

# People as Partners in Panchayati Raj & Development: An Analysis of Attitude and Awareness

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## Abstract

Despite participatory development process envisaged in the Directive Principle of State Policy and 73rd amendment and enactment of Bihar Panchayati Raj Act 2006 giving sweeping power to panchayat, people's participation in the governance process and development has not yet been institutionalized. The development projects are non-participatory barring few elites and powerful. The reason for this is mainly people are not aware about the provision of Panchayati Raj and people's participation. Even though some people are aware, but they fear backlash from the elected representatives and elites. Gramsabha and panchayat meetings are mere formalities and most of the times their proceedings are recorded without their actual occurrence. The government seems apathetic to transfer the real power: fund, functions, and functionaries. This causes wastage of resources. Most of the people have very favourable attitude on participation and volunteering in development process. So there is a need for integrated and concerted action to strengthen the people's participation on the part of the state.

**Keywords:** Panchayati Raj, People's Participation, Development, Awareness, Attitude

## Introduction

Citizen's participation is a way through which the people of a country take part in the electoral and policy making process. In other words, aspiration and needs of the people can be represented and materialized through the process of political participation. Political participation indicates the voluntary participation through which people select their ruler directly or indirectly for the formation of public policy. Casting votes, seeking information, holding discussions, attending meetings, staging strikes and demonstrations, communicating with the legislators,

leaders, government servants etc are involved under these activities.

Herbert Mc. Closky says, "Participation is the important means through which consent is given or withdrawn in a democracy and the rulers, legislatures are made answerable to the ruled." Some political philosophers like J.S. Mill, Rousseau and Bentham have strongly opined and advocated for citizens' participation in various spheres of political life. Direct and indirect participation of citizens in public affairs is the lifeline of a participatory democracy.

People's participation in local self governance (LSG) ensures common citizen evaluate their own needs and participation in local project planning implementation and monitoring of the project being implemented. It is vital for the optimal utilization of the public resources and reducing corruption, by making public servants and political leaders answerable to the people. Unequal power relations are created by exclusion of weak, vulnerable, powerless from decision making which is also a cause of poverty. Involvement of the people in the LSG increases the transparency, accountability and ability of the political leaders and government servants to solve problems, creates inclusive and cohesive communities. This also leads to increased and better initiative made by the communities to address their local level issues and challenges.

Mahatma Gandhi held the view that the foundation of India's political system is PRI, and these PRIs would be decentralized and where each village will be responsible for its own affairs. Gram Swaraj was the base of this vision. Various committees were formed to make the PRI system functional and effective like –Balwant Rai Mehta (1957); V.T. Krishnamachari (1960); Takhatmal

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Jain Study Group (1966); Ashok Mehta Committee (1977); G.V.K Rao Committee (1985); Dr. L.M.Singhvi Committee (1986). Article 40 under Directive Principle of State Policy envisages village panchayats will be promoted and given necessary resources so that they can function as a unit.

The legislators, policy makers and scholars recognized that the earlier government initiatives had not yielded the desired result and the extent of rural poverty is still too large. So the need was felt to change and reform the existing structure, system and processes of government. PRIs were found as a solution by the policy makers, legislators etc to the governmental crisis. Therefore, 73rd amendment of the constitution was passed in 1992 to give constitutional sanction to establish democracy at the grass root level. Under this amendment Gramsabha was given right to conduct social audit apart from other functions and powers. Uniform three tier structure (Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad); minimum 33% of the reservation of the seats for the women, for SC/ST in proportionate to their population; formation of District Planning Committee to promote bottom-up-planning; indicative list of 29 subjects to be transferred to panchayats; formation of State Election Commission in each state to conduct supervise, direct and control the regular and smooth elections of panchayats; formation of a State Finance Commission in every State/UT every five years, to advise and strengthen finances of PRIs.

