

ROLE OF GRAM PANCHAYAT FOR RURAL POVERTY ALLEVIATION THROUGH GOVERNMENT SCHEMES- A CASE STUDY IN GOPINATHPUR-I GRAM PANCHAYAT, DHANIAKHALI, HOOGHLY, WEST BENGAL

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Abstract: Poverty is a curse for human society, particularly now-a-days, when India is achieving much in space-science also. Most of the Indian population live in rural areas, so we can't ignore the institutional responsibilities for eradicating rural poverty. For present research work Gopinathpur-I Gram Panchayat under Dhaniakhali CD Block of Hooghly District has been taken into consideration. Panchayat is the micro-level institution which is the representative of the Government and the implementing authority of all the grass root level projects adopted by the Government. Through the survey work it can be clearly seen that the institutional participation is vibrant for rural poverty alleviation in the study area.

Keywords: Poverty, rural, Panchayat, alleviation

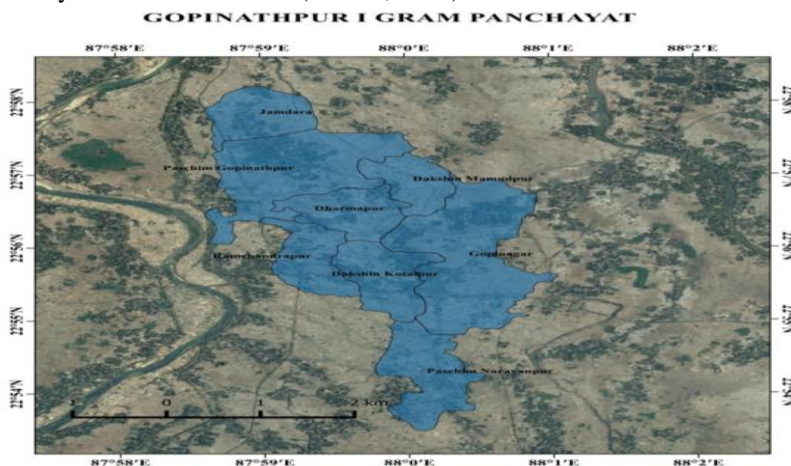
Introduction:

In Indian Constitution under its Directive Principal of State Policy in Article 38 it is clearly mentioned that state shall promote the welfare of the people in terms of justice, social, economical and political perspective. It has also been mentioned that state shall also minimise the inequalities in income and endeavour to eliminate inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities. Article 40 emphasises for formation of village panchayat with such power and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government (Mukherjee & Mukherjee 2008).

The Gram Panchayat is the lowest layer in three tier rural administration system. It has been empowered to identify the beneficiaries for different schemes and programmes of the government. Here Gopinathpur-I Gram Panchayat is found to be playing the same role as mentioned in Indian Constitution and following the instructions as per Government of India and Government of West Bengal. Several governmental schemes, like Indira AawasYojona, MGNREGA, Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme etc. are running for eradicating rural poverty.

Study area:

Gopinathpur-I Gram Panchayat has been selected as the study area. It is under the jurisdiction of Dhaniakhali Block of Hugli district, West Bengal. The Panchayat area is constituted by eight mouzas viz., Dakshin Kotalpur (J.L. no. 53), Dakshin Mamudpur (J.L. no. 44), Dharampur (J.L. no. 45), Gopinagar (J.L. no. 43), Jamdara (J.L. no. 47), Pachim Gopinathpur (J.L. no. 46), Pachim Narayanpur (J.L. no. 55), and Ramchandrapur (J.L. no. 52). Total area of the Panchayat is 1322.87 hectares (Census, 2011).



Source: Google Earth

The study area lies between 22^o54'N to 22^o58'N and 87^o58'E to 88^o01'E. River Damodar is flowing at the western part of the panchayat. The study area is situated on the lower flood plain of Ganga basin. It is a highly fertile agricultural land enriched by sandy loam soil.

