
**LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT:
CASE STUDY OF PANCHAYAT IN BISHNUPUR, MANIPUR**

Amom Thoinu

Asst. Prof. Department of Political Science, Kumbi College,
Bishnupur District, Manipur

ABSTRACT

Nevertheless, local government has an increasing role in the governance of federal countries, placing new demands on the theory and practice of federalism. Moreover, its status is changing along with its new role. The study is to insight different issues of social developmental schemes implementing in the state but it is very much questionable on the achievement in the rural areas of Bishnupur District. Implementation of MNREGS is still problem in Manipur that the record finding in the field investigation confirm that most of the PRIs cannot provide 95 days of work to the job card holders. An active Gram Sabha is a must for providing effective socio economic transformation in the rural areas of the State.

Keywords: Local self government, Social development, Panchayat, Bishnupur, Manipur

INTRODUCTION

The constitutional recognition of local government as an order of government in federal systems is a modern phenomenon. Local Self-government is the management and governance of local affairs by a local body or authority. These local bodies may be municipal corporations or panchayats. Local government may be loosely defined as a public organization, authorized to decide and administer a limited range of public policies within relatively small territory which is a subdivision of a regional or national government.ⁱ The first federal constitutions of the modern era did not include local government as an order of government. The Constitution of the United States of 1787 was silent on the matter, as was the Swiss Constitution of 1848. In the Canadian Constitution of 1867, local government was mentioned only as a provincial field of competence. The Australian Federal Constitution of 1901, being silent on the matter, had the same effect – making local government a creature of state power.ⁱⁱ

It was only after the Second World War that local self-government increasingly appeared in federal constitutions, often coinciding with the return to democratic rule. The first was the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany of 1949. Although the Spanish Constitution of 1978 was focused on the creation of Autonomous Communities, local autonomy was nevertheless mentioned. Brazil's return to civilian rule was also marked by the extensive protection of local self-government in the Constitution of 1988. The entrenchment of local government in the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Indian Constitution in 1992 was prompted by developmental concerns, while the extensive protection of local self-government in the South African Constitution of 1996 was the result of both democratic and developmental goals.ⁱⁱⁱ Similar sentiments informed the entrenchment of local government as an order of government in the Nigerian Constitution of 1999. The trend is to increase the role of local authorities in the provision of services. Local authorities are seen as engines for growth and development, and more and more functions are being downloaded on them. This places considerable stress on local government to finance new responsibilities. With the increased status and role of local government, intergovernmental relations between the three levels of government have not only become more complex, but also critical for the demarcation of responsibilities and effective cooperation in service delivery.^{iv}

PANCHAYAT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Representation has largely been related to the benefits that accrue to the constituents, and constituents often relate to their representatives as potential beneficiaries of some form of personal advantage.^v It was hoped that the constitutional status accorded to the Panchayati Raj Institutions would definitely check the status from tampering with the working of these institutions. This would also enable them to function as vibrant and viable rural local self-government institutions and acquire the capacity to learn, to respond, to change and to mobilize better participation of people in managing the local affairs.^{vi} Panchayats in the country have been designed to have development interests of the people in view, and provide a more responsive manner of meeting such interests. Being responsive is one form of accountability to the voters and constituents, i.e., by meeting what the constituents need and want. The people should be able to hold their representatives 'accountable' for whatever actions that were taken by them in their capacity as representatives. In rural areas the self-governing bodies are the Panchayats and in urban it is the municipal corporations etc.

In Manipur we have two tier system of Panchayati Raj, i.e. Gram Panchayat at the village level and Zilla Parishad at the district level. The Panchayat at the both levels are involved in the implementation of centrally sponsored and state planned schemes for creation of community assets, infrastructure development and employment generation etc. in rural areas of the state.

