

## Decentralised Governance and Service Delivery in India

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### **Abstract**

*Decentralised governance has occupied a very prominent place in nation building and developmental strategies of developing countries in recent years. It is sometimes viewed as either a panacea or plague. Some argued for it on the grounds that it promotes efficiency, effectiveness and equity in delivery of services. According to them, it facilitates people's participation, preferences and helps to mobilise both human and financial resources as well as contains corruption and ensures accountability. Democratic decentralisation tends strongly to enhance speed, quantity and quality of responses from government institutions. Here, Local Self-Governments have both the authority and resources to respond quickly to mitigate problems and pressures from below without waiting for approvals at higher levels. Development is not just a basket of new investments and programmes but it is also a means to deliver quality public services to citizens and these are civic services, social services, welfare services etc.*

*The present study is empirical in nature. It covers citizens as a beneficiary of services in grassroots level with the aim to look after the delivery of services in decentralised Local Self-Government in the state Tripura, India. Data was collected through structured schedules from three-tier rural local bodies along with citizens like beneficiaries of various services in grassroots level. Purposive and random sampling methods were used for the study. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted with the citizens of the villages. The study provided the findings of civic services, social services, welfare services, governance related services and others.*

**Key words:** Decentralization, Local Self-Government, Service Delivery

### **Introduction**

#### **Service Delivery of Rural Local Self-Government in India**

Panchayats have been the backbone of the Indian villages since the beginning of recorded history. Gandhiji, the father of the nation, in 1946 had aptly remarked that the Indian Independence must begin at the bottom and

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every village ought to be a Republic or Panchayat having powers. Effective and meaningful functioning of these bodies would depend on active involvement, contribution and participation of its citizens. Gandhiji's dream has been translated into reality with the introduction of the three-tier Panchayati Raj system to ensure people's participation in rural reconstruction.

The provision of 73rd Constitution Amendment Act also emphasis on constituting a Gram Sabha for each and every village for exercising the powers and performing the functions provided in the Eleventh Schedule under Section 243G. Total 29 subjects (functions) are incorporated in Eleventh Schedule and these subjects are exclusively transferred to the PRIs for micro-planning and implementation, for economic development with social justice. Moreover, the objectives of Panchayati Raj system could be revived by transferring to them funds, functions and functionaries, as provided in the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitution Amendment Act, 1992.

Article 244 of the Constitution provides various provisions for separate administration and control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes. Fifth Schedule is constituted under the Article 244(1) and Sixth Schedule has been framed under the Article 244 (2) and 275 (1). The areas of the Fifth Schedule are spread over nine states viz. Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Rajasthan. On the other hand, few states of India like Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Tripura are under the provision of sixth schedule. These states have a separate administration and they have also statutory local bodies.

The Panchayat Raj Institution is one of the oldest local governance institutions in rural India. This traditional system of governance at the local level is being reinvented with the recent emphasis on devolution of powers and local governance. There is increasing recognition that local communities should be given the opportunity to decide on the priorities and strategize implementation of plans. In the light of this perception, the role of the Gram Panchayat, the lowest tier of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), has become the focal point.

Through the power of Local Self-Government India has achieved improved social service delivery systems, better targeting of the poor, more coordination between agencies, policies aimed at income generation, and more involvement of the poor and of nongovernmental organizations. The health and education of the poor has improved but not as much for the population as a whole. Physical access to education and health services has improved but inequalities exist because of biases in locating facilities. The access of the poor to housing, social security, and social welfare services has been limited because these services were inadequate relative to needs and because services leak to the non-poor. Moreover Social service policies are not comprehensive enough and the quality of services is low. Issues

common to the social sector delivery systems are weak management, ineffective targeting, and inflexible service delivery systems that result in a mismatch between perceived needs and services delivered. The bureaucracy is inadequate to reach the poor. Existing capacity and resources are inadequate, particularly for education and health.

### **Service Delivery of Rural Local Self-Government in Tripura, India**

Tripura was a princely state that had a long list of tribal kings stretching back into antiquity. As long as Bengal was under Hindu rule, the Tripura kings could rule their state more or less peacefully but after Muslim rule was established in Bengal in 1240, Tripura became open to attacks by the successive Muslim rulers of Bengal and Tripura became a tributary state to the Muslim rulers of Bengal.