Literature Review:

The economic concept of poverty, in terms of external circumstances, conditions a person's behaviour he displays in economic transactions, buying consumption items, selling productive services, securing professional advices, etc. (Watts, 1964). There exists an inverse relationship between economic growth and poverty and the structural reforms can increase the rate of economic growth and consequently reduce poverty (Garza-Rodriguez, 2018).

As per some provisions of Indian Constitution in its Directive Principles of State Policy the state may initiate programmes towards the betterment of the poor people (Mukherjee & Mukherjee 2008). The provision of panchayat system laid in Indian Constitution under Article 243A to 243O (Bakshi, 2015). West Bengal Legislative Assembly passed Panchayat Act in 1973. This Act introduced 3-tier Panchayat system. The Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 (73rd amendment) inserts detailed provisions in respect of panchayat system (Mukherjee & Mukherjee 2008).

Government initiated programmes for the betterment of standard of living of the poor people are also observed in Latin American countries. It has also been noticed in UNESCO report that the student enrolment ratio increased as a reflection of those programmes (Gonzales, 2015).

Database and Method:

All the secondary data are collected from District Census Handbook Hugli 2011, Houselisting and housing census 2011 and Gopinathpur-I Gram Panchayat office. All the implemented schemes are verified through field survey by the author. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses are used as research method. Suitable maps and cartographic techniques are used.

Result and Discussion:

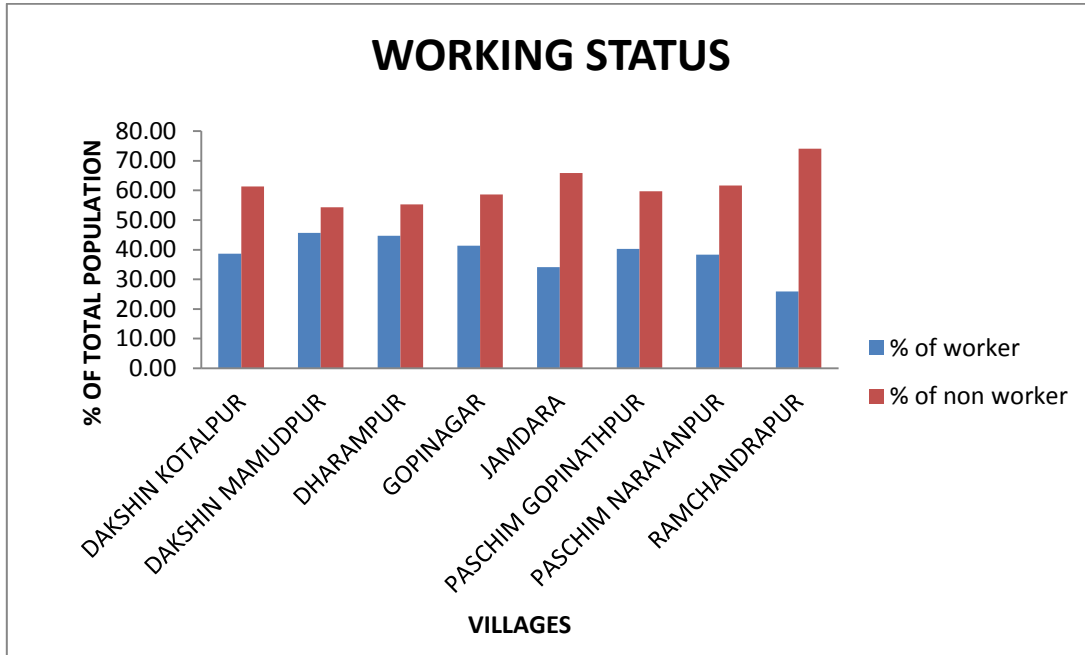
Demographical scenario: As per the Census 2011 report the total population of Gopinathpur-I Gram Panchayat is 18,702. It has total number of 4415 household. The sex ratio is 988 female per 1000 male. Among the total population 35.41% and 3.40% belong to Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe categories respectively.

