ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT AND PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN GRAM PANCHAYAT: A CASE STUDY IN WEST BENGAL STATE

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Village Constituency;

Economic Development;

Environmental

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Vulnerable groups in the

Villages.

Abstract:

The present paper seeks to examine Environmental Development and People's Participation in Gram Panchayat in West Bengal. West Bengal is the first and the only major state to have had timely panchayat elections on a party basis regularly every five years since 1978. The extent of people's participation in the planning process is significantly less compared to those other states like Kerala. This paper studies a particular component of a set of recently introduced reforms of the panchayat system in West Bengal that is aimed precisely at addressing this concern the introduction of requisite village constituency (gram sansad) meetings. A very unique and large-scale experiment in economic and political Decentralization was introduced in the late seventies in the Indian state of West Bengal.

West Bengal, being a predecessor in installing a 3-tier Panchayati Raj System (PRI) for rural local governance dates back to 1978 i.e.15 years ahead of the country's waking up to a

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constitutional mandate. Ever since inception, the state has demonstrated strong commitment to rural decentralization by ensuring regular elections to PRIs and also handed over them with responsibility of implementing various rural development programmes and making the development bureaucracy part of Panchayat Raj Institutions. The state of West Bengal also ensures representation of the socially backward classes - scheduled castes (SC), scheduled tribes (ST) and women in PRIs. Particular attention needs to be paid to the how much common people are aware about the environmental framework and Gram Panchayat really have urge to work for vulnerable groups in the villages.

The paper is divided into five sections for the sake of meaningful analysis. Section I, II and III deals with introduction and objectives, scope of the study and methodology. Section IV attempt has been made the pace of economic and environmental development through ESMF and VGDF analysis. Finally in the Section V attempt has been made general observations and recommendations of the study.

I. INTRODUCTION:

According to West Bengal Panchayat Act 1973[Section 19 (1)] the Gram Panchayat as a unit of self-government in order to achieve economic development and secure social justice for all should prepare

(a) Development plan for the five year term of the office of the members and revises and update it as and when necessary, with regard to the resources available;

(b)Prepare of an annual plan for each year by the month of October of the preceding year in respect of development of human resources, infra-structure and civic amenities in the area;

(c) Implement schemes of economic development and social justice as may be drawn up by, or entrusted upon it. The main aim of the Plan and budget of the Gram panchayat is to do well being of the poor and backward sections of the society. With the coming of three tiers system of Panchayat (ZP, PS and GP) and decentralized planning came into being. But amongst the 3 tier Panchayat System it is only in Gram Panchayat level actually people's participation is most as it is the grass root level. It is being said that now" Gram Panchayat plan is for the people, of the people and by the people". This concept has become sound with the coming of -

1. Gram sansad,

2. Gram Sabha and

3. Gram Unnayan Samities

Whereas local peoples of the village are directly participate in the development activities of the Gram panchayat. In order to have an effective Panchayati Raj System (PRI), the Government of West Bengal took some pioneering steps in the 1970s and introduced the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973 with a view to:

a)   Ensuring regular elections to PRIs.

b)   Entrusting them with increasing responsibilities to implement various rural development programs.

c)   Making the development bureaucracy part of PRIs.

d)   To Make representation of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women mandatory in PRIs to ensure their involvement in the process of socio- economic development.

The powers and functions of the PRIs have been expanded to cover practically the whole spectrum of rural life and livelihood including all poverty alleviation programs. Over the years, the PRIs have grown in stature and have made positive impacts towards economic development and social justice for all.

That rural poverty declined in the State from 73% in 1973-74 to 32% in 1999-2000, that annual growth rate of food-grain production was recorded at 6.5% between 1981 and 1991 and that the highest rate of growth of wages was recorded between 1979-80 and 1992-93 is mostly attributed to the effective role of PRIs in the successful land reforms and in organizing the poor and augmenting their social and economic opportunities through various programmes. It is

acclaimed that West Bengal Panchayats showed the way and inspired the constitutional amendment.

The State Government itself identified areas in PRI functioning which needed systemic improvements e.g. Institutionalization of bottom-up planning approach;   Intensification of people's participation and of local level organizations in PRI functioning; convergence of PRIs with all other development agencies; greater accountability of the development bureaucracy to PRIs and the like.

The State Government brought about need-based reforms in the Panchayat system from time to time from the very beginning. A leading reforms was set off by the 73rd constitutional amendment leading to among others, reservation of seats and office-bearers in PRIs, formation of State Finance Commission & State Election Commission, creation of Gram Sabha at Gram Panchayat (GP) level and the unique system of Gram Sansad (village parliament with electors regarded as parliamentarians) at village level. In order to strengthen rural decentralization and to ensure accountability, transparency and inclusiveness aimed at good governance at the local level, the State Government has recently embarked on another series of reforms, the most striking among them being :-

 i)   Zilla Sansad & Block Sansad (accountability forums for Zilla Parishad & Panchayat Samiti)
 ii)   District Council at each ZP headed by the opposition leader
iii)   Gram Unnayan Samiti (village development committee) elected by the electors of each Gram Sansad (GS) to enhance people's participation and to assist GPs to plan, implement and monitor activities for economic development & social justice
iv)   Representation of the oppositions in the standing committees of PS & ZP
 v)   Determination of principles of subsidiary for each tier of PRIs
vi)   Power to standing committees of PS & ZP and sub-committees of GP to prepare and implement work plan and budget
vii)   Systems for improved financial management and information management
   In this background Participatory planning came into being where people not only makes their plan but also implements them. There are seven sectors and nine subjects in planning of GP.

Table: 1, Seven Sectors and Nine Subjects in Planning of GP		
The seven sectors are:	**The nine subjects of planning are:-**	**There are 5 (five) upa-samities in the GP. They are:**
1. Miscellaneous Sector, 2. Agriculture and Allied sector, 3. Small Scale industries 4. Infrastructure sector, 5. Education Sector, 6. Public Health sector, 7. Women and Child development and social development	1. Agriculture 2. Animal resources, 3. Education, 4. Public Health, 5. Women & Child Welfare, 6. Social Welfare, 7. Small Scale industries 8. Infrastructure, and 9. Miscellaneous	1.Artho-O- porikalpana Upa-samity 2.Krishi-O-prani Sampad Bikash Upa-samity 3.Sikhya-O-janoswasthya upa-samity 4.Nairi-sishu unnayan –O-Samajkalyan upa-samity 5. Khudhra kutir Shilpo-O-Porikathamo upa-samity

In villages there are Gram Sansad, Gram Sabha, and Gram Unnayan Samity. The Participatory Planning process is a People Centered Bottom- Up -Planning. The Planning process starts at the habitation level are as-

➢ The entry point is preparation of resource map – both social & natural in a participatory mode and use of simple PRA tools.