Thorough out the country, the panchayats cover about 96 per cent India's 5.8 lakh villages and nearly 99.6 per cent of rural population. This is the biggest decentralization programme of any government in the history of humanity. In line with the 73rd amendment of the constitution, Bihar conducted election in 2001 after 1978 and the last election was organized in 2011. Bihar Panchayati Raj Act 2006 was passed to give the PRIs constitutional status in Bihar and provision related 29 subjects were brought within the ambit of this act. But despite giving powers to the Panchayats (though limited) their performance is not upto the mark. Katihar is one of the most backward district of India, where this study was conducted. Even though limited fund, functions and functionaries has been transferred to the PRIs, but some flagship programmes and schemes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Backward Region Fund Grant (BRGF), Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), Mid Day Meal (MDM), Indira Gandhi Pension Yojana (IGPY), Integrated

Child Development Services (ICDS) etc are being implemented by the PRIs, where people can play vital role in their implementation, monitoring, evaluation etc. These programmes if implemented at the ground properly, they have the potential to make big positive changes. So this study will see if there is a connect between people's participation and development in rural areas.

There are numerous research works on PRI and its role in rural development by academicians, researchers in India and across the globe. Lack of people centric development in Bangladesh by Mohammad, S. N (2010). Conway, citizen influence government decision. Gloppen et al (2003) regarded democratic governance 'both a right in itself and a means of ensuring basic human rights observance. Participation makes people more responsible (Blair, 2000). Irregular gaon sabha meeting, apathy of conscious voters, unaccountable behaviour of elected representatives, no role of gaon sabha in planning but reduced role as implementing arm of government schemes only (Brouah, M, 2013). Rashid et al (2010) found a number of the people has not even heard of the Gram Sabha, let alone participation in it. Due to the constitutional pressure many states reluctantly fulfilled the formalities of decentralisation to satisfy the constitutional requirement only (D. Bhuyan, 2010).

## Objectives

- Identify and analyse the awareness and attitude of the people about certain provisions of Panchayati Raj and development schemes.
- Explore and analyse the actors and factors affecting the people's awareness on PRI, its provision and development schemes, monitoring tools.

## Methods

The present study is descriptive and mostly based on empirical methods. For the present study, semi-structured interview schedules were administered to collect data from the electorate of the Kadwa and Barsoi block. Hundred respondents were selected using stratified random sampling method from four panchayats (Shikarpur, Bijhara, Dhaparsia & Kumhari) out of 30 panchayats from Kadwa block and (Kadamgachi, Sudhani, Chaundi & Raghunathpur) out of 29 panchayats from Barsoi block.

Two FGDs one in each block with gram sabha members were conducted in Shikarpur panchayat (Kadwa block)

and Raghunathpur panchayat (Barsoi block) and secondary data like panchayat records is also used in the

study. The data was collected in the month of February, 2015.

## A Profile of the Study Area



Katihar is one of the minority concentrated district. Like other districts of Purnia Division, Katihar district is primarily rural area. Out of the total population (23, 92, 639), 90.88 percent live in the rural areas (Census, 2001). The urban population is concentrated only in Katihar (72%), Manihari (14.61%) and Barsoi (2.13%) Tehsils of the district. 44.8% of the population is muslim minority as against States 16.17%. According to the census (2001, 2011) literacy is one of the lowest not only in India but also in Bihar. Literacy of Katihar is 53.56% (Male 60.9 and Female 45.37%) (Census, 2011). Muslim female literacy is the lowest compared to any group. Human Development Indicator is one among the lowest. Rural poverty ratio in this zone is 59.3 higher than Bihar's 58.2 (1993-94). Other indicators like medical facilities, people teacher ratio in schools, per capita income, electrification

of villages, per capita power consumption etc, is one of the lowest not only in India, but also in Bihar. High birth rate, maternal mortality rate, infant mortality rate are comparatively high. Katihar is a muslim minority concentrated district (Barsoi - 72% Kadwa - 51.6%) and it is one of the most backward district. The main occupation of the people in these blocks is agriculture and about 85 per cent population depends on it.

