



PARTICIPATION OF GARO YOUTH IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

Youth participation is necessary for many development interventions and social changes. Young people can participate in development as beneficiaries, partners and leaders moving from mere representations to being actively engaged in the planning and implementation, monitoring of development interventions, working in partnership with older adults and becoming development professionals themselves in their own social and cultural settings. However the avenues for youth participation have been limited. This study has shown that youth have a vital role in the programme planning, development and implementation processes. Youth want a deeper relationship in programme planning, development and implementation process. They are not interested in the information about the programmes that are being developed in their area. They want to see their ideas actually used in the programme planning, development and implementation process. The youth want their input to be taken seriously. This study has established that Hart's ladder of youth participation is still relevant even though it was presented years ago. Determining levels of youth participation is still an important task. In the case of youth of the Garo Hills there exists Arnstein's gap which needs to be considered seriously by the stakeholders and take appropriate measure to alleviate the situation. It was revealed that the parents' economic status has great effect on the educational attainment of the youth which in-turn effect the youth's contribution to the family welfare, Mahari's development, development of the village and society at large.

KEYWORDS: YOUTH, PARTICIPATION, SOCIO-ECONOMIC, DEVELOPMENT PROCESS.

1.0. INTRODUCTION

Development is a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, aiming at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals, on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development (Centre For Development and Human Rights [CDHR], 2004). Besides economic growth it includes productivity, equity, sustainability and empowerment, thus giving rise to the concept of human development (CDHR, 2004; Borbora, 2010; Nayak, 2010).

In the socio-economic context, development means the improvement of people's lifestyles which would be attained through improved education, income, skills development and employment (Socio-economic development and empowerment of disadvantaged groups, n.d.). Socio-economic development brings social transformation based on cultural and environmental factors.

If development is the ultimate objective of societies, then participation of people is the ultimate means to realise it (Government of Meghalaya, 2009). Article 1 of Right to Development underscores the entitlement of all persons and peoples to participate in, as well as to enjoy, the process of development (CDHR, 2004). The Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, Article 12 the most widely ratified treaty in history enshrined that youth, even those under 18 years have the right to participation (United Nations Children's Fund, 2001). Participation itself is

development (Sen, 1999; Tandon, & Kak, 2007). It is through participation that change can be brought about. Young people are a valuable asset to their countries and investing in them brings tremendous socio-economic benefits. It is an important factor in implementing social changes (D'Lima, 1996).

2.0. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Youth participation is a necessity for many development interventions and societal changes. Young people can participate in development as beneficiaries, partners and leaders moving from mere representations to being actively engaged in the planning and implementation, monitoring of development interventions, working in partnership with older adults and becoming development professionals themselves in their own social and cultural settings. However the avenues for youth participation have been limited (Department for International Development [DFID], 2010). Young people form a large portion of the population of the study area. This section of the population is poor, neglected, unemployed and not able to continue their education due to poverty. Some, due to uneducated parents, are pressured to contribute economically to the family or given in early marriages so that they cannot fully blossom their potentialities (Reddy, 2004; Bhowmik, 2012). These problems are contrasted with the wealthy section who takes advantage of the various schemes and opportunities (West Garo Hills: State of Meghalaya, 2018; Mukhim, 2003). The major concern of the government has been the development of the tribal population and a number of schemes have been conceived and

implemented. Nevertheless, the Garo Hills still remains one of the most backward areas of the State and lags behind the rest of the country (Thyrniang, 2014). Conducive socio-economic ambience for the over-all development is conspicuously absent in the Garo Hills today. Demographic scenario, economic condition, political situation, cultural state and social climate of the region have rapidly changed and have become more and more complex. For years now, the Garo Hills has been experiencing a number of turmoil and insurgency problems. The problem of insurgency has added new and critical dimensions to the socio-political, cultural, educational, economic and other problems of the society. *A-chik* youth are infamous due to the continuous insurgency in the State. As a result not only its economy but also the social elements are deteriorating.