➢ Seven Sector data collection with a group of villagers by following participatory mode and use of simple PRA tools.

➢ Placing and approving plan from Gram Sansad.

➢ Placing and approving data from Gram Sabha.

➢ Placing and approving plan in respective Upa- samities.

➢ Placing and taking final approval from GP General Body meeting.

➢ The processes identify the priority of schemes in different sectors for each Gram Sansad and are aggregated at GP level.

➢ Labour budget for NREGA is also worked out for each Sansad for integrating the same with the plan.

➢ Collection of relevant data of each household through neighborhood level interactions and intense participation, more as a tool for learning & empowerment.

- ➢ Analysis of problems, resources & potentials by communities at Gram Sansad level
- ➢ Prioritization of action points based on needs & resources
- ➢ Preparation of Annual Action Plan

People's Participation in Gram Sansad or Gram Sabha:

Let us focus on the People's Participation in the Gram Sansad & Gram Shaba Meeting. Participation of women in local governance and in decisions making process of development is one of the most significant focuses of the state Govt. and is an important performance indicator of gram Panchayat. The Gram Sansad Meeting at the village level is one of the principal mechanisms envisaged for enhancing people participation in development process while increasing accountability and transparency of the local government. The monitoring and capacity building of gram Panchayat members to encourage participation of people with opposing views including members affiliated with other political parties would ensure that Gram Sansad meetings are conducted in a fruitful manner. People should raised their voice in Gram Sansad or Gram Sabha Meeting & participate in the planning process.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study aims to find out whether decentralization   people are really benefited, whether people have the real power in their hand. The study wants to investigate whether the participatory planning is really for the people, of the people and by the people. The specific objectives are as follows:

- ➢ To study how much political and administrative functionaries really take into consideration of ESMF and VGDF issues while doing planning.
- ➢ To study how much common people really know about ESMF, VGDF and planning process of Gram Panchayat.
- ➢ To study how much representation or participation of people in the planning processes and its implementation.
- ➢ To find out the ways of awareness techniques used by Gram Panchayat to make common people aware about Planning process and work of Gram Panchayat.

Scope of the Study

The study shall be conducted in the district of Cooch Behar of the state of West Bengal. Four Gram Panchayats (Two Different Block) of Cooch Behar district have been selected for the study-Nishiganj I Gram Panchayat, Nishiganj II Gram Panchayat of Mathabhanga-II Block, Gosairhat Gram panchayat and Khalishamari Gram Panchayat of Sitalkuchi Block. These Gram Panchayats have been chosen as these are developed GPs in the Cooch Behar District and where it was said that participation of people on the planning process is good. These Gram Panchayats are ISGP Gram Panchayats (These are model Gram Panchayat of the district). One of the criteria of ISGP Gram Panchayats is good quality Decentralized Integrated planning with special emphasis on vulnerable groups. And maximum emphasis is given on proactive disclosure and people's participation in the Gram Panchayat. Along with this Environment is given top priority both in planning and during plan implementation. In this way, we can see the economic development and people participation in the Gram Panchayat level. For the sake of development, the Govt. introduced Environment and Social Management Framework (ESMF) and Vernarable Group Development Framework (VGDF) for improving the environment and peoples in our society.

Organizing the Poor for Their Participation in Panchayats

Making legal provision and providing structural framework are not enough for the poorer section of the community and the women to participate in the process of development. In order to have the voice of the vulnerable and the marginalized sections heard, they are to be organized and their capacities are to be increased for being able to right to be heard their demands and influence carrying out of the Panchayats in their favour. These are to be done by organizing the poor, mainly the women in Self Help Groups (SHGs). SHG movement, especially of the women, in the State has gained a lot of momentum and more than seven lakh SHGs have been formed out of which majority have been formed by women. Organizing the poor in groups will be strengthened further so that every poor rural family has at least one member included in an SHG within the Eleventh Plan period.

Legal provision has been made for the representation of SHGs in the GUS. Also, the SHGs are being organized further in Sub-Clusters within the Gram Sansad, Clusters within the GPs. The Clusters are being federated in bigger bodies known as Federations in each Block for synergy in

their functioning. Those are being formed by the women SHGs in general and men are also involved in certain areas. Orders have been issued for representation of the Clusters and the Federations in the Upa-Samitis and Sthayee Samitis of the GP and the PS respectively, as invited members, so that they can give their feedback for decision making in their favour and whatever decision is taken can be communicated to their members for wider knowledge and participation. The task is to form such Sub-Clusters, Clusters and Federations in all Gram Sansads, Gram Panchayats and Panchayat Samitis respectively within the Eleventh Five Year Plan period so that every GUS, Upa-Samiti and Sthayee Samiti has representations of the poor group of women to act as a pressure group. These organizations, apart from playing the most crucial roles of ensuring benefit to their members, will also influence the local governments to remain pro-poor for maximizing benefit to the most deprived section of the community. The responsibility of the State Government will be to build capacities of the Panchayats to utilize the Sub-Clusters, Clusters and Federations as their agents for poverty alleviation and making social changes for uplift of the women will be an important task to be achieved within the period.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study is a complex one and many concept of it such as impact of ESMF and VGDF on planning process has not done specifically by any one. Even the whole planning process of Gram panchayat is a very complex and lengthy procedure. Thus it is not good to depend exclusively on a particular method. The whole exercise depends on a set of methods, depending upon the situation concerned. A pre-designed questionnaire, consisting of 46 questions and various sub-sections of questions, has been used for collecting primary level data. The survey-sheet consisted to the multiple choice questions. The study has both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Such combination of the qualitative and quantitative dimensions is reflected beyond the purview of the questionnaire. Special attention has been provided to the nature of data. For this purpose, the primary data have been complemented by secondary data.

The Use of Primary & Secondary data:

a)   Integrated Plans of the concerned GPs.

b)   Reports on ESMF Formats during plan and Quarterly reports of the concerned GPs

c)   Data generated as part of the self-evaluation exercise by the Gram Panchayats.

d)   Various reports of the concerned Gram Panchayat submitted to Block, District and State.

e)   Gram Sansad and Gram Sabha Booklet of the concerned GPs

f)   VGDF Index of the concerned districts

g)   Resolution Books of the concerned GPs

Sample Size / Sampling Unit

The sampling was as follows:

a)   Cooch Behar district is chosen from 9 ISGP districts through random sampling method.

b)   After this from the Cooch Behar district, 2 Community Development (CD)   Blocks which have ISGP Gram Panchayats have been chosen purposively. This was necessary as it was not possible to include all the CD Blocks of the district. Again these CD Blocks are located in 2 parts of Cooch Behar district and these Blocks are said to be among the most developed Blocks of the district.

c)   For each selected CD Block, 'Gram Panchayats were chosen by simple random sampling to eliminate preconception. Thus the total number of sample villages came into 4, which was a feasible number for study, given the time frame.

d)   From each Gram Panchayat one Sansad was chosen by simple random sampling. Thus total sansads are come into existence 4.

e)   The sample size was limited to forty persons (out of 4 Prodhans and 8 GP staff are Chosen purposively) and remaining 28 villagers are selected by the method of random sampling from the targeted area mentioned 4 gram Panchayats are mentioned in Table: 2.

