

CHAPTER - 6
HUMAN CAPABILITY: AN OBSERVATION FROM SAMPLE
RESPONDENTS
(FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION)

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6.1 Introduction

This Chapter attempts to capture qualitative judgments of respondents about their developmental issues, basically relating to human development aspects. At this stage of the study, an attempt has been made to recall the common concept of development though most of the respondents are not aware of human development and deprivation as a concept, nor about the mathematics involved in measuring it. In this chapter, methodology, organization and outcomes of the focus group discussion has been presented precisely. Selected respondents were facilitated the environment in which they were given freedom to express their priorities and better understanding and well-beings through organized platform of **Focus Group Discussions (FGD)**. Respondents were first individually requested to respond to few major questions on various aspects of human development and deprivations. Facilities available in their family and concerned area, restoration of peace and unity, poor governance and their impact on *ill-fare*, peace loving nature of the people in the community, required policy initiative for providing basic facilities, etc. were considered. Respondents were absolutely free to express their views about on-going various issues and expected outcomes of the development during discussion. The interest was solely focused on what the people think *they should be able to do and be* i.e. their potential functioning or capabilities in the area of human development aspect. Focus Group Discussion was designed in such a way so that outcomes of the discussion could represent the status of human development aspects; and which may form part of the basis for policy formulations for the expansion of human capabilities in the study area. For FGD, some villages from the study area were selected purposively. The FGD was organized covering the period 2017-2018. As the selected sample villages are situated in rural

areas only, the discussion was being arranged during the off season of cultivation and harvesting of basic crops in the area.

6.2 Focus Group Discussion: Methodology

The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a powerful qualitative method, generally applied in social science research to obtain in-depth information on concepts, perceptions and ideas of a group on social, economic, political issues that directly or indirectly shape their lives [Asiimwe et. al. (2003)]. It refers to the group discussion participated by certain number of persons guided by a facilitator, during which group members talk freely and spontaneously on certain topic(s) considered by the organizers. The respondents get proper environment to express their ideas and views about the considered area of discussions. Hence, the method aims to be more effective and authentic than the common *question-answer-type* interactions in the area of research. The underlying ideas behind this qualitative technique traces upon the fact that group members discusses on the topic among themselves in a cordial atmosphere in which they feel absolutely free from any kind of pressure from social, political, administrative or religious angles. The FGD can effectively explore perceptions of the participants even on controversial topics and can help researchers. Moreover, proceedings of Focus Group Discussion has been interactive in nature, each discussion builds on the previous one with elaborated or better focused set of things for discussion. The technique is regarded as a powerful research tool which can provide valuable spontaneous information in a short period of time required for the purpose. However, it is suggested that the information gathered through FGD should not be used for typical quantitative purposes such as testing of hypothesis or the generalization of things for larger areas in the area of research.

The primary requirement for conducting an effective discussion could be by gathering knowledge of local conditions. While organizing FGD, the members selected for the discussion may not necessarily be homogenous. Their opinions are likely to differ according to age, gender, educational attainments, economic status, and ethnicity, political affiliations as well as religious identity of the respondents. These

differences are likely to be reflected on the perceptions of the problems they regularly suffer from, and dreams for possible solutions in time. The primary quality of the researchers conducting group discussion, therefore requires, complete awareness of these differences while formulating plan and policy for organizing FGD.

Respondents were selected preferably from the same socio-economic and ethno-political background and having a similar connection in relation to the issues under investigation. Facilitator or organizer is expected to speak in the language or dialect of the participants considered for discussion; and this aspect has important advantage of FGD. Better outcomes can be expected as the respondents can express their ideas and views properly in their mother tongue. There should be a precise list of topic(s) to be covered during the session in the mind of the facilitator so that all relevant topics are discussed. Care is to be taken so that no item is left out during discussion which resultants more effective outcomes. It is suggested that under no circumstances facilitator should control the direction of the discussion for its manipulation. However, in the situation when some of the participants are using words which are *un-parliamentarian* or abusive in nature, the facilitator is expected not to stop the member directly; but make them to maintain decorum of the discussion so that it may not spoil the entire proceedings.

