CHAPTER I
INTRODUCING THE STUDY

1. Rural Development in Search of Communication and Participation

In the following discussion we seek to introduce the study by linking development, communication and participation in the specific context of Participatory Development Communication (PDC). It is to be done by highlighting its foundation growth and various forms. But before getting any further it is necessary to understand Development Communication (DC). The term DC was first coined in 1972 by Nora C. Quebral “to designate the processes of transmitting and communicating new knowledge related to rural environments” (1). Therefore “It almost goes without saying that communication lies at the root of all human development, in any context. Capacity building for rural development takes place in the context of communication practices and processes” (2). Rural development, in general, is inalienably linked to the improvement of economic and social life of the people residing in the rural areas. In the context of the third world nations, the World Bank came up with a reasonably compact concept of rural development- “Rural development is a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people-the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest ... who seek a livelihood in rural areas. The group includes small scale farmers, tenants and the landless laborers....” (3).

Agriculture, animal husbandry, roads, drinking water, education, women’s welfare, child care and nutrition, family welfare and planning, health and sanitation constitute the core of rural development. However, such programmes and projects cannot be successfully accomplished without the co-operation and support of the local rural people. Enabling the poor and the down-trodden to intensely participate in the programmes meant for their upliftment recognizes their importance in the overall development and welfare of the community as a whole.

But there is a need to go deeper into the roots of the process. Development has many approaches and forms but in the sense of transformation for the better it bears little meaning unless ‘communication’ approaches are used to mobilize the local people to
action. Kofi Annan (4) in an address to the World Bank Conference, ‘Global Knowledge’ 1997, said “If information and knowledge are central to democracy, they are the conditions of development” (5). Communication is, thus, the key element in development in general and in the implementation of development policies and programmes in particular. In this respect PDC, to be elaborated below, seeks to provide twin stress on individual and community to effect a much-needed ‘balance’.

1.1. The need for Study
In this context, my area of study, rural Darjeeling (6), remains under-developed despite various developmental interventions in the form of schemes, programmes and projects, which in turn reveal the need for effective strategies of communication networks and resources that are available. In the absence of such strategies, several policies and schemes, meant for the rural people only remain stagnant since they are not communicated to the beneficiaries.

Development has been hard to come by because of the limitations that the people at the grassroots level face in identifying and becoming part of the programmes meant for them. This is similar to the contention of K.S. Nair and Shirley A. White who contend that “Full participation of the peasant/villager in decision-making, including inputs of indigenous knowledge, has been largely a fantasy with only lip service given to its importance” (7).

The people residing in the rural areas of Darjeeling will continue to remain neglected unless communication policies and strategies are regarded as vital for identifying local people’s needs, and incorporating such needs for their benefit. Dearth of research has made the development scenario in rural Darjeeling largely unexplored. This is what motivates me to study the locale more intensely and explore the prospects of PDC.

2. Development and Participation: Communication as Linkage
The notion of people-centric development, broadly speaking, contends that development devoid of people-centric communication becomes too technocratic and therefore, meaningless. Guy Bessette in his book Involving the Community: A Guide to Participatory Development Communication states that “Development is no longer
considered as a process being directed towards beneficiaries, but as a result of the involvement and effort of people. Participation is an essential condition to this task and communication is the process that facilitates it” (8). In *Participatory Communication Strategy Design*, Paolo Mefalopulos and Chris Kamlongera have precisely described the ways of facilitating people’s participation in the decision-making process that may contribute to effective communication planning and action to improve their livelihood. It “documents the process of planning a communication strategy in a participatory manner, i.e., with the people, in order to address practical problems and needs as identified and defined by them” (9).

Dagron in a report to the Rockefeller Foundation, “The main elements that characterise participatory communication are related to its capacity to involve the human subjects of social change in the process of communicating” (10). Jan Servaes in *The International Communication Gazette* writes, about the Development Support Communication (DSC) approach adopted by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (11). It is “the systematic utilization of appropriate communication channels and techniques to increase people’s participation in development and to inform, motivate and train rural populations, mainly at the grassroots level” (12).

It is beyond doubt that rural development indicates change for the better, and upliftment of the disadvantaged rural masses. It is a transformation of the rural society that not only provides every individual with the bare necessities of life but also boosts community participation in the decision making process. However, positive indicators like these will not materialize unless one realizes the importance of people as active participants. There is an urgent need to make people’s participation their responsibility and encourage them to take part in the programmes and issues that affect their lives. When people participate they get the opportunity to develop self-confidence and they take the responsibility for the accomplishment and execution of activities for sustained development.

Lack of people’s participation in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes has been a major factor retarding development. Providing high technology or capital power is important but it cannot help to bring about a change in the poor people’s life unless they take the lead as key actors in development. This enables the poor to come to the centre of action from the periphery, ascertain their
capacity, increase their aspiration level and utilize their resources for a more prolific intention. It is a platform that moulds them to be decision makers, contributors, thinkers and implementers. Thus, the concept of ‘human development’ (13) cannot be undermined as it puts people’s empowerment at the centre of development. In fact such is the importance of the participation of the rural poor that well-known economist Gunnar Myrdal pointed out way back in 1968, “The ideal has always been that the plan should come from the people and meet their wishes and need and have their support in thought as well as deed……” (14).

One could go at length elaborating the effects of people’s participation. However, it becomes necessary to understand that the rural poor, the true beneficiaries who are supposed to play the key role, are often beyond easy reach, both physically and mentally. Lack of education makes it even more difficult. They have half-formed ideas and knowledge that center around the deep rooted ‘culture’ (15), traditions, experiences and values, far different from those of development administrators and workers (16). Such differences impede the participation of the local rural people in the diagnosis of the problems and in the planning of action to solve it.

The situation further suffers a setback when the development workers and field personnel working with the people do not have a clear idea about their roles. Often they lack proper tools, skill, methodology, aptitude and ability to handle the entire operations in the development process. Thus, there is a need to get into the skin of the rural behavioural pattern. This at its roots is a problem of communication, and the ground reality is that not much has been done to adapt, promote and intensify developmental techniques and undertake training lessons.

Lack of communication between the development projects and the people at the grassroots level impedes the rural development process. When the flow of information gets disrupted the rural people are deprived of benefits and rights. A well-coordinated rural communication network designed by the policymakers and the local administrators can get to the door-steps of the people and open up opportunities for economic and social improvement. Since majority of the rural masses are illiterate and naïve, the communication channels have to be formulated in such a manner that it largely fulfills the objectives--- ‘of the people, for the people and by the people’.
2.1. **Impediments**

At this juncture of discussion it becomes necessary to mention the factors, associated with communication, which provoke development to falter. The key factors are the following:

- **Deficiency in planning strategy:**

The essentials of rural development include a process whereby people of local communities play a role in planning and action, drawing up their common and individual needs and problems, making group and individual plans to fulfill their needs and solve problems and executing the plans. However, such role is often overlooked by the development workers and administrators. They view the people only as ‘takers’ of the pre-designed programmes and projects and ignore the experiences, information knowledge that they possess vis-à-vis their local environment. In this context we can relate to Paulo Freire’s classic *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in which he argued that “Most political, educational and communication interventions fail because they are designed by technocrats based on their personal views of reality. They seldom take into account the perspectives of those to whom these programmes are directed” (17).

Consequently, this results in miscalculated examination of problems, inaccurate and misjudged solutions which often result in faulty planning and formulation of programmes. Under such circumstances the people are reluctant to participate in such development programmes that do not suit their needs.

- **Unplanned allotment of development projects:**

When development policies meant for the upliftment of the rural local people are designed according to the inadequate, incorrect and incomplete information regarding the local community there is an inclination on the part of the development administrators to allocate the projects to people who are not in urgent need of them or the most deprived and disadvantaged lot.

- **Application of improper technology:**

There is a tendency among the development agencies to provide inappropriate solutions to the local people’s problems which they would decline because they are not understood as pertinent to their needs. One can blame the inadequate, insufficient
utilization of efficient techniques to engage the people in recognizing suitable
technology that would provide solutions to the local needs, problems and
environment. At the same time the agencies normally criticize the local rural people
as 'laggards'- for showing reluctance to change and not possessing a positive
temperament for adopting the proposed resolutions.

- Poor packaging of information:

Development ideas, information meant for the people are often poorly formulated that
leads to non-utilization and non-acceptance by people. Circumstances exist where
communication networks, channels, policies are not appropriate enough as to be
approachable and obtainable by the rural people, and it so happens that such channels
are utilized in rural development. Hence a ‘two-way communication system’ cannot
be established.

- Lack of knowledge on the role of communication:

The policymakers and the development administrators associated with rural
development are often ignorant and unaware of the benefits of communication
channels that can help to bring about successful people’s participation in the planning
and implementation of rural development programmes. Many of them still regard
communication as a one-way process of disseminating information, message and
knowledge from the government to the people at the grassroots level. Thus, lack of
recognizing the importance of the two-way communication process is reflected in the
meager funding, support and aid for communicative action in rural development
programmes and projects.

- Rural people lacking strength:

The people at the grassroots level, specifically the marginalized, impoverished and the
very needy, regard themselves as incapable and too weak to influence development
policies, programmes, objectives, and techniques. In fact they have a strong
conviction that development is planned and formulated by the government ‘at the top’
and its rural development agencies seek to make them ‘powerless’ to raise their voice.
This kind of limitation occurs when the people are not included at the time of drawing
of development schemes. At the same time it may be that the development workers
show no interest or simply ignore the application of participatory strategies. A same kind of scenario can be experienced in the study areas of rural Darjeeling.