Table: 2, **Sample Design**							
District	Block	Gram Panchayat	Sansad	Prodhan	GP Staff	Villagers	Total
Cooch Behar	2	4	4	4	8	28	40
	Mathabhanga-II	Nishiganj-I	IV	1	2	7	10
	Mathabhanga-II	Nishiganj-II	I	1	2	7	10
	Sitalkuchi	Khalisamari	V	1	2	7	10
	Sitalkuchi	Gosairhat	IV	1	2	7	10

IV. FINDINGS AND ANALYSES OF THE STUDY

In Fig.1 (Annexure A1, Table:3) clearly points out that 30 respondents out of 40 respondents believe that development means development of road, drain, and water facility. It is also seen from the above table that 8 respondents thinks development means money, whereas other 8 respondents believe development means development of Education, Health and Women and Child welfare sector. There is only one respondent, out of 40 who has no knowledge about development at all. It is very appreciable that 39 respondents out of 40 respondents knew something about development.
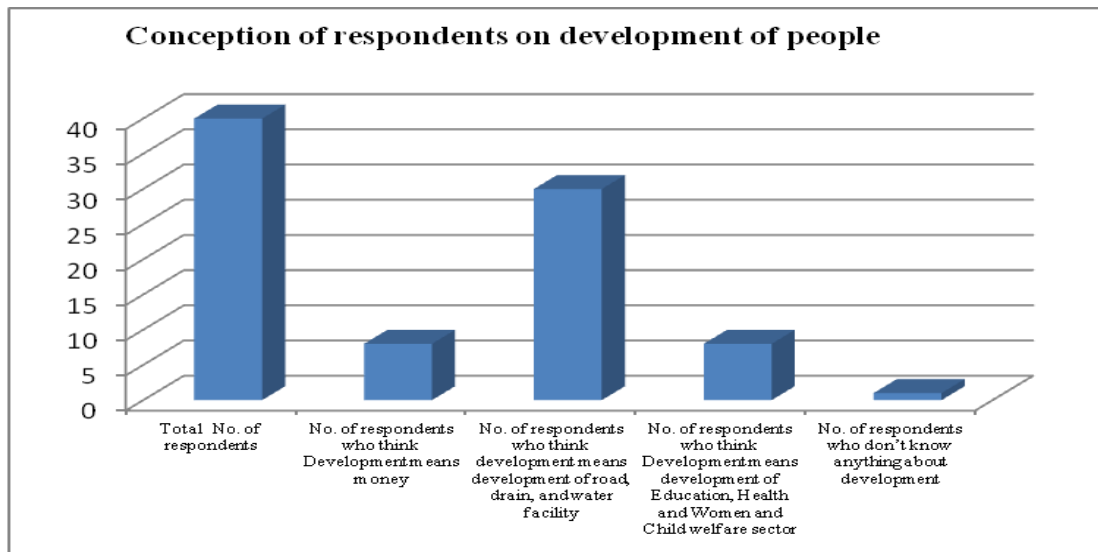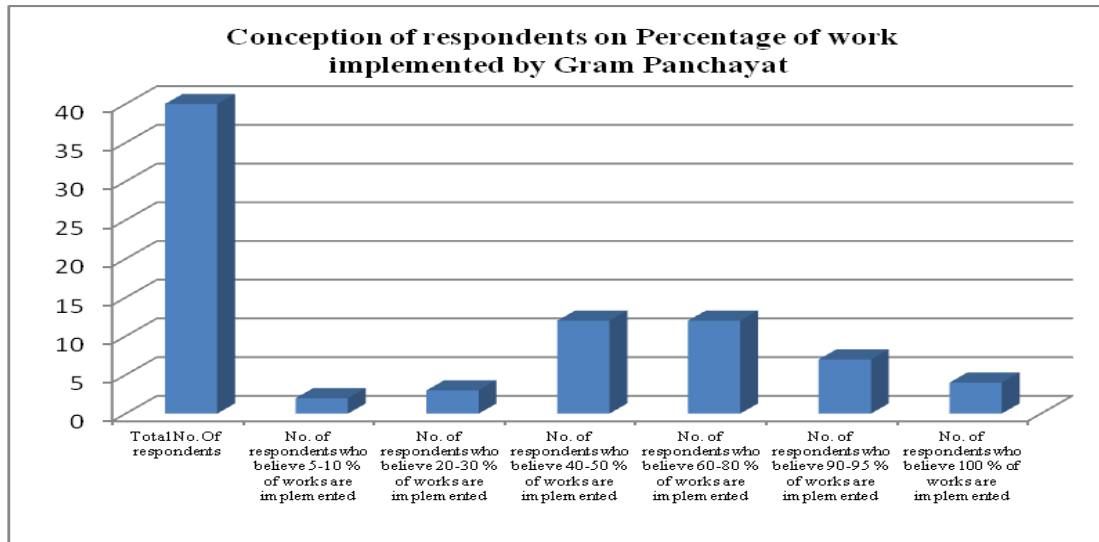

Fig. 1

It is also seen from Annexure A1, Table: 3 that if it is we added the respondent's answers it was found 47 answers are coming out, but respondents are 40. The reason behind this, some respondents have given multiple answers about development.

Fig.2

In Fig.2 Annexure A1, Table: 4 points out the percentage of work implemented by Gram Panchayat. It has not given a very clear picture about how much work are really implemented by Gram Panchayat. It is clear from the above table that Gram Panchayats are doing development works and people are aware about it at least, though no doubt, the level of awareness varies.

In field survey, it is clearly find out that main problems of Gram Panchayats are still drinking water, roads, and drainage. 33 responses of respondents point out drinking water is the most important problem in the Gram panchayats. It is followed by roads, where 20 responses of respondents believe that roads are still the main problem in their Gram panchayats and 12 responses of respondents think drainage is the main problem in their Gram panchayats. Only one respondent believes electricity is the main problem in their Gram Panchayat. Again, though the respondents are 40, there are many respondents who have multiple answers about the problems of Gram panchayat and answers are coming out of 66.