Several categories of young people appear to be particularly at risk like the unemployed university graduates; those migrating from rural to urban areas and who have been victims of discrimination or injustice perpetrated by local people or officials. These young people have few opportunities for positive engagement and, therefore, represent a ready pool of recruits for extremist groups. Regardless of whether they are participants in violent conflicts or their victims, young people undoubtedly are the worst sufferers (Draft Meghalaya Youth Policy [DMYP], 2012).

Meghalaya Human Development Report 2008 clearly indicates that the rate of development in Meghalaya is slower than in most of the States and hence significantly lagging behind in almost all sectors in comparison to all other States (Meghalaya Times, 2013; Sengupta, 2009). This could be due to lack of youth participation in the development process. There exists a huge potential to increase the contribution of the youth by increasing their participation in the labour force and their productivity (NYP, 2014). This is a concern of the society as youth play an important role in the contribution to the socio-economic development of the community. This calls for efforts to minimise their problems in order to enhance their constructive and productive contribution for the furtherance of the society and themselves. This has prompted the researcher to initiate this study. Furthermore, the Garo Hills is still a virgin land in the field of research and study and its history and people have not been studied sufficiently (Marak, 2000). Keeping these points in view the present thesis seeks to study the participation of youth in the socio-economic life of the society whereby they can be the catalyst for progress and development in the society.

3.0. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions have been formulated keeping in mind the goal of the study.

- a) How is youth participation in the socio-economic development as per National Youth Policy reflected in the existing development projects in Garo Hills?

- b) What role can youth play in the socio-economic development of the Garo Hills?
- c) To what extent are the Garo youth involved in the process of development?
- d) What is the opinion of the Garo community on the contribution of the youth towards progress?
- e) What could be the obstacles that the youth of the region face in the context of their active involvement?

4.0. OBJECTIVES

The objective of the present study is to understand the level of participation of the Garo youth in socio-economic development of the Garo community. The specific objectives are:

- a) To explore the provisions enshrined in the National Youth Policy for enhancing the capacities of the youth to be able to participate effectively in the development of the region.
- b) To identify the roles that the Garo youth can play in the development interventions.
- c) To study the level of youth participation in the existing socio-economic development processes of the community.
- d) To study the attitude of the Garo community towards the participation of youth in the development of the region.
- e) To find out the challenges that hampers the effective youth participation in the development process.

5.0. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Development of a society cannot be achieved without the development of the young people. Young people constitute more than 65 per cent of the population in Meghalaya representing both a challenge and an opportunity for the socio-economic development of the society (DMYP, 2012). Young people are perceived as lacking the maturity to contribute effectively to the development projects and youth nowadays would be more and more put aside as producers and integrated as consumers, in a clear trend to increase its social subordination (Cruz, 1989). However, the youth need to be involved in the identification of problem and programme design process. Hence, it is essential to know if and how in a socio-economic setup this process is revealed. If the youth can effectively participate in the development process, they will benefit themselves, their organization and their community. The present study done in the context of the *A-chiks* of the selected area is important as it is a community with many young people who are exuberant, beaming with potentials and is subjected to constant change due to contact with other cultures, education and modern advancements.

In the past in *A-chik* society youth had been the stronghold of their respective villages and the society took utmost

care to train and discipline them integrally. The traditional *Nokpante* practice is a clear manifestation of this phenomenon. Therefore, the vicissitudes of today's *A-chik* youth come under the realm of socio-economic change and calls for closer examination to understand the scenario of the situation in its entirety. This becomes all the more significant in the context of various other factors which directly or indirectly influence the population under study. Hence, it was important to explore the role that the *A-chik* (Garo) youth play in the aspects of socio-economic changes within the age of 19 to 30 years in the selected area of study and investigates the level of their participation. It is also important to seriously study and analyse the challenges that the youth of the region face in taking active part in the developmental process. For education and in search of livelihood *A-chiks* live in different parts of the country outside Garo Hills. In this context an attempt was made to study the attitude of the *A-chik* community including those residing outside the Garo Hills. The study also had made an exploratory viewpoint of the members of the *A-chik* community with regard to the strategy to be adopted in order to facilitate the development of the Garo Hills.