Thus, it becomes necessary to understand that people's participation is a central feature of the contemporary thinking about rural development with communication playing a vital role. Communication is supposed to be a process which is rooted in 'their own' social and cultural milieu, their own language and dialects, and their own traditional ways of interaction.

PDC hence becomes an innovative method of reaching to the rural masses and mobilizing them for their own development. It is a platform for educating and guiding the rural local people to actively contribute towards social change, community development and rural reconstruction. It also plays a pivotal role in exposing the people's hidden abilities and utilization of these abilities to achieve the goals of developing the individuals and the community at large. K.S. Nair and Shirley A. White describe PDC as a “Two-way dynamic interaction between 'grass-roots' receivers and the information source, mediated by development communicators, which facilitates participation of the 'target group' in the process of development”.

3. Centrality of Communication: Towards PDC

Communication occupies a key status in the process of development. Communication should be regarded as a central process in the overall development plan. In a more concrete form “It seeks to integrate people's culture, attitudes, knowledge, practices, perceptions, needs and problems in the planning and implementation of development projects and programmes to guarantee that they are effective and relevant. It ensures that information from development agencies is useful and relevant and packaged in ways people will find attractive and understandable. In the same way, people's perceptions and knowledge are rendered in ways that will be comprehensible to development agencies”.

PDC focuses on the channels, procedures, medium, techniques and media to impart and accord knowledge, message, and information among all the stakeholders in the process of rural development. The objective is to perceive common acceptance and agreement that lead to the accomplishment of goals and objectives. At the same time it encourages and promotes local peoples participation at every stage of development.
with an aim to check and lessen the ordinary people's burden of poverty, for a better life.

The academic and research analysis of communication for development have a long and impressive trajectory. Let us mention them briefly. It was after the Second World War that the use of communication tools in development programmes started. Rather its role became more defined after the independence of many former colonies of Asian, African and Latin American countries. Daniel Lerner, one of the earliest Modernization scholars, came up with *The Passing of Traditional Society* (1958) in which he “emphasized the relationship between communication, urbanization and modernization, which lead to the belief that the greater the communication facilities, the greater the modernization” (20). Everett Rogers wrote *The Diffusion of Innovations* in 1962, in which he focused on the “poor majority, their communication behaviour and the impact of information on their situation” (21). His theory was based on three factors: the marked or the specified population of the innovation, the innovation to be broadcast and the sources and communication channels. Wilbur Schramm in 1964 too identified the linkage between communication and economy as crucial to national development. He regarded “development of communication system as a means of participation of the national economy in the process of world economy” in his book *Mass Media and National Development* (22). In the 1970s in a new shift the systematic study and practice of DC in the Philippines began with the pioneering work of Professor Nora C. Quebral who became the first to come up with this term as mentioned at the very outset of this chapter. She defined DC “As the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater economic and social equality and the larger fulfillment of the human potential” (23). In the same period Paulo Freire also defined DC “As a tool that the grassroots can use to assert control through becoming aware of the various facets of the real development problems in their region; organizing in order to react collectively and effectively to these problems; bringing to light the conflicts that divide the various interest groups; becoming politicized—learning to provide alternatives to problem situations and finding solutions to various problems; and becoming "technicized"—obtaining the necessary tools to put to concrete use the solutions provided by the community” (24).
However, DC was criticized for being too technocratic that too at the cost of the people. It was debated that in it the channels of communication were economically and socially biased and there was an absence of the larger section of population who are the true beneficiaries.

In the 1980s when neo-liberalism was carving its space, “Participatory development became more connected to promoting self-reliance, to seeing participants as ‘beneficiaries’ or ‘clients’, and to focus on their interactions with bureaucracy through development and donor agencies” (25). This period witnessed the growth of Information Education Communication (IEC). As we move to the 1990s, concepts like “Participatory governance, accountability and citizenship also began to gain popularity and communication as a dialogue and deliberation became popular” (26).

The early approaches to DC stressed that communication networks, like the mass media and the interpersonal variety, had the aptitude to bring about social change amongst those deprived of knowledge and skill. But the reality reflected a different picture, as pointed out by J.V.Vilanilam—“Simply disseminating ‘targeted’ information through media does not in itself make people willing participants in the change process.” (27). Despite the investments in the media and in the development programmes and projects the people at the grassroots level continued to remain in poverty, unemployment, bad-health, with a huge failure to provide the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. Ultimately, the redefinition of DC has led to the study of the importance of the role of the ordinary people who are the actual actors in the development decisions in the development process.

Communication is, therefore, instrumental in taking development to the door steps of the rural people covering a wide arena that not only includes agriculture but also education, health, nutrition, environment, livestock and other key areas. It also emphasizes the needs of the communities and facilitates the local people, especially the poor and deprived, to be active participants in the decision-making process of development in general. At the same time, it also encourages the people to take part in the identification of their problems and needs which will form the base of project planning and open up interaction among all the stakeholders to ensure that the goals of the development project are realized.
Discussions on how PDC contributes to 'enhancing development' have taken place around the world. For instance, the IXth United Nations Communication for Development Roundtable was held from September 6–9, 2004 at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy (28). The First Regional Workshop on Communication for Development and Ways of Sustainable Life was held in Costa Rica from May 28 to June 01, 2006 (29). In Lima, Peru, a seminar on “Without Communication There is no Development” was held from September 13–15, 2006 (30).

Studies have also shown that communication can aid all-round development. The first World Congress on Communication for Development was organized from October 25–27, 2006, by the World Bank, FAO of the United Nations and the Communication Initiative in Rome, Italy (31). Its main objective was to prove that PDC is an essential avenue for responding to the most pressing challenge of development and therefore, should be fully incorporated into the ‘practice and politics’ of development.

The Isang Bagsak methodology enables people to secure development through PDC and Natural Resource Management (NRM). The process would look like this:

Step 1: Establishing a relationship with a local community and understanding the local setting;

Step 2: Involving the community in the identification of a problem, potential solutions, and in a decision to carry out an initiative;

Step 3: Identifying the different community groups and other stakeholders concerned by the identified problem (or goal) and initiative;

Step 4: Identifying communication needs, objectives and activities;

Step 5: Identifying appropriate communication tools;

Step 6: Preparing and pre-testing communication content and materials;

Step 7: Facilitating the building of partnerships;

Step 8: Producing an implementation plan;

Step 9: Monitoring and evaluating the communication strategy and documenting the development or research process;

Step 10: Planning the sharing and utilization of results (32).
3.1. Specific Functions:

In this context specific mention needs to be made of the functions communication performs in development. Such functions are to be located in the background of communication. “…it generally refers to the planned use of strategies and processes of communication aimed at achieving development” (33).

- Facilitating people’s capacity-building

PDC seeks to utilize participatory exercises, mass media and resources to empower the rural local people to voice their opinion and share their individual needs, difficulties, and capabilities among themselves as well as with the development personnel working with them. This enhances the people’s ability to exert influence in the formulation and implementation of development programmes with a purpose to fulfill their needs and solve their problems. People’s participation in the decision-making process enables them to have a ‘common consent’ with the development agency as well as between them with an objective to achieve a ‘more sustainable community development’.

People’s capacity to look at decisions and strategies as ‘their own’ with an aptitude to strive for effective implementation results not only in the accomplishment of the designed goal but also enhances sustainable development. When communication empowers the people, it gives them the competence to mobilize themselves for action with the intention to secure the objective of development activities. Laura Cornish and Alison Dunn rightly observe: “It more directly influences the capacity and capability of citizens to assert their own needs and act upon those needs” (34).

- Refined training

The rural people get an opportunity to sharpen their training skills when knowledge, skills and information are allotted to them in the manner the people find it beneficial, effective and appealing. When measures are taken to prepare messages and training about new technology, if properly designed they help to reach the people easily and efficiently. It is normally done utilizing the mass media, interpersonal and group communication.

Presence of this kind of communication-based training enables the local rural people “To overcome the barriers of illiteracy and cultural differences by sharing ideas and
knowledge in appropriate audio and visual forms” (35). However, this is only possible when the community comprising people of various backgrounds and social standing are treated on equal ground.

- Transparency beneficial to the people

Two-way communication between people and the development administrators is vital. For example, in Latin America a transparent communicative relationship has been devised which contributes to development. The citizen journalism (Colombia and Peru), media watch (Guatemala, Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Argentina) and citizens watch (Peru) have managed to establish relationships among the people, the government and media (36) rather effectively.

When such transparency exists between the two sides it becomes easier for the decision makers to understand people’s feelings, views and opinions. At the same time, it makes them conscious of the necessity of an improved communication link between the beneficiaries and the stakeholders of development projects.

Consequently, the people will also be in a position to perceive and analyze the information and messages being sent from the government. This gives them the space to make their own analysis and ascertain what to accept and deny, and why.

- Ensuring mutual acceptance and consent for action

There is a crucial need to adopt appropriate communication methods, networks, channels, and traditional, mass and interpersonal media that ensure better interaction between the people at the grassroots level and the development agencies. This leads to a positive situation where both the sides share ‘common consent’ to work together on problems, needs, solutions as well as on new and suitable technology. Also the people show the willingness to participate as they get an opportunity to participate in the solutions which are connected to their needs.