## Findings of the study

To have a clear picture on people's awareness about PRIs and development to fulfil other objectives of the study, findings are discussed under different heads. Major findings of the study are given below:

## Awareness among the Rural People about Various Provisions of PRIs

**Table 1: Profile of the Participants**

Sex	Age		Category			Marital Status			Education				Income			Occupation						
	Age (group)	Frequency	General	OBC	ST/SC	Married	Unmarried	Widow/Widower	Illiterate	Primary/Upper-Primary	Secondary	Sr. Secondary	Graduate & above	5000 >	5001-10000	10001-20000	>20000	Service	Construction & allied	Agriculture & allied	Business	underemployed/Unemployed/Housewife
MALE	<30	9	7	1	1	4	5	-	-	2	4	2	1	6	2	1	-	1	1	4	1	2
	30-39	17	13	2	2	15	2	-	3	4	5	3	2	8	4	3	2	2	1	7	2	5
	40-49	13	9	3	1	10	-	1	3	5	3	1	1	7	3	1	1	2	-	6	1	4
	50 &>	11	8	3	-	11	-	2	4	4	2	-	1	5	3	2	1	1	-	5	1	4
FEMALE	<30	8	4	2	-	5	3	-	2	5	-	-	-	6	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	7
	30-39	18	12	4	2	17	1	-	9	7	1	-	1	17	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	16
	40-49	14	8	4	2	13	-	1	8	6	-	-	-	14	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	13
	50 &>	10	7	1	2	10	-	-	7	3	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	8

There were 100 respondents (50 male & 50 female) in the study. Further they were classified into four age cohorts. Among male the highest 17 respondents were in 30-39 age group, followed by 13 in 40-49 age group, 11 in 50 & above, and the lowest 9 in < 30 years group. For the female respondents the highest 18 were in 30-39 age group, followed by 14 in 40-49 age group, 10 in 50 & above, and the lowest 8 in < 30 years group.

In category wise classification respondents were divided into three categories – general, OBC and SC/ST. In male highest 13 respondents were in general category in 30-39 age group followed by 9 in 40-49 group, 8 in 50 & above, and 7 in < 30 age group. There were total 9 respondents in the OBC category - highest 3 each in 40-49 and 50 & above age group, 2 in 30-39 group, and 1 in < 30 age group. In SC/ST there were total 4 respondents – 2 highest in 30-39 age group. For female in general category highest 12 fall in 30-39 cohort and lowest 4 in < 30 years group. There were total 31 female respondents in general category. In OBC there were total 11 female respondents - 4 each in 30-39 and 40-49 age group. In SC/ST there were 6 respondents -2 each in all the categories except <30 age category.

In marital status total 40 males and 45 females were married. Under unmarried there were 7 males and 4 females. In the education component the table portrays that there were 10 males 26 females illiterate. Five male and 1 female are graduate. This also shows that 14 males and 1 females were secondary educated, while senior secondary educated males are 6 and none of the female are in this category.

Under the income category there were 26 males who were earning less than Rs. 5,000 per month, while 47 females were earning this amount. Twelve male and 2 females were earning between Rs. 5,001 to Rs. 10,000. Only 7 males were earning between Rs 10,001 to Rs. 20,000 and 4 males earning above Rs. 20,000, whereas none of the women were in the last two earning bracket.

In occupation category 6 males and 2 females were into service sector while 22 male and 4 females under agriculture & allied sector. Four males were doing business and none of the female was found under this head. Fifteen of the males reported they were under/unemployed. Thirty seven of the females reported that they were either housewife or under/unemployed.

## Awareness about the Panchayati Raj Institution System

interview schedule about the Panchayati Raj institution, which is related to people's participation.

