CHAPTER VII

PEOPLES' PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC CO-OPERATION

Community Development programme is a programme for the welfare of the people, for the people and by the people. This makes it amply clear the importance of the involvement of the people in the programme. Active participation of the people and their sustained co-operation and confidence are sine qua non for the success of the programme. The motive force for improvement should come from the people themselves. An official statement says: "the fundamental concept of the community development programme is that the main motive force for its implementation should come from the people themselves." The programme is essentially a people's movement and is based on democratic principles. Community Development denotes the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of Government authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of the community."

People's participation in the programme is to be achieved in two ways - through their involvement in the formulation and implementation of the programme and their contribution in the form of cash, in kind or in the form of labour.

In securing the villagers' participation, it is intended to avail of all non-official local organizations. These organizations are to play a vital role by arousing the enthusiasm of the masses towards this programme. The objective of having the programme function as a people's programme with the co-operation of Government, can be achieved only when the villagers organize themselves into their own institutions and assume a sustained interest in the programme.

There are various voluntary organizations in the rural areas such as Kisan Mandal, the Bal Mandal, the Yuvak Mandal, the Mahila Mandal, Bharat Sevak Samaj, Co-operatives, etc. These organizations play an important role in bringing about a revolutionary change in the rural areas. These are people's organizations created and led by the people themselves. These institutions tackle and continue to work on many problems and activities in
countryside which can be solved only by the village folks through their own efforts. In fact the Ministry of Community Development took upon itself the responsibility of promoting these organizations as it was realized that the development programme cannot be successfully run by the Government without the active involvement of the people in it. So in 1954, it was decided to associate the representatives of the people in state legislatures and in the Parliament with this programme.

At the Centre, there is a Central Committee which provides the necessary guidance and direction. At the State level, there is an Advisory Committee of officials and non-officials. At the district level, there is District Development or Planning Committee consisting of officials and non-officials. This Committee is also an Advisory body. At the Block level, there is Block Advisory Committee consisting of all block-level officers, prominent non-officials, progressive farmers, leading co-operatives, representatives of voluntary organizations, heads of educational institutions in the block and members of State Legislature and Parliament from the area. According to the latest statistics (December 1971) 1127 youth clubs
with an average membership of 556 were functioning in each block. The corresponding figures for Mahila Mandalas are 13.3 and 34.2. In the early years, the District Collector was the Chairman of the Committee. Later on, a non-official was given the Chairmanship. These Committees were co-ordinating, planning, implementing and supervisory bodies. But the name of these Committees created misconception in the minds of both officials and non-officials alike that these were merely Advisory Committees. People were not prepared to advise unless they were sure that their advice would be accepted. So, four years later, this point was accepted that the Block Advisory Committee should no longer function merely as advisory bodies; but their decisions should prevail. As such, the name of these committees was changed to Block Development Committee. At the village level, the planning and implementation of the programme is done by the Panchayat. The Gram Sevak functions in collaboration with the village panchayat. The panchayats are given adequate representation on the Block Development Committees for the purposes of co-ordinating and executing the development programmes; where villages do not have panchayats, village development
Councils called Vikas Mandals or Gram Mangal Samitis are formed. Their functions are similar to those of village panchayats. These development Councils sponsor and guide the village in its development programmes. Thus at every stage or level, the officials and non-officials and organizations are working side by side for planning and implementing the programme.

Though the intention thus has been to make the programme a people's programme with Government participation, in practice what evolved was a Government programme with varying degree of people's participation. This fact has been recognized and accepted both by the Programme Evaluation Organization and the Mehta Committee in their reports. This is why the Mehta Committee Report recommended democratic decentralization - Panchayati Raj - with its three tier system of democratic institutions - local Government organizations in direct line with the Central Government. Panchayati Raj is the agency through which the Community Development programme is to be carried out. Panchayat at the village level is an elective

1 Study Team Report. Volume I. op. cit. p. 43.
body and is a co-ordinative and executive body and is responsible for the execution of the programme at the village level. It is also a co-ordinating body vis-a-vis associate and functional institutions which will implement the programme on behalf of the Panchayat. The village Panchayats send their representatives to the next body at the block level, i.e., Panchayat Samiti. The Samiti has other co-opted members - representing women, depressed and scheduled classes. The functions of Samiti comprise both co-ordination and execution. The Samiti is responsible for implementing the Community Development programme and all individual departmental programmes of Government in the block. It is also a co-ordinating body vis-a-vis village panchayats and associate institutions at block level.'

The Presidents of Panchayat Samiti together with the Members of Parliament and Members of Legislative Assemblies in the district constitute the Zila Parishad. The Zila Parishad in collaboration with the Collector and the technical departments at the district level, guide and assist the Samitis in their co-ordination work.'

In this way, Panchayati Raj visualizes Panchayat
to be the village Government; *panchayat samiti* to be block Government and *Zilla Parishad* to be District Government. There will be associate organizations at every stage to promote the development work. There will be functional sub-committees in every local body looking after individual subject of development. Though it will take a number of years for these various institutions to become effective; the pattern that will emerge in the end, will be one of continuing integration of functional interest at progressive levels. The people of India will govern themselves through their representatives in institutions from *Panchayat* to Parliament and this democracy will travel from Lok Sabha to *Gram Sabha* and from Parliament to *Panchayat*.