The Annexure A1, Table: 5 clearly points out that to 26 respondents; environment means tree-birds- animals. Ten respondents, however, believe that environment means man, society, tree-birds- animals, and sky-wind-water. According to Government order No:59 (9) ISGPP/21P-1(P.M)/2 dated13/1/12, this should be the answer, but only 10 respondents knew it and they are Prodhans and staff. Environment means sky-wind-water-land to 3 respondents. One respondent thinks environment means society.
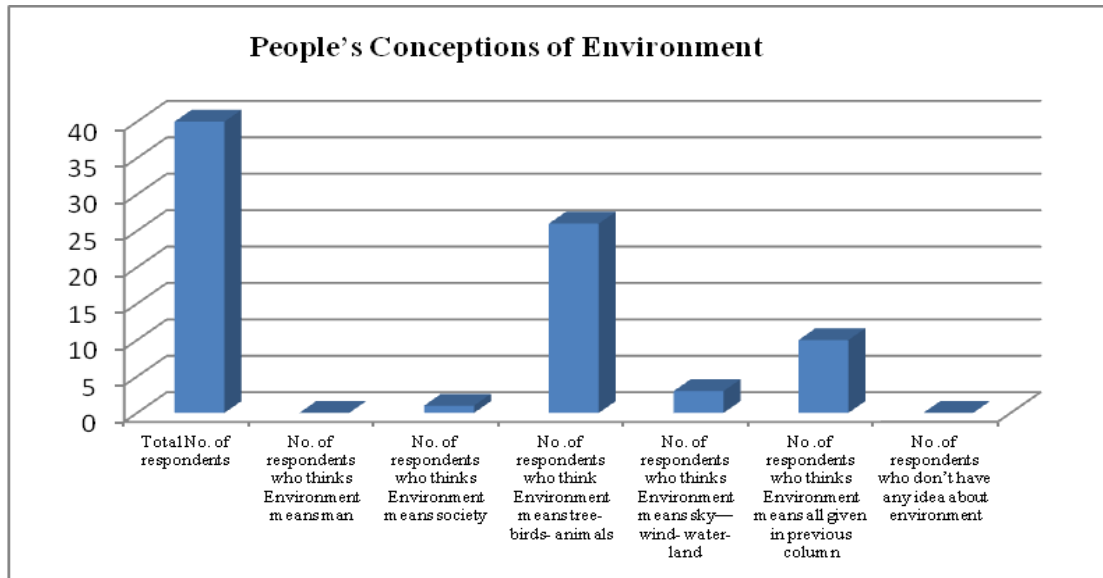
Fig. 3

It is very noteworthy to mention that out of 40 respondents, all of them have some knowledge of environment.
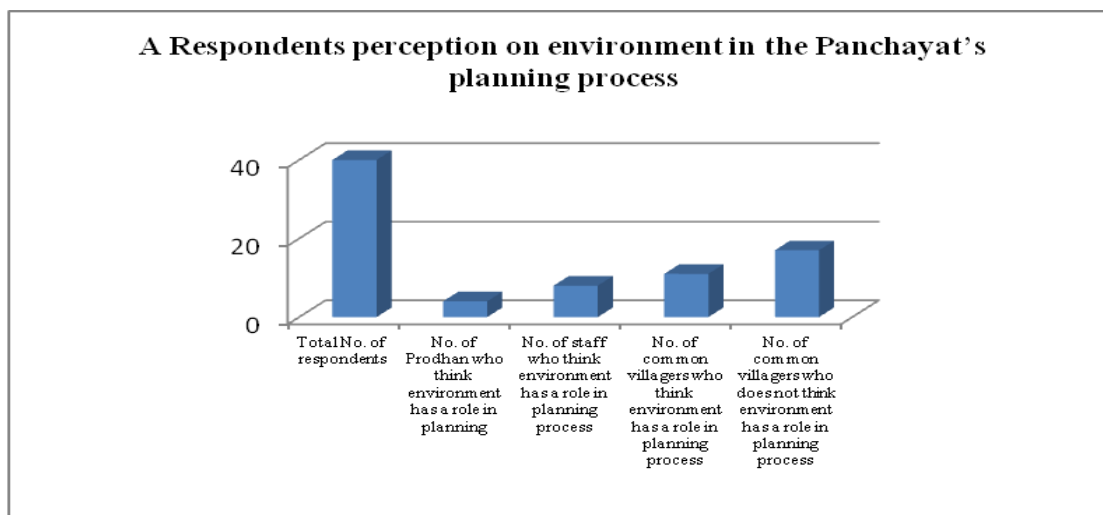
Fig.4

The above Fig.4 points out that out of 4 Prodhan respondents, believe that environment has role in the planning process. It is also very noteworthy out of 8 staff respondents, all eight staff respondents think that environment has role in planning process .But the people who matter most in the planning process, 17 common villager respondents out of 28 respondents think that environment has no role to play in the planning process and only 11 common villager respondents think environment has role in planning process.

The above table points out those 28 respondents have no knowledge about Environment and Social Management Framework, out of which one respondent who is also a staff has no knowledge about it. Only four respondents thinks ESMF means before doing any work finding out the negative impact of it on environment. Eight respondents however, believe that Environment and Social Management and if needed the negative work should be stopped or its adverse effects should be minimized and before doing any work, finding out the negative impact of it on environment, to exclude those works from plan which have negative impact on environment.
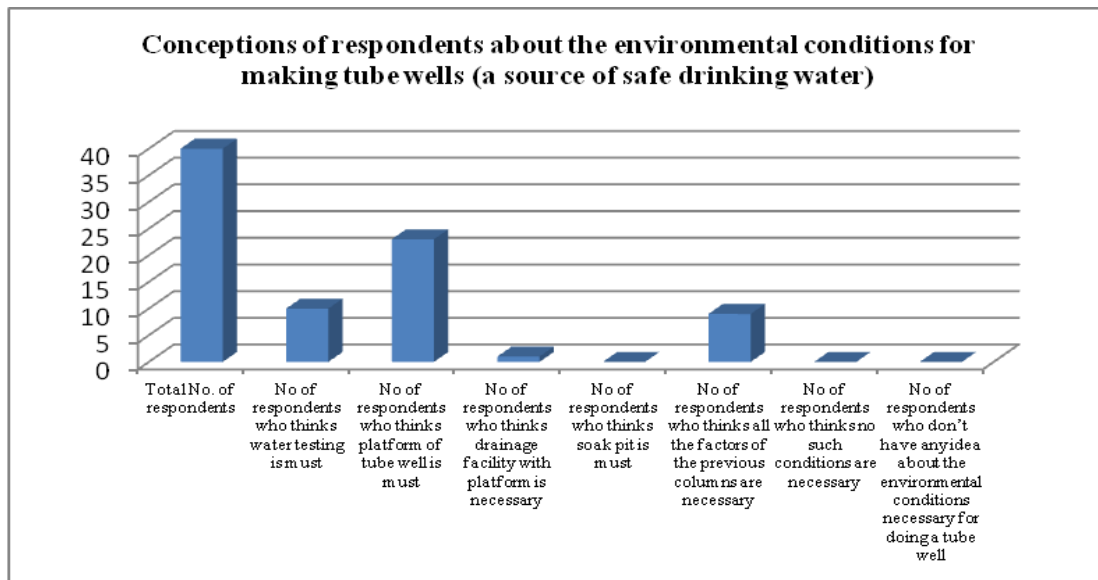

