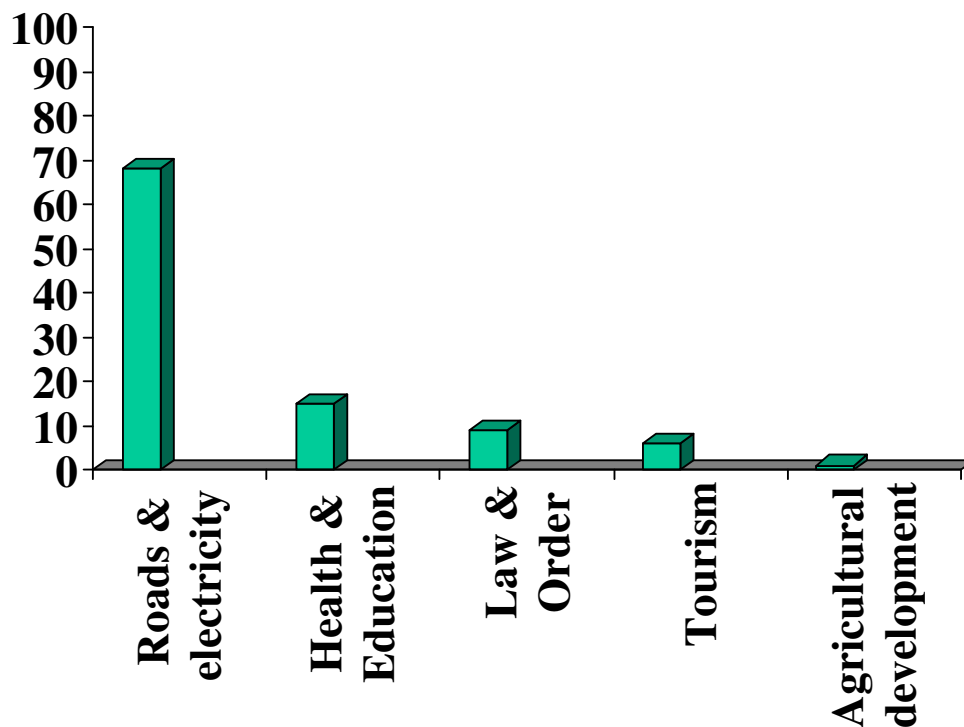


POLL 2004- NOBODY LOOKING AT AGRICULTURE

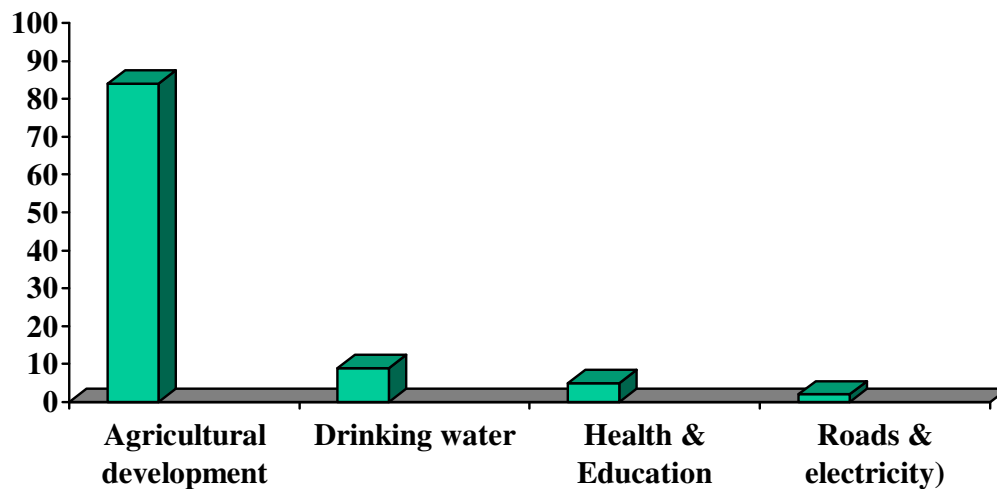
Gene Campaign has conducted a small spot poll in the four states of Assam, Rajasthan, and Jharkhand and UP, to see the candidates' perception of the main problems of their areas and whether agricultural development featured anywhere on the priorities of the major political parties. A total of 35 candidates from the main political parties in 12 parliamentary constituencies were questioned. These included Jorhat and Koliabor in Assam; Ranchi, Hazaribagh and Khunti in Jharkhand; Tonk, Sikar, Bhilwara, Alwar and Jaipur in Rajasthan and Aonla and Shahjahanpur in UP. The candidates were asked two basic questions: *What are the most important problems of your constituency and what would you address first were you to be elected?*

The poll questioned 50 voters each in three to four assembly segments per parliamentary constituency. The voters in the largely rural constituencies were similarly asked what their most important problems were and what is the first thing they wanted their elected representative to do for them. The two graphs below show the mismatch between what the voters list as their chief problems and what the candidates would like to do in their constituencies, or at least what they profess they will do.

Candidate's issues



Voters' issues



As the graph shows, agricultural development did not appear to be the principal concern of most candidates even though they were contesting from largely rural constituencies. Just two candidates of those surveyed, Sri Amra Ram, the CPM candidate from Sikar, Rajasthan and Sri Drupad Borgohain, the CPI candidate from Jorhat, Assam said that one of their main priorities is agriculture. Most candidates wanted to provide roads and electricity. Many wanted to promote tourism. Other responses by candidates included control of erosion (Assam) , good administration, employment and 'beautification' . Many sitting MPs who were contesting the election claimed they had done everything that needed to be done and there were no problems in their constituencies. This was unsurprisingly, not echoed by the voters of their constituency.

Rural voters overwhelmingly listed agriculture development, as their major need. This category included factors like good quality seed, protection from spurious pesticides, agricultural machines and tools like threshers, markets to sell agricultural produce, better price for their produce, assured irrigation, training and extension facilities, treatment and recovery of wasteland. Drinking water was next, followed by issues in health and education. Of the main needs expressed, roads and electricity were last.

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