PART IV

Chapter 15

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

15.1 Summary:

Community Development Programme is a multipurpose process of development of the rural people, and also a multi-level planning with Community Development Blocks as the micro-level base. For such a development programme all the community development plans were worked out collectively and efforts were made to accelerate the process of rural transformation in South-East Kamrup as in other parts of Assam till 1974. After that year, the Block administration was divested with the responsibility of implementation of some of the plan proposals and were entrusted upon the State Departments. The impact of such departments or so-called community development projects on the socio-economic transformation may be summarised, on the basis of findings in chapter 3 to 14, as follows.

Under Community Development Programme a Community Development Block acts as the base of the integrated planning pyramid. The administrative functions of the block are concentrated at the block headquarters. A fundamental deficiency of the block as a unit for micro-level planning is that it is not
a scientifically delineated region and the block headquarters are not centrally located. In the case of Rani development block, even when there existed alternative and comparatively more central locations, the headquarters was located in a peripheral or border area.

Withdrawal of the schematic budget provision for Community Development Programme significantly slowed down the tempo of developmental activities in the rural areas. On the other hand, the Panchayati raj institution could not keep up the tempo for reasons of their general apathy to create their own resources by availing the resource provisions as provided under the Panchayat Act. Another setback faced by the development block and the panchayat administration is the result of taking over the administrative control of Extension Officers of the blocks by the respective Subdivisional and District heads of the concerned development departments, ignoring the role of local administrative control of the Block Development Officer so long enjoyed by him over the block extension staff. This has not only caused disintegration of the development block organisations but also adversely affected the continuous flow of associated services of the different development departments to the rural people, which was offered by the block administration till 1974. A jeep car provided to each block office for quick movement of personnel to the interior places, is found to be ineffective, because of poor maintenance and non-availability of running expenses. These vehicles remain
out of order for years together. As many as 36.1 per cent of Rampur, 20.3 per cent of Rani and 44.9 per cent of Dimoria's people are not fully acquainted with the Community Development Programme and Panchayat institution. Inputs in the Community Development Programme in the region under study have not produced the expected results.

People, living in remote countrysides without transport and communication facilities are, not only deprived of the scope of healthy interaction with the improved areas, but also of the benefits of Community development movement. Specially the forest villages, in the southern border, with no communication, are untouched by the block staff. The quantum of such villages are 4.1, 25.5 and 5.7 per cent of the total villages in Rampur, Rani and Dimoria development block respectively. Of course, the untouched villages are thinly populated. On the other hand, certain villages situated at the boundary of a block are enjoying dual benefits from the neighbouring block and Gauhati Municipal Corporation. However, the percentage of villages having dual benefits is very low - about 1.9 per cent of the total villages in the area. This state of affair clearly indicates the negligence of block administration to their border areas.

The main thrust of agricultural development was given to the introduction of high-yielding varieties of paddy and the cultivation of wheat. The high-yielding variety of seeds of paddy, chemical fertilizer and insecticide etc. are accessible
to only 25.8, 25.4 and 22.4 per cent, 14.4, 17.8 and 6.5 per cent, 7.4, 5.4 and 7.9 per cent of the total households in Kampur, Rani and Dimoria development block respectively. This signifies that the Community development movement has failed to bring wide spread and effective innovation in the agricultural practices, and to cause substantial economic relief to the rural masses in the study area. Stages of adoption of various programmes and schemes have been varied, depending on the degree of motivation and help offered to the people. Inadequate and late distribution of the aforesaid agricultural inputs are the other reasons for sluggish development. Chemical fertilizers and pesticides if used without proper knowledge produce disastrous results, and the farmers after bitter experience gave up the use of chemicals. But the cultivators who have learned the use of those chemicals are deriving good results. Many of the cultivators of Dharapur and Amranga have totally stopped the use of chemicals, whereas the farmers of Maloibari gaon are constantly using them and have derived substantial benefits. From land-utilization survey, it was observed that all the three villages raise two or more high-yielding variety of paddy and wheat on certain plots. Chemical fertilizer and pesticide etc. are mostly used in rabi crops. Excepting the northern strip of South-East Kamrup, flood of the Brahmaputra has been considerably controlled. Flood caused by heavy monsoon rain is a common phenomenon and such floods damage the crops as well as the residents of the people. Development of irrigation in certain localities is a noticeable
achievement. Use of modern agricultural implements is very limited. Intensification of agriculture is in progress. Poor economic condition of the people and the small landholdings are the main handicaps in agricultural development.

