

Sustainable Rural Development in Bankura: A Case Study

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Structured Abstract:

Purpose: Sustainable rural developments often rely on direction of development planning of the concern area. This paper explores whether the development plans going in right direction to ensure the sustainable rural development? Whether all the relevant indicators of sustainable development have been addressed? It also highlighted the lacuna of existing planning process and suggested alternative ways to achieve the goal of rural sustainability.

Methodology: This study is empirical in nature. Data are collected by using the method of interview from the respondents, who are selected by sampling technique. The author selected two Gram Panchayates under Taldangra Block of Bankura district for the purpose of study.

Findings: Conditions of uneven sustainable development is prevailing between the two selected sansad under a same block and to eradicate the unevenness, awareness should be made on different issues of sustainability among the rural people.

Originality / Value: This paper tried to explore the reasons for backwardness among villages belonging in a same block of West Bengal. No worthwhile study has been made regarding the issue of sustainable rural development in West Bengal on the main theme of the present paper.

Type of the paper: Case Study.

Keywords: Sustainable Rural Development, West Bengal, Sansad, Ecology, Development Plan.

Introduction

In India, more than 6 lakh villages that are complemented with 600 million people constitute nearly two third of the country's population and one tenth of world. Hence it goes without saying that rural development becomes inevitably important. In other words the progress and prosperity of our nation would depend entirely on how far we are able to improve the economic and social life of the rural masses. Generally rural development means, development that touches all aspects of rural life including agriculture, health, literacy, sanitation, communication, rural housing, rural industry, animal husbandry etc. Thus we can say rural development means a process of improving living conditions, providing minimum

needs, increasing productivity and employment opportunities and developing potential of rural resources. Independence from colonial rule in 1947 in many ways marked the beginning of a new phase in the history of rural Indian society and its agrarian economy. Having evolved out of a long drawn struggle against colonial rule with the participation of people from various social categories, the Indian state also took over the task of supervising the transformation of its stagnant and backward economy to make sure that the benefits of economic growth were not monopolized by a particular section of the society. It is with this background that 'development' emerged as a strategy of economic change and an ideology of the new regime. Since independence several plans and programmes have been taken by the Government of India to develop the quality life style of rural people. But situation remained the same. The rural poor, the landless labour have been bypassed by many developmental schemes (Bhose, 2003). Despite economic progress in the post-independence period, several five year plans and heavy investment, the living condition of the rural poor has not improved. Instead, it has deteriorated with inflation and with spreading unemployment. Dissatisfaction with the quality of life and creeping change in economic strata are contributing to an undercurrent of frustration that is starting to affect basic rural people's attitudes and social harmony. Now the question is what should be the way? Is there any alternative? Under these circumstances the notion towards development is needed to change. So to reorganize the current rural life in better and sustainable order, the sustainable rural development strategies have been taken by our planners and policy makers. This new approach not only emphasizes on economic dimension but also emphasized on social and environmental dimension. The new development strategy should not only aimed at economic growth but also an equitable distribution at the income it produces because rural poverty is not a production problem, but distribution problem (Deshmukh, 2014). This new approach cover issues like poverty elimination by increase of job opportunities among rural people, proper access of land, water and other resources, participation of women into rural development, education training and extension services. So the paradigm of rural development has shifted into sustainable rural development. Sustainable rural development means the rural development which is guided by the principles or the strategy of sustainability. Sustainable rural development can be defined as the development which meets the need of present generation of rural people without compromising the capacity of future generation to fulfill their own needs. It aims to maintain a delicate balance between the human need to improve life styles and feelings of wellbeing. Sustainable rural development is accountable to the poor, and hence it should ensure that the

poor have adequate access to sustainable and secure livelihood. The important issues of sustainable rural development are follows:

1. Agricultural, land, soil and water management.
2. Access of opportunities for work.
3. Health and hygiene.
4. Education.
5. Woman and child development.
6. Participation in decision making and village planning.
7. Rural communication and rural infrastructure development.
8. Environmental planning.