6.3 Organization of Groups

Considering the relevant basics for conducting effective focus group discussion, as elaborated in the previous section, we have organized three (3) group discussions (FGD- I; FGD-II and FGD-III) in the entire five (5) Blocks considered for study in the district. As the opinions on expectations as well as aspirations vary significantly across the age and sex of the people, we made some broad grouping of the respondents covering all aspects of human capabilities. The focus group discussions were conducted with a total number of 150 respondents, taking 10 respondents from each of the 15 sample villages. The characteristics of total respondents participated in all fifteen *focus group discussions* are designed with number and structure of participants as represented in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Respondents Characteristics of FGD

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
20-30	15	15	30
31-40	15	15	30
41-50	15	15	30
51- 60	15	15	30
61 and above	15	15	30
Grand Total	75	75	150

Source: Field Survey

However, to maintain a certain degree of homogeneity among the participants in terms of their age and sex, and to provide free environment for expression; in 3 villages the groups were formed with exclusively male participants, in another 3 villages with only female participants. In the remaining 9 selected sample villages, groups were of mixed participants in which age-groups were taken as criterion of forming the groups. The groups in the villages namely, Haloadol in Kokrajhar Block, Singimari in Dotma Block and Habrubil in Gossaigaon Block were exclusively of male participants; while in the villages namely, Dholmara in Kokrajhar Block, Kumtola in Kacchugaon Block and Mechpara in Hatidura Block were of exclusively of female participants, and in the remaining 9 villages, namely Ghoramara in Kokrajhar Block, Boragari and Gossainichina in Dotma Block, Gongia and 1 No. Sekhadani in Kachugaon Block, Kartimari and Tulshibil in Gossaigaon Block, Srirampur No. 1 and Pokalagi in Hatidura Block; groups were formed with mixed participants, both male and female. While forming the groups, representations from all

Table 6.2 Characteristics of Exclusively Male Participants

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
20-30	6	0	6
31-40	6	0	6
41-50	6	0	6
51- 60	6	0	6
61 and above	6	0	6
Grand Total	30	0	30

Source: Field Survey

sample villages were being considered for focus group discussion. Moreover, the groups with exclusively male participants were also classified according to the age of the respondents as depicted in Table 6.2.

In the first FGD-I, 30 respondents for exclusively male participants; the groups formed with 20-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60 and above 61 age were invited from 3 villages (10 respondents from each village) as per well ahead scheduled date; and it was organized in the village Singimari in Dotma Block. The second FGD-II was organized in the village Kumtola in Kachugaon Block by inviting 30 respondents; the group formed with exclusively for female participants in the same line as done in the case of group formed for exclusively male participants. The composition of respondents in these three (3) villages with exclusive male participants is depicted in Table 6.2; and for the group exclusively female participants is depicted in the Table 6.3.

Table 6.3 Characteristics of Exclusively Female Participants

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
20-30	0	6	6
31-40	0	6	6
41-50	0	6	6
51- 60	0	6	6
61 and above	0	6	6
Grand Total	0	30	30

Source: Field Survey

Table 6.4 Characteristics of Male and Female Participants

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
20-30	9	9	18
31-40	9	9	18
41-50	9	9	18
51- 60	9	9	18
61 and above	9	9	18
Grand Total	45	45	90

Source: Field Survey

However, a total of 90 respondents (male participants: 45 and female participants: 45) were invited in FGD-III from remaining 9 villages; the group formed with 20-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60 and *above 61* with both male and female participants. The FGD-III was organized in Kokrajhar by inviting a total of 90 respondents (45 males and 45 females) from 9 sample villages. The respondent characteristics of FGD-III are depicted in the Table 6.4

6.4 Findings of Focus Group Discussion

This section summarizes the key findings of Focus Group Discussions (FGD) on the aspects of human development and deprivations. FGD considered perception of development of various communities ‘and key factors of persistent backwardness in developmental aspects. Participants in focus group discussions were asked to prioritize the major advantages and obstacles required for future changes; and the factors that push them to continue to remain as backward. Given the fact that most of the respondents are not aware of human development as concept, nor about the mathematics involved in measuring human development, the proceedings of discussions were solely on non-technical language. The investigator allowed the respondents to establish what they feel important without any interference or suggestions.