Some detail information based on Census 2011 about the villages is given below:

Village Name	Area in Hec.	No. of Household	Total population	% of Male population	% of Female population	% of SC population	% of ST population
Dakshin Kotalpur	127.93	335	1574	51.52	48.48	45.49	10.23
Dakshin Mamudpur	88.8	283	1247	50.84	49.16	13.39	0.88
Dharampur	110.06	251	1115	50.31	49.69	51.84	0.00
Gopinagar	352.17	1323	5424	50.18	49.82	39.53	7.06
Jamdara	112.07	258	1153	47.53	52.47	30.18	2.34
Paschim Gopinathpur	284.56	893	3825	50.27	49.73	46.41	0.34
Paschim Narayanpur	154.72	737	3081	50.86	49.14	18.37	0.19
Ramchandrapur	92.56	335	1283	49.88	50.12	25.57	2.73
Total	1322.87	4415	18702	50.29	49.71	35.41	3.4

Census 2011 reveals that the villages have population range 1153 to 3825 along with a greater concentration of 5424 in Gopinagar. Two among the eight villages have scheduled population more than 50% of the total population, while the rests are ranging from 14.27 to just below 50%.

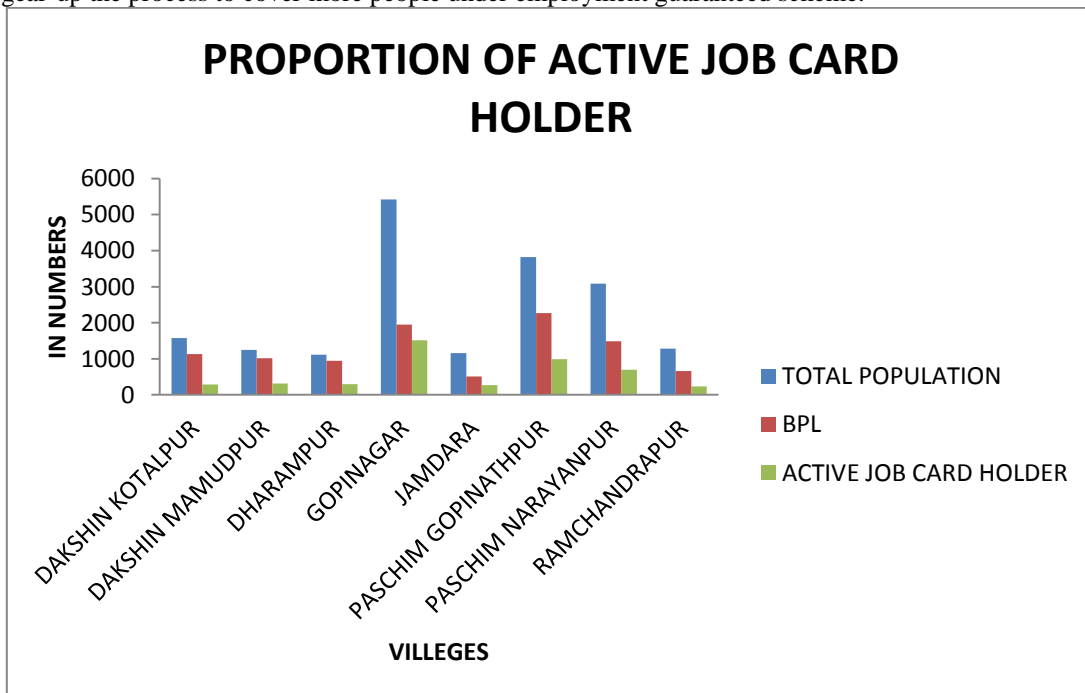
Working status:The working status shows that all the villages are having less than 50% of the total population as working population. Moreover out of the total working population a very high concentration in agricultural work participation is being found and most of them are agricultural labourer.



