

# Human research development: A case study of an NGO in Assam

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## ABSTRACT

The present paper discusses about development followed by human development. Concept like human research development has also got due importance in the paper citing its need in context to present day condition. The paper has further highlighted the contribution of an NGO named “Society for North East Handmade Paper Development (SNEHPAD)” of Assam, India in the field of Human Research Development through a case study. The paper has been concluded with few suggestions made by the authors on the basis of the data collected through case study.

**Keywords:** Development, human research development, NGOs.

## Introduction

Development is a multi-dimensional process involving reorganization and reorientation of entire economic and social system for improving the quality of all human lives with three equally important aspects. These are: raising peoples’ living standards, creating conditions conducive to the growth of peoples’ self-esteem and increasing peoples’ freedom to choose by enlarging the range of their choice variables. The real wealth of the Nation is its people and the basic purpose of development is to create an environment for the people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. But it is often forgotten in the pursuit of material and financial gain. The liberalization process of our economy has helped to reach a higher growth rate in 1990s and it is through the development of agriculture and industry where maximum of our manpower is engaged. But this has not developed in our country equitably. As a result human development has suffered. The UNDP has laid emphasis for the development of human being so it has introduced a broad approach to improve human well-being covering all aspects of human life for both

rich and poor countries. The UNDP introduced HDI in 1990 and since then it is observed that the GDP and HDI is having a positive correlation in India.

## **Human Research Development**

The emphasis has been shifted to an individual, so as to pave passage for research investigators to make research on the potentials, skills, knowledge and abilities of human being followed by capitalization of all these for their own development. Human Research Development means a thorough systematic and scientific study of means pertinent to increase in GNP. Saving, investment, trade, business and other macroeconomic indicators of growth are important to the extent that they contribute and accept as means of raising the quality of life of the people. Once these people acquire the required capability they can contribute further for raising the macroeconomic indicators of the country/region. This strategy of development is extremely important from the point of view of this region, as people seem to be alienating themselves more and more from the process of development. To get more productive results in the field of H.R.D the Government of India is strenuously entrusting different research institutes and NGOs to make fruitful research investigations on Human development.

## **NGOs and Human Development**

NGOs are becoming quite prominent in the field of development in recent decades. The World Bank defines NGOs as private organizations that pursue activities to relieve sufferings, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development. According to World Bank, since the mid 1970s, the NGO sector in both developed and developing countries has experienced exponential growth. In the era of globalization, successful implementation of development programmes requires an appropriate policy framework, formulation of suitable plan schemes and effective delivery machinery. In this broad arena of development the work and skill of Non-profit organizations (NPOs)/ NGOs have received direct attention during the last two decades. Moreover, in recent years there are certain evidences that, the people at grassroots levels are organized through the process of social mobilization with active involvement of NGOs in their own programmes. Active participation of NGOs in developmental activities all over the world is one of the most encouraging trends in recent development experience. The entry of NGOs in development process represents an important response to needs resulted due to the overburdened government and underutilized people power. NGOs have not only been successful in filling up a critical investigation vacuum, but they have also demonstrated their overall effectiveness in which proper groups are finding

low cost solution in improving the use of local resources and in encouraging self-reliance. Largely they have developed durable partnership with the Government.

## **Case Study of Society for North East Handmade Paper Development (SNEHPAD)**

### ***Methodology***

The author conducted an in-depth study on SNEHPAD by adopting a methodology with an objective to understand the contributions made by SNEHPAD in the field of Human Research Development and villagers' perception. She developed an interview guide to interact with the NGO functionaries and used a structured interview schedule to gather data from villagers. The secondary data has been collected from different literatures.

### ***About SNEHPAD***

SNEHPAD is an NGO, registered under the Society's Registration Act 1860 in the year 2004-05, rendering services for livelihood promotion, educational, health development of the poor people of the Jorhat district of Assam, India. They have been implementing different programmes in the field. Before implementation of the project in the field, the NGO does a research work in the project area with an objective to understand the socio-economic condition of the people, identify the possessed knowledge, skill, capabilities of human being followed by identification of resources of the project area. Recently SNEHPAD has made a research on livelihood promotion in the Sonwal Village of the Jorhat district of Assam, India, and the findings are discussed below.

### **Sonowal Village at a glance**

New Sonowal area is situated at the Assam-Nagaland border and is approximately 30 km away from Jorhat town. The New Sonowal area consists of eleven villages having 760 families and having a population of 3,814 approx. (data as of December 2010). Most of the people of the area are self-employed with a very low annual income. This area has also been selected because some NGO based activities are pro-active in nearby areas and also in some portion of the selected area. Out of 760 families only 56 families are engaged in Govt. jobs, 11 families are engaged in private jobs, 499 families are self-employed on daily-income basis, 61 families are engaged in business, 10 families have retired from Govt. employment while the remaining 123 families are engaged in agriculture and allied activities. 88% of the total population of the selected locality has per capita income below the National Per Capita Income. Moreover, the incomes are seasonal for the 499 families which

are self-employed on daily income basis. It is therefore obvious from the above data that there is ample scope to take initiatives for sustainable human research development.