Government of India introduced several schemes/programmes viz. Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC), Total Literary Campaign (TLC), Swarnajayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojana (SGSY), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), National Health Mission (NRHM) etc. in last two decade to ensure sustainable rural development. The main focus of these plans was on weaker and vulnerable section of society. Now the time has come to evaluate the status of sustainable rural development in India. We should remember that, in this new paradigm apart from the question of economic disparities the issues like; the question of ecology, the women and child, inclusive governance have been given much more emphasized to shape the rural development. We have already passed two decades and much has been done by the Govt. corner. To measure the reality under this new paradigm of rural development, to examine the effectiveness of Govt. initiatives under new pattern, a comprehensive study is necessary. It would be quite logical to take feedback of development strategies of last two decades before to analyze the future plan. Are we going to the right direction? Have we addressed all the relevant indicators to achieve the goal of sustainability? These are the frequently asked questions and now there is growing demand to answer these questions from governance and development discourse. This research is directed to fulfill this demand. There are so many indicators of sustainable rural development. Now it would be relevant to analyze whether the strategies are sufficient to fulfill the indicators or not. Our primary task is to observe the changes that have been occurred and inverting the actual reality of present day. Researcher has selected a Block under Bankura district of West Bengal to analyze the issue. The main focus of the present study is to find out the status of sustainable rural development in rural Bankura with the help of a case study. No worthwhile analysis has yet been carried out with scientific investigation to measure this

sustainability by tracking the relevant indicators in Bankura. This research work will not only be useful to examine the reality of rural sustainable development but also it will help to add a new dimension to our knowledge in sustainable rural development both theoretical and practical. Now if we pay our careful attention on the resolution taken by UNO on 17 Sustainable development goals in place of 8 Millennium Development Goals for the next fifteen years, 2015-2030, we will find that the UNO has also emphasized on the above mentioned issues. So the research has the international significance along with national importance.

Literature Review:

There has been huge literature on the different aspects of rural development in India as well as West Bengal. Related published materials regarding this topic are ever growing in volume. Few are highlighted below:

Desai (1961), attempts to analyze the problem of rural India from historical and class perspective. He mentions that the development policies and programmes implemented before and after independence are not much qualitatively different from one another. Instead of solving they have created problems such as regional and income disparities, sectional and sectoral imbalances and structural distortions and contradictions which are extremely difficult to correct without radical policies and programmes, basic structural changes or revolution. A comprehensive sociological picture is represented by him.

Kar (1989) represents the history of unique pattern of rural development in West Bengal. He tries to give the logic of that uniqueness by mentioning four factors which are – i) Popular participation and decentralization, ii) Panchayati Raj Institution, iii) Land Reforms measure, iv) Implementation of rural development schemes. According to the author these four factors have made the difference compare to other region. By introducing the three tiers governance system in West Bengal, it became very easy to reach entire benefit to the real stakeholders. The three tiers Panchayati Raj System has given the opportunity to the rural people of West Bengal to make their own strategy or to take decision for implementing the allotted plan.

On the other hand, Webster (1992) also makes some useful contribution to understand the nature of rural development in West Bengal in his on the basis of three consecutive panchayat election 1977, 83, 88. He evaluated the performance of Gram panchayat in respect of implementing various land reforms measures and executing rural development scheme entrusted to Gram panchayat. He argues in his research work, that the land reform and decentralized governance has created a new dimension on rural development which calls for

active participation of the beneficiaries in development planning from below. This can be treated as qualitative change.

Lieten (1992), in his praiseworthy works, such as ‘Continuity and Change in Rural West Bengal’, ‘Development Devolution and Democracy: Village Discourse in West Bengal’, has tried to examine the usefulness of land reforms in the development process, in West Bengal, where the land reforms process initiated in 1977 has combined with a significant growth in agrarian production and an apparent decline in polarization and poverty. He argues that the land reforms programme in West Bengal has been instrumental in turning the scales from a political economy of corruption to a political economy of rural development with a pivotal management role for the panchayats. The decentralized pattern of governance has opened up the opportunity to take part their own development process of the rural poorest of the poor people. This ‘catching up’ process creates a balance in power structure.

Dutta (2011) has examined twin roles of the panchayats as instruments of rural development and as a institutions of self-government. He analyzed the rural development policies of West Bengal Government since 1977. The policies are – i) Land reforms, ii) Non- Land input support, iii) Implementation of centrally sponsored programme, iv) Contract between the panchayat and the people and v) Literacy programme. He told, ‘panchayat of West Bengal began to gain momentum and attract attention of all concerned even before the constitution was amended. Panchayat have been successful in implementing anti-poverty programmes and ensuring people’s participation.’