The study also attempts to find out how the youth workers, policy makers and youth counsellors can assist the *A-chik* youth in channelling their potential constructively and building a bright future for themselves. Based on this study, the society and the government can adopt certain intervening measures.

Till date no direct attempt has been made to study these vital issues seriously, especially from the perspective of youth. Hence, there was a need for an in-depth study of the present status of the *A-chik* youth in the context of their future prospects which is of great concern. The findings of the study can also give dependable pointers to policy makers and development agencies regarding the impact of National Youth Policy, benefits received and the avenues and levels of youth participation in the region. Besides, the findings of the study can also serve as resource materials for courses dealing with the importance of youth participation in socio-economic development of the society in higher academic institutions.

6.0. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sherry Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation, which was published in 1969 in the *Journal of the American Planning Association*, is considered as one of the classic and most influential participation theories. Arnstein based her theory on the assertion that citizen participation is citizen power and argues that participation cannot be had without sharing and re-distributing power (Participation models, 2012).

Based on Arnstein's model Roger Hart developed a ladder of children's participation in 1992 which is often referred to as the ladder of youth participation. Arnstein's model focuses on citizen empowerment in general while Hart's model is a tool for recognizing young people's participation. This ladder of participation is an evaluation

tool for children or young people's participation (Kopetzky, 2009).

Kopetzky (2009) further reworked on the original article of 1969 and revised it for 21st century use and made a substantial revision for Roger Hart's ladder giving emphasis on citizen participation activities as the rungs of the ladder, and partnership as the ultimate goal of most citizen participation processes.

The literature on participation has brought forward several typologies in order to grasp and to highlight different forms of participation that express the multi-dimensionality of the term and the flexibility of its applicability in various perspectives. Zocher (2010) asserts that typologies of participation can be conceived as an attempt to giving a theoretical base for facilitating the analysis of participatory practices. Presented in the form of a ladder, they describe an idealizing gradation of participation.

The literatures gathered highlighted that youth participation is resilient. It is also dynamic in many aspects. The various ways youth participation is initiated and facilitated take into account the different issues that the societies tackle in order to prepare the young people to become constructive and effective participants.

The number of articles and books reviewed for the present study signals modest advances in the areas of youth participation. The researcher finds that the literature found are more focussed and gives careful accounts on the problems faced by the young and their involvement in the socio-political life of the society through various movements. Some researches account for the paths of youth involvement and inclusion of the youth by adults in their activities. Others explain the evolution of a strong sense of owning up the decisions in various developmental interventions by the youth. Eventually within this contour youth participation takes shape and unfolds their talents, abilities, leadership qualities and inborn yearning for contributing positively to their world.

But the literature about Indian youth has subsequent gaps and need to be explored further. Since the youth is the hope of the future, there is a need to find out how to harness this power and to evaluate how far their potential can be recognised and utilized. Moreover, the social context of Indian youth and the youth of other parts of the world is different. Likewise, the youth of Northeast India are characterised by their uniqueness. Therefore, studies should focus more on specified groups of youth keeping in view the background of the youth. As gleaned from the literature review in different parts of the world, studies had revived and researches on Youth Policy, positive youth development, youth power and estimating youth participation are gaining momentum whereas no such studies were found done in Indian context. There are no systems in place to seriously evaluate the policies being enforced to boost up youth potential. Again several studies were done effectively abroad using ladder of participation to measure many factors including youth participation

ladder as a tool to measure young people's participation while there was a gap of such literature in India. Very few literatures were found related to the Garo youth as per the present study is concerned. No studies were done on any aspect that pertained to the participation of Garo Youth. Furthermore it was found that there was hardly any studies done related to the participation of Garo youth in the developmental interventions of the Garo Hills. Here lie the disparities that have created a gap within the youth participation literature. Therefore the implication of this study will fill this gap that is found by the investigator in the existing literature.