People's contribution may be in the shape of donation of a plot of land, a house or any other thing in kind or cash or free manual labour. Some contribution by the people was from the beginning made an essential condition for the grant of loans and subsidies by the Block. In the beginning, in order to enthuse the villagers 75 to 89 per cent of money that was needed by the village was given by the Government and the balance
of the amount was to be contributed by the people in the form of cash, material or labour. Subsequently, people's contribution gradually increased so that the programme converts itself into a people's programme. For the success of the programme, it is essential that the people should come to regard the movement as their own and to feel that its aim is to assist them in their efforts - individual and collectively - to raise their standard of life, and create a new pattern of society.

The consciousness of this fact is steadily growing amongst the people and this strengthens the hope that the Community Development programme will fill in the years to come, the place of National Development which it was designed to.

People's contribution is to be brought about by persuasive influence. People show enthusiasm for participation when an understanding that the programme is for them and meant for their benefit is created in them. Government cannot do everything, the funds at the disposal of the Government are extremely limited. People are, therefore, expected to take a keen interest in this task of national reconstruction and development - not only to reduce the monetary burden on the Government but also to
ensure speedier development. It is for this reason that the programme insists that the people be associated with it at every stage in the formulation as well as execution.

People's contribution has always been very promising since the beginning of the programme. In fact, their enthusiasm was much beyond the expectations of the Government and the sponsors of the programme. By coming forward freely with their contributions, people have demonstrated their desire for progress and faith in the programme. Village people in thousands are forthcoming to build new roads, schools, health centres, panchayat ghars, co-operatives, community halls etc. Students and cadets are going out to the villages to participate in shramdan. They organize literacy camps, health and sanitation drives and other welfare activities. Those who cannot contribute voluntary labour are coming forward with donations in cash or land. Contribution in cash, kind and labour for digging community wells, building community centres, chopals, roads etc., is one form of participation. Balwadis, literacy classes and women's centres were set up with voluntary effort. On the whole, it is estimated that as against a total plan
investment of the order of Rs. 855 crores by Government
till March 31, 1969, on the Community Development pro-
gramme, local contributions in cash, kind and services
amounted to Rs. 230 crores. Of late, there is a decline
in this.

It is always difficult to measure the extent of
people's contribution. The number of families directly
participating or benefiting from the activity, afford a
useful test. But statistics needed for such assessment
are not available. The statistics collected and presen-
ted to show that the people's participation in building
roads, schools, panchayat-ghars, wells are not satisfac-
tory due to the fact that these figures are often exag-
gerated or inflated through inclusion of undeserved items
as well as excessive valuation of them. A few instances
may make the point clear. A good portion of the people's
contribution from local and other works has come from the
income from taxation of local bodies like Panchayats and
Boards or out of the amounts received by them as grants
from Government, or out of the value of labour obtained
from people in lieu of the labour tax. Besides, there
have been cases where buildings or other property which
are of no value to the donors have been presented for public purposes. Contributions like these do not involve any real sacrifice on the part of the donors; but on the contrary help them in getting such buildings repaired or improved, besides earning the goodwill of the people. There have also been cases when a part of the expenditure on the construction of private irrigation works has been included in the category of people's contribution. In this way, the methods used for evaluating people's contribution have, in many cases, tended to inflate their value and many schemes have actually been executed only with the funds made available by the Government.

During the First Plan period, the Government expenditure on the programme was of the order of Rs. 46.18 crores out of the total provision of Rs. 96.5 crores for this programme and Rs. 16 crores provided in other plans, for rural development. As against this, the contribution of the people amounted to Rs. 25.13 crores or 55 per cent approximately. During IIInd plan, the Government expenditure was of the order of Rs. 189.39 crores. As against this, the contribution of the people by way of land, cash or labour was Rs. 77.30 crores. The percentage of people's contribution to Government expenditure
comes to 40.3%. Taking the overall view of the First and Second plans, people's contribution amounted to Rs. 102.43 crores against Rs. 235.57 crores of Government expenditure. The percentage of people's contribution to Government expenditure comes to 43.6. The Third Five Year Plan provides an outlay of Rs. 287.67 crores for community development programmes, Rs. 28 crores for Panchayat schemes and Rs. 6 crores for Central schemes.

During the first year of the Third Plan, i.e., 1961-62, people's contribution stood at Rs. 1041 lakhs against Rs. 5264 lakhs of Government expenditure. The percentage of people's contribution to Government expenditure comes to 19.4. During the fourth year of the Third Plan, people's contribution amounted to Rs. 994 lakhs against Rs. 5106 lakhs of Government expenditure. The percentage of people's contribution to Government expenditure comes to 19.5.