The draught animal of local breeds is weaker than the non-descript breeds. This weak animal has not helped much in ploughing and its allied activities. Almost all the milk in the areas is produced mostly by some small farmers, marginal farmers and agricultural labourers. Marketing facilities for milk and milk products are also meagre. The farmers have either to depend on intermediate agents who take away most of the profits, to market their products themselves, or to dispose of their surplus milk in the form of ghee which is the least remunerative of all the milk products. As a result cattle are neglected, their growth is slow, and they mature much later than the cattle in other countries. The interval between calvings is prolonged, and losses due to starvation and diseases are high. For the treatment of animals only 50, 60 and 43 per cent of the total households in Rampur, Rani and Dimoria development block respectively approached the veterinary hospitals. Milk production, on the whole, is low. No grazing land is available to the cattle. Grazing in the narrow strip along the roads within human settlement is also poor in grass except during the monsoon when fresh pastures are available. Other available feeds are not adequate, and are of poor quality to sustain the existing cattle population. Most of the cattle owners do not have the materials required for constructing a
standard cattle-shed due to their deplorable economic condition. Not only cattle but also other domestic animals and birds of non-descript type cannot yield the desired livestock products. For the upgradation of livestocks improved breeds of animals and of birds have been supplied, and these improved breeds have reached to one and ten per cent of the total households in the areas respectively. Thus, the measures taken for distributing benefits are very inadequate, and the official procedures are clumsy, time consuming, harassing and costly for the uneducated poor people. There is no doubt that little attention has been paid to the livestock. Different developmental programmes and schemes of the Veterinary and Animal Husbandry department have been undertaken through inadequate numbers of service centres and technical personnel. The Community Development Blocks have failed to cover the entire area and spread the developmental schemes with equity.

Most of the catches of fishes are done in the river Brahmaputra and its tributaries and in the natural fisheries in the area. Fish is a tasty and costly item of food of the villagers, which is available only in certain periods of the year. Pisciculture is not yet practised extensively. The work of the fishery project was confined to the departmental tanks till 1975. The benefit from the fishery department has been given to a very insignificant number of households in the area under study. Only 1.5 and 2.5 per cent of the total households in Rampur and Dimoria development block have been benefited from such project of the Government. Incentives provided for
fishery are very inadequate and the official procedures are clumsy.

The handloom industry ranks in importance next to agriculture. Most of the families have one handloom and this is operated by the females for production of some of their necessary requirements of cloth. The quantum of production of the famous golden-yellow silk, muga and eri yarns and cloth produced in the Palashbari and Rampur area has progressively decreased. The effective number of such handlooms have been fast decreasing and unfortunately no attempt has been made so far from any corner to boost up this age-old traditional craft. Vocations like tailoring, carpentry, cane and bamboo work are almost negligible. Timber from the lumbering area of the south of Rampur and Rani development block has helped the growth of Palashbari, Mirza and Rampur as saw-milling centres. The Department of Industry, Government of Assam, has completely connived this region for development of cottage and household industry. The distribution procedures of grants at the equal flat rate to some of the craftsmen and artisans do not serve the purpose. Neither it stimulates entrepreneurship nor helps the artisans. The handloom industry has remained at the lowest position of its development ladder. Only 2.9, 5.0 and 0.4 per cent households of Rampur, Rani and Dimoria development block respectively have small scale or cottage industry as their primary occupation. In spite of more attention paid to the all-round development of simple, unsophisticated tribal peasants, their development is not yet at par with the general peasants.
Projects on health and sanitation have an impact on 96.6 per cent of the total households in the area under study. Approximately 1.2 per cent of the households are yet to receive the benefits of medical facilities. This fraction of the population still retains the traditional faith on the primitive methods of treatment of diseases. Illiteracy and economic backwardness are perhaps the major causes of their primitive way of life. Serious patients of remote villages cannot be taken to the dispensary or the doctors cannot attend on them for want of proper communication and transport facilities. In absence of adequate qualified medical practitioner, the meagre medical staff cannot cope with the growing needs of the people in remote villages. Moreover, life saving drugs are not supplied to the dispensaries, and most of the dispensaries of the interior places are without doctors. The high birth rate is not at all controlled under the Family Planning Programme. Potable water has been supplied to only 46.5 per cent of the total population in the area. Materials provided for better sanitation are very insignificant. However, epidemics frequently broke out in the area, have been successfully controlled and eradicated under the patronage of the medical staff of Community Development Blocks. Now the medical staff has been able to reduce infant mortality and premature death rate.