***Contribution of SNEHPAD in the field of Human Research and Development***

The contribution of SNEHPAD in the field of human research development is enormous. The NGO selects the village, identifies the areas for research, conducts baseline survey for appraising the resources and needs. Interview schedule is framed in connection to the selected areas of research. Data is collected and analysed and an implementation model is developed on the basis of analysis. So here in the Sonowal village, the NGO has identified 19 broad headings namely Annual Income, Health, Nutrition and Food habits, Energy Sources, Cooking Procedure, Resource – Biomass, Resource – Water, Resource- Soil, Vegetation, Waste, Non-farm Skill, Market, Communication, Education System, Forestry Products, Agricultural Development, Livestock and Animal, Transportation System and Disaster Management, with an objective to determine and analyse the local needs, local resources available and action plan to bridge the gaps through positive efforts.

**Table 1. Findings of the village survey**

Broad Headings	Findings
Annual Income	The average income of the people of the area is much below the national average in terms of per capita income.
Health Issue	The problems related to health are either lack of information and awareness, or shortage in some of the basic infrastructures needed for living. In particular, the problems are related with Drinking water, Sanitation and Cooking Procedure.
Nutrition and Food habits	Due to their low levels of income, certain families cannot even afford two square meals a day. Another major problem is that the maximum number of families does not have their own cultivable lands.
Energy Sources	As more than 50% families of the area do not have access to electricity, the available bio-mass resources are exploited by them.
Cooking Procedure	Almost all the people of the area use traditional chullas for cooking and a large amount of energy is wasted. Lack of public awareness in terms of efficient and hygienic means of cooking is also an important matter of energy waste.

Resource Bio-mass	About 90-91% of the households use biomass as a fuel for cooking meals as well as to prepare food for their cattle and livestock. The people use the biomass as an exclusive source of energy. Apart from cooking, people also use biomass as the source of heat during winter.
Resource water	The main source of water is the underground water. It is found that the quality of drinking water in that area is very poor and it causes a number of diseases. Moreover the filtration systems used by the people of the area are very crude and unscientific.
Resource Soil	It is observed during survey, that different types of food grains and vegetables are grown in the area. It is found that the soils of the area are fertile for different types of vegetation.
Vegetation and Agriculture Development	The area presents a very poor scenario with regard to agricultural development. The main problems for the lack of agriculture are:- Loans from the banks or credit agencies are not generally accessible to farmers in this area for which they can't exploit the modern system for cultivation. Also lack of education, out dated thinking and prejudiced cultural values are also important problems.
Waste	Most of the families of the area do not have a proper toilet, so certain sanitary wastes are generated. The problem of waste disposal can be solved by creating proper awareness among the public and introducing some low cost sanitary systems.
Non-Farm Skill	Non-farm skills have been playing an important role in employment generation. Some people of the area are traditionally expert weavers. Though they weave traditionally and their products are well designed, of better quality and good looking too, some problems still exist due to which it is not a commercial activity as yet
Market	Though different types of markets are available, the main market concern in the area is the Physical Retail Market. The village farmer's market which prevails in the surveyed area is a very ordinary type of market where a few shops are permanent and the other shops are temporary. The temporary shops operate only once or twice a week.
Communication	Only one post office prevails in the surveyed area. There are a number of public Telephone Booths in the area which help the people to communicate. Now-a-days mobile connectivity is gaining popularity, particularly with the younger generations.