Panchayati Raj System in Manipur comes into existence since the time immemorial as an organized institution to provide justice to the villagers by the elders Gram Sabha (*Khunja Mipham*). However, present Panchayat system of elected representatives in Manipur was introduced in the year 1960 under the provisions of the United Provinces (Uttar Pradesh) Panchayati Raj Act 1947, which was extended to the state. In Manipur, the Panchayati Raj institutions are functioning in accordance with two Acts namely, the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1975, and the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1994. The later was passed under the general guidelines provided in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992. Although the Act of 1975 had provided for a three-tier system i.e. the Gram Panchayat at the village level, the Panchayati Samiti at the Block level and the Zilla Parishad at the district level, only a two-tier system is actually functioning. The Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, replaced the Act of 1975 in the districts of Imphal West, Imphal East, Thoubal and Bishnupur.^{vii} Expansion of basic education, better health care, more effective land reforms and greater access to provisions of social security would enable the marginalized sections of society to lead a less restricted life and better use of markets. A governance process should aim at eliminating disparities and promote development. It should concern with mankind and should meet the basic needs of human beings, particularly the poor. It has been therefore, widely argued that decentralized governance is an instrument for this multifaceted development and it can ensure effective and equitable development at grassroots level.^{viii} Representatives who are elected not only need to affirm their commitment to their constituents, but also have to be responsive to the manner in which they were elected, perhaps through patrons and patronage.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Bishnupur District is one of the smallest Districts in Manipur, having a geographical area of 496 kms. and only three sub divisions. It has one Zila Parishad (consisting of 11 ZP Members) and 24 Gram Panchayats, 4 Municipal Councils and 3 Nagar Panchayats and 89 villages. Different developmental schemes have been implementing in the state but it is very much questionable on the achievement in the rural areas of Bishnupur District. There are issues relating to difficulties in implementation of certain schemes/projects, such as IAY (Indira Awaas Yojana), NREGS, (National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme) SGSY, (Swaranjayanti Gram Swarogjar Yojana) IWDP (Integrated Watershed Development Programme), NRHM (National Rural Health Mission), SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan), PMGSY (Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana), Food and Public Distribution, Banking, Youth Affairs & Sports, Minor Irrigation, Commerce & Industries, Water Supply and Sanitation, Fisheries, RGGVY (Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana). Besides, there are issues of unable to submit utilization certificate by Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department.^{ix} Mention may be made that under the twenty point programs of the government of India, the centre has been providing fund

through Tribal Development Department for implementation of scheme to assist Schedule Caste families in Manipur. However, the actual implementation of the scheme is being taken up by Rural Development and Panchayati Raj/Zilla Parishads and the performance level has been recorded 'nil' following the failure of submitting the Utilization Certificates in time.

MAIN OBJECTIVE

- to focus on the role of Panchayates in bringing social development with a case study Bishnupur District.
- to insight the status of developmental schemes which are implementing by the government.

METHOD

Quantitative and empirical methods are employed while the universe of the study is Bishnupur district. The main hypothesis is that panchayate has great role for successful execution of developmental scheme as a whole to fulfill sustainable development goals.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Haokip and Ananda (2017) argued that decentralized governance is an instrument for multifaceted development and it can ensure effective and equitable development at grassroots level. This is because, locally elected representatives know their small constituency better and are in advantageous position to provide better services according to their electorate's preferences.^x Development refers to the progress achieved in decentralized governance per se equitable and sustainable delivery of services to the satisfaction of the people. Effectiveness is understood as the ability of decentralized governance to produce results that meet the future needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal. Sustainability means the ability of decentralized governance to generate and to maintain the development process for a longer period. This paper focuses on the effectiveness of service delivery by the panchayats in the State of Manipur. Geeta & Sanjay (2017) analysed to understand the impact of the constitutional amendment on the empowerment of women. It is true that reservation for women in PRIs have opened up huge vistas for their empowerment, particularly women belonging to the weaker sections.^{xi} However, there are many challenges and issues. Entrenched patriarchal system and mindset, rigid caste divide and rampant caste discrimination in the rural society, massive female illiteracy and female dependence on male have ensured that, by and large, the real levers of power are still in the hands of males. Studies have been cited to show that some of the southern and western states are far more advanced than the northern and some of the eastern states. Nico (2015) analysis revealed the increased status and role of local government,