The following table makes this point more clear:

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1 Kurukshetra. October 1966.
### Government Expenditure and People's Contribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period or Year</th>
<th>Government Expenditure (in LAKHS)</th>
<th>People's Contribution (in LAKHS)</th>
<th>Percentage of People's Contribution to Government Expenditure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Plan</td>
<td>4,618</td>
<td>2,513</td>
<td>55.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Plan</td>
<td>18,939</td>
<td>7,730</td>
<td>40.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>1951-61</td>
<td>23,557</td>
<td>10,243</td>
<td>43.6</td>
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<td>1961-62</td>
<td>5,264</td>
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<td>19.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>5,106</td>
<td>994</td>
<td>19.5</td>
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</table>

In closing, it may be stressed that the "People's participation should not be regarded merely as providing a certain portion of cost of a particular work in cash, kind or manual labour; but it is their full realization that all aspects of community development are their concern and the Government participation is only to assist them where such assistance is necessary."¹ Now efforts are being made to have people's participation on an organized basis. They

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¹ Study Team Report. Volume I. op. cit. p. 3.
are encouraged to organize the work through their representative bodies. This will enable them to understand the significance of development and their part in it.

According to the Evaluation Report of April 1955 on Community Development work, participation was intended to imply popular initiative and sharing in the whole process of development; but public participation was given the "restricted meaning of contributing to the execution of state plans approved by the people of a village." Therefore, the measure of public participation was in terms of contribution in cash, kind or labour. It is necessary to take corrective measures in order to give a broader meaning to the term public co-operation to imply community action for social change.

One of the major experiments made in the field of public co-operation in rural areas was the creation of institutions known as Lok Karya Kshetras by the Bharat Sevak Samaj, Youth Clubs and Mahila Mandal and other voluntary Associations with assistance from the Planning Commission. There are, at present, 58,200 Mahila Mandal with a total

membership of 13,21,000. They look after the Women's and children's programmes in their respective villages covering nutrition, elementary health measures, child care, family planning, training in domestic work and utilization of spare time profitably in activities like poultry keeping, bee-keeping, kitchen gardening, knitting, weaving etc. They also engage themselves in programmes of social education, enrolment drives, school feeding and training of local village associate women workers. In operational terms, the Mahila Mandals are expected to have a balwadi, an adult education centre for women and one craft or the other like poultry and kitchen gardening. They also take up demonstrations on family planning, balanced diet, craft work etc.

To encourage the participation youth clubs have been formed. These clubs look after the organization of various recreational programmes like games and hikes; creative arts like songs and dramas, organization of annual youth rallies and national festivals; social education programmes; education for citizenship by participation in panchayats, co-operatives, schools etc. Besides they foster interest in productive avocations like agriculture
animal husbandry and cottage industries. They also assist in mobilizing help in the form of money and voluntary labour in creating community assets such as school building, panchavat-ghars and fishery tanks. There are, at present, more than a lakh of youth clubs functioning in the country with a total membership of about 22 lakhs. In order to encourage these organizations, a new scheme of incentive awards to Yuvak Mandalas has been launched in the Fourth Plan with an outlay of one crore rupees.

University Planning Forums bring Universities and Colleges into closer contact with the community at large which enables teachers and students to contribute towards national development through constructive programmes.

There are a number of programmes of Community Development which draw heavily on public co-operation. These include the Applied Nutrition Programme, The Composite Programme for Women and Pre-School children and Wells Programme. The Applied Nutrition Programme taken up in collaboration with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) aims at increased in every village of various protective foods like fruits, fish, poultry, milk, etc.
the training and education of the villagers in the production, preparation, preservation and consumption of these foods. Free feeding of vulnerable sections is an essential part of the programme. At present, the programme is being carried out in 924 Blocks. According to report\(^1\), about 16,000 Mahila Mandals with a total membership of about 3.2 lakhs, and about 13,000 youth clubs with a total membership of about two-and-half lakhs, are associated in the execution of this programme. The UNICEF have instituted special awards for youth clubs and Mahila Mandals which are taking part in these programmes. Since its inception in 1959, about seven crore twenty lakh children and one crore twenty lakh expectant and nursing mothers have been fed and sizable quantities of vegetables, fish, milk and eggs have been supplied. Special central assistance at the rate of Rs. 34,000 per Block is provided for certain production components of the programme including assistance to Mahila Mandals, for acquiring equipment and accessories necessary for their work.

In the areas not covered by the Applied Nutrition Programme, the Composite Programme for Women and Pre-School

\(^1\) Kurukshetra. December 1971.
Children has been started in the Fourth Plan. The focus of the programme is on children up to five years' age. The scheme is implemented through Mahila Mandal and balwadi has five components: nutrition education through Mahila Mandal, strengthening the supervisory machinery for women's programmes, encouragement of economic activities by Mahila Mandal, training to associate women workers and demonstration feeding. The first two are in the state sector while the others are in central sector. The programme of demonstration feeding has been started in 350 Blocks. One balwadi in each Block has been selected as an integrated demonstration centre. The entire provision of about Rs. 30 lakh was spent on this programme by the Government of India in 1970-71.

Thus people's participation is the sheet anchor of the Community Development programme.