Fig.5

Water is one of the main sources of life; the maximum diseases in Gram Panchayat are due to unsafe drinking water. The Annexure A1, Table:7 points out those 23 respondents think platform was necessary for doing tube well, while one respondent feels that drainage system was also necessary. The plat form and drainage is one of the loopholes found while viewing tube well in villages, it is noteworthy that people are now conscious about it .Ten respondents feel that water testing is needed for safe drinking water. It was also very interesting as by taking with the villagers most were unaware about water testing before use. Only nine respondents think that water testing, platform, drainage facility, soak pit all are necessary for perfect environment conditions for making tube well. The nine respondents who have this knowledge are mainly staff and Prodhan. So it was found the though they are conscious about it, but these awareness was not reaching to the people, who really need this knowledge. But it was definitely

noteworthy to mention that majority of the respondents have some consciousness about safe drinking water. Since there are some respondents who have given multiple answers about the environmental conditions for making tube well, the responses are coming to 43, though the study was being done with 40 respondents.

The Annexure A2, Table:8, Fig. 6 clearly points out that twenty five respondents felt that the land where the road were being made was not fertile agricultural land .Ten respondents thought that land where the road was being made was not fertile agricultural land, trees were not being cut for making roads or even where trees were cut same amount of trees were planted, in both sides of roads 45 centimeter mud was not being cut, proper drainage facility with roads was needed.
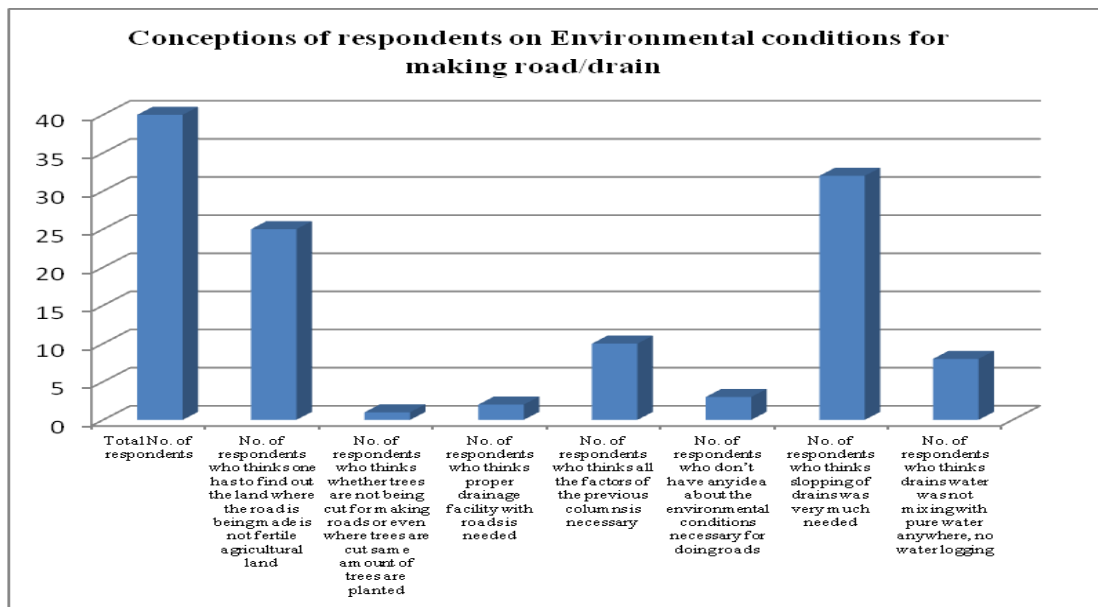

Fig.6

The shows that 32 respondents believe that slopping of drains was very much needed for making drain, But it was noteworthy to mention here that eight respondents correctly points out that Environmental conditions for making drain must include no water logging, proper slopping of drain, drains water was not mixing with pure water anywhere, proper drain cleaning was necessary. It is good that people have some knowledge about the environmental condition for making drains. It is also found from the above table that perfect consciousness was confined with Prodhan and staff.
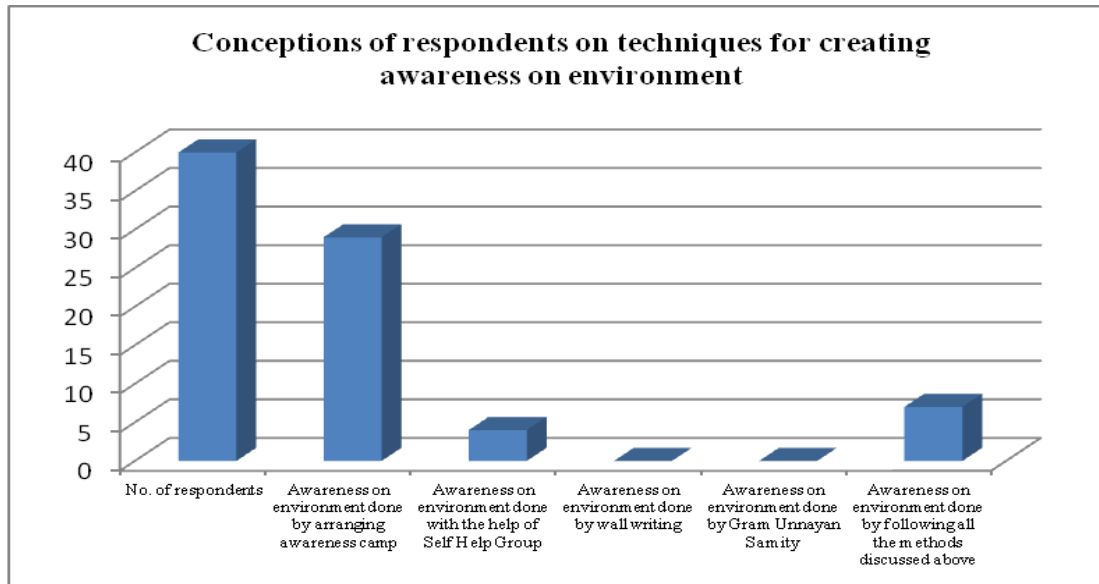
Fig. 7