intergovernmental relations between the three levels of government have not only become more complex, but also critical for the demarcation of responsibilities and effective cooperation in service delivery.^{xii} Although India has given recognition to local government in the 73rd and 74th amendments, the manner of allocation of powers to local government appeared crucial. When powers are granted by another sphere of government, the granting authority often perceives the transfer of powers as a loss of its own authority. Although local government powers are listed in the Indian Constitution, they are still dependent on allocation by the state governments, which has resulted in slow progress regarding the empowerment of local authorities. Stina et al (2015) argued that for inclusive growth, livelihood security and democratic empowerment as envisaged in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the state of Manipur is implementing the scheme with the mandate to provide at least 100 days of demand based guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work and creation of durable social assets in the process.^{xiii} Their study examined the performance of the scheme in that state with respect to extent of employment generation, efficiency in work completion rate and efficiency in fund utilization through analyzing official records. The finding shows that the shabbiest parts of the scheme were detected in the forms of provisioning of 100 days employment to only 7.39 per cent of job card holders and failure to complete 95.55 per cent of the undertaken works by scheduled time. This calls for playing of more responsive role by the state authority so that very purpose of MGNREGA is not defeated.^{xiv} Ishani & Suresh (2015) emphasised on the women members of gram panchayat and the changes in their involvement in politics particularly after the 73rd amendment of the constitution of India. The experiences and views of the members of panchayat are important for a successful rural development process.^{xv} Most of the people are not well educated and easily get influenced or worked under the guidance of a second person, be it an influential male member or respective husbands of the women representatives. Some of the women came without even having the knowledge of local self-government but just to fulfil the privilege of reservation policies for women participation. This has definitely created many loophole in terms of using the funds as well as devaluation of the functions authorised to them.^{xvi} However, it is also true that some of the women representatives gained knowledge and confidence and became assertive in the politics of Panchayat and little scope has been given for them to try and make efforts for a genuine participation due to the lack of various social and mental inspirations or readiness towards the women folk of the Panchayati Raj System. The analysis suggested that there still needs to orient and encourage such women despite being very enthusiastic and vocal to bring confidence and assertiveness among them so that they themselves become the one who can play active participation in the decision making and administrative process of rural development.

Sanjoy and Tomba (2013) analysis focus on Rural Poverty Alleviation Programmes: A Study of Mgnrega in Manipur, it revealed that the Govt. has implemented many rural development schemes such as the SGSY (Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana), IAY (Indira Awaas Yojana), PMGY (Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana), PMGSY (Pradhan Mantri Gram Shadak Yojana) etc. But this programme could not bear the desired reasons due to inconsistency between scheme aims, poor quality of asset creation, lack of resources and manipulation of the record.^{xvii} To overcome this problem the present paper, an attempt has been made to analyse the implementation of MGNREGA in Thoubal District of Manipur. Dipanjan, (2005) argument stated that the Panchayati Raj institutions were functioning only in the valley districts and Jiribam sub-division. In the hill districts, there were village authorities, almost similar to village Panchayats, functioning under the provisions of the 1956 Manipur (Village Authorities in Hill Areas) Act.^{xviii} The Post- independence phase of Panchayat Raj is marked with significant developments. Further the analysis revealed that there is also a need to re-look at the way Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are working in the North-East.