In spite of the huge expenditure incurred by the Government, Social Education has not made much progress; it has only touched the fringe of the problem. The environment of the illiterate adults does not seem to induce them to know the
usefulness of education in order to bring about changes in the standard of living. The illiterate people want immediate gains which Social Education unfortunately cannot offer them. The economic hardship is so acute that they cannot think of anything else than to procure two square meals a day. The rural uneducated adults are overshadowed by superstitions and ignorance. Unfortunately there is a dearth of suitably trained, honest, sincere and selfless workers in the field, neither any attempt has been made to supply guiding literature and equipments to the personnel engaged for the purpose. The funds earmarked for Social Education are too inadequate and the available funds are not properly utilised. The areas which need massive attention for Social Education are not served by the centres and interestingly, the areas with less need are attended most. Usually the social education centres exist only for the sake of its existence. The social education centres have totally failed to motivate the people and to create a sense of participation in various social education schemes. Higher rate of illiteracy, lack of primary knowledge on changing ways of comfortable living and above all the conservative attitude, dissuade the rural people from adopting improved methods in various activities, as well as from participating in all the developmental projects.

Different types of co-operative societies are constituted and registered under co-operative rules. But the societies soon become defunct, because the societies are formed with vested interests and it is observed that most of co-operative societies are formed under the initiative of few
unscrupulous members to obtain certain undue advantages. Once this end is met, the co-operative societies meet their premature death. The controlling authority of the Government Co-operative Department failed to keep strict vigilance and offer constructive guidance for smooth functioning of the societies. More emphasis has been given only to the formation of the co-operative samabai samities for the development of the rural people in the areas under study. The co-operatives formed under the control of an organisation, or, an institution, usually functions well. The impact of the co-operative movement has covered only 2.5 per cent of the total households in the area.

The development and maintenance of the village roads fall within the purview of the Community Development Block. The Community Development Blocks could hardly improve the inter and intra-village communication. Most of the roads are in a dilapidated condition without adequate number of bridges and culverts. Village roads, under the authority of the panchayats of the concerned villages, are mostly narrow tracks, and these are rarely suitable for vehicular movement even in fair weather. During rainy season most of the roads deteriorate and become useless.

From the quantitative analysis, it is inferred that the distance of the households from the block headquarters plays the vital role in spreading the benefits of the Community development projects. 'Shorter the distance from the block headquarters, greater is the benefit acquired by the households and higher is the degree of transformation'. In matters like per capita
income, literacy rate, participation rate, financial facilities, or adoption of improved methods of cultivation, the villages nearest to the headquarters have gained most of the benefits. With the increase of this distance the quantum of benefits proportionately decreases, and also the decelerating rate of spread of benefits abruptly rises with bad transport and communication facilities.

From the case studies it is observed that the development was very much sluggish in Dharapur and Amranga village under the Community Development Programme. The villagers are indifferent to the development projects as the people did not receive the desired help and assistance from the Government. However, the farmers have shown keen interest in improvement of cultivation by introducing high-yielding varieties of paddy and wheat. But the newly settled families of Maloibari gaon, with their sound planning and mutual co-operation have converted the marsh-land and the jungles into green fields of two or three crops of high-yielding varieties of paddy. The house-steads in the basties are also full of fruit bearing trees and shrubs. The Maloibari gaon 'Sangathan Samity' (panchayat of that village) efficiently conducts the planning and development work and acts as local self government, including discharging limited judiciary functions. The change in other institutional development is also fast in the village.

Modern innovations of medical science comparatively have had a greater impact on the people; but, the impact of industry, fishery and co-operative projects has been very insignificant.
Fig. no. 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.10, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 9.4, 9.5, 10.1, 11.1, 12.1 and the superimposition figure (Fig. no. 13.2) of these figures give an idea of unequal spatial distribution of beneficiaries of modern innovations and facilities offered by different community development projects. To remove such disparities Gram Sevaks and Agriculture Demonstrators were posted at various places within the development blocks, in order to minimise the coverage of unit area and for effective micro-level development. The impact of the community developmental benefits inversely proportional to the distance of the block headquarters. The hilly region in the southern periphery of the blocks lies, completely out of touch of the Community Development Programme. So, none of the facilities offered to the rural people has reached the backward hilly areas. Of course, transport and communication bottleneck, poor literacy, conservative attitude of the people are also partially responsible for restricted flow of benefits of the Community development movement in these areas.

15.2 Conclusion:

Community development projects, from the establishment of blocks in the area under study till the year of 1979, could not cover more than 37, 21 and 45 per cent of the total population in Rampur, Rani and Dimoria development blocks respectively. Community Development Programme has not yet been able to infuse a self-generating force for all round development of the rural people. To expedite the work of Community development projects following suggestions have been made on the
basis of findings of this study.