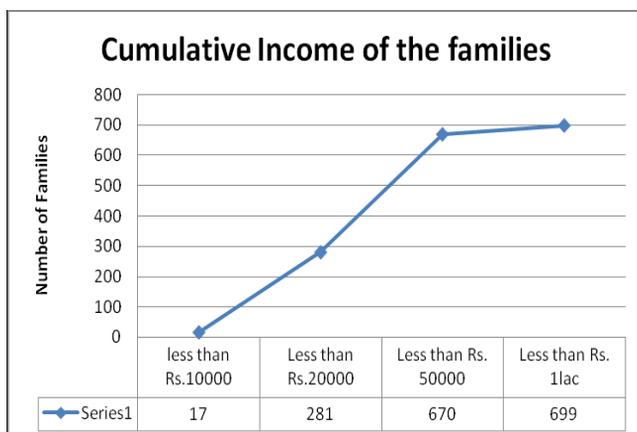
Education System	The education system of the village is not satisfactory. Majority of the children are not availing education facility because of their poverty. From the teacher-student ratio, it is clear that the required number of teachers is also not available in all the schools.
Forestry Products	The people of the area generally use fire-wood from the nearby forests. It is seen that a large portion of the area in and around the villages surveyed are covered by the forest. These forests are extensively used by the villagers for the collection of fire-wood. The problem of uncontrolled use of forestry products can be solved by using the different modes of non-conventional sources of energy.
Livestock and animals	Almost all the families maintain livestock and animals, but due to some deterrent problems like lack of capital to invest for maintaining livestock and animals on commercial basis and also due to lack of proper scientific knowledge, they cannot use these as a source of income. Lack of veterinary doctor for consultation in regards to animal diseases is also a major problem.
Transportation System	Transportation facilities in the form of auto riskshaws, tempos, public transport etc though available but are for a limited period of 12 hours throughout the day. Though the main road connectivity to the area is pitched and well developed but the country side roads are still “kachha” roads. So there is a scope for improvement of the roads.
Disaster Management	The selected area is not affected by natural disasters like flood, earthquake etc. Since the entire North East India is situated in earthquake zone-V, there is always a common risk of earthquake. As there are no multi storied buildings in the area under survey, the risk of disaster due to earthquake is limited. There is not much scope for any man-made disasters also.

The above data has been collected through field survey by SNEHPAD. Further an interview schedule was prepared with related questions on 19 different broad headings. These interview schedules have been filled up through door to door survey of all families residing in all the 11 villages of New Sonowal area of the Assam-Nagaland border. The responses of the villagers have been interpreted graphically to get the composite idea of each of the areas of analysis.

### Analysis

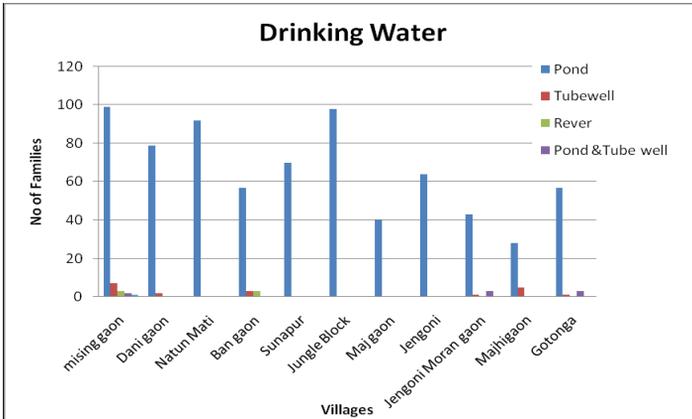
- The income level of 51.2% of the families lies in the range of ₹ 20000.00 – 50000.00 annually and that of 34.7% of the families lies in the range of ₹ 10000.00 – 20000.00 annually. In terms of absolute numbers, out of the 760

families, income of 389 families lies in the range of ₹ 20000 – ₹ 50000 and 264 families lies in the range of ₹ 10000 to ₹ 20000, 29 families lies in the range of ₹ 50000 to ₹ 1 lac and 61 families lies above ₹ 1 lac while still 17 families lies below ₹ 10000.



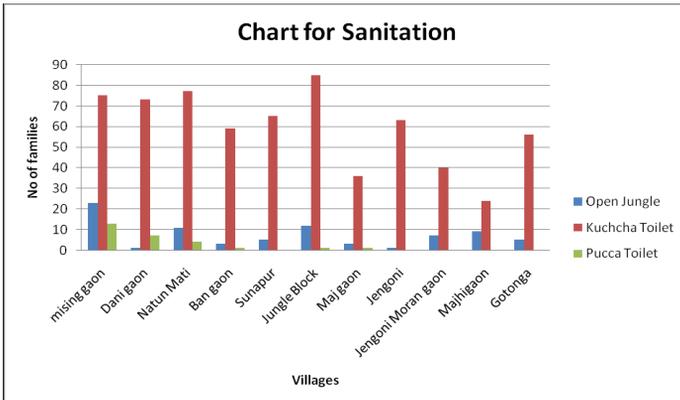
**Figure 1. Cumulative Income of the Families**

- Till today many people are using only kerosene for lighting purpose. In New Sonowal village, out of 111 families 49 families use kerosene, while 62 families use both kerosene and electricity, in Dani Gaon, out of 81 families, 25 families use kerosene and 56 families use both electricity and kerosene, in Natun Mati, out of 92 families, 62 families use kerosene while 30 families use both electricity and kerosene; in Ban Gaon, out of 63 families, 55 families use kerosene, 7 families use electricity and kerosene, while one family uses solar light lighting and kerosene. In Sunapur, out of 70 families, 26 families use kerosene, 44 families use electricity and kerosene. In Jungle Block, out of 98 families, 41 families use kerosene while 57 families use both.
- Out of 760 families of that area (all the eleven villages) 727 families use pond, 19 families use tube well, 6 families use river and 8 families use both pond and tube well as their primary source of water. About 95% people of that area who avail their drinking water from pond using simple filtration (sand filtration), are not conscious about pure drinking water and the various diseases which may occur from drinking impure water. As a matter of fact, it was found that they frequently suffer from water-borne diseases like Jaundice, Diarrhea, Typhoid, and Gastroenteritis etc. A graphic representation of the number of families per village using the different types of water sources is given below.