PARTICULAR CASE STUDY ON BISHNUPUR DISTRICT

The Wangoo Terakhong GP have 1995 members of household, 1413 members of household have their own land while 582 household are landless. Most of the people are farmers and labourers. The GP has 1856 nos. of Job card holders under MGNREGA. There is shortage of drinking water in the GP that 220 nos. of household gets drinking water from 3 numbers of public hydrant located in the GP and others remaining households gets drinking water from 13 nos. of hand pumps 9 nos. of ponds and 1 nos. of spring water tank constructed by the Panchayat and other departments under 14 Finance Commission and state finance commission. P. Baleswor Singh, Pradhan, Wangoo Terakhong Gram Panchayat, of Bishnupur District, has taken up many developmental programs under state and central sponsor schemes viz, MGNREGS, 14 Finance Commission, State Finance Commission, IWMP etc.

It is known to all that MGNREGS is targeting to provide 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to any rural household but in implementation it is very tough to fulfill the target in the sense that the Wangoo Terakhong GP could provide 20 days for the total active 1856 Job Card holders with the 17 works (DP – 2; IC – 3; RC - 10 and ND – 2) in this financial year 2017-18. Significantly, on the basis of Socio Economic Caste Census (2011) the GP completed 39 houses under PMAY (G) Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin when they made target of 50 houses which is indeed progressive that 79 percent cover up. Besides, the GP has also planning to construct 419 houses under Non-SECC. Mention may be made that the scheme was launched in Manipur by Chief Minister N. Biren Singh on 29 June 2017. That, 9740 housing units were targeted for the FY 2016-17 (backlog) in Manipur. Financial assistance is released to the

beneficiaries in their bank account in three installments like 25:60:15 which are at the time of house sanction, completion of plinth level and completion of lintel level. They are also liable to get Rs. 12,000/- for (SBM/MGNREGS) construction of low cost latrine and another Rs. 19380 (existing @Rs. 204 Job Card holder per day under MGNREGS) for 95 days. As such each beneficiary is entitled to get Rs. 192760/- (Rs 161,380 +12000+19380).^{xix}

In regards to the Wangoo GP, so far during 2017-18 period the authority provides only 13 days which is 7 days from GP; 4 days from ZP and 2 days from Line Department. For the poverty alleviation of the villagers, the Gram Panchayat also took initiative to construct Houses in this Wangoo GP area under PMAY (G) Pradhan Mantri Awaj Yojana – Gramin, (since March 2016 Indira Awaj Yojana was rename as PMAY). So far 28 nos. of houses are completed out of 147 targeted. The beneficiaries are selected on the basis of Socio Economic and Caste Census 2011 (SECC).

FINDINGS

- Wangoo Terakhong GP could provide 20 days for the total active 1856 Job Card holders with the 17 works.
- Implementation of MNREGS is still problem in Manipur that the record finding in the field investigation confirm that most of the PRIs cannot provide 95 days of work to the job card holders.
- On the basis of Socio Economic Caste Census (2011) the Wangoo Terakhong GP completed 39 houses under PMAY (G) when targeted of 50 houses which is indeed progressive that 79 percent cover up.
- In general beneficiaries can get direct benefit from the MGNREGS and PMAY while the state finance commission and 14 finance commission indirectly benefited to the villagers in the sense that different developmental programmes are undergoing through this SFC and 14 FC like watershed management, road construction, well and pond digging, repairing and construction of primary schools in deferent villages.
- In particular to the Wangoo GP, only 13 days are provided it is indeed very serious.
- So far Wangoo GP has completed 28 nos. of houses out of 147 targeted. The beneficiaries are selected on the basis of Socio Economic and Caste Census 2011 (SECC).