The impact of agricultural projects is in the positive direction of development, but the degree of impact is not very encouraging. The degree of impact should be fortified with some measures. Floods should be properly controlled and irrigated water should be effectively supplied to the agricultural fields. The flood-control and the assured water-supply to the remaining fields specially in the winter season and in the periods of drought in summer will stimulate the cultivators to practice intensive cultivation of high-yielding varieties of paddy, wheat and sugar-cane. For intensive cultivation, adequate supply of high-yielding varieties of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides should be made. Adequate supply of modern implements will help the cultivators to adopt modern methods of cultivation. Considering the small fragmented agricultural land-holdings, co-operative farming societies should be formed. Members of such societies should share harvested crops on the basis of land, capital and labour. For the self-contained individual cultivators adequate number of tractors, power tillers and other costly agricultural implements should be provided on rent from either S.D.U., G.S. or A.D.. In order to restrict the utilization of agricultural land for non-agricultural use, appropriate legislation would be very much effective. The people of the forest villages should be encouraged to practise horticulture, especially production of orange and pine-apple on co-operative basis, with the financial assistance and guidance of the Government. The suggested development processes of agriculture
will meet the future demand of food for the growing population and shall enlarge the scope of judicious exploitation of the rich land resource. With the development of roads and transport systems, probable growth of local market centres is high and accessibility to populous city of Guwahati and to the growing industrial centre at Jagiroad is fast increasing. So, equal emphasis should also be given to horticultural activities for immediate benefit of the rural people.

Upgradation of veterinary first-aid centres to dispensaries and establishment of more dispensaries equipped with all requisites will be able to pay more attention to the welfare of the dumb animals and birds. Some control should be exercised on the multiplication of unproductive cattle so that the total number of cattle in each area is assured of adequate fodder. This should be done by exporting the cattle which are not required. For the rapid upgradation of cattle, artificial insemination of exotic breed, as also distribution of improved bulls for natural mating should be prompted along with mass castration of non-descript cattle. Upgradation of cattle and other domestic animals and birds of non-descript type will increase animal products. In order to remove the intermediate agents and to enhance the profit of the milk producers a marketing scheme, covering a block should be initiated. It will have a marked impact on the economic condition of the poorer section of the rural people. A package programme of supply of nutritious feed and better health care of animal is urgently required for the area. Such a scheme will be an
effective break-through in economic stagnation of the people, on one hand, and help in production of milk and milk products, on the other.

Pisciculture on a commercial basis will be possible only if the fisheries are protected by high embankments. High embankments will prevent the fish from swimming away during floods. The natural fisheries and the marshy lands should be brought under composite fish culture. Fingerlings of rahu, catla, mrigal, grass carp, silver carp etc. should adequately be provided to the households having tanks. Increase in fish production shall enlarge the scope of rural employment to a greater extent.

For the production of yarn and cloth from golden-yellow silk, muga and eri, hand-loom should be replaced by power-loom. In order to retain its popularity in other parts of Assam the production of such cloths should be increased. The power-loom should be encouraged to organise themselves into economic-sized units, and get integrated into the organised mill sector. Raw materials for the looms should be sufficiently produced under the Government subsidy. The industry needs government patronage in marketing the products.

The region under study has a large area under forests and her forest resources are rich in various products, which, if properly utilized, can sustain a number of industries. There are enormous scope of commercial uses of cane and bamboo. A sizeable number of units for production of cane and bamboo
Materials could be established, provided marketing facilities are created. For the encouragement of such small-scale industry adequate financial assistance and the provision of implant training is urgently needed. For the betterment of hand-looms as household industry Khadi Board may take the full responsibility of regular supply of cotton yarns at reasonable or subsidised rates to the consumers. Perhaps, an active co-operative society at block level, would be suitable for procurement of the raw material and for marketing the finished products of the cottage or household industry.

The deficiencies of medical facilities will be met if the existing sub-centres are upgraded to dispensaries, and more dispensaries are set up with provision of doctor, supporting staff and medicine. In a welfare state the people deserve to get the common medicines free of cost. The service area of the dispensaries need to be restricted to 10 kilometres radius for practical purposes. The advantage of making the limitation into smaller jurisdiction of each dispensary is that the doctor and the staff will be able to serve the people very efficiently. An ambulance car is also necessary for a health centre. The abolition of private practice of Government doctors is essential. Preventive measures for epidemics should be so arranged that it can meet the need at any time and at any place. Immediate attention should be given to the family welfare programme of the Government, which needs popularisation through mass educative processes. This will save the health of the poor parents and the children. For better sanitation in the area under study, the
most important requirement is the supply of potable water which may be done by increasing tube-wells and pucca (concrete) wells.