Utilization of this methodology moulds the people’s abilities, temperament, viewpoints, competence, customs and their conceptions in a way that it acts as a foundation for the planning and devising of productive development policies and programmes. Its effectiveness increases when people’s perception of their existence and surrounding are given importance in the process of planning.
Thus, communication provides a platform for the people and the development agencies to transmit, share, and convey information, messages and knowledge to one another in a way that is both comprehensible and compatible.

3.2. Innovative Approach: The Key

If communication is instrumental in the implementation of policies and programmes aimed at the welfare of the people, it is supposed to make the rural people, as in the case of our study areas, its ultimate beneficiaries. Communication not only aids material development, but brings about a change in the attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and behavioral pattern of the people. This in turn facilitates a better linkage between the common people and the government, enabling them to be active participants in their own development and that of society.

When ideas, experience and knowledge are shared the ‘social’ process is understood as communication. It encompasses the mass media, folk media and the interpersonal interaction for community development. When the mass media is used to disseminate messages for development programmes the communication process enters into a cycle with development.

Radio, newspapers, television and the internet comprise mass media while the folk media consists of folk songs, folk dance, folk theatre etc. Interpersonal interactions include face-to-face communication like the community meetings, door-to-door visit, open dialogue among the people and so forth. It is important to note that in rural Darjeeling the media-sourced communication is so inadequate that our discussion will be heavily oriented towards face-to-face communication. However, it does not mean that the other two media cannot make any contribution in the life of the rural poor. They too have been occasionally utilized and we can mention some of the projects in other parts of India. The Kutch Mahila Vikas Sanghatan (KMVS) (37) in Gujarat were women are trained to be community reporters for a radio programme made by them. Their programme deals with local issues like Panchayat, water, mid-day meal, health care etc. Another project is the Chalo Ao Gaon Mein a community radio programme of Daltonganj in the Palamau district of Jharkhand (38). Community radio has also been set up in Budikote in Kolar district of the state of Karnataka. The programme has been named Namma Dhwani meaning our voice and it promotes effective rural communication (39).
In neighbouring Bangladesh, ‘Proshika’ (40), the third largest Non Government Organization (NGO) works for human development. Some of its objectives are “To awaken people’s human and ethical values, to ensure the participation of poor villagers and to value their thoughts and beliefs and to disprove the popular belief that poor villagers cannot use sophisticated technology and to create skills among these target people” (41). Its work is varied but one can mention ‘participatory video’ (42) as one of its major communication channel. In Chile internet too has opened up as a new form of communication medium. As Don Richardson writes, the farmers in rural Chile get better prices for their crops because they use the internet to get information of the up-to-the minute farm market information from the website of the Chicago Board of Trade (43). Internet too connects rural communities some parts in India, as in the case of the Information Villages Project started in Pondicherry. The project links a cluster of villages into an information network connected to the internet and it provides relevant information on agriculture, health, government policies, livestock and make such information accessible to the local rural communities (44).

Traditional media like drama and folk music have been employed in Nigeria to address issues of gender inequality and diseases like Human Immuno Deficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). The theatre for community action projects in Zimbabwe and the use of theatre and folk musical groups to disseminate agricultural information to rural communities in Nigeria are also important instances (45). Theatre too can act as a useful communication tool like the Aarohan Street Theatre of Nepal, which performs plays on a wide variety of subjects for community awareness and participation (46). A paper by P.Alumuku and R. White on “Community Radio for Development in Africa” deals with the communicating ability of the local community in the form of community radio stations in Ghana, South Africa and Zambia (47). Latin America’s interactive school radio projects and community radio particularly in Ecuador and Bolivia need special mention (48). The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) supports social development by implementing a number of W.F.(Wireless Fidelity) pilot projects to connect remote and rural communities across Latin America and the Caribbean to the internet (49).

However, any kind of medium of communication created will remain stagnant vis-à-vis rural development activities unless we actively involve the rural poor people in the
decision making process which affects their lives. But successful response to the opportunities and challenges to social, economic and technological change as well as improved agricultural productivity, food security and rural livelihood will occur only when knowledge and information are effectively communicated to the people. Hence a well-coordinated rural communication network centering around the people will help to consolidate the development policies and projects towards fruitful results. ‘Putting people first’ should be the first thing in the mind of a development agency, while taking programmes to the doorsteps of the rural masses. It is not without reason that the FAO came up with a famous slogan, “There is no development without communication” (50).

Supporting this is Erskine Childers and Mallika Vajrathon, “All over the world, rural development programmes of every kind are limping, delayed and often failing outright because of failure to communicate to the people. Only when such support communication is seen and acted upon, as a basic and intrinsic part of the rural development, we will begin adequately to help rural people to help themselves” (51). Thus, to reiterate, a strong and innovative communication network is supposed to function as an effective agent of change, promoter of rural development and most important the voice of the rural mass.

3.3. From DC to CfD: A Long Trajectory

The people at the grassroots level and their ‘role’ in development cannot be isolated from the entire framework of rural development and the specific modes and nodes of communication. This is why the idea of DC becomes important. We are using the term DC broadly, though we keep in mind that it is now graduating to Communication for Development (CfD) in which there is the vital role of the development communicators who are supposed to mediate between technical, personnel and administrative officials as ‘co-equal partners’. Early DC models in the 1950s and 1960s viewed communication as messages going from a sender to a receiver (52). The intended receivers were neglected and it largely remained a one-way model. The approach to development was targeted and based on economic growth, with the masses who were supposed to benefit from the growth left in the dark. Intense criticisms led to a change in perception which regarded people as subjects of their own development and not simply objects of technology or processes.
As Juan Diaz Bordenave pointed out “Communication is beginning to help participation in becoming a natural mode to solve problems” (53).

Hence, CFD cannot move further without the active participation of the rural masses. It is the platform for exchange of thoughts, ideas and experiences amongst the people, who are the true beneficiaries. It acts as an effective change agent helping the rural people into main-stream of national life. In this context Guy Bessette in his book *Involving the Community - A Guide to Participatory Development Communication*, writes that PDC is a “Planned activity, based on the one hand on participatory processes and on the other hand on media and interpersonal communication, which facilitates a dialogue among different stakeholders around a common development problem or goal, with the objective of developing and implementing a set of activities to contribute to its solution or its realization” (54). Nair and White write, “Participatory communication for development begins with the premise that all people have a right to voice their views and become active partners in the development process” (55). A well-designed communication strategy fulfills the objectives of the rural development programmes. However, the objectives can be achieved only with the intense involvement of the beneficiaries, administrators, local leaders, development facilitators. The rural people are always the neglected lot, exploited and dominated. But underlying the participatory communication approach is as Emmanuel Kasonga points out, a “theory of community”. In such approach, as Kasonga goes on to add, “Communication ought to relate to the sort of community in which it takes place” (56).

The success of the developmental programmes depends to a great extent upon people’s participation, the government agencies responsible and the kind of development activities. Thus, inter-dependence constitutes the main focus of developmental administration, i.e. its identification rests with the involvement of the people. Its importance was so much that in India the Panchyati Raj System (57) was introduced which is not only supposed to expedite people’s participation but also to narrow down the gap between the people and the government. The objective is decentralisation to “enable local governments to function as units of self government and to plan and implement programmes which are meaningful to the local population” (58).
Communication channels and strategies have to become integral part of programmes devised to bring about change, development as well as on the participation of the people, and to bring them closer to the government and administration. They become at least indirectly associated with policy processes and a kind of transparency is created of the politico-economic and administrative apparatus. However, there is an urgent need for the people to realize that unless they don’t involve themselves in every development process chances of sustainable change will be slim. Here CFD comes to their aid helping the people to become ‘performers’ in their own development. Ouchi and Campbell, noted “The objective of development communication is to motivate, involve, and make the rural people participate in development programmes - a process which is two-way, dynamic, and interactive” (59). Explanations like these put communication as an essential ingredient of change, as a key element in the implementation of policies and programmes aimed at the welfare of the people.

3.4. Limits to Participation and Beyond

Then again, people’s participation is a complex issue. Even with people’s participation it is not always easy to achieve and may not always fulfill every expectation. So one must be aware of its limitation, realizing at the same time that development cannot take place in its absence. In spite of communication being democratized, obstacles to participation cannot be over looked.

The ‘top-down’ development approach is a major hindrance, in which the absence of people in participative planning and action is endemic. It is control-oriented and accompanied by a set of guidelines that leaves little space for the people at the grassroots level to take their own decisions or control their resources. This is exactly what is happening with the people of rural Darjeeling and has been further studied in the chapters that follow.

- The rural people lack the proper understanding of the concept of development and there is lack of effective information support to the development efforts made at the community level.
- There is also a dearth in mutual understanding between the policy makers, and the rural development communication functionaries to cater to the needs of local community and to collect feedback.
The disadvantaged group and the rural poor have to struggle daily for survival which leaves little room for participation. The situation becomes worse when the field staff of the government do not take into account the socio-economic differences.

The development agents' failure to identify the target group will leave the deprived lot to be dependent upon the local elite group, local political leaders (60) for decisions and project implementation. They may also lack the experience of interaction and speaking in group meetings which may lead to the manipulation of development programmes by the well to do and local leaders within the community.

The development agency and the people at the grassroots level differ in terms of social status, dialect, level of education, perception, cultural norms, that render a further communication gap. Often the people are not comfortable with the methodology adopted by the field personnel, which undermine their intelligence and pragmatic ways. Shirley A White observes, “It is not at all, unusual for authorities to try to dictate what should happen throughout a project and let the participatory process fall by the wayside” (61).