7.0. METHOD AND DESIGN OF THE STUDY

7.1. Exploratory Sequential Design

Exploratory sequential design which has two-phase mixed methods design wherein qualitative data help build upon the quantitative results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) was employed as the design of the present study. The researcher had chosen Exploratory sequential design for this study considering its strength that the separate phase make this design straightforward to describe, implement and report (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) the findings and thus help in expounding the answer to the research question about the phenomenon of the participation of the Garo youth in today's scenario. The study is exploratory in nature as it attempts to explore a phenomenon of the range of involvement of Garo youth in developmental interventions in the region and measure its prevalence. The research is focussed on exploring the provisions enshrined in the NYP for capacitating the youth of Garo Hills and the possibilities of their effective participation.

7.2. The Population

The universe of the study or the population of the study covers the youth, both male and female, in the selected area between the ages of 19-30 years and those who have completed at least high school education. From this the study population covers those youth belonging to the Garo community only and those who have passed high school and exclusively those of rural areas. As per the records obtained from the Meghalaya house at Kolkata the approximate population of the Garos those living in Kolkata is 90, in Delhi is 300 as per the record obtained from Meghalaya house, Delhi and Bangalore is 400 according to the information obtained from the Bangalore A-chik Association. The researcher also identified some community elders, government officials and members of NGOs particularly those working in the area and had discussions with them to enrich the study.

7.3. Sample Size

A total of 300 respondents were covered in the survey, taking 250 from among the youth and 50 from among the community leaders and government officials. Majority of the youth population being from West Garo Hills district, 235 respondents were from the said district which was obtained from the five blocks under the district: Majority of the youth population being from West Garo Hills

district, 235 respondents were from the said district which was obtained from the five blocks under the district: 44 from Rongram block, 38 from Gambegre block, 39 from Selsella block, 40 from Dalu block, 26 from Tikrikilla block, 22 from those residing in Delhi, 20 from Bangalore and 20 from Kolkata. And among the community leaders 14 from Rongram block, 5 from Gambegre, 13 from Selsella block, 5 from Dalu block, 10 from Tikrikilla block and 3 from Kolkata.

7.4. Tools for Data Collection

Interview schedule, Focus group discussion, interview with key informants and case study were employed to obtain the required data for the present study.

7.5. Procedure of Data Collection

The researcher visited the different parts of the selected areas frequently during the time of research. Many youth, community leaders and government officials were met in their work places, residence or in some arranged meeting places. Through the contact persons, arrangements were made to visit the locality and meet the youth personally. Since the study area was spread out, some of the respondents from Bangalore and Delhi were contacted over the phone and some of them were met during their holidays in Tura at the appointed time and day. The required data was also collected through a known person residing in the city who has been well instructed earlier on the procedure to be followed. The responses were then sent to the researcher through post.

7.6. Sources of Data

The primary data was collected from the field through FGDs, interview techniques and case studies. Secondary data was generated on the basis of extensive literature survey and were collected from different sources such as published books and articles from journals and magazines, reports, internet sites, documents of various organisations and newspapers pertaining to the topic of research. The researcher visited various libraries in different parts of the country in order to undertake the literature survey.

7.7. Data Analysis

Statistical indicators were entered in SPSS program to analyse the quantitative data. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the demographic information of the qualified respondents. The frequencies and percentages in the forms of tables and graphs were also prepared. Cross-tabulation was used to understand the relationship between the variables. Correlation coefficient was applied to find out the association between the variables. Chi square test was used to understand the association between the variables that represent various aspects that contribute towards socio-economic growth. To find out reliability item analysis was done through one sample t-test of significance at 0.05 level.

16.1. Objective 1: Exploring the Provisions of National Youth Policy for Enhancing Youth for Effective Participation in Developmental

Processes

The impact of the policy is not much visible among the youth in the Garo Hills. Despite so many provisions stipulated in the NYP, the system has not been effective in capacitating young people for their constructive participation in the developmental processes. The findings of the study showed that majority of the respondents are not aware of the existence of such a Policy and the opportunities it offers for youth development. Thus this shows that much of its provisions are grossly underutilized.