Twelve questions were incorporated in the semi structured

**Table 2: Awareness about the Panchayati Raj Institution System**

Sl. No.	Awareness about the Panchayati Raj system	All		Male		Female	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Do you know eligible age to vote is 18 years?	44	56	33	17	11	39
2	Do you know eligible age to contest election is 25 years?	11	89	9	41	2	48
3	Do you know panchayat election should be held on every five years?	57	43	35	15	22	28
4	Do you know there is constitutional provision of conferring 29 subjects to the gram panchayat?	9	91	8	42	1	49
5	Do you know according to 73rd amendment of constitution there is at least 33% of seat reservation for women in panchayat election?	20	80	17	33	3	47
6	Do you know Bihar Govt. has reserved 50% of the seats for Women?	27	73	22	28	5	45
7	Do you know intervening period between two gram sabha meetings must not be more than 3 months?	5	95	5	45	-	50
8	Do you know that 1/20th of gramsabha to be required to be present to complete the quorum?	3	97	3	47	-	50
9	Do you know If a gramsabha meeting is postponed due to lack of quorum, the revised quorum in the reconvened meeting is 1/40th of gramsabha?	2	98	2	48	-	50
10	Do you know gramsabha member can vote on development issues during gramsabha meeting?	12	88	9	41	3	47
11	Do you know gramsabha can raise question on development issues during gramsabha meeting?	11	89	7	43	4	46
12	Do you know that elected panchayat members like mukhiya, sarpanch, samiteetc can be impeached by gramsabha?	3	97	3	47	-	50

Awareness about PRI related questions were incorporated in the semi structured schedule and canvassed among the respondents. When it was asked that do you know the eligible age of voting? It was found that only 44 people knew this. Out of the 50 male 33 replied in affirmative and rest in negative. For the same question only 11 females said that they knew it and overwhelming 39 said they did not. On asking the question of eligible age for contesting election; which is 25 years, only 11 people (9 male and 2 female) said that they knew it. About the question of election to be held on every five years, it was found that 57 people (35 male & 22 female) knew this.

Regarding the constitutional provision of conferring 29 subjects to the panchayats, it was found that only 9 people (8 males & 1 female) knew it. On exploring the awareness about 33% reservation of seats for women at

third tier level of governance it was discovered that only 20 people (17 males & 3 female) knew it. When asked to the respondents that Bihar government has reserved 50% of the seats for women/SC/ST in third tier governance, only 27 people (22 males & 5 females) knew it.

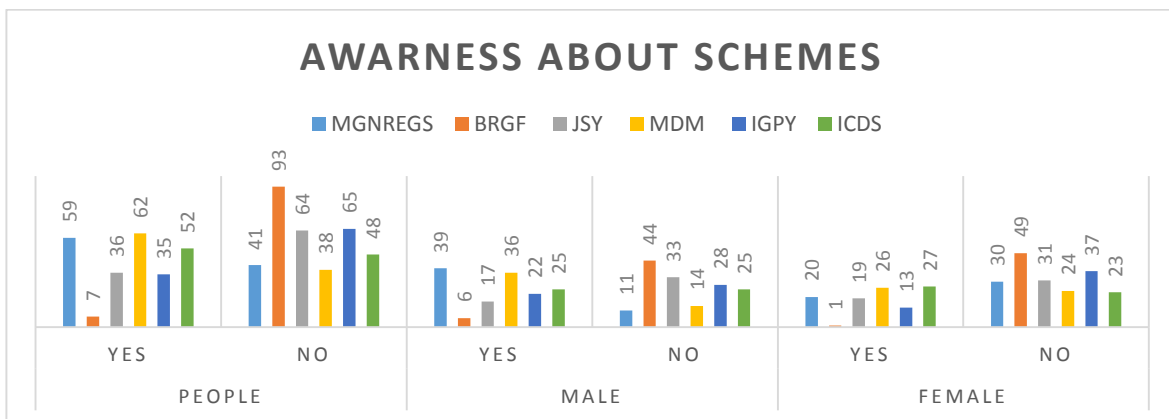
When the researcher asked about the knowledge on intervening period between two meetings must not be more than 3 months, it was identified barely 5 people (5males & no females) knew this. On asking the question of quorum of the gram sabha, which is 1/20<sup>th</sup> of the gramsabha, it was found that only 3 of male and none of the female knew it. When it was asked – did they know if a gramsabha meeting postponed due to lack of quorum, the revised quorum in the reconvened meeting is 1/40<sup>th</sup> of gramsabha? It was found that only 2 male and none of the female knew it. On question of gramsabha member