The Annexure A2, Table: 9, Fig.7 very clearly points out that all the respondents felt that awareness for environment was necessary. Twenty nine respondents thought that awareness on environment should be done by arranging awareness camp. Seven respondents felt awareness camp, use of SHG, wall writing, para baithak all are necessary methods for spreading awareness on environment. Four respondents felt that awareness by SHG was the best method for spreading awareness on environment.
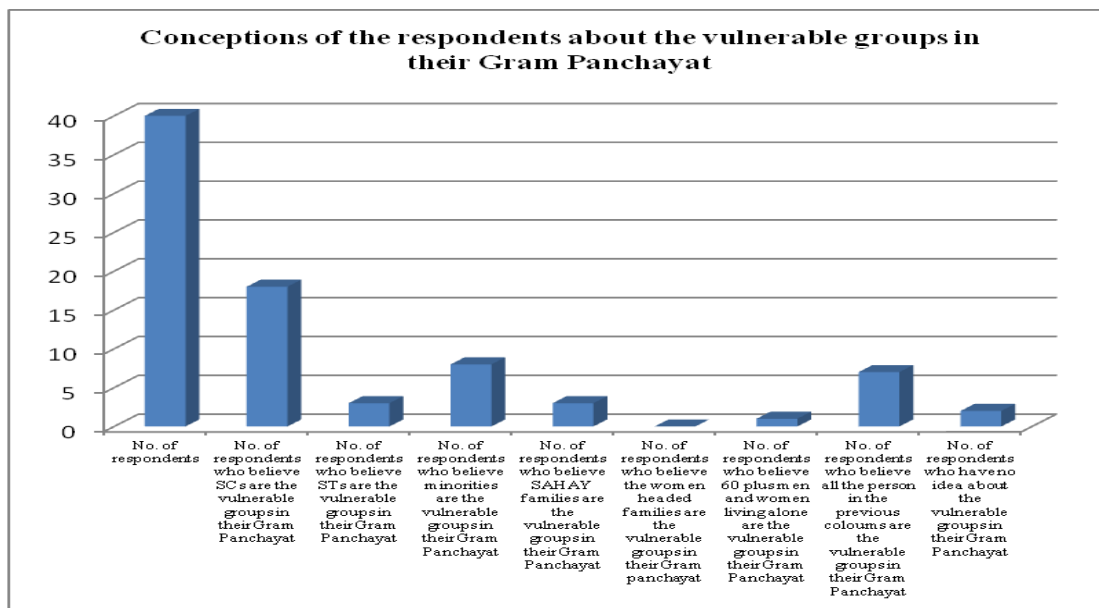
Fig. 8

The Annexure A2, Table: 10 points out that eighteen respondents believed that SCs were the vulnerable groups in their Gram panchayat and eight respondents stated that minorities were the vulnerable groups in their Gram panchayat. The interesting thing about this data is that all the SC respondents thought themselves as vulnerable groups in their Gram Panchayat and all the minority respondents felt themselves as vulnerable groups in their Gram Panchayat. Seven respondents felt SC, ST, Minorities, SAHAY, women headed families, 60 plus men and women living alone all are vulnerable groups in their Gram Panchayat. But all the eight respondents of here were either Prodhan or staff. Three respondents felt STs are the vulnerable groups in their Gram panchayat and three respondents thought that SAHAY families are vulnerable groups in their Gram Panchayat. One respondent, however, said that 60 plus men and women living alone were the vulnerable groups in their Gram panchayat. However two respondents have no idea about who were vulnerable groups in their Gram Panchayats.
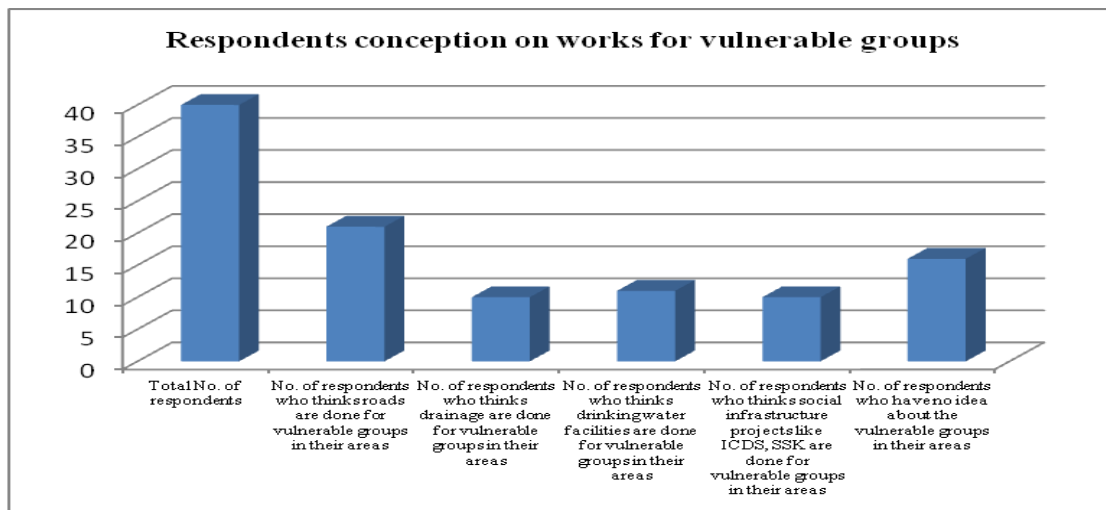
Fig. 9

The Annexure A2, Table: 11, Fig. 9 points out that twenty one respondents felt that roads were done by vulnerable groups in their Gram Panchayat. Ten respondents thought that drainage were done for vulnerable groups in their areas, on the other hand another ten respondents of the above question pointed that social infrastructure projects like ICDS, SSK, MSK, Sub-Health Centre were done for vulnerable groups in their areas. Eleven responses for the above answer pointed out that drinking water facilities were done for vulnerable groups in their areas. However, 16 respondents have no knowledge about the works for vulnerable groups in their areas.

The above table is interesting as the respondents for the study was 40, and out of which 16 respondents have no knowledge about the works for vulnerable groups (40-16 = 24). So, only 24 respondents have knowledge about works done for vulnerable groups. Twenty four respondents have given multiple answers for the above question.

The study clearly points out that thirty six respondents out of forty respondents have proactive disclosure on MGNREGS facilities, rules and regulations and monthly report on MGNREGS. So the study shows that people of Gram Panchayats have conception about the popular schemes like MGNREGAs. Only four respondents have no knowledge about Proactive disclosure on MGNREGAs.