After India became independent, Tripura acceded to the Indian Union on 15 October, 1949 as a “C” category state and became a Union Territory in November 1956. A popularly elected ministry was formed in Tripura in July 1963 and since then; the state has had a government elected on the basis of universal adult franchise. Tripura attained full statehood on January 21, 1972.

In Tripura, there exist two types of legal frame of the local governance, namely *Sixth Schedule Frame (Council areas that are governed by the provisions of Sixth Schedule and Parts IX and IXA of the Constitution have not been extended so far)* and *National Frame (Non-Council area, covered under Parts IX and IXA of the Constitution)*. In the State, two-third of the total geographical area and one-third of the population falls within the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule areas. The unique feature of the state is that all revenue districts comprise of both the areas under Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) and the PRI areas. There exists a 60 member Legislative Assembly in the State.

Administratively Tripura is divided into 23 Sub-Divisions in 58 Blocks covering 878 revenue villages and 527 ADC villages in 8 Districts of the State. The 3 tier Panchayat Raj System and one Autonomous District Council is prevailing in the State. There are 8 Zilla Parishads and 35 Panchayat Samitis presently functioning in the State. There is 595 Gram Panchayats in the State, which are functioning outside the Autonomous District Council (ADC) areas of the State.

### **The status of delivery of services in Rural Local Self-Government in Tripura:**

The services actually provided by *Panchayats* depend on the functions actually transferred to the Panchayats. It may be mentioned that most of the functions transferred to the Panchayats are supervisory in nature. The Panchayats perform their task through various Standing Committees and Sub-Committees. These committees are monitors the functioning of various local institutions such as anganwadis, schools, community health centres

etc. As the controlling powers of these institutions are in the hand of the respective departments, the Panchayats can only advice regarding the quality of services. But in spite of all this, the Gram Panchayats are continuing to delivery their services for the sake of rural population. Some of them are as follows:

**School Education:** (Supervision and monitoring of primary schools, SSA scheme, Mid-Day Meal, attendance and retention of children, reduction of dropout rates).

**Social Education:** (Implementation of literacy programmes and continuing education).

**Social Welfare:** (Improving quality of ICDS services, monitoring of Anganwadis)

**Social Welfare (Pension):** (Selection of beneficiaries for disbursement of old age pension, B.H. Pension through Panchayat Secretary/Anganwadi Worker)

**PWD (Water Resources-Irrigation):**(Operation and maintenance of all minor irrigation schemes)

**Agriculture:** (Management of all rural markets, Supervision and hiring centers)

**Fisheries:** (Supervision and management of community water areas)

**Animal Resources Department:** (Supervision of veterinary, first aid Centres)

**Forest:** (Promotion and supervision of social and farm forestry)

### **Right to Service Delivery Act**

The Right to Service Delivery Act, 2011 has empowered people to seek hassle free, corruption free and time bound service delivery mechanism in the govt. offices. The main objective of this Act is to deliver time bound services without any hassle, which also improves the credibility of the govt. offices. This act ensures the fast working and brings more transparency and credibility in official working of govt. departments. This Act is a strong weapon to eliminate the corruption from the Govt. offices, to bring transparency in the official working and to enhance accountability of the Public Servant.

As decentralization of Local Self-Government is enacted by laws then every rural local body of state governments have the right to deliver their services as per citizen's need. To protect every citizen Government of India has legislated Right to Public Service Act in 2010. It comprises statutory laws which guarantee time bound delivery of services for various public services rendered by the Government to citizen and provides mechanism for punishing the errant public servant who is deficient in providing the service stipulated under the statute. 20 (twenty) states and Union Territories have

already enacted public services delivery law for time bound redressal of citizen's grievances. Madhya Pradesh was the first state to implement Public Service Act, followed closely by Bihar, Delhi, Punjab, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Goa, Assam, West Bengal and few other states.

**Services under this Act:**

Initially, 65 services were notified by the govt., while starting the act. But now these services are increased to 351 services. There is a provision to include more services in the ambit of this act by the govt. in near future. But it is yet not started in Tripura.

**Status of State Panchayati Raj Act and Village Committee Act: Identification of services devolved to Gram Panchayats and Village Committees:**

Total 29 functions mentioned in Eleventh Schedule of Article 243G of Indian Constitution has devolved in Gram Panchayat and Village Committee level through the legislation of state act i.e. Tripura Panchayat Act in 1993 and Village Committee Act in 1994. In both the acts, the functions of three-tier PRI have been mentioned and the functions of Village Committee has also described by TTAADC. Total 18 functions are devolved in single-tier local body i.e. Village Committee along with all the functions mentioned in Tripura panchayat Act 1993.