Mukhopadhaya et al., (2012) has tried to explore a profile of development through participation in rural west Bengal during the last three decades that witnessed Panchayati Raj Institutions in action in 38,000 village of West Bengal. Different issues and dynamics related to rural development have been discussed very widely and comprehensively. Before analyzing the different dynamics of rural development in West Bengal, they represent a useful literature review regarding West Bengal’s rural development in introduction. It helps to understand the ‘continuity and change’ of rural development profile in West Bengal.

Gap in Existing Literature and Issues of Investigation:

Having gone through the huge chunk of existing literature on sustainable rural development, it is found that certain areas are not sufficiently dealt with. The gap or lacuna of early researches is being analyzed below:

1. This is due to fact that the majority of scholars have confined themselves to the areas of land reform and decentralized governance, spanning from 1977-1995. But in the new, millennium it must be noted, a significant change has taken place in the global perspective of sustainable rural development. For example UNDP on its report as set forth certain new indicators in assessing the sustainable rural development (SRD) and unfortunately this new perspective is conspicuously absent in the existing literature.
2. Indicators like health, sanitation, access of skill, knowledge and information, efficient use of local resources are treated as the important indicator of SRD. To ensure the SRD, government needs to concentrate on those indicators. The existing literature is not focused this subject in detail.
3. Another important global issue of sustainability is protecting the environment. The present concept of sustainability presupposes the safety and longevity of the environment. SRD must not entail environmental degradation. Nor does it endanger the depletion of natural resource like ground water and forest.

Research questions:

Following are the issues, the researcher wish to address.

1. Do the existing rural development programmes facilitate the sustainable rural development in rural Bankura?
2. Do the Panchayate Raj Institutions of concerned area play a vital role in ensuring the sustainable rural development?
3. Is the peoples' awareness and participation satisfactory towards resource mobilization and environmental planning?

Objective of the study:

1. To find out the state of development of the sample villages.
2. To find out the reason for backwardness of the villages.
3. To examine the effectiveness of governance in different Panchaytes by making a comparative study of the modes of development which have probably taken place.
4. To review whether the adopted measures are sufficient to ensure the various indicators of sustainable development, such as education, health, sanitation, agriculture, environmental planning etc.
5. To find out the status of participation of local people in governance.

Methodology:

Selection of Sample:

Considering the topic of research it is necessary to select the universe for answering the research question. The area of case study is two gram *Sansads* under Taldangra block of Bankura district. Bankura is regarded one of the under develop district among the under developed districts of West Bengal. Researcher has purposively selected Chak Jambedia *Sansad* from Panchmura GP and Taldagra basic primary school *Sansad* from Taldagra GP. The both GP, Panchmura and Taldangra is under Taldangra block. The rationale behind the selection of two gram *sansad* is, when Chak Jambedia under Panchmura GP is regarded as most backward village (as per 2004 HRD Report of West Bengal), at the same time Taldangra basic primary school remains one of the develop *sansad* under same block. Researcher has taken these two types of Gram Panchayate to make a comparative study, which will help the author to find out the reality of situation.

Being a case study method, this study is basically empirical in nature. As the researcher mentions before the area of the research, here it must be relevant to discuss the sampling method of the data collection. In this case study none of random and purposive sampling can be applicable exclusively. For making investigation more convenient here researcher followed the mixed sampling method to select the sample. The data have come from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data have been collected from sample villagers, Secretaries of Upasamities and Panhayate Executive Assistants. Fifty sample villagers from each Gram Panchayate (i.e. $50 \times 2 = 100$) have been selected from the voter list of the concerned *Gram Sansad* by using the method of interval sampling or systematic sampling. Five Secretaries of five *Upasamities* from each Gram Panchayate (i.e. $5 \times 2 = 10$) have been interviewed and the Executive Assistant of each panchayate (i.e. $1 \times 2 = 2$) has also been interviewed.

Selection and description of the tools:

The tool that has been selected to collect the opinion of sample villagers is a structured questionnaire. Both open and closed ended questions have been included in the questionnaire to collect primary data from the sample respondents. The questionnaire have been prepared with the thrust on the aspects like: opportunities of work, women and child health, quality of housing, condition of sanitation, water facility, meeting attendance etc. Seven questions are

formed on the basis of these indicators to judge the research question. The seven questions are as follows:

1. Are you living in a *Kuccha* house?
2. Have you got sufficient drinking water though out the year for your family members?
3. Have you got necessary health facilities form your nearest health centre?
4. Are you satisfied with baby care facility for children, provided by the Government?
5. Have you got job under MGNREGA scheme for more than 20 days in a year?
6. Is hygienic toilet facility available in your house?
7. Do you attend the meeting of *Gram sabha* and give suggestion for your local development?

