jerry, Vansant, Beyond the Rhetoric of Rural Development Participation - How can it be done. Cited here from the extract in Management of Behavioural Dimension for Rural Development, Reading Material (Hyderabad, (NIRD). Being a reading material for Trainers, the year of publication has not been given in the document.
- 120 Ray, S.N. (1985), op.cit., p.320.
- 121 Ibid., p.323.
- 122 The West Bengal Panchayat Amendment Act, 1988, op.cit.
- 123 The Congress I (Party) then was divided into two camps between the S.S.Ray and A.B.Ghani Khan Choudhuri Group. The Ghani Khan group withdraw support to the S.S.Ray group which gave way to the CPI(M) to allign with All India Gorkha League to choose a Sabhapati (President) of the Zilla Parishad from the independent group of candidates. The Sahakari-Sabhapati (Vice-President) was chosen from the CPI(M).
- 124 Narain, Iqbal (1970). Panchayati Raj Administration : Old Controls and New Challenges (New Delhi : IIPA) p.10.
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- 125 Vide Sections 124(2) (1), 172(2) (ii) of the 1973 Act and Cabinet Committee (1980) Government of West Bengal.
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- 130 Report of Concurrent Evaluation on Singrimitan Village by a Team consisting of the District Magistrate, Project Officer two Panchayat members and others, dated 20.6.86.
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- 132 Dasgupta, Biplab (1982) has divided the brief carrier of the Corporation into four distinct phases
- (i) Period upto 1975 - Planning and legislation
 - (ii) 1975-77 - Building the infrastructure
 - (iii) 1977-78 (November) - Stagnation
 - (iv) 1978 - (November onwards) - Work under the New regime in his Rural Development : The CADC Experience (Calcutta, West Bengal Comprehensive Area Development Corporation) p.4.

- 133 File No.003/001/0401 Guidelines to Project Directors
dated 4.1.80.
- 134 Project Directors (Kalimpong Project) Report in Project
Directors meeting, vide file no.003/021/04/25, 1982.
- 135 Ibid.
- 136 Dasgupta, Biplab, op.cit., p.37.
- 137 Vide list of beneficiaries who was provided woolknitting
machines presented in Project Advisory Committee (from the
personal files of Mr.Amrit Khaling, ex-Sabhapati (President)
of the Panchayat Samiti, Kalimpong-I.
- 138 Project Director's Report, op.cit.
- 139 The Stem of the maize plant has a sweet taste when they grow
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chewing.
- 140 Dasgupta, Biplab, op.cit., p.18.
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- 153 The Act of 1983, op.cit., Section 27(3).
- 154 This is according to Mr. A.Khaling, the then President of the Panchayat Samiti in 1983 term and also exofficio Chairmen of the Project Advisory Committee, CADP, Kalimpong.
- 155 Principal Agricultural Officer (1986-87). op.cit., p.43.
- 156 A Mid Term Review (1984). op.cit.
- 157 Hill Affairs Branch Secretariat (1977). Darjeeling Marches Ahead (Darjeeling), p.32.
- 158 Dahick, C.L. (1971). Cited in Bottral, A.F. (1976)
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