can vote on development issues during gramsabha; it was found only 12 people (9 males 3 females) knew it. It was found that only 11 people including 7 males 4 females knew that people can raise question on development issues during the gramsabha. Regarding the question of impeachment of elected panchayat members like mukhiya, sarpanch, samittee by the gramsabha, only 3 male and none of the female knew it.

### Awareness about Flagship Schemes:

Awareness about the flagship schemes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Backward Region Fund Grant (BRGF), Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), Mid Day Meal (MDM), Indira Gandhi Pension Yojana (IGPY), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) etc are given in the below charts.

**Chart 1: Awareness about Flagship Schemes**

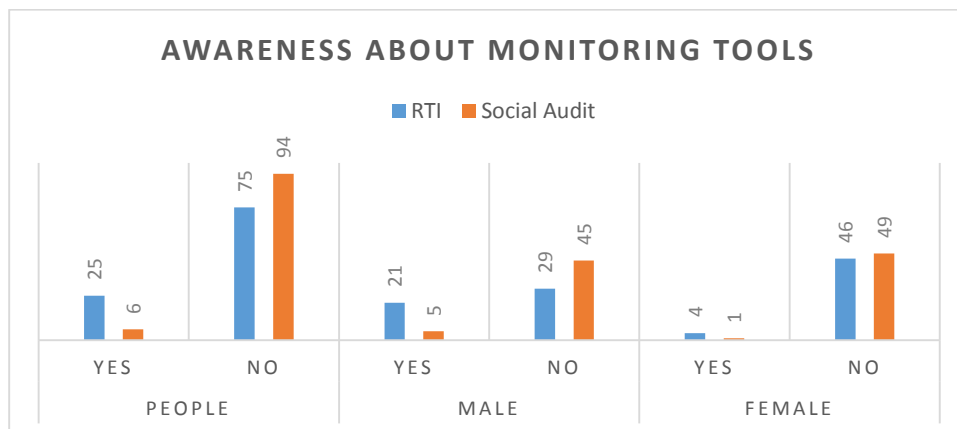


The above chart shows that only 59 people (39 males & 20 female) knew about the MGNREGS. When enquired about the BRGF scheme, it was found that only 7 people (6 males & 1 female) knew about it. About JSY, only 36 (17 male & 19 female) people knew about it. It shows that 2 more females are aware about JSY, probably because it is a female oriented scheme. About MDM, it was found that 62 people (36 male & 26 female) knew about it. On enquiring awareness about the IGPY, it was found that 35 people (22 male & 13 female) were aware about it. In case of ICDS little bit more than half (52) of the people (25 males & 27 female) have knowledge about it.

### Monitoring Tools and Its Awareness

Social audit and Right to information (RTI) is used by the activists and common citizen to dig out information, which were hitherto disposed on the whim and fancies of government officials. RTI and Social audit are powerful tools which have been bestowed upon the people of India. It is therefore, the researcher included about the awareness about the monitoring tools in this study.

**Chart 2: Awareness about Monitoring Tools**



The above chart shows awareness level among the respondents about the monitoring tools – RTI and Social Audit. It was found that only 25 people (20 male & 4 female) knew about the RTI. Regarding the awareness of the Social audit, only 6 people (5 males & 1 female) were aware about it. So awareness about RTI and social audit is very low particularly among female.

### Attitude Related to the Development of Village & Panchayat

Since, no programme can be made success and sustainable without the active participation of the people, it is worthwhile to look into the attitude related the development of the village & panchayats among the masses.