Visual aids are necessary adjuncts of Social Education. The use of portable black-boards, coloured chalk, chart and flash cards will make the job of Social Education work easier. These are essential items for imparting education, which create effective impressions in the minds of the learners. Tape-records, gramophone records should be used. Even radio and Video sets can be usefully utilised for the purpose. Social Education should be occupation - oriented. Social Education workers should be properly trained and they should have the right aptitude for this work. The number of centres, with adequate staff and literature should be increased. The schools and colleges may be utilised for this purpose. Besides, the Social Education workers should utilize the educated persons in the locality for this noble cause. The work of Social Education works are not spread with due seriousness and earnestness which is indispensable for removal of illiteracy and for motivation of the people to participate more actively in the development programmes.

Ignoring the inactiveness of the co-operative societies in the area under study and considering the merits of co-operative movement, greater stress should be laid on the co-operative societies for rapid development of the rural society. In order to remove the ills of co-operative societies, the members should be motivated for active participation under well
organised administrative set up and strict vigilance should be enforced. Cash and credit facilities may be extended to the co-operative societies through STATFED or such other co-operative bodies in order to meet their requirements.

It has been observed that, by handing over the responsibility of road development to the State P.W.D., the process of communication improvement has been unnecessarily delayed. The Public Works Department may retain the responsibility of construction and maintenance of the major link roads; but the authority of construction of village roads should have been left with the Community Development Blocks. The block should be treated as the micro-level planning unit for preparation of blue prints and execution and supervision of such work under technical personnel at block level. Financial resources required for such a project may be minimised by mobilising the people's participation. Village roads should be sufficiently high so that flood waters cannot submerge them. Development of drainage system may be taken up simultaneously with the construction of roads and culverts.

In order to increase the number of beneficiaries of Community Development Projects priority should be given on education, and on financial assistance particularly in the Dimoria tribal block. This block needs enlargement of farm-size and increase in the number of individual ploughs of the farmers. For greater coverage of people the activities of the block headquarters should be decentralised on the basis of needs in villages or
group of villages. Moreover, programme of road and communication development should be taken up in a big way which will radically enlarge the area of effective development and give greater coverage for the spread of benefits to the needy farmers.

The process of decentralised planning brings the following needs to the fore: Whatever be its inherited deficiencies, which are not irremediable, the Community Development Block is an indispensable and strategic base for micro-level planning. The block should be revitalised with well demarcated boundary and with full set up of key personnel. There should be three-tier panchayat system. The lowest tier, the Gaon panchayat should, of course, be suitably enlarged to make it a viable unit. There should be a full-fledged planning establishment at the subdivision level and the blocks should be adjuncts to this establishment. The subdivisional planning establishment should possess a machinery to co-ordinate the various adjuncts at block level. A scheme for training personnel for employment in these establishment is the immediate need. For rational planning and development, a good number of persons, conversant with the local problems including socio-cultural background of the people and with profound knowledge of need-based planning concepts and techniques are the pre-requisites. The State as a whole is in dearth of such personnel with sound knowledge of planning principles and procedures. Therefore, to man these subdivisional and block level planning organisation, a State level scheme for imparting training is indispensably necessary. Above all, greater efforts should be
made to increase the participation rate of the rural population in the planning as well as in the implementation of the rural development programmes. For personal appraisal, it is also necessary on the part of concerned block officers to visit every village in order to assess the requirements and progress of the development works.

As the personnel of the different development departments had to work under the Block Development Officers, the Heads of these departments were so dissatisfied that the Government was compelled to withdraw them from the blocks and engaged them in their respective departments. For deriving the expected results of revitalization of the blocks, it will be imperative to keep an eye on such undesirable situation.

The special efforts made towards upliftment of the tribal people by the Community development projects could not bring them to the developmental level of the non-tribal people. Therefore, such special efforts for the development of the tribal people should be continued.

The Community development projects have achieved roughly one-third of its target as a result of continuous efforts during the last three decades. Considering the slow developmental progress the blocks should be allowed to forge-ahead with full vigour atleast for sixty years.

The suggested incentives should be instilled in the households through the existing service out-lets of service centres and by establishing more service out-lets. For location
of such out-lets nodal points of roads in comparatively populous and unserved area should be preferred.

One of the primary aims of the Community Development Programme was to infuse political consciousness of the rural folk of the country. Unfortunately the undesirable party politics and domination of village polity by influential party members have considerably damaged the cause of Community development movement and Panchayati raj. Obviously such fissiparous growth in the village polity should be safely avoided for healthy co-ordinative effort in the rural upliftment.

This study, though immediately of local importance may provide useful clues in the current search for an optimal approach to Community Development Programme and micro-level planning in this country.