There are four scales of opinion viz. positive response, negative response, remain silent and do not know, for each question of the questionnaire.

The tool 'direct interview' has been used to collect the data from the sample officials for the purpose of study. They are asked to tender their opinion regarding direction of development planning, sustainable development of the area, lacuna of government's developmental programmes etc.

Data collection:

The primary data have been collected directly from 100 sample villagers, 10 Secretaries of Upasamities and 2 Executive Assistants through door-to-door investigation and personal meetings by the investigator himself. Respondents are requested to give their natural, free and frank responses to the queries. They are taken into confidence and are told that the information is required only for research purpose and will be strictly kept secret.

Tabulation and Scoring:

The data that have been collected through questionnaire and direct interview are compiled on suitable tabulation sheet, which is also prepared for the purpose.

Statistical Technique Used:

Bar chart, Table etc have been used to represent diagrammatically the primary data which has been collected for the purpose of study. Apart from these percentage-technique of arithmetic has also been used to reach conclusion.

Discussion:

Table 1 & Table 2 depict the responses of respondents of two sample sansads and Figure 1, Figure 2 & Figure 3 shows comparative picture of villagers' opinion in respect of queries. Collected data are being analyzed separately in this phase of study, for make it easy to compare between the statuses of progress of the two *gram sansads*.

Let us discuss first the Jambedia *sansad* of Panchmura Gram Panchayte. There are 15 *sansads* under panchmura Gram panchayte and Jambedia is a listed Backward village (as per 2004, HRD Report of West Bengal). The *sansad* has three mouzas – Bhaetuadanga (645), Chakjambedia (196) and Jambedia (424) and total population is 1265(as per 2001 Census). Besides this 457 (36.13%) person out of 1265 belong to SC and number of BPL families are 146. The grim picture of the *sansad* which we have found after carrying out a comprehensive survey is really matter of grave concern. They woefully come short of all the necessary indicators for human development like housing, water, health and hygiene, opportunities of work sanitation etc. They are not only deprived of the basic necessities of life, at the same time they are deplorably unaware about any measure which can alleviate their poverty. If we closely observed Table I, then we'll found that only 20 people lived in *semi pucca* or *pucca* house and only 5 persons have got the job opportunity above 20 days in a year under MGNREGA scheme out of 50 respondents. Again 20 respondents have replied that they are not getting pure drinking water though out the year. In a brief they are lagging behind all the indicators which will make their lives sustain.

On the other hand, people of Taldangra basic primary school *sansad* are living in a far better condition than the Jambedia *sansad* belonging to the same block. Huge disparities have been noticed between these two *gram sansad*. Taldangra basic primary school is one of the *sansad* out of 12 *sansads* of Taldangra Gram Panchayte. Total population of this *sansad* is 982 (as per 2001 Census) and only 43 families belong to BPL. They are enjoying all the necessary facilities which ensure good life. Only 12 persons have told that they are deprived from *pucca* house out of 50 respondents. Again 24 respondents remain silence regarding MGNREGA, which indicates that they do not need the job card or they are not seeking job against job card.

Figure 3 portrays a comparative picture of deprivedness between two selected gram sansads: Chak Jambedia under Panchmura GP and Taldangra Basic Primary School under Taldangra GP. .If we compare the data getting from the respondents it will be found that 88% family of Jambedia *Sansad* doesn't have sanitary latrine or toilets facilities in the home against the 18% family of Taldangra basic primary school *sansad*. Till now they are defecating openly, which is one of the main sources of health related problem in rural area. UNICEF states that one

gram of faces can contain up to 10,000.000 viruses, 1000,000 bacteria besides other pathogens. Improved sanitation status has direct relationship with the eradication of poverty, reduction of disease burden, universal primary education, gender gap, employment and so on. Regarding health, 40% out of 100 % the people of Taldangra *sansad* have enjoyed primacy health facilities from their nearest health centre, where only 16% from Jambedia. Again, only 16% people of Jambedia *sansad* have got sufficient drinking water through the year, (that means 84% are deprived from it) compare to 40% of Taldangra *sansad*. Regarding housing quality, 60% people of Jambedia *sansad* are living in Kuccha or mud-made house, where as only 24% from Taldangra is dwelling in the same.