Illiteracy, poverty, superstitious beliefs, ignorance, preoccupation with their livestock and agricultural work also keeps them away from the initiative to identify needs, problems and respond to action.

### 3.4.1. Beyond the Limitations

Despite the limitations, the essence of PDC exists with the direct involvement of the people in the various processes of identification, formulation and implementation of development policies and programmes. Therefore, “It is now accepted that rural people and other disadvantaged groups have the right to participate in decisions affecting their lives. They need to be empowered – as the stock phrase goes – to realize their self-worth, and to have their opinions heard and factored into the development dialogue” (62). In other words, local resources can be best utilized when the people participate in the development programmes. In fact when local expertise, talent, resources, and knowledge are harnessed for development projects to materialize the outcome is more effective and streamlined. This will break them free from the circle of dependency and arm them with the power of decision making and self-governance.
What would follow is not only the progressive use of their capabilities to achieve the goals, but also closer relations with the government, which expose them to the realities of administration and makes them aware of what lies in store for them. For example, the formation of self-help groups (SHGs) (63) in the rural areas is an important participatory model of development in which information flows not only downwards from the government to the people but also upwards from the people to the government. The SHGs has emerged as a powerful channel of human communication in the area of study, which has been elaborated in the fifth chapter.

In the ultimate analysis, any democratic modes of communication have to be identified with a ‘two-way’ communication system where exchange of ideas, dialogue on needs takes place. This gives the local rural people a platform for a better communication linkage with the government machinery and development agency. It should not be viewed as a way of telling people what they should do and make them accept projects as designed from higher authorities, but it should establish a relationship with the people for their involvement in the development initiative.

4. PDC: Brief Appraisal

Participation is a learning process. It brings about knowledge and skills to the people, while they participate in development activities, irrespective of their background, social status, occupation, literacy level, etc. Hence it’s all about citizens communicating with one another, with the administrative officials, development agencies working on behalf of the government and NGOs. Guy Bessette significantly observes: “Each time we must look for the best way to establish the communication process among different community groups and stakeholders, and use it to facilitate and support participation in a concrete initiative or experimentation driven by a community to promote change” (64).

PDC is instrumental in enhancing the knowledge, experience, skills and competence of the people as well as enrich their collective bargaining power and gain maximum through various developmental programmes. The mass, traditional and interpersonal media of communication must be properly channeled to accomplish this goal. Communication strategies should be so designed that it should not be for a privileged few but dedicated to the rural masses.
The preceding discussion shows that the development workers working as communicators are to act as effective change-agents facilitating intelligent participation and active contribution of the people. Economists, sociologists, development scholars, and communication scientists have various versions but at the same time they agree on a common assertion: “Development communication is the forum, through which the people are educated and mobilized to actively contribute towards promoting community development, social change, rural reconstruction, national development and other processes” (65).

4.1. The focal point in PDC

PDC is focused on the people-centric-communication and this can be best understood when classified as communication between government and people, communication between people and government and communication between people. However, this needs further explanation. Foremost, the government should give preference to the local people’s felt needs and it must start at the community level, than to persuade them to accept predesigned programmes. Thereafter the government agency has the responsibility to mobilize the people to share information and opinion, utilize communication tools and channels befitting the group concerned and monitor the development projects by ensuring that they are implemented for the beneficiaries.

The local development administrators and agencies act as the mediator between the government and the rural people. They have the responsibility to transmit messages, information on developmental schemes. For instance, the centrally funded flagship programme, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) (66), was recently launched in Darjeeling district. Before it was sent to the villages, the Gram Panchayat (GP) staff, Block staff, a few selected SHG leaders had to undergo training at the Block Development Office to understand what the scheme is all about, followed by the responsibility of disseminating the same to the people. The Gram Sansads, the SHGs and the government appointed Panchayat staff form the core of distribution and supervision of information to the people. The government agencies have to ensure that the people at the grassroots level avail of the benefits of the rural development programmes. The challenge before the government is not only to improve the living standards of the rural poor but to assure that the rural development programmes are spread through proper communication. The importance of rural communication, therefore, can be regarded as a major transformation of rural society. Then again,
participation of the rural masses in the economic, social, political and cultural development is possible only when there is a constant dialogue between the government and people.

The Participatory Development Communication Model


The model itself indicates the planned use of strategies and processes of communication aimed at achieving development. In other words it means that when the development agencies use communication as a tool to facilitate participation, they need to take certain specific conditions into account:

- To have a perfect understanding of that particular local environment in which work will be carried on.
- The ability to collect and share information with the people at the grassroots level.
- The duty to involve the community in the identification of a problem and also make them a part of its solution.
- The patience to listen to the people, guide them to share their opinions and lead them to action.
- People at the grassroots level must be given space for closer involvement in the communication system, which will make them capable of taking responsibility rather than being pushed as beneficiaries.
To use the appropriate communication channels to the different groups involved.

- Monitoring the development activities and collection of feedback.

If the above mentioned conditions are followed, it is argued, it will lead to the establishment of a transparent relationship with the local community.

PDC not only enhances development of the community and its people but also brings them closer to the polity and strengthens their bargaining power. It increases awareness about government plans and programmes and gives them the confidence to approach the administration for their rights. For instance, the formation of SHGs in rural Darjeeling is, to a certain extent, enabling the people to come out from passivity to the centrestage of action. A close observation of the SHGs reveals a reasonable degree of alertness and awareness of members vis-à-vis the functioning of the GP, Block Office and the development policies and programmes they have to offer. Thus, the crux of PDC lies in educating and mobilizing the local rural people not only towards social change and community development but also towards self-reliance, responsiveness and leadership. Moreover, it moulds local public opinion which is an integral part of grassroots democracy and development.

4.2. Participatory Rural Development Communication

PDC as a general statement refers to the role played by communication in achieving development and extending people’s participation for collective empowerment in effective planning and implementation of development projects and programmes. However, there is a specific form of PDC in the rural context, which is Participatory Rural Development Communication (PRDC). It comes to facilitate rural people who are often estranged from the mainstream of national development, due to the deficiency and failure of information, training, guiding and education to accomplish rural development programmes and projects.

Rural areas in developing societies, including my study areas, are inhabited by the down-trodden, marginalized and the poor section of the society. In a way ‘top-down’ communication process has manipulated the rural masses and made them ‘puppets’ in the hands of the development agency and administrators. The reality is communication can work “but not as a centrally-operated, top-down, one-way flow of information from the ‘wise’ to the ‘ignorant’. It can work only as a participatory
exchange in which citizens are empowered first to communicate effectively..." (67).

The little use of communication by the development agencies fails to raise consciousness amongst the rural poor that leads to a lack of common understanding between the local community and the development workers. Thus, a communication barrier gradually builds between the two groups that leave little opportunity for sustainable development to take place. Riccardo Del Castello and Paul Mathias Braun writes, "Policies for rural communication need to put rural people in a position to have access to information that is relevant for their livelihoods and to acquire the skills and knowledge to use the information. Rural people need to have a voice in demanding, formulating the data, knowledge and skills they need(68).

PRDC is especially formulated to mobilize the local rural people to actively take part in the execution of development programmes, entrust them with responsibilities and provide them the space to voice their opinions and at the same time every individual should avail of the benefit of the projects meant for them, such as those relating to the construction of water tank, community hall, library, primary health centers, permanent markets and others. It is a powerful methodological tool with an objective to implement and manage effective communication activities with the rural people. It seeks to facilitate dialogue among the rural people themselves, and between them and the development workers. Participation in decision-making process is the most crucial and important phase in PRDC, related to their daily life and local surroundings.

4.2.1. Enhancing PRDC

We need to analyze the major factors that maneuver PRDC towards attaining efficiency and effectiveness.

- Involving the community

The development facilitators must have the ability to involve all section of the rural community and create an environment where the people see themselves as 'owners' of the development process and its result. In this regard the development workers have a crucial role to assure that the people at the grassroots level take the initiative in the assessment of the process and develop the courage to speak their mind, express their views and precedence. This is the cornerstone for participation, its every stage—from identification to planning to implementation.
PRDC endows the rural masses with the mental strength to take a lead role in the investigation and analysis of their needs, wants and problems. Leadership is not just enough, unless the rural people are well-situated and comfortable with the channels, tools and techniques adapted by the administration. In this respect it is best to concentrate on the utilization of local resources, skills and materials which constitutes the hub of knowledge and experience of the masses. Thus, a kind of transparency is created which enhances the participatory skills of the people. It is important for the facilitator to realize that their attitude and behavior should be able to impress the people, which would act as vent for mutual understanding, trust and agreement between them and exhibit a genuine concern and interest in their activities, ideas and opinions.

- Potentiality to learn from people

In general perception the people of the rural belt are illiterate, naïve, timid, ignorant and so forth but we cannot underestimate the in-depth knowledge they possess of their local surrounding, the problems they face, their requirements, needs and the method for resolving the problems. The development workers must stop being ignorant and give the rural masses the opportunity to speak their mind and share their knowledge, experience for individual and community development. This helps in the establishment of a ‘two-way communication’ system that recognizes the importance of feedback and dialogue in the development process. It creates a platform to the concerned problems.

Thus, a changed attitude on the part of the facilitators and their eagerness to co-exist with the people at the grassroots level will sharpen the people’s ability to open up and give voice to their knowledge and experiences. The interest and capability to listen and learn from the local people is a positive indication of success of PRDC.