The study shows that thirty five respondents have not seen Anataday Anna Yojna beneficiaries names in GP wall and only five respondents have seen Anataday Anna Yojna beneficiaries names in GP wall that were mainly GP staff. The study shows that fourteen respondents have seen Annapurna Yojna beneficiary names in GP wall and thus twenty six respondents have not seen Annapurna Yojna beneficiary names in GP wall and also points out that there are four respondents who have not seen any kind of schemes proactive disclosure by Gram Panchayats.
The study points out those thirty-eight respondents know about the works in their area, but still there are two respondents who have no knowledge about the work in their area. So it can be said people knew about the work in their Gram Panchayat, it is a very good thing.

One of the Mandatory events of MGNREGs scheme is social Audit, but only twenty respondents out of forty respondents knew about it. The study pointed out that thirty- six respondents said that people used to protest if work in Gram Panchayat was of low quality. Only four respondents said that people were not able to protest if work in Gram Panchayat was of low quality. The study clearly showed that thirty-eight respondents in the work place there was information about the work, but two respondents thought that there was no information about work in the work place.

Respondents Profile
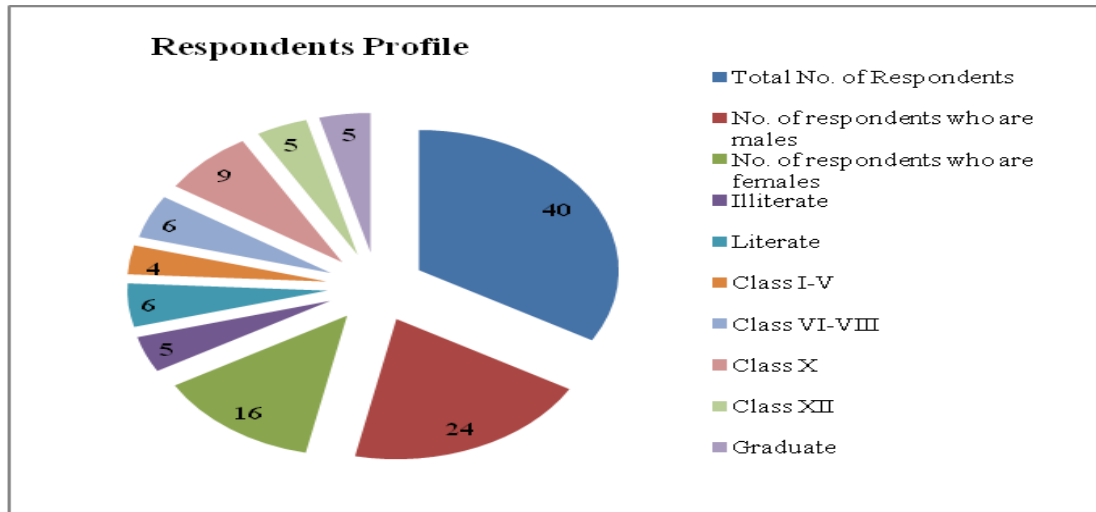
V. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE STUDIED GRAM PANCHAYATS:

In all the studied Gram Panchayats similar observations has been found and let us zoom in the ESMF study:

ESMF appears to be a new area for gram Panchayat members and functionaries and a continuous and systematic training support is required for the gram Panchayat to understand and accept an idea the process in sprit & purpose. The Possible socio-environmental implications of all activities in the Gram Panchayat were often found to have very sketchy details and at times, very extensive conclusions were given in the review such the same as "This activity does not have any adverse social or environmental impact and hence we have decided to do it here."

a)   All the four studied Gram Panchayats have done their screening of plan on basis of ESMF for the year 2014-15.

b)   They have certified that none of their plan violates ESMF guidelines   (Protecting Environment form Infrastructural Development.(Format- A)

c)   They have also found out what Environmental impacts fall on a particular work (but in all the four studied Gram Panchayats it was found that they have written that no environmental impact happened, which can never be like that. As for example, Installation of tube well if taken, the environmental problem is that water must be tested before drinking. So in the problem side water testing should have been ticked. But for saving time, they have said no environmental impact happened. On being enquired about the reason for doing it, the Gram Panchayat staff said that since they would do water testing, so this is not a problem to them. But while doing the field

study, it was found that in most of the cases no water testing done. Similar case was for all other works.

d)   In Format- B (Part-B) all the four Gram Panchayats have issued certificates that they have strictly followed all the norms of ESMF. And signatures of Prodhan, Executive Assistant and Nirman Sahayak were found. And the work was done within stipulated time also.

e)   It is also found that all the four studied Gram Panchayats have also taken resolutions about ESMF on General Meeting book, Finance and Plan Upa-Samity Meeting book, and on Gram Sansad Meeting book and Gram Sabha meeting book as mentioned in ESMF guidelines.

f)   In the implementation part there are four quarterly reports to be prepared. The   1st Quarter Report (April-June), 2nd Quarter Report (July-September), 3rd Quarter Report (October-December), 4th Quarter report (January-March). In a nutshell all the gram Panchayats have to prepare a quarterly report for the specified time and they have to pass the works with ESMF norms. But in all the Gram panchyats it is found that they had not done Quarterly report within stipulated time. They only for the sake of maintenance of report used to do three quarterly reports at once. So it is more or less became a paper work rather than real work. This Report is a mandatory part of reporting in ISGP Project Gram Panchayat.

g)   It is also found during Field visit, that ESMF norms are not followed properly while implementing the work in the field.

h)   Moreover the staff in the studied Gram panchayats thinks it as time consuming affair. Nirman Sahayaks (diploma engineers) of Gram Panchayats who are in   main charge of implementing activity found not much interested in doing ESMF, they only sign in the report, in most cases reports are being prepared by other staff .

i)   ESMF though a compulsory affair for Gram Panchayats, but it is not compulsory for Block and Zilla Parishad, thus Gram Panchayat officials questioned why they only have to follow ESMF norms.

VGDF STUDY:

VGDF Index is a very important tool for development. It is a process which is introduced by Panchayat & Rural Development, Govt. of West Bengal. It is a recorded data about which clearly points out who are vulnerable groups in the Gram panchayat, which are the vulnerable group dwelled Sansads of the Gram Panchayat. It also points out the present condition of the

vulnerable groups and what to be done for them in future. It points out how much really the Integrated Plan of Gram panchayat is for the vulnerable groups. While going through the VGDF Index of studied Gram Panchayats and the following observations are as below-

a)   As per VGDF, three formats have to be filled up (Format-A, B, C) by Gram panchayat which all four studied Gram Panchayats have done.

b)   The Gram Panchayats need to take resolution in General Meeting and concerned Upa-Samity meeting about following VGDF Index, all the studied Gram Panchayats have done it sincerely within stipulated time.

c)   Knowledge base of Gram Panchayat staff and elected representatives on VGDF Index is very low.

d)   Sometimes it is found that vulnerable groups which are coming out of VGDF Index are in a better position than those people who are not vulnerable in VGDF Index, so economic parameter of the condition of people is also necessary to come out of this problem.

e)   Though in guideline before doing plan this VGDF index needs to be considered, but there is a tendency to do it after planning process by back calculation.

f)   It is not accepted by all staff as whole heartedly, it is more a paper work to them, rather than reality base.

g)   It is seen as a burden by staff, an extra work for ISGP Gram Panchayats. This work is not applicable to all Gram Panchayats of West Bengal.

h)   There is a need of implementation report of VGDF Index otherwise; its progress cannot be measured.