**Objective of the study:**

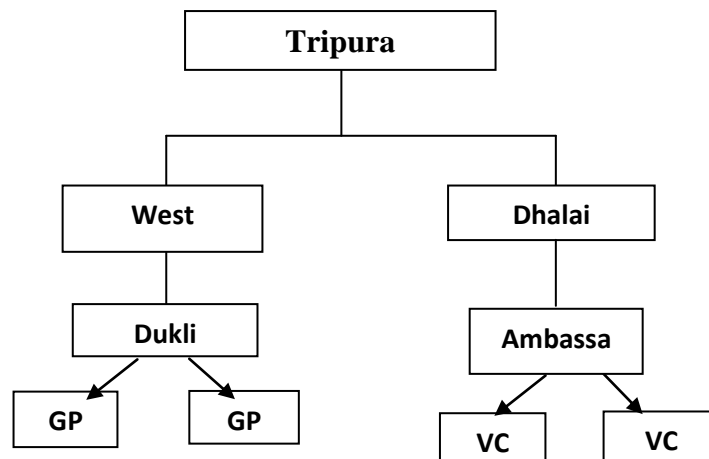
The objective is to study the status of delivery of services in Rural Local Self-Government in Tripura, India.

**Methodology**

**Study Area:**

The present study was conducted in West and Dhalai District covering 2 (two) blocks and 4 (four) gram panchayats from ADC and Non-ADC areas.

**Sample Design**



**20 citizens from each GP/VC  
Total Citizen= 80**

### Sample Size

Total 80 respondents have been covered to fulfil the objective of the study along with two districts, two blocks and four gram panchayats/village committees have also been covered.

### Sampling Method:

Multistage random sampling methods were used for the study. Focus group discussion was conducted in each GP and VC.

### Methods of Data Collection:

Data was collected from structured schedules of state, district, block, gram panchayat and citizens like beneficiaries of various services in Gram Panchayat and Village Committee level.

### Sources of Data:

Data was collected from secondary as well as primary information.

**Secondary Source:** It was collected from several books, journals, government acts, gazettes, guidelines, e-sources and others.

**Primary Data:** It was collected from citizens like beneficiaries and service providers like state officials, elected representatives and functionaries from district, block and gram panchayat level through structured schedules.

### Data Analysis

The obtained data is analyzed through the using of percentile method.

### Result and Discussion

The present section focuses on result and its discussion on few services like civic services, social services, welfare services and governance related services in Panchayats and Village Committees in West and Dhalai District of Tripura, India.

### Civic Services

**Table 1:** Supply of drinking water

Sl. No	Quality	GP		VC		Total	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1	Piped drinking water	31	77.5	5	12.5	36	45
2	R.O. bottled Water	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Street supply	9	20	0	0	9	11.25
4	Hand pump	0	0	35	87.5	35	43.75
5	Through tankers	0	2.5	0	0	0	0
<b>6</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>

Above table highlighted the quality of supply of drinking water as a core service in grassroots level. 77 percent respondents from gram panchayat benefitted from water pipeline service; whereas 87 percent respondents from ADC village area were mainly depends on hand pump water service.

**Table 2: Sanitation type**

Sl. No	Types of Sanitation	GP		VC		Total	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1	Own toilet	40	100	22	55	62	77.5
2	Community toilets	0	0	1	2.5	1	1.25
3	Not functional due to technical fault	0	0	6	15	6	7.5
4	Not utilized due to lack of water	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	Open defecation	0	0	11	27.5	11	13.75
<b>6</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>

From the above table it has been shows that, the percentage of own toilets is high in Gram Panchayets, all the respondents under these GPs having toilets. In VC the percentage of own toilets is not low, here open defecation is high with 60 percent.

### Social Services

**Table 3: Primary school**

Function	GP		VC		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Regular	39	97.5	32	80	71	88.75
Irregular	0	0	1	2.5	1	1.25
Non availability of teachers	0	0	6	15	6	7.5
Lack of infrastructure	1	2.5	0	0	1	1.25
Non-functional	0	0	1	2.5	1	1.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>

Primary Schools are the formal institutions of getting education. 88 percent responded that, the functioning of primary school in study areas is regular. Very few claimed about non-availability of teachers in the school.