As inferred from the literature review the researcher has found that Nehru Yuva Kendra (NYK) had played a major role in different parts of the country in involving youth in developmental processes. From the findings of the present study, it could be concluded that such rich provisions are being deprived in the Garo Hills to the youth.

16.2. Objective 2: *A-chik* Youth's Role in Development Interventions

Different aspects were presented to the respondents in order to obtain their views with regards to the role of youth in the developmental interventions. The youth respondents were asked to give their views on the part they play while the community leaders were asked to give their views on the participation of youth. The question was whether the youth acted as initiator, promoter, implementer, joint decision maker or indifferent onlooker.

a. Social Aspects

In mahari meetings that discuss developmental plans majority (37%) of the respondents opined that youth are the joint decision makers. In Relief activities majority (41%) is of the opinion that they are implementers. In social ceremonies too majority (37%) felt they are the implementers. In easing of social and ethnic upheavals majority (30%) opinion is that the question is not applicable.

b. Aspects of Well-being

In dissemination of knowledge majority (25%) of the respondents said that the youth are implementers. As regard to free coaching, the study revealed that there are few youth who are committed and work voluntarily free of cost giving free coaching or tuition to children especially in the villages. However, many respondents think that they are promoters (20%), which imply that they encourage their friends even if they are not able to do themselves. In Village cleaning programmes most of the respondents (33%) felt youth are the initiators. Majority (39%) of the respondents said that in matters concerning village development plans youth are not much involved although 39 per cent said that they are joint decision makers and 9 per cent think that they are initiators. In health care programmes youth are found to be most (27%) Promoters. Regarding the intervention of the youth in the planning in the families, the study showed that most of the respondents (39%) are of the opinion that youth are the

joint decision makers. With regard to improvement of telephone and electricity connectivity 51 per cent of the young respondents out of 250 do not feel that it is their responsibility. Yet a sizeable number (10%) of them felt that they are initiators of such works.

c. Altruistic Acts

With regard to altruistic acts: In blood donation majority is for youth as promoters (34%) and in promoting good neighbourliness majority (41%) are for youth as implementers. Whereas in donating money /clothes towards charity (35%), visit orphanages, prisons and care homes (43%), majority are for not applicable meaning that they do not feel their responsibility towards it. Many of the youth do not feel that it is their responsibility. But there are some who are engaged in such type of charitable works. In general, this aspect needs to be inculcated among the young people in the Garo Hills.

d. Work Participation

In household maintenance majority (36%) are of the opinion that youth are the joint decision makers while majority of the community leaders (28%) said implementers. For Voluntary work (31%), work for remuneration (38%) and exchange of work (36%) the majority view is not applicable. However the next majority being implementers the study revealed that more female youth respondents see themselves as implementers compared to their male counterparts. Global view regarding work participation indicates that work culture has to come in a big way among the youth of the Garo Hills. Among the young people who are employed, it is observed that work output is not satisfactory. The work output should match the expected wages.

e. Economics Aspect

The study showed that most of the youth are not very enterprising in initiating self-employment programmes. However, there are some youth who take interest in finding self-employment, as they have to support their families, which are poor. The *A-chik* youth is seen to be not interested in business or in economic development. But when they are married, they suddenly realise that they have to earn an income to support themselves and their families though the trend is changing now and people are becoming more confident in starting their own business.

f. Political Participation

In matters concerning political participation, it is observed that in the case of village administration the majority of youth do not feel the responsibility to insert themselves into it. However, 15 per cent youth feel that they are the initiators and 20 per cent felt that they are joint decision makers with regard to village administration. With regard to informal political action and involvement in leaderships, most of the youth feel that they have no part in it. But 24 per cent of the community leaders are of the view that youth are the initiators while 22 per cent say that they are joint decision makers. To certain extent, the youth are becoming part of the many informal political groups that

are mushrooming in the region that demand for certain rights.