**Table 3: Attitude Related to Development of Village & Panchayat**

Attitude related to development of Village & Panchayat	People		Male		Female	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Do you want to volunteer for the development of your village?	44	52	35	11	9	41
Do you want to participate in gramsabha meeting, if informed?	36	60	32	14	4	46
Do you want to prevent corruption in development works ?	69	29	45	3	24	26
Do you want to raise question related to the development project in your village?	56	43	43	6	13	37
Do you want to monitor the project being implemented in your panchayat/village?	53	44	41	6	12	38

Five questions were given in the semi structured interview schedule to gauge the attitude of the people about the development of villages & panchayats. When it was asked to the peoples, if they want to volunteer for the development of their villages & panchayat? It was found that 44 (35 male & 9 female) people wanted to do so. Further it was found that 36 people (32 male & 4 female) participate in the gramsabha meeting, if informed.

When the interviewer asked that if they want to prevent corruption in development? It was found 69 people (45 male & 24 female) wanted to prevent the corruption in development work, if they have power to do so. It was found that 56 people (43 male & 13 female) wanted to question about the development of their villages, if they get a chance to do so. Regarding the question of the do you monitor the project being implemented in your panchayat/village, out of the 100 people 53 (41 male & 12 female) want to do so.

### Discussion

The study highlights the striking facts about the awareness and attitude of the people about Panchayati Raj System in the study area. It was evident from the study that awareness about the PRI and its provisions was very low among the people. In general it was found that awareness among female are much lower than male in all the parameter except for JSY& ICDS. Even the awareness among male and educated were low in most of the parameters.

Regarding the awareness about the eligible age for voting only 44 people (33 male 13 female) knew. The study of the Rashid et al ((2010) in his study in Gaya district of Bihar also found low awareness among the people about people’s participation in local self governance. He also found that there was very low awareness among the elected representatives. Similarly my earlier study in Katihar district found low representation and awareness among elected women representatives (Hussain, S, 2015). About the election duration 57 people (35 male & 22 female) knew. Since, elections are taking place every now and then of MP, MLA, panchayat etc, so they have heard from the fellow people about the duration of panchayat election and eligible ages for voting. These two questions were known more to the educated people, but these were also known to some uneducated people also.

Regarding the age of contesting election, it was found that awareness was very low across the gender. Similarly both male and female were not much aware about the constitutional provision of the 33% reservation of the seats and devolution of 29 subjects to Panchayat. Only 2 female who knew this about the eligible age for contesting election are from educated background. One have studied political science in graduation in a local college and other has studied Social science at masters level from a central university in Delhi. The provision of 50% reservation for women, and

SC/ST in proportionate to their population was known to less than half (22) of the male and only 5 females. This is known to relatively more people including females due to discussion with fellow citizen. This is known to the people who are more interested in politics, though some of them are not educated. There is no any awareness generation on these nor any gram sabha held.

Regarding the question of intervening period between two meetings, which should not exceed 3 months the awareness was very low. Regarding the quorum, revised quorum in case of rescheduled meeting due to postponement of the meeting for lack of quorum, voting right of gram sabha members during gram sabha, provision of impeachment of the elected members – awareness on all these were very low.

Similarly awareness about the flagship schemes like MGNREGS, BRGF, JSY, MDM, IGPY, ICDS etc among the people were very low. Since, MGNREGS is one of the important programme and it is being implemented in large scale, it was relatively known to more people and mostly male, where as BRGF, JSY schemes were known to few people. Awareness on JSY & ICDS were known to relatively more female than male. This seems due to being female oriented programme and visit of ASHA and Anaganwadi workers, who happens to be female and prefer to talk to female. It was also found females who reside more near to the PHCs were more aware about it (In Barsoi block - Raghunathpur & Chaundi Panchayat. In Kadwa block Dhaparsia & Kumhari Panchayat). But in case of the people of hinterland, it was known to very few people, probably IEC were not reaching them and in some cases the PHCs were inconveniently located and inaccessible. In case of Kadwa block people residing on trans Mahanada river do not use the services of PHC and comparatively known to few people about JSY. People of Shikarpur Panchayat (trans Mahanada panchayat) uses no services PHC where as people of Dhaparsia, Kumhari were using more services as it is easily accessible from the latter panchayats of PHC. So easy accessibility of institutions and services are important factors of their awareness and uses. In case of the BRGF, it was known only to few people. Even among the males it was known mostly to highly 6 males. It was known mostly to highly educated people.