The discussion, first of all, focused on key advantages of various communities that can be considered as major resources to achieve their perceived goal of development in terms of human capabilities. The unity and the peace-loving nature of various communities living in the study area has been perceived as the major resources which may help the authority while formulating plan and policy for development. Hard-working nature and skills, brotherly feelings of the people for other group of population as well; and brotherly feelings and unity between the tribal and non-tribal communities living around emerges as next important resources. However, few participants emphasized tribal values as a part of developmental issues. About 40 percent of the total participants across the age groups of both sexes reported that they consider the unity among different community as the major advantage for achieving

developmental goals; and to them, human development was possible only with unity among different communities. Nearly 27 per cent participants consider the peace-loving feature of the community as most important resource for over all development in the tribal inhabited district of Kokrajhar. Majority of the participants in Focus Group Discussion opined that current dominating nature of the people in the present study area is not congenial for development. They stressed on changes of the attitude of the people and the authority for development of the society with equality. Opinion of majority participants indicates that only some 30 percent people in the study area are availing major proportion of the schemes and facilities representing existence of inequality and unhealthy growth in the study area.

The next aspect of discussion focused on the major obstacles that came in the way of development as potential barriers in the study area. Here, the participants pointed out different of *ill-fare and* social exclusion. About 73 per cent of male respondents blame poor governance as responsible factor low human development and social exclusion in various aspects of human capabilities. About 63 per cent women stressed on immediate solution of various agitations by the groups, organizations; and restoration of peace and unity in the area is necessary for their betterment and development. They also stresses on socio-economic, cultural and political equal opportunity between the males and females for gender unbiased development.

Young respondents of both sexes pointed out the lack of educational infrastructure and poor educational opportunities in the study area which have contributed to lower performance of the students than other parts of the state. They also pointed out inadequate health care facilities which form the aspects of ill- health condition of the people in the study area. The aspect of inadequate health care facilities is responsible for high rate of Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) in the study area.

Ethnic identity plays a crucial role in the mind of the older respondents, basically *51 and above* category of participants. Frequent occurrence of violence, riot including Bodoland movement, to their opinion, contributed to low level of development and poor human capabilities in the present study area. However, there is hardly any support for the violence; the opinion is clearly divided on the issue of

separate Bodoland. An acute feeling of exclusion of the people in the study area in socio-economic-political and decision-making process was clearly reflected during the sessions of *focus group discussions*. A proper initiative is required by the authority for the involvement of common people in decision making process.

6.5 Conclusion

In the previous sections of the present chapter, the observations of the sample respondents on various aspects of human development are analyzed. The observation of the respondents is captured through Focus Group Discussion organized in this present study. From the discussion, it has been observed that different sections of the people living in different area; and different group of age composition have different opinions about human capability. The unity and the peace-loving nature of various communities living in the study area have been perceived as the major resources which may help the authority while formulating plan and policy for development. Hard-working nature and skills, brotherly feelings for other group of population as well, that is brotherly feelings and unity between the tribal and non-tribal communities living around emerges as next important resources. Opinion of majority participants indicates that only some 30 percent people in the study area are availing major proportion of the schemes and facilities representing existence of inequality and unhealthy growth in the study area. Participants pointed out different aspects for their overall *ill-fare and* social exclusion. Their opinion, expression and suggestion through Focus Group Discussion could be helpful in further research work in the present study area.