16.3. Objective 3: Assessment of the level of youth participation in the existing socio-economic development processes of the community

Eight points corresponding to the different rungs of Hart's ladder of youth participation was presented to the respondents to get their opinion regarding how they feel with regard to the pattern of the involvement of youth in various developmental interventions in the Garo Hills. They were given an option: never, rarely, sometimes, often and always. The findings showed that for Rung 1, Rung 2, Rung 3, Rung 5 and Rung 6 the majority of respondents marked sometimes. The majority of the respondents marked 'often' in the case of Rung 4, for Rung 7 the majority of the respondents marked 'never' and for Rung 8 majority of the respondents marked 'rarely'.

The overall analysis of the study of the responses indicates that the youth of the Garo Hills still need to go a long way in learning to work in partnership with adults in order to bring about a better ambience for participatory mode of working for development. As Hart presented the ideal way would be the highest rung of the ladder wherein youth and adult work in partnership. This would complement the experience and knowledge of each other. The development work will enhance.

16.3.1. Assessment of the Gap

A phenomenon titled Arnstein's Gap determines the difference between two points on the ladder varying on the context in which the ladder is employed. An attempt was made to determine if Arnstein's gap exist in the case of youth participation in the process of developmental works in the Garo Hills. To this end, an opinion was sought regarding the location of the involvement of the Garo youth in developmental projects on the youth participation ladder where it is currently located and where it actually should be.

For the current location majority [100 out of 300 (33%)] opined that it is at the level of Rung 4: Young people are assigned tasks and informed how and why they are involved in a project - the lowest level in the participation level. For the expected location in the participation ladder majority (48%) among the youth have opined Rung 7: Young people's initiative and leadership, while most of the community leaders (78%) felt it should be at the level of Rung 8: Young people's initiative but decisions are made in partnership with adults.

The current location and the expected location are at two different points on the ladder which indicates that in the case of the Garo youth Arnstein's Gap exists. To breach this Gap, we need to encourage youth participation and for this we need to use more practical methods and incorporate them into the realm of youth development programmes. This would likely to improve the scenario of participation of youth.

16.3.2. Case Studies

The case studies conducted on three units illustrated the pattern in which the youth are involved in the developmental interventions. The findings of the study were evaluated in the light of Hart's ladder of youth participation.

According to Hart's ladder of youth participation, the pattern of the working of Garo Students' Union(GSU) would probably be categorized at level seven: youth take the initiatives as well as leadership. This is concluded as it is seen from the study that the members of GSU initiated developmental interventions and took up leadership upon themselves in various matters that concerned development of the region. While the study of one unit of 'Intensified Malaria Control Programme- II' project implemented by BAKDIL can be categorized at level four. As revealed by the findings the project is adult initiated but the youth are assigned tasks and were informed how and why they are involved in the project. It had entrusted the work to the youth that had facilitated the youth to contribute positively to the health of the people and to disseminate knowledge regarding health hazards. The case study of an individual youth a resident of a village in Garo Hills capacitates the researcher to place his contribution to developmental works at the level of rung seven in the ladder of youth participation. The findings indicate that though the media project only the negative aspects of the youth of Garo Hills there are youth who genuinely work for development selflessly.

16.4. Objective 4: Views of the A-chik Community on Youth Participation

The findings of the study reveal that both the youth themselves and the community leaders expressed dissatisfaction at the way the A-chik youth involve themselves in the developmental processes of the Garo Hills. Most of the youth felt that they are dissatisfied although some felt that their involvement is very high. A small section of the respondents are unsure about the stand of the youth in this regard. All these indicate that the youth should insert themselves more in the developmental processes in the region.

According to the majority of both the groups of respondents that is community leaders and the youth, the contribution of youth towards bringing socio-economic changes among the people is moderate. The laxity in assuming responsibility upon themselves by the youth is visible from the fact that to the question who should be responsible for bringing about development of the region majority of them pointed out that it is the Government's duty and next to it the adults. People with more experience instead felt that after Government the responsibility lies on the youth. This stance could be argued in the wake of many movements uprisings in the region in a powerful way enthused with lofty and noble ideals all focussed on development of the Garo Hills apparently. Here again a blame game is seen from the adults represented by the community leaders and the youth. Throwing the first place

of responsibility to the Government then, either is not sure of who next should be forgetting who actually forms the Government and the obligation each individual has towards one's Motherland. Perhaps this could be the main reason behind the socio-economic backwardness of the Garo Hills in preference to the listed reasons as obtained from the findings of the study.