In case of MDM it was known to 62 people (36 male & 26 female), as most of the children were enrolled in schools people learnt about it from the schools and also

teachers visit their homes and telling them sending their children to the schools. Teachers also tell them about other concomitant benefits like provision of MDM, free dress, books etc. Thanks to the implementation of the right to education. About the IGPY, it was also known to only 35 people (22 male and 13 female). It is usually known to people who are into the higher age bracket, more educated and into the service sector.

The possible reason for the low awareness about the provisions of PRIs, programmes, schemes, low level of education, awareness were low literacy in the study area, lack of active functional NGOs etc. Other factors of awareness are accessibility of institutions their services, schemes etc. Even among the educated class awareness was very low. It was found who have studied from some central university, Patna university etc are more aware. Even it was found that the mostly students from law, social science background particularly of political science were more aware about the provisions of the PRIs programme, schemes. But this was limited among the females. It was found that females were more unaware about than male. It was even found that some of the female though graduate that too in social sciences were not aware at all or very poorly aware on PRI and its provision. The possible reason for low awareness among the female are the poor quality of education in the local areas, distance from the colleges, due to which they were not attending the colleges regularly and mere enrolled in the colleges to take degrees, poor quality of education, low exposure to outside world, traditional and patriarchal system. Volunteering was also found low among women probably also due to the above reason. In many of the cases many of the male graduate were from local colleges were also found not having much information about the PRIs and schemes, but some who are politically interested they have some information, which is discussed with the fellow people.

People who are into government services, were found to be more aware about the provision of PRIs, schemes etc. It was simply stated by the people that they never came across such provision of the PRIs and schemes. It means there was lack of awareness generation on part of the government.

It was found that the electorates were hardly informed of the gram sabha and panchayat meetings. So this was possible reason for low awareness of provisions of PRIs, schemes etc. They were never told about the importance

and necessity of their participation. They did not feel confident and know where and how to participate. Even it was found that many of the elected panchayat representatives (including males) were not aware about the Panchayati Raj System and schemes. Elected female representatives were mere proxies to their male family members, relatives etc. They were not much aware about the provisions of PRIs and schemes included in this study. Low awareness and participation of female representatives was also found in one of my earlier study in Kadwa block of the Katihar district. The same study also found that Panchayat and gramsabha meetings were mere formalities and their proceedings were recorded without their actual occurrence (Hussain, S, 2015). Patnaik in Orissa also found that records of the meeting despite they did not happen (Patnaik, P 2005).

Manoj Boruah (2013) found in his study in Assam the reasons for failure of Panchayat Raj Institutions like awareness of the people about Panchayat activities due to the absence of the favourable environment; gramsabhas were not regularly constituted; gaon sabha has no role in annual planning and budget preparation of the panchayats; lack of proper circulation and information of the different schemes of the government to the common people. It seems that government is not interested in generating awareness on the provision of the panchayat, its power, functions, and role of the panchayats and people's participation in it. Above all it is also not interested to provide adequate fund, functions and functionaries to the panchayats.

