

Chapter 3

Methodology

The study aims to highlight the participation of the rural people, especially the disadvantaged section in the governance and developmental programmes through Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) with or without the help of the *Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs)* in the district of Cooch Behar.

Research Questions/Hypotheses:

Based on the problems related to the lack of Coordination between PRIs and CSOs in the district of Cooch Behar, which are sought to be analyzed as objectives of the study, a careful examination has been sought to be made on the following hypotheses:

- a. Do all the people fully participate in the process of governance and have access in developmental programmes at the rural level in the district of Cooch Behar?
- b. Is Panchayat Raj Institutions found responsive to the Welfare, development and empowerment of the rural people?
- c. Is the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) strong enough to raise voice from the below?
- d. Are the needs of the poor and disadvantaged people in the district met?
- e. Are the needs of the future generations taken into consideration in the district?

Research Design :

The research design used in the study is partly of explorative as well as descriptive or diagnostic research studies.

Design of Data Collection :

After pre-testing, a questionnaire has been formulated to elicit the merits and limitations of both PRIs and CSOs in the district. Both structured and non-structured questions were set for the respondents (i.e., beneficiaries or rural people).

Interviews were held with both the officials and non-officials and had personal contacts to discuss the relevant problems. Participant and non-participant observation techniques were used to supplement the data collected through questionnaire, by attending the Panchayats and CSOs. Data have also been collected from the offices of Panchayats with regard to development for each year since 1995 and also the records of the CSOs with regard to governance and development.

Data Analysis:

Comparative analyses throwing light on all points have been developed in view of the objectives set earlier in the study. Statistical computation has been developed on the interview replies and as such averages, percentages and other statistical tools were used.

Sampling/Universe of the Study:

The target population for the district of Cooch Behar was specified as the adult rural people, especially the poor, disadvantaged section, Women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Therefore, purposive random sampling method has been used to select and understand them as well.

7 NGOs, which are enlisted in the District Social Welfare Branch under District Magistrate of Cooch Behar and engaged themselves with rural development in the district, have been selected for study.

10 Self Help Groups (SHGs/SGSYs) have been taken from a Block / Panchayat Samity.

20 Voluntary Organizations (V.Os/ Clubs) have been taken which are engaged in rural development (such as Sanitation, Coaching etc. work).

20 Gram Panchayats (G.P.s) have been selected numbering 10+6+4 respectively keeping in view of those specified location/ areas where the above-stated 7 NGOs, 10 SHGs and 20 V.O.s were situated.

A total of 570 interviews were conducted taking 10 beneficiaries randomly each from those organizations, i.e., (7NGOs * 10 beneficiaries), (10 SHGs * 10 beneficiaries), (20 V.O.s * 10 beneficiaries) and (20GPs * 10 beneficiaries).

Further more, a few community based people's organizations, peasant organizations, Women Organizations, trade unions, etc. have been selected especially to the selected / above stated Panchayats and carefully examined them accordingly.