**Figure 2. Sources of Drinking Water**

- Out of 760 families 27 families use sanitary latrines, 653 families are using non sanitary latrine and the remaining 80 families are using the jungle as their latrine. A graphic representation of the number of families per village using the different types of sanitary toilets is given below.



**Figure 3. Types of Sanitation**

- Out of 760 families, 695 families use firewood for heating and cooking, 63 families use both L.P.G and firewood, 2 families use firewood and Gobar gas.
- Out of 760 households, 91 households in the Jungle block area use only traditional chullas for cooking purposes, which records the highest number of households surveyed, in different places, using only traditional chullas for their cooking purposes.

- Out of 760 families, 123 families are fully engaged in cultivation as their primary source of income.
- Less than 50% of the families have their own cultivation land, but the cultivations are done using old techniques.
- In more than 80% cases, vegetable farming has been observed to be done for the purpose of self consumption. Only a small number of families carry out cultivation for commercial purposes.
- People of the area are traditionally expert weavers, producing good quality traditional clothes but having limited designs. Due to lack of business acumen, lack of adequate capital, lack of modern equipments and lack of innovative designs skills, the weavers cannot harness their quality weaving skills commercially, thus lacking a good source of income.
- Majority of the children do not avail the existent education facilities which is mainly due to the fact that they belong to very poor families and are expected to help their parents in running the household and cultivation related works on a day-to-day basis.

## **Conclusion**

The above discussion has made it clear that development is possible when a human being is developed. A human being can only be developed when his/her hidden qualities are addressed and this is possible only through research. Because of this now a day Human Research Development has become the buzzard word. It is the human behaviour which can give a positive and negative impetus to any effort. So the research institutes and NGOs who are engaged in research activities need to follow the same, rigorously to maintain a balance between human and its behaviour through facts and figures. The study has also highlighted the contribution of SNEHPAD in the field of HRD. To improve the social, economical, physical condition of a human being the whole village had been surveyed. NGO had been facilitated with multifarious information related to problems, resources to fight problems through identification of skills, knowledge, abilities of a human being through scientific study of the selected village. During conversation, the villagers too addressed the strenuous effort taken by the NGO for the promotion of human being through the utilization of their own assets. As a result, an individual could realize his/her unexplored potentials and get motivated to utilize these potentials in a more productive way. In this direction few suggestions can be made to improve the quality of life.

## **For Income Generation**

1. Small or Micro Level Industry / Common Facility Centre (CFC) on Weaving and related processes to address the weaving skill of people of that area.
  - This centre will also work in the mode of a business incubation centre and innovative promotions will be made in terms of new design, fashion technology incorporations, etc.
  - The centre will work on a profit business model.
  - Experts from organizations like National Institute of Design (NID) will be hired for the development of new designs and also for the promotion of the business, both in national and international markets.
2. Agriculture based Micro Level Industry for processing of Mushroom, Different Local Spices etc.
3. Skill Development Training Programme like Masonry, Carpentry, Plumbing, Welding, Electrician etc.

## **Regarding Health Related Issue**

1. Community based water purification system or Individual water purification system based on some simple technology to be handled by the villagers.
2. Low cost scientific means of sanitation has to be implemented.

## **Regarding Energy Related Issue**

On analysing Energy and Cooking Procedure and other energy related issues the following suggestions can be provided

1. Utilization of biomass, particularly as bio-gasification can be used as a potential source of energy.
2. Solar energy utilization on community basis or individual basis is suggested as another source of energy. Solar energy can also be used for cooking purposes. Programmes like Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission of Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Govt. of India can be linked here.
3. Direct utilization of biomass in the traditional manner is very less efficient. It is therefore suggested that, improved and energy efficient chullas can be used for the purpose of cooking.

4. Some awareness programmes can be arranged, particularly for the women working in the kitchens to create awareness regarding health related issues.

## **Regarding Agricultural, Live Stocks and Animal and other similar Issues**

1. Science and technology interventions should be incorporated in the traditional processes of agriculture. In particular, irrigation systems have to be implemented.
2. People should be motivated to go in for different types of cropping throughout the year and also make business out of agriculture.
3. Providing guidance and support to opt for the cultivation of high value crops with export potential.
4. Scientific ways for maintaining and generating the animal live-stock not only for self consumption but also for commercial purpose. In this regard, training can also be provided, particularly for poultry, piggery, fishery, dairy etc.

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