16.5. Objective 5: The Challenges to Effective Youth Participation

The study highlighted many factors that hinder the effective participation of youth in developmental processes. The major challenges faced by the *A-chik* youth of the Garo Hills of Meghalaya as found by the present study are: Lack of motivation, Parental influence, Lack of entrepreneurial spirit, Lack of educational facilities and infrastructure, Corruption, Lack of opportunities for productive engagement, Self-centredness, Addiction to alcohol and drugs, Desire for easy money, Poor participation, Low level of consciousness, Lack of unity, Poor communication and transport facilities, Lack of optimal utilisation of resources, Misuse of social media and Early entry into married life. It also emerged from the findings that insurgency and the related problems that disrupt peaceful co-existence in the region are a block to their constructive participation in the society.

17.0. ASSESSING THE CORRELATION

The study of the correlation between the variables showed that there is a positive significant relationship between the parents' net income per month and the educational status of the youth respondents. While the analysis showed that the parents' net income per month is negatively related to the extent of awareness created by the various programmes conducted in the region under the schemes of NYP. And again the study showed no significant correlation between the parents' net income per month and the extent of opportunities created by the programs conducted. Correlation between parents' net income and youth's contribution to the socio-economic changes of the region is found to be having negative and significant relationship.

The educational status of youth and the extent of awareness created by the programmes conducted under NYP are positively associated though not significant. The Pearson Correlational analysis between the educational status of the youth respondents and the extent of opportunities created by the programmes organized under the schemes of National Youth Policy for the youth with regard to their participation in developmental interventions indicated that there is no significant association between the variables. The statistical analyses further proved that the extent to which various programmes organised for the youth in the region create awareness in the minds of the youth, the extent of the opportunities it offers the youth in indulging themselves into developmental processes is higher. It also follows from the findings of the statistical analysis that higher is their awareness higher will be their contribution towards the society. And again higher the extent of opportunities

offered to the young higher will be their chances of contribution towards the socio-economic change of the region.

18.0. UNDERSTANDING THE ASSOCIATION

To understand the associations between the age, educational qualifications and gender of 250 youth respondents with their role in various aspects that pertain to contribution to socio-economic development in the region, Pearson Chi-square test was conducted. The test thus yielded some interesting results:

- a. The age and the educational qualifications of the youth respondents is dependent on the range of roles youth play in *mahari* meetings that discuss development plans, while their role as per the findings is independent of their gender.
- b. Their age and educational qualifications is significantly associated to their involvement in village development plans whereas it is independent of their gender.
- c. The gender of the youth is not associated to their role in knowledge dissemination. But the analysis showed that their age and the educational qualification is significantly associated to the role they play in knowledge dissemination.
- d. The age and educational qualification of the youth is significantly associated to the role of youth in various phases of planning for the welfare of the family members or planned families while the gender of the respondents instead is found not to have any association.
- e. There is an association between the age and educational qualification of the youth respondents with regard to promoting good neighbourliness while the range of role youth play in promoting good neighbourliness has nothing to do with the gender factor.
- f. There is a significant association between the age of the individual and the role they play in household maintenance. The same is also observed in the case of the educational qualification. The statistical analysis showed no association with the gender of the respondents.