Point to be noted, it has been found in time of survey, that most of people of Taldangra *sansad* are belonging to APL. Their occupation is mainly service or own private business. Few people are engaged in cultivation or wage labours. Another thing is that this *sansad* is nearer to Block office and Block Hospital. Infrastructure and communication facilities are available here. So the life style is far better comparing to that of Jambedia, where most of the people are belonging to BPL (626) and their main occupation is either wage labour or share cropping. Most of the time throughout the year, they remain jobless. The economic poverty is reflected on every sphere of their life. One interesting aspect has found in the field of political participation, where only 20% people of Taldangra *Sansad* are attending Gram *Sansad* meeting, there 34% people of Jambedia *sansad* are participating in Gram *Sansad* meeting. The root cause of it from my point of view is that it is very easy to motivate and create some pressure from the political party over the poor people who are really jobless and nothing to do. The expectation for getting something from the politics has taken them in *Sansad*.

Conclusion

The study reveals that the progress of Jambedia *sansad* is very slower than the Taldangra in comparison. No praiseworthy development have found for the people of Jambedia , which could enable them to lead a better life and would have ensure all the necessities of life. It is really a matter of regret that in last 12 years (from the year of listing it as a backward village) the people of Jambedia deprived from all aspect of life, where as the people of Taldangra *sansad* are enjoying maximum facilities to ensure their own standard life, which highlighted the fact that effectiveness of the governance is not remain same in different Panchaytes of a same Block. After having a look at the overall results of the survey the following observations can be highlighted:

1. The lack of political willingness is one of the main causes of underdevelopment of Jambeida. Most of the time it has remained under the regime of Communist Party of India (Marxist), who deliberately neglected the development of this area and till now the tradition is going on.
2. The government's initiatives are not properly implemented in the deprived village. The money of different development plans, coming from the top level are not utilized in right direction by following proper development plans by the local authority. Most of the time they are emphasizing their political interest rather than the real interest of the rural people for the minimum amenities. It indicates the poor performance of panchayate in different area.
3. The communication gap and infrastructural deficiencies have bound the villagers to stay in underdevelopment stage.
4. Creation of alternative employment or non agricultural activities is also regrettably less in Jambedia. Besides this people who are dependable on agriculture are facing problem of adequate irrigation facilities and water in summer. It means existing programme of rural development is unable to facilities the rural people in all aspects of their livelihood. It needs to be reviewed.
5. The low educational enrollment and unawareness about different governmental programmes or about the existing unhygienic condition is also responsible for underdevelopment of the backward village. It proves that the awareness and participation is not satisfactory towards resource mobilization and environmental planning.
6. The government initiatives are not sufficient to ensure the rural sustainability in the studied area. It's need to be more intensive in nature. Most of the people of the area are not aware about the schemes which are taken for their upliftment. Due to this unawareness, a gap remained between the two sides which enable them to bypass the real stakeholders. This is one main reason for not getting the proper facilities provided by the government.

Policy Suggestion

To overcome the present situation and maintain a balanced development among all the areas under study, every corner should be emphasized or treated by the authority equally. Political friendliness is necessary to ensure the momentum of sustainable development. Awareness campaign should be encouraged. The basic principle of granting money for rural

development should be “more backward will be entitled more grant”. Proper developmental plan should be chalked out by the local authority with the active presence of rural people.

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Table 1

Responses collected from Chak Jambedia, Panchmura GP

Question Number	Positive Answer	Negative Answer	Remain Silence	Do not know
1	30	20	-	-
2	28	20	2	-
3	8	32	2	8
4	14	10	14	12
5	5	30	5	10
6	6	44	-	-
7	17	11	22	-

Table 2

Responses collected from Taldangra basic primary school, Taldangra GP

Question Number	Positive Answer	Negative Answer	Remain Silence	Do not know
1	12	38	-	-
2	26	8	16	-
3	20	5	14	6
4	19	12	10	9
5	2	14	24	-
6	37	9	4	-
7	10	12	28	-

