

Participation of rural women in ICDS programme in Assam

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Integrated child development scheme (ICDS) is one of the world's largest and most unique programmes for the development of women and children. In order to see the participation level of rural women in ICDS, an attempt has been made to know the awareness and perception about different activities of ICDS. The study was carried out in twenty five Anganwadi Centres of ICDS programme of Dhakuakhana Development Block in Lakhimpur district of Assam on which the ICDS project was first introduced in the year 1975-76. There has been found schedule caste, schedule tribes and low income families in this sub division with various problems like illiteracy, poverty, destitution of children etc. in the locality for which the development programme requires strengthening. The findings clearly indicated that although a higher percentage of women were aware about the need of this programme but they were ignored about the various activities that were carried out at Anganwadi Centre and the extent of their participation was woefully inadequate.

■ **KEY WORDS** : Rural women, Development, Awareness, Participation, Programme, I.C.D.S.

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The community development programme is an integral part of five years plans which aimed at developing the rural sector. The programme aims at developing human potential to its maximum capacity as a member of the community by promoting a progressive outlook, self-reliance and a cooperative way of life that is vital for the whole democratic process. There are various development programme which are implemented by the government of Assam for the development of women, children, youth, farmers etc. Integrated child development scheme (ICDS) is one of such community development programme response to the challenge of meeting the holistic needs of the women and children (NIPCCD, 1992). Today the ICDS is one of the world's largest and most unique programmes where the target groups are children under six years, pregnant and lactating women. Therefore, their involvement and participation in various activities are very important for the success of the ICDS programme in the villages (NCAER, 2001). The target group should feel that it is their programme and is meant for the benefit of them (Ghosh, 2004). The Government agencies are responsible for the implementation of the programme and

therefore required to organize some publicity campaign to create awareness and carried out a sense of confidence and zeal in the minds of the target group to come forward and reap the benefits of the programme (Dasgupta *et al.*, 2005). Therefore, an effort was made to see as to how the beneficiaries were made aware and participate in this programme with the specific objectives: to know the awareness and perception of women about the programme, to know the extent of participation of women in the programme and to highlight the suggestions for better participation of women in the programme.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

The study was carried out in twenty five Anganwadi centres of ICDS programme of Dhakuakhana development Block in Lakhimpur district of Assam. The beneficiaries of each selected Anganwadi centre were interviewed as per as categorization of the ICDS programme, *i.e.*: pregnant women, lactating women, and mothers with pre-school children. From the list of the beneficiaries registered at the twenty five