- Equitable interaction by the facilitator

The development facilitators’ capability and interest to share and communicate their portion of knowledge with the local community is equally important as learning from them. This will enable a better way to find solution to the people’s problem However, it would be wrong on the part of the facilitator if they only continue to impose their own knowledge, without showing concern for the people’s reaction and feeling. While establishing a dialogue with the community they are required to listen, be
aware of and conscious of people’s view and the ability to come forward to share 
information, ideas and experiences.

This is an important and crucial factor that will help the people at the grassroots level 
to become active participants in the development activities and be more comfortable 
in acquiring knowledge, information and developing skills that will allow all 
possibilities of the fulfillment of the development initiative for change.

- Gender Equity

We cannot expect the same class and the same standard of people in every rural 
settlement. The development worker has to always remember and be conscious of the 
fact that there is an existence of different class and groups of people with differences 
in opinion, experiences and perceptions of the state of affairs of the local community. 
Furthermore in some communities the womenfolk are so bound by the tradition that 
they are not permitted to speak their mind in the presence of others. Hence, it 
becomes important to work, by interacting with the various categories of people 
separately, with an aim to explore and bring to light their ideas and viewpoints of the 
situation in the community. To accomplish this, the village should be segmented into 
various groups, applying different preconditions like gender, marital status, age, etc.

- Relevance of information

The development agents working with the rural people should prepare his/her agenda, 
well in advance and leave space for unexpected and embarrassing questions that can 
emerge from the audience. In other words, to implement an effective communication 
strategy the information and messages to be disseminated should be devised and 
planned before they connect with the grassroots level. Above all the channels 
undertaken should be the most appropriate to the environment or situation.

While they communicate, development agents have to develop an objective condition 
which should correspond to the way people think, act, and see themselves. They 
should in the initial stage only discuss those issues and topics which fit the people’s 
mentality and environment that leads to a speedy action on development issues. It 
should be a compact discussion, to the point and within a prescribed time. If not, then 
there is a tendency on the part of the rural people to develop inferior complex, which
results in the withdrawal from the participatory communication process, thereby weakening it severely.

- Easier and spontaneous adaptation:

The development workers must be mentally prepared to adjust to the prevailing situation, according to the convenience of the rural people at any time, be it preparation, planning or implementation of development efforts. They have to be flexible enough to adjust to the work schedule of the people, keeping aside their pre-formulated and preconceived agenda. If they are not able to adapt to these kinds of situations, which sometimes can be unforeseen, the development endeavour fails and communication stunted. If they are adamant enough to continue with the development projects in their own way only a handful of the rural people will be able to participate and the rest will be excluded.

4.2.2. Initiatives in PRDC

There are instances of applying the PRDC in developing societies, which reveal the growing importance of communication strategies to mobilize the rural people to action and in the ways they find effective and relevant to their needs and preferences. Traditional and modern communication systems have been confined for interacting with the people for programme implementation. In the Philippines the Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resources Management (CHARM) with support from ENRAP (Knowledge Networking for Rural Development in Asia/Pacific Region), implemented a school-on-air program, (aired from three radio stations) to disseminate among farmers the best lessons learnt during the projects implementation in the provinces of Abra, Benquet and Mountain Province (69).

In Latin America FAO has introduced an innovative methodology known as ‘Audio-visual Pedagogy’ which consists of learning issues decided jointly by the extensionist with the farmers with video at its centre. The objective is to encourage the rural communities to actively participate in the decision-making process (70). The Government of Sierra Leone has adopted Care project called LEARN and utilized “dramatizations, music, visual aids to bring new information and ideas to villagers to help them keep healthy and improve their agricultural practices” (71) The developing countries also resort to ‘Theatre for Development’ in which the masses can directly relate to issues and policies, thereby using it as ‘precursor to community mobilization
campaigns. It is lead by a team of experts who work with the ‘village level workers’, aiding and guiding them to ‘get their health, nutrition, and agricultural messages across to rural villages using entertainment and fun’. For example, the Travelling Theatre of Zambia and the Extension Services Department in Malawi that works with puppetry and dance (72).

India too has taken up the initiative to broadcast and disseminate development programmes and policies for the all round economic and social transformation of the rural areas of the country. The Ministry of Rural Development of the Government of India (73) with support of IEC has enforced a number of programmes with the objective to attain sustainable development of rural areas, specifically the weak and the marginalized. Realizing the importance of ‘communication’ in mobilizing the people towards participatory development, concerted efforts have been made to disseminate information and message on rural development programmes through most of the available modes and nodes of communication.

In this context we can sight a few programmes like the launch of the *Grameen Bharat* Programme over Doordarshan (74) Publication of *Grameen Bharat* Newsletter (75), and Radio Programmes broadcast all over the country through 128 Primary Stations and Local Radio Stations of All India Radio (AIR) (76) to disseminate information to people in rural areas in language easily understood by them. Radio programmes have also been launched to meet the specific communication needs of the people in the rural areas of the North East and people in tribal belts of Chhattisgarh, Orissa etc (77). Darjeeling too has its AIR station at Kurseong (78) which has been further discussed in Chapter IV. Then again, there are only limited instances of what should be a huge endeavour.

4.2.3. PRDC: Inhibiting Factors

PRDC is an excellent methodological tool to fulfill the needs of the local people with simultaneous emphasis on the communication process, community participation and decision-making of the people at the grassroots level. Its chief objective is to facilitate grassroots participation in development and the crucial role that communication plays in promoting development. However, there are certain obstacles to the implementation of the PRDC. K. Singh writes, “The challenge before us as development communication specialists is to awaken the minds of millions of people,
particularly the disadvantaged section of society, a vision of almost unlimited possibilities. This requires development of a kind of communicator who is adequate to meet the challenges of our rapidly changing world and who can be instrumental in bringing about effective agricultural development and rural change” (79). Let us identify some factors inhibiting the PRDC.

- The rural areas constitute of both the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ and there has always been a tendency on the part of the former to keep away the marginalized, poor, and downtrodden from the development programmes and projects which are overwhelmingly designed for them. Such is the situation that their ideas and knowledge do not carry much weight before the development facilitators and their needs and the requirements are often ignored and excluded in the priority list. This is despite the fact that the poor and the disadvantaged are the potential target beneficiaries of development efforts.

- In this scenario in which the facilitators are only interested in communicating with those in the ‘have’ category there is every likelihood that the rich villagers will influence the working of the field workers in their own interest. It is also possible for the government agencies to divert all attention towards those who are identified as the rich and the powerful in the community with little interest on what the poor majority have to say. This to some degree has also been observed in the community meetings like the Gram Sansad and Gram Sabha in the study areas.

- The scattered nature of rural settlements impedes PRDC. Development workers are reluctant to walk to villages that are far flung. The situation is worse if it’s an uphill journey on foot with no jeepable road. They normally avoid the remote villages and prefer to conduct their work or meetings in those areas that are well connected by roads. This reminds us of an observation by Robert Chambers, “The higher the officials the more likely they want to use the tarmac for comfort” (80).

- Thus, rural areas that are within a walking distance or accessible by vehicle are at an advantageous position. Information, messages reach those who reside near the roads. For example, some of the gous (villages) like Batasia in Jhepi GP, Lower Dong in Samtar GP and Lungchakro in Nayanore GP can be
reached only after walking for about two hours and field study reveals that they are still backward with very little flow of information. Gram Sansads are barely held in the area and by and large the bulk of the rural areas remain under developed. This naturally obstructs effective rural development communication system.

- Rural development programmes do not get proper communication support when the under-privileged lack proper education. This leads to alienation from the mainstream mode of development. Usually the privileged groups who are also literate become the chief gainers, and the facilitators lack the patience and the eagerness to explain and carry developmental information to the illiterate lot. When this happens the rural people lose hope and do not get an opportunity to be a part of the two-way communication process.

- Life in the rural areas varies with the seasons, simply because the majority of the people are dependent on agriculture for a living. However, the fieldworkers do not take into consideration these conditions while they visit the villages. They lack the ability or simply ignore the appropriate time to meet with the people. Their concern is only to complete the work entrusted to them, without bothering about the number of people present. For instance, the sowing and harvesting season is the most inappropriate time for day-long interaction, and the rainy season also hinders participation.

Despite the limitations PRDC stands as an effective tool, facilitating a platform to champion the cause of the rural masses. Thus, for well-being and wellness to come, it is important for the rural poor to be at the center not at the periphery in the local development-related decision-making process. At the same time, it also gives them an opportunity to express their views and ideas, makes them better informed, raises their level of consciousness and enlarges their scope for awareness of basic amenities.

5. Data Collection and Methodology

5.1. Primary Source

Availability of reference material on Darjeeling for my kind of work is minimal. Therefore, the study has relied heavily on the local field data which constitute its primary source. In order to gather the field data, a select number of methods, both of quantitative and qualitative variety, have been applied. Both semi-structured (in order...
to ascertain the demographic status) and open-ended interviews have been conducted. The questionnaires were duly pre-tested to detect possible omissions and errors.

In-depth interviews were conducted in the study areas during 2005-2008. On the basis of Purposive Sampling 8% of the population was chosen for interaction. Participants with different age, sex, economic and occupational profile, caste were purposely selected to represent diversity of voices and experiences within the boundaries of a defined population. Participants were interviewed until a redundancy in descriptions and themes began to emerge.