During 2 FGDs in Shikarpur (Kadwa block) & Raghunathpur (Barsoi block) panchayat, it was discovered that one brick layered pucca pond was built under MGNREGS. Pre and post photos were taken by panchayat officials and then bricks from the pond were immediately taken away to the home of one of the panchayat official. There is another example of the corruption, that after the devastating flood of 2010, relief package was announced by the state government, but they never reached to the actual beneficiaries. It was given in another panchayat, where there was less need of it, but not to them who suffered more loss to their crops, properties due to flood. They also said that under MGNREGS kutcha roads are built, but soil are not filled to the sanctioned level as shown in the cemented board raised alongside the road. In one recent storm, government announced compensation package, but panchayat officials, representatives take commission for giving it to the people. The elected

panchayat representatives said that there was share of block officials in schemes, so they cannot spend the sanctioned amount of schemes. Commission is charged by panchayat officials & elected representatives even for normal work like issuing birth certificate, death certificate, ID cards to the migrant workers etc.

Moreover, elected panchayat representatives have to perform lot of panchayat works, as they have not been given adequate staffs in the panchayat, they spend most of their time in public work, and it is hard for them pursue another vocation to earn their livelihood. They are paid pittance for huge amount of the works they perform like documentation, records keeping, selection of beneficiaries and interaction with the beneficiaries, visiting blocks, implementation, monitoring of the projects etc. Ward members are not paid any compensation. Even the article of the Nirguni et al (2013) highlights that Panchayati Raj in Bihar is controlled by the bureaucrats and the people did not have much power and say in it. There is no sufficient fund functions and functionaries for the panchayat. The lacks of the functionaries keep elected panchayat representatives occupied in office work. Yet the government fixes no salaries and honorarium like MPs and MLAs (Nirguni, R, et, al. 2013). Boruah (2013) also found in his study in Asam lack of sufficient staff in the panchayats. So they admitted that there was no way except cornering some benefits from the schemes & projects being implemented by them, meant for the public welfare. Though some people admitted that the level of corruption has come down like in case of PDS, now they were getting kerosene regularly, unlike past when they did not get it for months.

The people want development in their constituencies irrespective of their education, but lack of awareness was prevalent among them. They think that it was inappropriate if public money meant for the welfare of the public and development was being wasted, diverted, and misappropriated. So despite knowing they kept silent fearing backlash from elected representatives and officials, who were considered powerful. Even the educated kept silent. Conscious voters were not interested in the local affairs was also found by Borah in his study in Asam (Boruah, 2013).

Despite their high level of participation in election, their participation in planning, execution and monitoring the projects, schemes was very low. This has been also highlighted by one survey of Institute of Human

Development (2008) despite low access to media like TV, newspaper their participation in election process was very high. It was probably due to the word of mouth publicity and some of the enlightened citizen.

## Conclusion

Policy seems to be divorced from the ground reality as more and more power is being transferred to PRIs. There seems no provision of making people aware about their role, responsibilities, liabilities, entitlements in PRIs. The government spends crore of rupees for implementation of programmes, schemes. But the key stakeholder i.e. beneficiaries' role are almost negligible in planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation of the programmes, schemes.

Majority of the elected representatives particularly female are also not aware of the constitutional provision related to panchayats. Current programmes and schemes are not being implemented optimally. Government seems disinterested in transferring real power to the people. Therefore the elected representatives, officials like panchayat, block etc. like panchayat, block etc. and few influential rural people corner benefits, which keep the poor and the marginalized outside the development process. It is necessary for the participation of citizens in local governance, they need to understand and want to exercise their right to participate in it. Common people need to feel confident and know where and how to participate, while government should facilitate their participation. Ensuring people's participation in local governance improves accountability and the ability of local authorities to solve problems, creates more inclusive and cohesive communities and increases the number and quality of initiatives made by communities. There is a need for massive awareness program in collaboration with local Non-Government Organizations (NGOs).

Project evaluation system both by government officials, and people should be started to bring transparency in local project management system and to ensure accountability in the activities of panchayats - programmes, schemes. Implementation of guidelines which, facilitate people's participation will promote and encourage involvement of beneficiaries in local development projects. Recommendation of the gram sabha should be made binding on the panchayat. So that the people feel that their

demands and needs are respected. The government should provide adequate fund, functions and functionaries. Adequate compensation for their work, sufficient training to the representatives should be ensured and controlling the executive fiat.

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