**Table 4: Functioning of Health Institutions**

Services	GP		VC		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Institutional deliveries	22	65	18	45	40	50
Availability of full staff equipments/medicines	3	7.5	1	2.5	4	5
Cannot attend critical cases	13	32	3	7.5	16	20
Irregular	2	5	16	40	18	22.5

Unavailability of health institutions	0	0	2	5	2	2.5
<b>Total</b>						

Above table shows the picture of institutional delivery and services of Gram Panchayat level. 65 percent institutional deliveries have done in GP level, in case of Village Committee it is 45 percent. In ADC areas PHC's are not regularly open and even unavailability of doctors and nurses are creates problem in a local level.

### Welfare Services

**Table 5: Ration Service**

Ration supply	GP		VC		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Supply regularly	36	90	33	82.5	69	86.25
All items are not provide	4	10	1	2.5	5	6.25
Some items are provide	0	0	5	12.5	5	6.25
Shop is close indefinitely	0	0	0	0	0	0
No PDS shop	0	0	1	2.5	1	1.25
<b>Total</b>						

In Gram panchayats all the items were provide regularly in the ration shops. 90 percent respondents from GP and 82 percent Respondents from VC of the total respondent told that ration shops are regularly supply their essential commodities.

### Governance Related Services

**Table 6: Electricity Connection**

S l. N o	Electricity Connection	GP		VC		Total	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1	All Household	38	95	35	87.5	73	91.25
2	Some household	1	2.5	1	2.5	2	2.5
3	Not available in maximum household	0	0	1	2.5	1	1.25
4	One point at the Household	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	No electricity	1	2.5	3	7.5	4	5
6	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>

Above table describes the electricity connection of studied household. Out of 40 respondents from gram panchayat 38 households have electricity connection whereas 35 respondents out of 40 studied respondents told that, they availed electricity connection in village committee area.



**Table 7: Type of Roads**

Sl. No	Type	GP		VC		Total	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1	All streets have Cement/Metals road	32	80	13	32.5	45	56.25
2	Kacha roads	2	5	5	12.5	7	8.75
3	Some streets have Cement/Metals road	6	15	15	37.5	21	26.25
4	Totally damaged	0	0	4	10	4	5
5	No roads	0	0	3	7.5	3	3.75
<b>6</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>

Above table highlight the system of connectivity and types of roads. 32 respondents of Gram Panchayet and 13 respondents from Village Council told some street have cement or metals. Only one respondent said that there are no roads. Percentage of totally damaged roads is high in Village Council areas.

### Findings

Few findings on service delivery of Gram Panchayats and Village Committees are discussed in below:

#### Socio-Economic Condition

68 percent male and 32 percent female were covered and 50 percent were from the age group of 46 to 60 and above. Literacy rate of the respondents was also poor as data revealed only 19 percent has passed class 10 standard. On the other hand, 60 percent respondents worked as a daily labour. 12 percent citizens under gram panchayat earned Rs 50000 to 75000 annually.

#### Participation in local level

Most of the people were participated in Gram Sabha for becoming aware of scheme and to claim their demands. In GP level 92.5 percent respondents were regularly attend in any kind of local body event; in case of VC it was 95 percent. As people know Gram Sabha is the platform of village people, 90 percent respondents from gram panchayat were participated in Gram Sabha meeting, in case of ADC it was 80 percent.

#### Supply of drinking water

Service providers were collected Rs. 50 (fifty) per month as a user charge of drinking water, but few panchayats who had yet not started this kind of collection as villagers were not ready to pay this amount. Even people were not bothering about the cut off of drinking water service due to irregularities of service charges.

#### Electricity connection for households

Out of 40 respondents from gram panchayat 38 households had electricity connection whereas 35 respondents out of 40 studied respondents told that, they availed electricity connection in VC level.

### **Streets lights**

50 percent respondents from gram panchayat and 95 percent respondents from VC were facing unavailability of street light connection in their village areas. On the other hand, 13 respondents of Gram Panchayats out of 40 told that some streets light are found in some areas but these are not functioning.

### **Types of roads**

80 percent roads of the Gram Panchayat were made in cement, in case of Village Committee it was 32.5 percent.

### **Maintenance (cleaning) of roads**

The areas of Gram Panchayat were mainly cleaned in festival time. But in Village Committee there were separate staffs for cleaning.