Source: District Census Handbook Hugli 2011

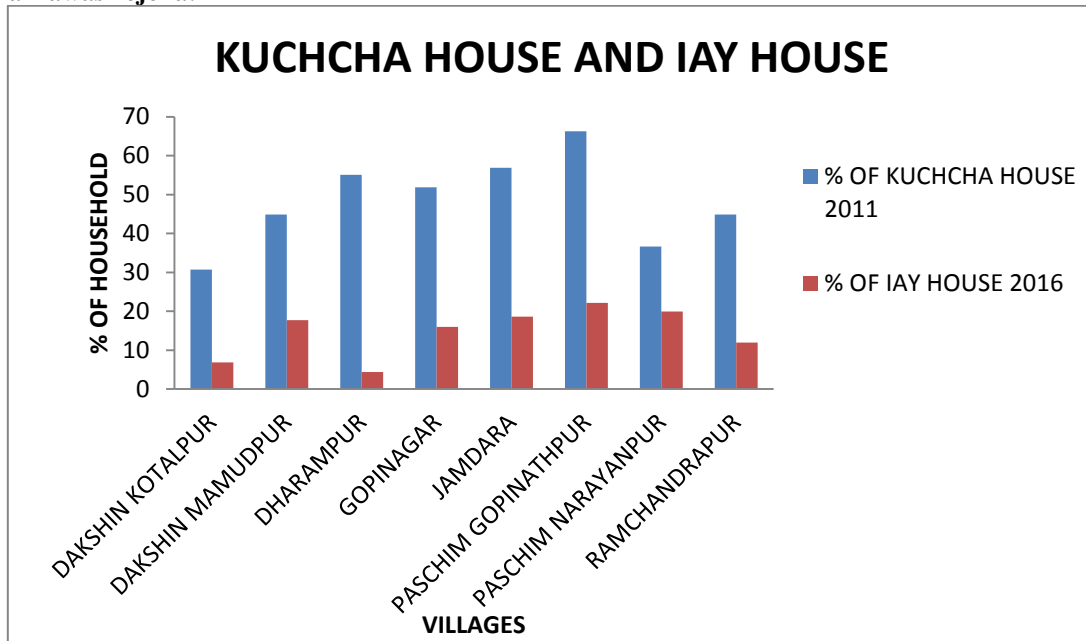
The Monthly Per-capita Consumption Expenditure (MPCE) of Rs. 972 in rural areas constitute the new poverty line at all India level as per the recommendation of Expert Group constituted by Planning Commission (Rangarajan, 2014).

Four out of eight villages have BPL population above 50% of the total population; it reaches even upto 84% also. These villages viz., Dakshin Kotalpur, Dakshin Mamudpur, Dharampur and Ramchandrapur are also lagging in distribution of Active Job Card of MGNREGA scheme among the poor people. While four villages have BPL population below 50% of the total population except Paschim Gopinathpur but they are quite in a better position in terms of Active Job Card possession among the poor. So the institution of local administration may gear-up the process to cover more people under employment guaranteed scheme.



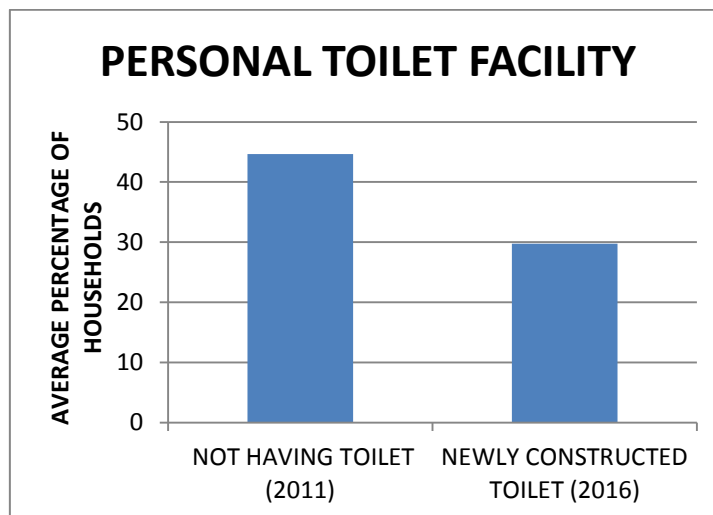
Source: District Census Handbook Hugli 2011 and Gopinathpur-I Gram Panchayat Office

Indira AawasYojona:

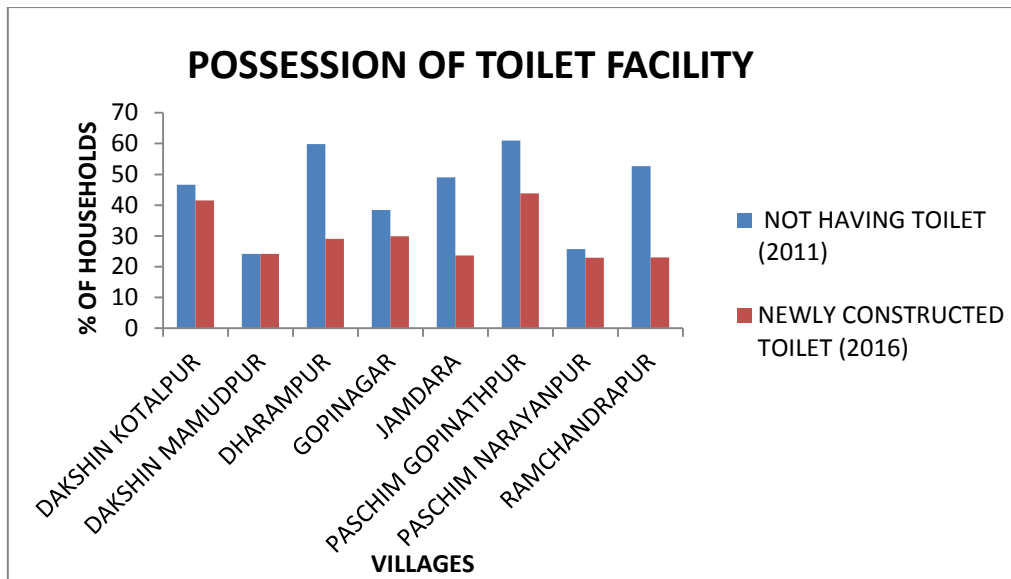


Source: Houselisting and housing census, West Bengal 2011 and Gopinathpur-I Gram Panchayat Office Houselisting and housing census, West Bengal 2011 shows that four out of eight villages have more than 50% of kuchcha houses, while remaining four have less than 50%. Maximum kuchcha houses are found in PaschimGopinathpur (66.3%) and minimum in Dakshin Kotalpur (30.7%). Panchayat office has catered the benefit of Indira AawasYojona to elevate the kuchcha houses into pacca. The progress, in this regard, reveals that all the villages have done quite well except Dharampur and Dakshin Kotalpur. Maximum villages have converted one third of their kuchcha houses into pacca one during the period of 2011 to 2016.

Personal Toilet Facility: Open defecation is responsible for many water borne diseases. Government is trying to solve this problem through establishing personal toilets and grow consciousness among the people to use toilet instead of open defecation. In the study area a remarkable progress has been noticed during last five years as the average percentage has been reduced from 44 to 14 of those not having personal toilets. Outstanding performance has been observed in Dakshin Mamudpur, Dakshin Kotalpur, Paschim Narayanpur, Gopinagar villages.