Respondents were encouraged to explain their own notions of development and to talk about issues that they felt were relevant to the topic. The observation was not only noted in paper but also recorded. The recorder was used in order to keep a record of the content of discussion as well as the important aspects of group interaction. The digitally-recorded interviews lasted 90-120 minutes each and were transcribed and analyzed thematically through a manual procedure. Participants’ interpretive narratives were reviewed several times to identify reoccurring issues. Responses were compared, matched and assigned to a few broad categories and further analyzed for discovering patterns, themes and key issues.

Pilot study was done in the related Blocks and villages. Study was undertaken in the different villages (See Annexure I-A Sections I to IX) of the four GPs each under the two Blocks. Since the villages remain scattered the researcher often had to walk sometime for hours to reach the villages. For instance, Suruk, Dong, Najok forest village in Samtar GP, Pringtam, Chuikhim, Yolk in Seokbir GP, Dara Goan in Upper Ecchey and Lower Walling, Lower Kafle, Thapa Goan in Lower Ecchey under Kalimpong I Block are very far and remote. Under Darjeeling-Pulbazar Block (DP Block) places like Gangatae, Lower Liza Hill, Dilbir Dhura in Chongtong GP, Lungchakro, Nore, Suntalae, in Nayanore GP, Sherpa Goan, Samsu in Relling GP and Batasia and Thapa Goan in Jhepi GP. The work in each GP was undertaken by staying in the villages from where the researcher gained access to the rest of the GP areas. In general, field visit to each GP area was done on foot.

Utilization of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) as an important qualitative method for data collection became very important. FGD is a mode of discussion “of approximately 6-12 persons guided by a facilitator, during which group members talk...
freely and spontaneously about a certain topic” (81). Its purpose is to explore a range of opinions and views on a topic of interest among the group members. This interactive group setting is more than a question-answer round; here the members get an opportunity to independently perceive and discuss the topic among themselves, with occasional clues from the facilitator.

FGD is not just about monitoring a group of people interacting with one another, but one should also be aware of the local environment. Communities are rarely homogeneous. The distinctions are reflected in the differences in opinion and possible solutions they have. As a researcher I had to be aware of this difference to gain knowledge of the concerned area and initiate a rudimentary analysis.

In the methodology undertaken in my area of research, FGD is, so to say, an important ‘communicating tool’ that allows me to study the rural local people in their ‘natural’ surrounding. In the villages I have opted for FGDs and individual-based interviews mainly when I found that beyond a point increasing the number of respondents through questionnaires would not elicit varying response. This point was proved during pilot study in all the GPs. I was not only able to indulge in participant observation, but have also been able to collect a wide variety of local terms and expressions used in the discussion, discover subjective issues which cannot be explained statistically, and understand their ‘body language’. Adoption of this mode proved beneficial because it helped to explore the feelings, attitudes, thoughts of the poorest of the rural poor, about various issues or topics.

On some occasions the researcher has found that the local rural people were able to communicate well and express themselves better within a small group. For example, some villagers who were only silent participants in the Gram Sansad meets were able to voice their opinions in a small gathering, in the ‘safety’ of their village. The interaction among members of the SHGs in the monthly meetings (82) also forms part of FGD. As a researcher, with an objective to extract much information and explore the communication channels, emphasis was not only laid on close observation of the interacting members, but also on the facilitators, who have the responsibility to move the group into the main discussion, without constantly being the main speaker during the discussion. Thus, FGD has immensely helped me in exploring the communicating skills of the people at the grassroots level as well as its limitations.
I have also accumulated information and data as non-participant observer from the meetings I attended during the field visits. The meetings pertain to the Gram Sansad, Gram Sabha, Samaj Ghar, Youth Club, Cluster meeting of SHGs (83), between the GP and the Block, between the GP and the SHGs and others.

Interviewing and structuring the questionnaire (See Annexure I-B Sections I to VI) also form an important part of the research technique. I relied basically on interactive interviews to ensure the maximum response. Apart from the respondents at the grassroots level, the interview list also includes visits and interviews with the officials and staff of the District Magistrate (DM) Office, the District Rural Development Cell (DRDC) and the Block Development Office (84), the GP Staff, staff of libraries, veterinary centers and primary health centers, group leaders and members of SHGs, political activists, staff of AIR at Kurseong and working activists of the NGOs and the missionaries. Interviews were also conducted with the former elected members of the GP like the Pradhan, Upa- Pradhan and Ward members of the selected GPs (85). Before the interviews applications requesting for appointment were also sent to the above mentioned (See Annexure I-C Sections I to V) personnel.

The researcher has paid attention to the following factors while contacting the respondents:

- Use of simple local language, which is Nepali (86).
- Subtle posing of controversial questions.
- Reasonable number of questions (as respondents are bored by a long list)
- Initial questions drafted to revive respondents' level of interest and confidence to speak-up.
- Questions designed to be easily understandable.

For certain issues related to the local politics, the working mode of the GP, rural development issues and the like, some of the participants preferred to maintain anonymity. Therefore, I have not included the concerned names in the reports prepared.

Every effort was made to ensure that the questions concerned the relevant segments of the respondents. Each segment, be it the government officials, the local people, the political activists, the social activists, and the local development workers, was given different sets of questions.
5.2. Secondary Source
The secondary source includes relevant official records and documents such as handbooks, governmental orders, government reports, booklets, leaflets, the books, articles, websites, pamphlets, notifications, and gazettes and also documents of SHGs, NGOs and missionary organizations. The details are mentioned in the section below.

6. Survey of Literature
As stated, PDC is supposed to encourage community participation in development policies and programmes through the implementation of the various communication strategies. The objective is to facilitate the understanding and acceptability of development interventions by way of deliberations, discussions and debates on ways and means of problem-solving. It also seeks to promote constructive dialogue among local people and promote two-way knowledge-generation between the stakeholders who are responsible for development interventions and the local people.

In this context, it needs to be mentioned that in the research on development-communication interface has given rise to substantive literature. The following sections constitute a select list of such literature.

6.1 Books
Mentioned below are the various books which are either related to DC, PDC, PRDC and people's participation in development programmes. These books are largely focused on the study of communication in community development, people's empowerment through various communication channels and use of communication to facilitate participation.

6.2. Books on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj

Mentioned below are books on Panchayati Raj and rural development. The former deals with local-self government at the village level and the latter is related to the rural development scenario in general, rural development in the Indian context and the importance of communication in facilitating rural people's role in the upliftment of their socio-economic life.


6.3. Books on SHGs

Several books have been written on SHGs which gives us a participatory view of development.

6.4. Articles


The available local literature forms the secondary source for constituting the study, but it lacks the requisite quality to fulfill the expected requirements. This has become a major limitation, when it comes to the question of referring to the preceding studies on related themes and taking cues from them. As a result, the emphasis is on the local official documents, like booklets, leaflets, pamphlets, notifications, gazettes, government orders, reports, handbooks and the like, having a logical relevance to the concern matter. This also includes documents and records of the SHGs, NGOs and missionaries. The available audio-visual material has also immensely helped in writing the paper.

### 6.5. Books on Darjeeling Scenario

Inspite of the fact that books are available on history, politics, culture and traditions of Darjeeling, there is, however, little in terms of development. Still, the following books enable the researcher to develop an understanding of the ‘background’ of Darjeeling’s development.

6.5.1. Books in Nepali

The following books in Nepali cover political and some development issues of Darjeeling. Mention can be made of the books:


6.6. Documents

The documents below include documents, booklets and reports, pamphlets issued by the different departments of the government. Besides, there are also documents, pamphlets and other papers of SHG, NGOs and other organizations.


Applications submitted by the local rural people during community meetings like the Gram Sansad. For instance applications for IAY, house repair, drinking water etc.


Bidhi Nirdaeshika, Calcutta: Panchayat and Rural Development Department, Government of West Bengal, n.d. (Translated in Nepali)

Chhanabata Jhareko Jal Sangra Ani Upayog Garnae Padwatiko Bikash, Panchayat and Rural Development Department, Government of West Bengal, n.d. (Translated in Nepali)


Grameen Bharat (Quarterly Booklet), Darjeeling: DRDC, Jan-Mar, 2006 (Translated in Nepali)


Himalayan Krishak Adiwaeshan-January 4-6, 2007, Kalimpong: Booklet prepared by Himalayan Farmers Front, Kalimpong (Nepali).

Indira Awaz Yozana Nirdaeshika, Calcutta: Panchayat and Rural Development Department, Government of West Bengal, 2006. (Translated in Nepali)

Job Card, Rastriya Gramin Rojgar Gaurantee, Calcutta: Issued by Panchayat and Rural Development Department, Government of West Bengal.
**Krishak Award**, Sample provided by Nayan Pradhan, President, Himalayan Farmers Front Kalimpong (87)

**List and Monthly Progress Report of SHGs**, Kalimpong I Block and DP Block.

**Pamphlets issued by Centre for Mountain Dynamics (CMD)** (88) Pudung Kalimpong I Block, on the awareness of health and hygiene for Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) (89).

**Panchayat Prasikshan Granthamala**, Rajya Panchayat Prasikshan Sanstha, Calcutta: Panchayat and Rural Development Department, Government of West Bengal, 1993 (Translated in Nepali)


**Pulse Polio Tikakaran, November 27, 2006.** Hand written posters issued by the GPs.

**Pulse Polio Tikakaran, November 27, 2006.** Printed posters issued by Zilla Pariwar Kalyan Bibhag, Darjeeling.

**Record books, monthly meeting registers, account registers, pass-book of SHGs.**

Records and documents of Samaj Ghars and Youth Clubs.