### **Maintenance of community assets**

Community assets were not maintained regularly both in GP and VC areas. It was maintained as on demand basis.

### **Spraying disinfectant (mosquitoes) in the village**

60 percent spraying of disinfectant was done in GP level, where as in ADC areas it was done only in special cases.

### **Functions of primary school**

The functions of primary school are well and regular in village areas. 95 percent and 80 percent respondents from GP and VC level were satisfied on the functions of primary school in their locality.

### **Functions of secondary school**

Secondary school of village council is not functioning whereas in Gram Panchayats the functioning of secondary school is regular and its infrastructure is also good.

### **Birth Registration**

Birth registration certificate is given to the beneficiaries within 5 to 7 days of their application and its cost is only Rs. 10. But in maximum cases service provider give the certificate in free of cost.

### **Death Certificate**

The collection procedure of death certificate is as same as birth certificate. The tendency of fees collection is yet not developed in Village level of Tripura though it is required for enhancement of local revenue.

### **Caste Certificate**

Gram Panchayat is not responsible to provide caste certificate. It is given by concerned SDM of the block within 90 days of application and for this purpose money is not required.

### **BPL Certificate**

This certificate is provided by Gram panchayat in free of cost. It is given to the beneficiaries within 100-110 days of their application.

### **Residence of Proof**

Residence of Proof Certificate is provided from SDM office within 45 to 60 days of their application and for this purpose no cost will be required.

### **Marriage Certificate**

Marriage certificate is also given by the block authority within 30 to 40 days of their application and its charge is Rs.300.

### **Any other- (ROR)**

ROR is given by the Gram Panchayats within 2 to 3 days of their application with Rs. 5 (five) only.

### **Recommendations**

- Right to Public Service Act is yet not introduced in Tripura. So it is need to introduce as early as possible as a weapon of citizens in the state.
- Gram Panchayats and Village Committees need to ensure public services at their best. There is no provision of services in liquid and solid waste management in village level. But it must be arrange in local level for healthy locality.
- The authority of Gram Panchayats must be encourage giving and collecting user charges of services in village level, so that local body can create revenue and use these funds for local development.
- Proper awareness need to be build up in Gram Panchayat level for collecting and motivating water service charges as well.
- Purified drinking water facilities need to be created as the villagers of Lalchari Village Committee suffered it most. They are mainly depending on stream water for drinking purpose. On the other hand, Two deep tube well are exist in Kulai Gram Panchayat, but these are not using by villagers as these are disturbed due to iron.
- With the aim to save their electricity charges, villagers are used hook line for their day to day service, which create a problem even hook line connection is illegal in everywhere.
- One community hall is required under Lalchari ADC village. Even the condition of their Village Committee office is not so good.
- Politicization is one of the problems in local level participation. As the political leaders preferred in village level, so in that case local people are not interested to attend the meeting even Gram Sabha.
- Emphasized need to be given in the areas of Anandanagar Gram Panchayat as the condition of street light supply along with drainages is very poor.
- Most of the villagers in Gram Panchayats and Village Committees are not interested to pay water charges as there is a hand pump in their locality. In that case awareness and motivational activities need to introduce in village level. Moreover minimum charges i.e. Rs. 10 or 20 may be helpful for rural village people.

- Kulai Gram Panchayat under Ambassa RD Block has achieved Full Sanitation Award in 2013. At that time, 15 to 20 percent work was pending and till today fund was not received for little amount of work in sanitation purpose.
- Collection of revenues is important to strengthen rural local bodies. Here Gram Panchayat is starting to collect water tax only but it is yet not successful as all the villagers are not ready to pay this. In this case, encouragement from rural local bodies is required.

### Conclusion

Rural Local Self-Governments playing an important role for delivering the services in grassroots level. As it is the duty of each and every local body they should keep in mind in every steps of their journey. The rural as well as urban local bodies served the services like road, electricity, water connectivity, health, education, market, rationing, sanitation, cleaning and maintenance and many more which are directly or indirectly attached with the interest of every citizen's in their life. The Gram Panchayats or the Village Councils in ADC areas are also empowered to collect taxes from the citizens. But, in case of Tripura it is yet not highly started. The authorities of rural local bodies are trying to collect only water charges but disinterest of large number of villagers creates a problem in their work. In that case, it is a duty of every elected representative in every corner of the state to motivate all the citizens towards paying their water charges in village level.

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