CONCLUSION

By discussing the above fact, it is cleared that the district planning committees for the four valley districts have been constituted by the government as provided under the state Panchayati Raj

Act. However the District Planning Committees are not functioning properly. Adequate infrastructure development and manpower support for the four District Planning Committees are still lacking and these need to be put in place to initiate the functioning of DPCs. It is recommended by a committee of three men that constituted for the smooth functioning of DPCs under the aegis of Prof. N. Mohendra Singh in 2014. To enable the PRIs to become financially viable and self –supporting the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 under its Section 40 and 70 empower the Gram Panchayat and Zilla Parishads taxation within their Panchayat areas with the approval of the government. However the Panchayats do not have any income of their own and do not levy any taxes, fees, etc. at present. As part of streamlining income generation by the PRIs, which has become a burning issue, the Director, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, during 2014, submitted to the government a detailed proposal containing all the relevant facts, figures regarding income generation by the PRIs in the state but still yet to approve. The rural leaders and elected PRIs representatives will need to go all out to motivate their electorate-members to instill in them a firm sense of faith in the system of grass-roots democracy by way of ads, awareness generation with circulation of annual report of the Gram Panchayats showing income, expenditure and works taken-up during the year and even providing nominal remuneration to the participants as a token of acknowledgement for being present during the Sabha meetings. For, without the participation of the general public / electorate members, the deliberation of the Sabhas will remain incomplete and disputes unresolved thereby dislocating the true texture of participatory democracy. The member, representative is needed to visit other developed states to make them familiar with the working of more dynamic and responsive Panchayates. It is opined that such activities would help in motivating and reinforcing the working of panchayats in the home state. An active Gram Sabha is a must for providing effective socio economic transformation in the rural areas of the State.

REFERENCES

ⁱ Nico Steytler, (2015) The place and role of local government in federal systems. *Occasional Papers*, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Johannesburg

ⁱⁱ Ibid

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Anand Inbanathan (2009). Local Governance, Patronage and Accountability in Karnataka and Kerala, The Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore, Working paper, 224

^{vi} Geeta and Sanjay Mishra (2017) Panchayati Raj Institutions and Empowerment of Women: Problems & Challenges, *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) Volume 22, Issue 9, Ver. 15 (September. 2017) PP 07-13*

- vii Ishani Oinam & Rajkumar Suresh Singh. (2015). Women Participation and Panchayati Raj in Manipur. *Journal of International Academic Research for Multidisciplinary*, 2(2) March
- viii Geeta and Sanjay Mishra (2017) Panchayati Raj Institutions and Empowerment of Women: Problems & Challenges, *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) Volume 22, Issue 9, Ver. 15 (September. 2017) PP 07-13*
- ix Sanjoy Singh, M. and Kh. Tomba Singh (2013). Rural Poverty Alleviation Programmes: A Study of Mgnrega in Manipur. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, 2(9) September.
- x Sonkhongam Haokip and Ananda Rajakumar. P. (2017). Inclusiveness in Service Delivery through Panchayati Raj Institutions in India with special reference to the State of Manipur. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) 22(6) Ver.11 (June. 2017)*
- xi Geeta & Sanjay Mishra, (2017). Panchayati Raj Institutions and Empowerment of Women: Problems & Challenges. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) 22(9), Ver. 15 (September. 2017)*
- xii Nico Steytler, (2015) The place and role of local government in federal systems. *Occasional Papers*, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Johannesburg
- xiii Stina Khumukcham, A. Sarkar, Ram Singh and R. Josmee Singh (2015). A Study on the Performance of MGNREGA in Manipur. *International Journal of Social Science*, 4(4) December 2015
- xiv Ibid.
- xv Ishani Oinam & Rajkumar Suresh Singh. (2015). Women Participation and Panchayati Raj in Manipur. *Journal of International Academic Research for Multidisciplinary*, 2(2) March
- xvi Ibid.
- xvii Sanjoy Singh, M. and Kh. Tomba Singh (2013). Rural Poverty Alleviation Programmes: A Study of Mgnrega in Manipur. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, 2(9) September.
- xviii Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, (2005). Autonomous District Councils and Panchayati Raj Institutions in North-East India. *Dialogue*, 7(1) July- September, 2005
- xix Somarendro Singh, A. (2018). Basics of MGNREGA: A Remedial Step on MGNREGS Implementation in Manipur State institute of Rural Development Manipur, Imphal East, Manipur, September