Figure 1

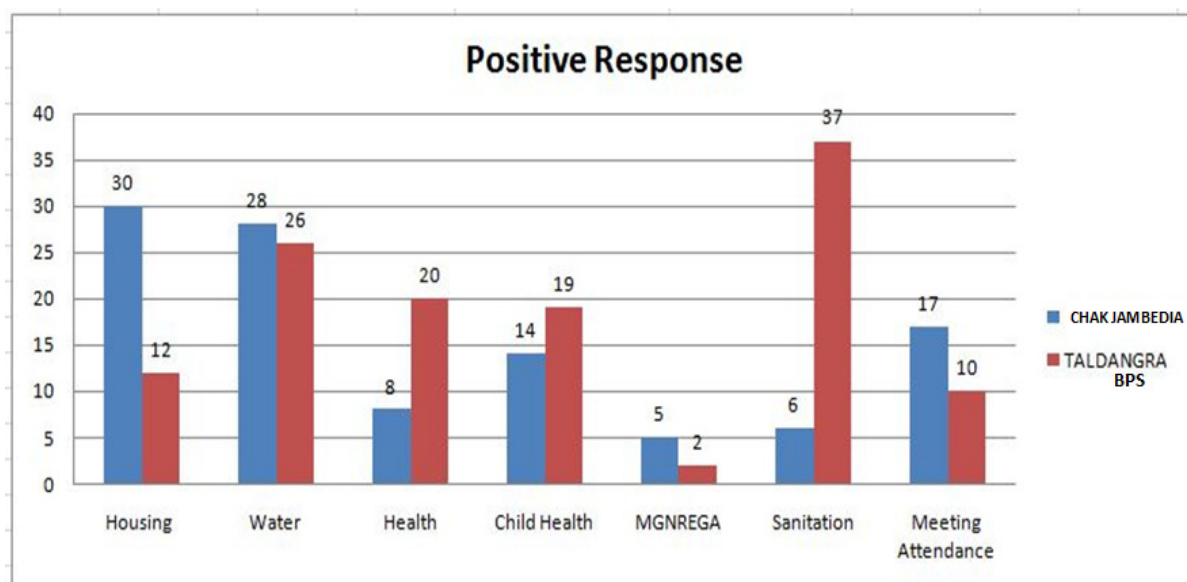


Figure 2

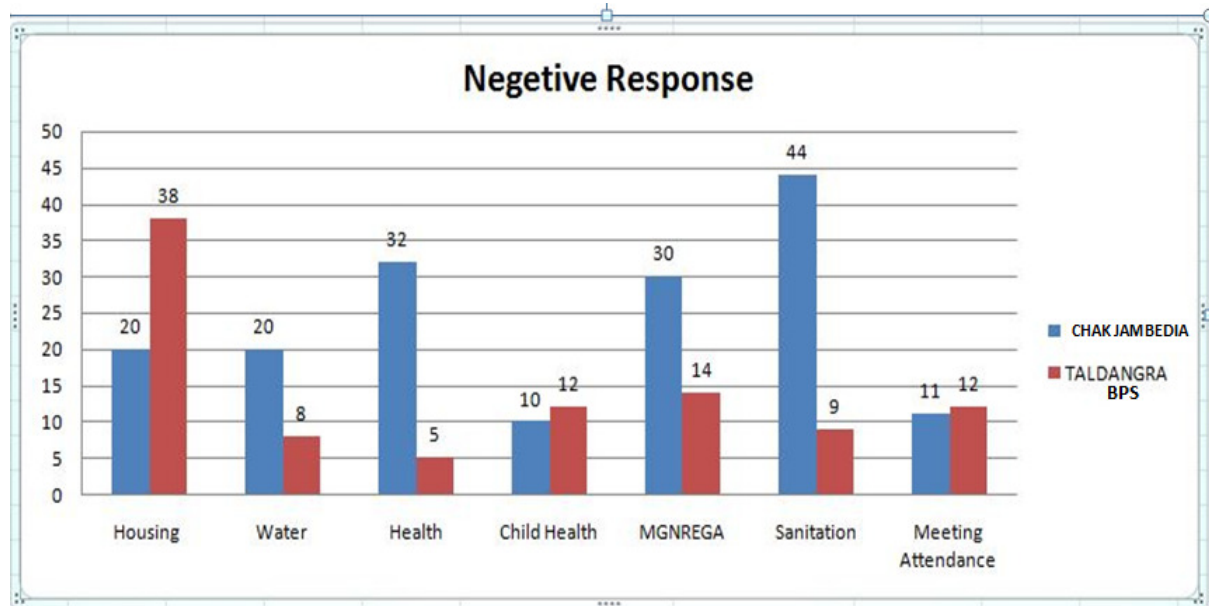


Figure 3