**Relling Gram Panchayat Karyalaya, Ardha- Barshik Gram Sanshad Sabha, Parith Prastawali Pustika**, Booklet prepared by the Secretary, Relling GP Bijanbari Block, November 2005 for the Half Yearly Gram Sansads held in the different wards of the GP during Nov-Dev’05 (90).

**Sample of various application forms of SHGs.** For instance, Resolution for formation of a SHG, Resolution for opening of bank account of a SHG etc.

**Schedule for Rural Household Survey, 2005 (Sample), Procured from Kalimpong I Block Development Office.**
Suchna, Notice distributed among the local rural people for holding of Gram Sansads in the wards of a GP.


6.7. Websites

Centre for Communication Rights:
http://www.centreforcommunicationrights.org

Communication for Social Change Consortium, Inc:
http://www.communicationforsocialchange.org

Darjeeling District:
http://www.darjeeling.gov.in

Darjeeling Times:
http://www.darjeelingtimes.com

Farm Radio International:
http://www.farmradio.org

Food and Agriculture Organization:
http://www.fao.org
Gorkhapedia:
http://www.gorkhapedia.wikidot.com

Gorkha Jan Mukti Morcha:
http://www.gorkhajanmuktimorcha.org

Government of West Bengal, Panchayats and Rural Development Department:
http://www.wbprd.nic.in

International Development Research Centre:
http://www.idrc.org

Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India:
http://www.rural.nic.in

Society for Participatory Research in Asia:
http://www.pria.org

Southbound:
http://www.southbound.com

The Communication Initiative:
http://www.comminit.eom

The DonSnowden Programme University of Guelph:
http://www.uoguelph.ca/snowden

The Himalayan Beacon:
http://www.beaconline.wordpress.com

The Philippine Journal of Development Communication:
http://www.joumal.uplb.edu.ph

The Rockefeller Foundation:
http://www.rockfound.org
6.8. CD and Documentary Films

Area and Issue: Profile of Darjeeling and Sikkim, Prema, Hayden Hall, Darjeeling.

Documentary on health and hygiene for TSC, CMD, Pudung, Kalimpong I Block.

Grameen Bharat: A Documentary film on Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yozana, Darjeeling: DRDC, DGHC.

Upper Ecchey Gram Panchayat Gram Sabha 2004 Provided by the Job Assistant (91) Upper Ecchey GP, Kalimpong I Block.

7. Chapterisation

The first chapter, which is the introductory chapter, outlines the theoretical framework of the study. The umbrella-concept of Participatory Development, with specific focus on PDC and PRDC, has been examined and analyzed. It also includes extensive discussion on the fundamental role played by ‘communication’ in the process of development. It seeks to explain how communication is critical to the upliftment, particularly of the marginalized and down-trodden sections of the society residing in the rural areas. The chapter also highlights the obstacles to effective people’s participation. Besides this, the chapter also constitutes a brief description of the methodology that has been adopted to explain, the accumulation of information and data required for the study. This is followed by the Survey of Literature which refers to the kind of text relevant to the concerned area of work.

In the second chapter, in the background of colonial Darjeeling the contemporary politico-developmental scenario of rural Darjeeling has been discussed with reference to the Gorkhaland Agitation and the formation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC). The chapter also highlights India’s vision of Rural Development followed by an analysis of rural development scenario in Darjeeling Hills. Here attention has also been given to the state of stagnation caused by the DGHC, and the emergence of
a new regional political outfit, the *Gorkha Jan Mukti Morcha (GJMM)*, in a fluid scenario. This chapter also includes a profile of the two select Blocks and the four GPs each from the above mentioned Blocks, relocated as the study areas.

The third chapter begins with the description of the structure of the local official channels of communication in relation to PRDC. It also includes sub-sections on the modus operandi of the GPs, their role in PRDC, and the associated problems. This chapter thus specifically focuses on the local official channels.

In the fourth chapter intensive study has been made on the local people of the study areas. Particular focus has been provided to their views on the development, or lack of it, in the study areas. The chapter further proceeds with the co-relation of people with communication, with particular reference to people-to-people and people-to-government channels. The chapter also analyzes the role of the mass media, local hill organizations, NGOs, missionary organizations and the local political parties in PRDC.

Last but not the least, the fifth chapter is overwhelmingly focused on the SHGs which, in context of rural Darjeeling, have been emerging as an important channel of PRDC. The chapter focuses on the SHGs as a potentially effective channel in facilitating people's participation in the rural development programmes as well as in changing the local people's mentality, standard of living, and the general milieu in the villages.

Thus, here we get a general framework of PDC where we understand the key status of communication in the process of development. The focus has also shifted from PDC to PRDC with analysis of the role of participatory communication in facilitating socio-economic development of the rural people. With this contention the chapters that follow is mainly focused on PRDC in the eight selected GPs of the two Blocks.

There is also a chapter on Summary and Conclusions which gives a brief account of the five chapters that make up this thesis. Every chapter has been discussed separately with focus on the respective major points. The summary is followed by the conclusion. The concluding remarks highlight the role of PRDC in the study areas. The role of the identified channels, both official and non-official, in reaching to the poorest of the poor and its limitations has been covered.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


4. He is a Ghanaian Diplomat who served as the seventh Secretary General of the United Nations from January 01, 1997 to January 01, 2007, serving two terms. He was the co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2001.


6. Darjeeling is a district in the state of West Bengal and rural Darjeeling in our case refers to those locales in the Hilly areas in which the people are largely (90%) dependent on agriculture and livestock for a living, economically backward, and are governed by the Panchayats, the units of rural local governance.


11. FAO is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger. The main objective is to assist developing countries in transition modernize and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries and ensuring good nutrition and food security for all.


13. This refers to the well-being of the people. This includes increased standard of living, economic upliftment, health and hygiene, physical fitness, education, proper food, proper housing and increased life expectancy. Human development is a development model that is about much more than the rise or fall of national incomes. It is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests, thus bringing the focus back onto people. People are the real wealth of nations. There are four basic pillars of human development: equity, sustainability, production and empowerment. Equity is the idea of fairness for every person; we each have the right to an education and health care. Secondly, sustainability is the view that we all have the right to earn a living that can sustain us and have access to a more even distribution of goods amongst populations. In addition, production is used to show how the government needs more efficient social programs for its people. Lastly, empowerment is providing people who are powerless to be given power such as women.

15. This denotes patterns of human activity that has been practiced from generation to generation. Behaviours, acts, beliefs, rituals, manners that have been passed down and are the way of life of the people.

16. They are the government appointed, who have been entrusted with the responsibility of facilitating people's participation in rural development programmes and projects.


24. Paulo Freire, Quoted by, Jacob Srampickal, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 5.


26. \textit{Ibid.}

27. J.V. Vilanilam, \textit{op. cit.}, p.91.

28. The Roundtable is a biannual event that brings together United Nations agencies, bilateral and multilateral donors, foundations, development agencies, NGOs, scholars and a number of practitioners in development communication. It examines, assesses and discusses the current trends in Communication for Development and set priorities for future direction in the fields for members of the Roundtable. The IXth Roundtable was focused on communication and sustainable development. It was organized by FAO, Rome, Italy, and co-sponsored by UNESCO, World Bank, IDRC, CTA and Government of Italy, 6-9 September, 2004.


34. Laura Cornish and Aliscn Dunn, *op. cit*, p.675.


37. The Kutch Mahila Vikas Sanghatan is an organization based at Gujarat that works for the development of women. In 1999, the group started airing a thirty minute programme made by them in the Kutchi language on AIRs Bhuj station by purchasing a commercial slot. Its most recent programme *Kutch Log Ji Bani* (The Voice of Kutch) has gained immense popularity and aroused the aspirations of the community, with special emphasis on local issues like Panchayat, water, literacy, alcoholism, health care facilities etc. Source: Vinod Pavarala, “Building Solidarities: A Case of Community Radio in Jharkhand”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, May 31, 2003, p. 2188.

38. This community radio programme is supported by the National Foundation for India and produced by community representatives of Alternative for India Development (AID), an NGO. The programme is broadcasted once a week on AIR, Daltonganj, in the Palamau district of Jharkhand. *Ibid*, pp. 2188-2189.
39. Bangalore based media advocacy group, Voices started an audio production centre, Namma Dhwani (Our Voice) in 2001 at Budikote in the Kolar district of Karnataka. It has been narrowcasting programmes made by rural men and women trained in basics of radio production. Ibid, p.2188.

40. Proshika is a well known NGO of Bangladesh and stands as the third largest. Its work is focused on human development, and women form the majority in the organization. Participatory video constitutes to be its major channel of functioning at the grassroots level for raising consciousness, and ensuring participation of the poor villagers to share their thoughts, beliefs on social issues and showing the processes through which people can overcome poverty and show them the causes of poverty.


42. It is a set of technique to involve a group or community in shaping and creating its own film. The idea behind this is that making a video is easy and accessible and is a great way of bringing people together to explore issues, voice concerns or simply to be creative and tell stories. This process can be very empowering, enabling a community to take their own action to solve their own problem and also to communicate their needs and ideas to the decision-makers and to other groups and communities.