19.0. SUGGESTIONS

Some of the strategies and suggestions that emerged from the various perspectives of the respondents are:

a. Suggestions to Government

a. Positive Youth Development: Government could give more emphasis on the local youth problems and cater to their needs. Integrating the new technologies, modern versions of *Nokpante* Training Institutes could be established making them relevant for the present-day boys as well as girls. Advertisements for propaganda should be done in the Garo language, a language that all could understand.

b. Employment Opportunities: More employment opportunities should be created.

c. Engagement of Youth: Setting up of various facilities for engagement of youth. Youth should be heeded to and be involved in negotiation and decision making processes thus providing platforms to express their concerns and views on the administration.

d. Natural Resources: To utilise available natural resources to its maximum scientifically.

e. Integral Education: Integral education to be introduced in the region besides the conventional one.

f. Insurgency: Young people should be motivated and helped to overcome the tendencies to join subversive groups.

g. Drop-in Centres: In order to achieve wider effect 'Drop-in centres' should be initiated at every place where people could go and receive information.

h. An Arena for Knowledge Acquisition: Good libraries can be established at different places and must be made available to the public. Seminars should be conducted oftener in many places on important topics in view of disseminating knowledge in the Garo language.

i. Exposure: Exposure to other cultures and places should be initiated among the youth.

b. Suggestion to the Garos living outside Garo Hills

To express their ideas and views on issues pertaining to the growth of the region through media. This could inspire the youth of the region to build a positive attitude in spite of the negative propaganda.

c. Suggestion to the society

a. The *A-chik* youth should be encouraged and motivated to work hard. From the very young age itself they should be habituated to keep themselves occupied with constructive or formative activities like music, arts, etc.

b. *A-chiks* (Garos) should be enlightened on how to use money cautiously especially in the villages. The sense of saving money and vision for the future should be strongly instilled among them.

c. People should change their mind-set. They should strive to shun individualistic attitude and transcend all *chatchi* or *mahari* attitude so that they can think in terms of the good of the community as a whole and not as an isolated group.

d. Awareness should be given about the traditional *Nokrom* practice prevalent in the society. Though this practice is fading, still in many instances the inheritance of property is given to the youngest daughter or to the daughter of parents' choice. People can be made aware and be convinced that family property should be divided equally among sons and daughters without distinction.

e. The intellectuals, heads of societies and well-wishers

can conduct *mahari* meetings and awareness meetings within the clan, village or locality regarding the development of their own clan, village or locality.

21.0. CONCLUSION

The present study has brought to limelight many ideas that can assist society for better nurturing of youth. It has looked into the general characteristics of youth, the role they play in the vicinity and their viewpoints on their participation, the challenges that they face, the opinion of the society/ elders and the strategies that could be adopted to alleviate the situation. The study revealed that the impact of NYP is not much visible among the youth in the Garo Hills. The various provisions enshrined in the NYP are grossly underutilised and as such the system was found to be not effective in capacitating the youth for their constructive participation in the development process. This study has shown that youth have a vital role in the programme planning, development and implementation processes. Youth want a deeper relationship in programme planning, development and implementation process. They are not interested in the information about the programmes that are being developed in their area. They want to see their ideas actually used in the programme planning, development and implementation process. The youth want their input to be taken seriously. This research has established that Hart's ladder of youth participation is still relevant even though it was presented years ago. Determining levels of youth participation is still an important task. The study also showed that in the case of youth of the Garo Hills there exists Arnstein's gap which needs to be considered seriously by the stakeholders and take appropriate measure to alleviate the situation. It was revealed that the parents' economic status has great effect on the educational attainment of the youth which in-turn effect the youth's contribution to the family welfare, *mahari's* development, development of the village and society at large. However, it is seen from the analysis that the contribution of the educated youth towards socio-economic development in the current trend is not satisfactory. Correlational analysis showed that the contribution of the educated youth towards socio-economic development in the current trend is negative which is not satisfactory. The study brought to light in a powerful way that the gender of the youth is not a hindrance in anyway with regard to their effective participation in various developmental interventions. The need for youth participation has implications for the development of the region. Effective youth participation can provide a deep reservoir of information that can be used to make high-grade decisions about a myriad of issues.

Lastly, all the stakeholders, elders of the society, clan elders, youth workers and policy makers can seriously take upon themselves to motivate and boost up their interest. This will usher in proper platform for youth development. The youth of the Garo Hills and Meghalaya as a whole are an asset to the State. Hence concerted effort can be made to create a favourable ambient for their

growth in order to get the maximum contribution from this potential section of the society towards the socio-economic development of the region.

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