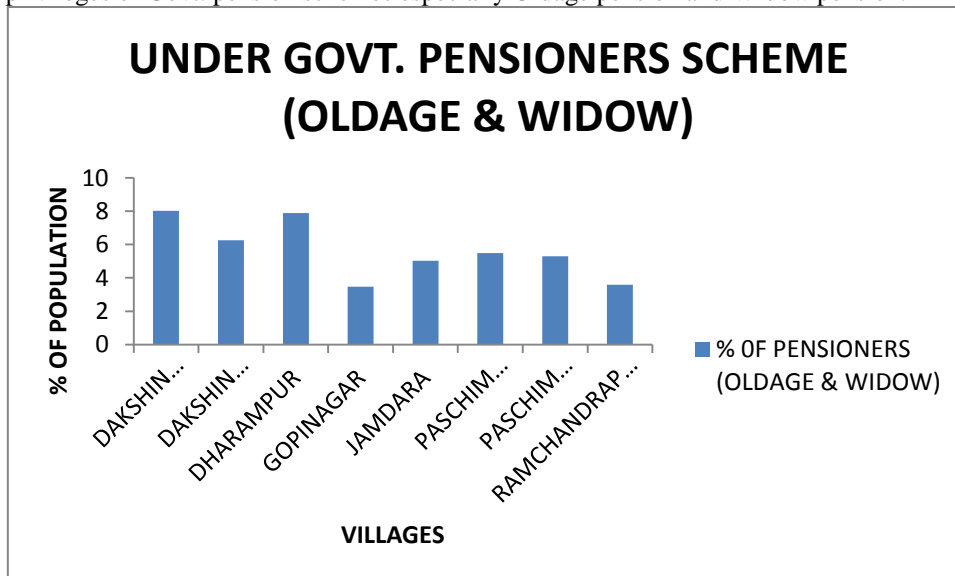


Source: Houselisting and housing census, West Bengal 2011 and Gopinathpur-I Gram Panchayat Office



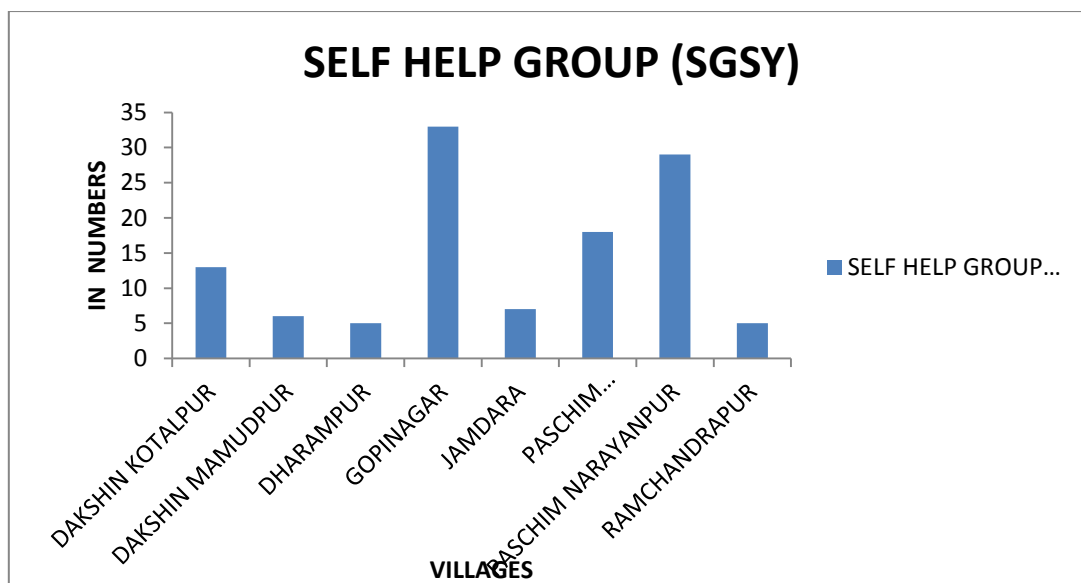
Source: Houselisting and housing census, West Bengal 2011 and Gopinathpur-I Gram Panchayat Office.

Govt. Pension Scheme for the weaker: Democracy always gives its emphasis towards the betterment of the weaker section of our society. In the study area six out of eight villages have the percentage above 5 who are getting the privileges of Govt. pension schemes especially Oldage pension and Widow pension.



Source: Gopinathpur-I Gram Panchayat Office

Self Help Group: Self Help Groups are very effective to elevate the rural poor people towards a better life. These are more effective as the poor female members are getting these facilities. In Gopinathpur-I Gram Panchayat area 116 self help groups are found. The members of these groups are using local resources as raw materials and preparing market oriented products viz., Puffed Rice, Goatery, Acid printing on cotton garments, Knitting, Stitching, Soft Toys, House decoration items and so on. Moreover female members of these groups have got a separate identity and respect in their locality.



Source: Gopinathpur-I Gram Panchayat Office

Conclusion:

The entire study advocates for the positive role of the government as the law making and implementing authority towards the upliftment of the poor people of our society. The impact of local government initiatives among the poor people clearly been observed as the study is confined in a panchayat level. Rural poverty may reduce drastically if all the local government agencies able to cater the government programmes towards rural poverty alleviation properly.

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