46. Aarohan Street Theatre has been established in Nepal for many years. It began performing on stage but later changed to street theatre. Aarohan has performed many plays on a wide variety of subjects including the problems faced by deaf people, voting rights and democracy, the relationship between people and the environment, the importance of good sanitation, family planning etc. Tim Frentki and Claire Lacey, “Using Theatre in Development”, *Footsteps* No.58, March 2004, p.4.


53. Juan Diaz Bordenave, “Participative Communication as a part of Building the Participative Society” in Shirley A White, K. Sadanand Nair, Joseph Ascroft (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 44.


57. It is a three-tier system of local self-government administration introduced for the rural areas of India. Zilla Parishad is located at the top, followed by the Panchayat Samiti and then the Gram Panchayat. It plays a crucial role in facilitating people’s participation, acts as a bridge between the people and the government and converts the people’s programme in government’s initiative and government’s programme in the people’s initiative.


60. This particular group enjoys superior social or economic status in the local rural area. They include rich landlords who own large agricultural lands, rich farmers and also government service holders, both civil and defence. They also enjoy political influence in the village. The local political leaders not only include the leaders who are legally elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage by the people to be their representatives to the government but also those who are not elected but are active in the regional political parties, in their respective areas.


63. SHGs in particular have been studied in chapter V. However, it was felt necessary to give a brief description on SHGs. The basic mission of this programme is to create employment opportunities for rural women through micro-credit. On an average 10-12 members come together to form a group to undertake economic activities. It is a platform for empowering the rural poor who most of the time are fenced by high poverty, illiteracy, under-development in the villages etc. The formation of such groups not only facilitates their participation in the rural schemes but is also aimed at capacity building for sustainable development.

64. Guy Bessette, op.cit, #8, p. 26.

65. Baldev Raj Gupta, op.cit, p.84.

66. NREGS is also known as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme or the 100 days programme. It has been in operation from April 01, 2008 and is one of the flagship programmes of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government at the centre. The programme aims at better livelihood security of households in rural areas. Every household is supposed to get work for 100 days in a financial year whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Around one-third of the stipulated work force is women. The two objectives of NREGS are rural development and employment. The target has been set for rural development activities such as water conservation and harvesting, afforestation, rural connectivity, flood control and protection such as construction and repair of embankments etc. The payment is made according to the volume of work. The GPs, after due verification, issues job cards to every working member.


71. Paolo Mefalopulos and Chris Kamlongera, op. cit, p.37.

72. Paolo Mefalopulos and Chris Kamlongera, op. cit, p. 42.

73. The Ministry of Rural Development is one of the major organs of the central government of India. It is engaged in implementing a number of schemes which aim at enabling rural people to improve the quality of their lives. Complete eradication of poverty in rural India and the ushering in of speedy socio-economic progress is its goal. Thus, the Ministry plays a pivotal role through a number of programmes, aimed at improving the life both of the individual and the community of the rural people. Some of the important programmes include rural housing, training schemes, promotion of social action programme and dissemination of rural technology through Council of Advancement of People’s Action and Rural Technology (CAPART). The Ministry of Rural Development also has a separate IEC division. This division is responsible for planning and implementing IEC activities with the aim to create awareness about programmes of the Ministry particularly amongst the people living in the rural areas. Their activities started particularly from 1994-95 to spread information through most of the available modes of communication. Their work has been enhanced during 2001-02 primarily through print, radio and television. It stresses the role of IEC in creating awareness, mobilizing the people and encouraging participation through advocacy and by transferring knowledge and skills to
the people. IEC also helps in bringing transparency in the execution of the rural development programmes.

74. The IEC programme undertaken by the Ministry of Rural Development has launched a bi-weekly programme known as Grameen Bharat. The programme is of fifteen minute-duration, in news magazine format, and is telecast from Doordarshan over Regional Kendras in Hindi and also in other ten Regional Kendras. It has been effective from October 02, 2002. The programme is focused on the activities for the rural people and their development Doordarshan is the television arm of Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India). It is in service of the nation with five national channels- DD National, DD News, DD Bharati, DD Sports and DD Urdu.

75. The Grameen Bharat Newsletter has also been launched by the Ministry of Rural Development under the IEC programme from April, 2002. It is published in Hindi, English and eleven other Regional languages, and is distributed free of cost upto the GP level across the country. The contents are entirely focused on the rural activities.

76. AIR is the radio broadcaster of India and was established in 1936. It is the sister service of Prasar Bharati's Doordarshan, the national television broadcaster. Today it is one of the largest radio networks in the world. AIR is a government organisation, with clear objectives to inform, educate and entertain the masses. When India attained Independence in 1947, AIR had a network of six stations and a complement of 18 transmitters. The coverage was 2.5% of the area and just 11% of the population. Rapid expansion of the network took place post Independence.

77. The IEC programme undertaken by the Ministry of Rural Development has also launched a one half and hour radio programmes each in the languages of the North East. Besides, programmes in the tribal dialects are also being produced and broadcast weekly from the stations in which the languages are spoken.

78. Kurseong is a sub-division of the Darjeeling District in the state of West Bengal. AIR Kurseong is located at Mehta Club Building in the heart of the
town. Kurseong lies at a distance of 33 kms from Darjeeling. It is also known as *Kharsang* which in the Lepcha language means "Land of the White Orchids". It was granted to the British by the king of Sikkim in 1835 when it was a small village. The small village became a tourist destination for the colonial authorities and was a preferred place for sanatoriums where the sick would recuperate. It gained importance in 1880, after the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway also known as the Toy Train was extended to it.


80. Robert Chambers, Quoted by, Chike Anyaegbunam, Paolo Mefalopulos and Titus Moetsabi, *op. cit*, p.47.


82. The twelvth of every month is reserved for a meeting of the GP staff with the SHGs. They discuss various kinds of economic activities undertaken, the problems, the remedies for the stagnating groups, money transaction, the amount saved etc. The Resource Person (whose function has been discussed in detail in chapter V) plays an important role during the meeting. It is also his/her duty to collect the monthly reports from all the groups for submission to the Block Office.

83. Cluster Meetings are meetings of the SHGs which are held every second Saturday and every fourth Saturday of every month. Group leaders, cashier of every SHG have to attain the meeting. Besides them the ordinary members also can be present in the meetings. The meeting is presided over by the Cluster President, Secretary and Treasurer. These office bearers are usually elected by the group leaders and cashiers from amongst themselves. The objective of the meeting is to monitor and evaluate the groups, revival of defunct groups, check their records, paperwork's, discuss their economic activities and financial status. The group members can also take loans from the cluster on a nominal interest.

84. The researcher also interacted and took interviews of the officials from the DM and the Block Office. The DM office is the administrative head quarter
for the entire Darjeeling district. Under this office there are various departments with District Panchayat and Rural Development Department being one of them. The concern staffs like the District Panchayat Rural Development officer, Panchayat Development officer, Panchayat Audit and Account officer, Upper Divisional clerks were interviewed. Similarly the Project Director of District Rural Development Cell and officials of the block, like the Block Development Officer, Block Relief Officer, Block Welfare Officer and others, were consulted.

85. GPs have been organized as units of self-government to improve and involve the people of the villages in the process of the government. Every GP has a Pradhan who is the elected head. The local rural people who constitute the ‘vote bank’, elect members of their choice from their respective wards and the elected members come together to elect the Pradhan from among themselves. The Upa Pradhan is the deputy of the Pradhan, and is also elected. The members from among themselves choose the Upa Pradhan who takes over the administrative charges of the GP office in the absence of the Pradhan.

86. Nepali is an Indo- Aryan language spoken in Nepal and some parts of India. It is the official language of Nepal and also one of the 23 official languages of India incorporated in the eighth schedule of the Indian Constitution. Nepali is also an officially recognized language in the state of West Bengal.

87. A copy of the Krishak Award certificate was provided by Nayan Pradhan, President of Himalayan Farmers Front at the office on March 12, 2007. Age: 45, Gender: Male, Education level: Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)

88. CMD is a NGO. It is located at Pudung under Kalimpong sub-division. This organization mainly works with the people at the grassroots level. One of the important tasks undertaken by this organization is imparting training to SHGs. However their role in the study has been further elaborated in chapter V. Yusuf Simick Director of CMD was kind and cooperative to give a recorded version of a documentary film based on the SHGs.

89. TSC is a comprehensive project to secure sanitation facilities in rural areas with wider goal to root out the practice of open defecation. This is all the
more applicable to the people living below poverty line, who suffer more from such common and preventable diseases due to lack of access to safe water and sanitation facilities. The earlier Central Rural Sanitation Programme (CRSP) was restructured and launched as TSC as India’s centrally sponsored programme in the year 1999. It became a people centered programme.

90. Jagat Man Rai is secretary of Relling GP, DPBlock. He was very co-operative and presented a compiled half yearly Gram Sansad report of November 2005. Age: 36, Gender: Male, Education Level: Class XII (Pass).

91. Balbir Yonzon is the staff of Upper Ecchey GP under Kalimpong I Block. He is the Job Assistant of this GP. Age: 39, Gender: Male, Education Level: Class XII (Pass). He too was kind enough to provide me with the recorded version of the Gram Sabha that was held in the month of December 2006. This Sabha was held in much fanfare where the local villagers participated in the cultural programme. Blankets and utensils were also distributed amongst the poor of the village. Tea and lunch was also provided to the villagers. However it also needs to be mentioned that such kind of large scale programme for Gram Sabhas are a rare sight.