References

[1] West Bengal Panchayat Act'1973.

[2] Government order (P & R Dept.) No: 59(9) ISGPP/21P-1(P.M)/2 dated 13/1/12.

[3] Annual Performance Assessment of Gram Panchayat Report (Published by P & Rd Dept.) 2013.

[4] Guideline of the Environment and Social Management Framework

(Published by P& Rd Dept.), (various year).

[5] Gram Panchayat's Annual Report (Published for Gram Sansad Shava).

[6] West Bengal Gram Panchayat Administrative Rule-2004.

[7] Panchayati Raj- Published by SRD Cell, WBSRDA.

[8] Gram Panchayat Annual Report (Various year).

[9] Census Report-2011.

[10] Chattopadhyay, R., Chakrabarti, B. and Nath, S. "Village forums or development: People's participation in decision-making in rural West Bengal", India, 2010, www.researchgate.net/publication/259117333.

[11] Samanta, D. and Nayak, N.C. "Participatory Practices in Rural Areas: A Study of Gram Panchayats of West Bengal", 2013, www.researchgate.net/publication/259117333.

Note:

i) Every constituency of a Gram Panchayat shall have a Gram sansad consisting of persons whose names are included in the electoral roll of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly.

ii) Every Gram shall have a Gram Sabha consisting of persons registered in the electoral roll pertaining to the area of the gram

iii) Every Gram sansad shall constitute a Gram Unnayan Samity with such number of functional committees as may be required, in such a manner as may be required, in such a manner having jurisdiction over the area of gram sansad for active participation of the people.

Annexure: A1

Table -3: Conception of respondents on development of people	
Total No. of respondents	40
No. of respondents who think Development means money	8
No. of respondents who think development means development of road, drain, and water facility	30
No. of respondents who think Development means development of Education, Health and Women and Child welfare sector	8
No. of respondents who don't know anything about development	1
Table -4: Conception of respondents on Percentage of work implemented by Gram Panchayat	
Total No. Of respondents	40
No. of respondents who believe 5-10 % of works are implemented	2

No. of respondents who believe 20-30 % of works are implemented	3
No. of respondents who believe 40-50 % of works are implemented	12
No. of respondents who believe 60-80 % of works are implemented	12
No. of respondents who believe 90-95 % of works are implemented	7
No. of respondents who believe 100 % of works are implemented	4
*The respondents here given multiple responses for the above topic	

Table -5: People's Conceptions of Environment

Total No. of respondents	40
No. of respondents who thinks Environment means man	0
No. of respondents who thinks Environment means society	1
No .of respondents who think Environment means tree-birds- animals	26
No. of respondents who thinks Environment means sky—wind- water-land	3
No .of respondents who thinks Environment means all given in previous column	10
No .of respondents who don't have any idea about environment	0

Table -6: A Respondents perception on environment in the Panchayat's planning process.

Total No. of respondents	40
No. of Prodhan who think environment has a role in planning	4
No. of staff who think environment has a role in planning process	8
No. of common villagers who think environment has a role in planning process	11
No. of common villagers who does not think environment has a role in planning process	17

Table -7: Conceptions of respondents about the environmental conditions for making tube wells (a source of safe drinking water)

Total No. of respondents	40
No of respondents who thinks water testing is must	10
No of respondents who thinks platform of tube well is must	23
No of respondents who thinks drainage facility with platform is necessary	1
No of respondents who thinks soak pit is must	0
No of respondents who thinks all the factors of the previous columns are	9

necessary	
No of respondents who thinks no such conditions are necessary	0
No of respondents who don't have any idea about the environmental conditions necessary for doing a tube well	0
Table -8: Conceptions of respondents on Environmental conditions for making road/drain	
Total No. of respondents	40
No. of respondents who thinks one has to find out the land where the road is being made is not fertile agricultural land	25
No. of respondents who thinks whether trees are not being cut for making roads or even where trees are cut same amount of trees are planted	1
No. of respondents who thinks proper drainage facility with roads is needed	2
No. of respondents who thinks all the factors of the previous columns is necessary	10
No. of respondents who don't have any idea about the environmental conditions necessary for doing roads	3
No. of respondents who thinks slopping of drains was very much needed	32
No. of respondents who thinks drains water was not mixing with pure water anywhere, no water logging	8

Annexure: A2

Table -9: Conceptions of respondents on techniques for creating awareness on environment	
No. of respondents	40
Awareness on environment done by arranging awareness camp	29
Awareness on environment done with the help of Self Help Group	4
Awareness on environment done by wall writing	0
Awareness on environment done by Gram Unnayan Samity	0
Awareness on environment done by following all the methods discussed above	7
Table -10: Conceptions of the respondents about the vulnerable groups in their Gram Panchayat	

No. of respondents	40
No. of respondents who believe SCs are the vulnerable groups in their Gram Panchayat	18
No. of respondents who believe STs are the vulnerable groups in their Gram Panchayat	3
No. of respondents who believe minorities are the vulnerable groups in their Gram Panchayat	8
No. of respondents who believe SAHAY families are the vulnerable groups in their Gram Panchayat	3
No. of respondents who believe the women headed families are the vulnerable groups in their Gram panchayat	0
No. of respondents who believe 60 plus men and women living alone are the vulnerable groups in their Gram Panchayat	1
No. of respondents who believe all the person in the previous coloums are the vulnerable groups in their Gram Panchayat	7
No. of respondents who have no idea about the vulnerable groups in their Gram Panchayat	2
Table-11: Respondents conception on works for vulnerable groups	
Total No. of respondents	40
No. of respondents who thinks roads are done for vulnerable groups in their areas	21
No. of respondents who thinks drainage are done for vulnerable groups in their areas	10
No. of respondents who thinks drinking water facilities are done for vulnerable groups in their areas	11
No. of respondents who thinks social infrastructure projects like ICDS, SSK are done for vulnerable groups in their areas	10
No. of respondents who have no idea about the vulnerable groups in their areas	16
Table -12: Gender & Education Profile of respondents	
Total No. of Respondents	40

No. of respondents who are males	24
No. of respondents who are females	16
Illiterate	5
Literate	6
Class I-V	4
Class VI-VIII	6
Class X	9
Class XII	5
Graduate	5