



# Local Government Quarterly

July - September 2020

A Journal of the  
**All India Institute of Local Self-Government**

- \* Present Scenario of Holding Tax Management of Local Government in Bangladesh: A Case Study on Union Parishad of Bogura District
- \* Panchayati Raj and Capacity Building: A Study
- \* A Study of Women & Social Movements in North-East India
- \* Scientific Temper in Urbanites: A KAP Study on COVID-19
- \* Affordable Housing in Urban Areas of West Bengal under Prime Minister Awas Yojana, India

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All India Institute of Local Self-Government (AILLSG), established in 1926 has been actively working in the field of urban development management and is a diligent partner in promoting the cause of local governance in India and overseas.

The Institute has been the steadfast friend, philosopher and guide to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) across the Country. For more than eight decades it has contributed to the principles and practice of urban governance, education, research and capacity building. It has designed and developed a vast array of training literature and courses and trained more than 1.5 million stakeholders in diverse areas of urban governance and urban services delivery.

These activities of the AILLSG are practiced through 30 regional centres located in different regions of the Country. The Institute anchors the Regional Centre for Urban and Environmental Studies (RCUES) of the Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India for Western India region. This Centre is actively involved in building capabilities of municipal officials, staff and elected members from the States of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and the Union Territories of Diu, Daman, and Dadra & Nagar Haveli by upgrading their knowledge and skills required for effective administration and implementation of various urban development programmes.

With a view to cater to the growing requirement of ULBs in regard to services, the AILLSG runs specialized capacity building institutions such as the National Fire Academy, the Nrupur Institute of Nursing Science and Research and the Centre for Environment & Disaster Management at Vadodara, PRUDA at Ahmedabad, National Resource Centre for Urban Poverty, International Centre of EQUI-T, the Disaster Management Cell and the Centre of GIS at Pune. It runs the Solid Waste Management Cell of the Government of Maharashtra. In recent years, AILLSG has ventured into rural and tribal capacity building and hand holding of rural institutions of self-governance.

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*Editorial*

**Minding our Minds; a crucial pillar of our fight against COVID-19**

'Minding our minds during the COVID-19' is the subject of a 3 page advisory put out by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India. It provides simple guidelines, dos and don'ts for dealing with possible psychological impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on humans. There is now widespread realization, including among policy makers, social sector workers, corporate leaders, and indeed healthcare professionals, of the significant likely impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on psychological well-being of large sections of society especially those with pre-existing mental health disorders. Fear is possibly the biggest emotion among all irrespective of social and economic standing. Elevated levels of anxiety, even leading to panic are common.

Needless to say, World Mental Health Day observed each year on 10<sup>th</sup> October has very special significance this year. A news release by the WHO puts the issue in perspective. It says *'Mental health is one of the most neglected areas of public health. Close to 1 billion people are living with a mental disorder, 3 million people die every year from the harmful use of alcohol and one person dies every 40 seconds by suicide. And now, billions of people around the world have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which is having a further impact on people's mental health'*. This year, on World Mental Health Day, the WHO along with partner organisations is calling for a massive scale-up in investment in mental health. It is driven by the campaign message 'Move for mental health: let's invest' which has kicked off since September.

Overall, more than 6% of the global burden of disease is attributed to mental health disorders.

The fact that mental health is a much neglected area of public health and therefore underfunded should come as no surprise. But the numbers are surely a

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wakeup call. The WHO release notes that countries spend a meagre 2% of their health budgets on mental health and that *international development assistance for mental health has never exceeded 1% of all development assistance for health*. The extent of neglect of mental health globally is appalling; the situation in developing countries more so.

The National Mental Health Survey (NHMS) 2016 reported that 9.8 million children aged 13–17 years suffer from serious mental illness. Mental health problems affect about 1 in 10 children and young people and they include depression, anxiety and conduct disorder, and are often a direct response to what is happening in their lives. 70% of children and young people who experience a mental health problem have not had appropriate interventions at a sufficiently early age (Mental Health Foundation 2020). Girls and young women are also up to three times more likely than boys to have depressive disorders and to attempt self-harm (WHO, 2014), which is one of the leading causes of death among adolescent girls. Girls & women are at greater risk of mental health problems than boys & men due to high gender inequality. Further, the stigma towards mental illness often causes people to feel isolated, stereotyped, shameful, or discriminated against, thus making it more challenging for them to seek help.

During the present COVID19 pandemic, children and women are at greater physical and mental health risk as they have experienced increased domestic violence and abuse (UN 2020). The COVID-19 related school closure, social isolation have impacted 286 million children, of which 49% are girls, in the country (UNICEF 2020). The girls & women are worst impacted by COVID-19 related social isolation as there have been increase in gender based violence, sexual exploitation, early pregnancy and early or forced marriage. This is also a major source of anxiety and stress and cause of psychological distress/ mental health issues among them.

Similar reflections of declining mental well-being especially of children, youth & women emerged from the AILSG's International Center of EQUI-T's grassroots field action areas with more than 700,000 disadvantaged populations spread over more than 450 locations. The learnings indicated the need for strategy to ensure mental well-being of children & women needs to be multi-pronged with focus on innovative approaches and actions on grassroots. Based on these, the key innovations to address mental wellbeing of children being developed by AILSG's International Center of EQUI-T include Innovative Information, Education, Communication (IEC) for mental health awareness: customized to different types

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of disadvantaged, Community Self-Assessment & Planning for understanding mental health of children, Capacity building modules for training field staff/ team working directly with children & community and Resource material for mental health literacy for concerned stakeholders. The AILSG through its field actions is striving towards good mental health for children, youth, and community through enabling avenues for their constructive and creative engagement, counselling, etc. AILSG holds special concern for care and empathy for those vulnerable to mental ailments including anxiety and depression. AILSG is taking conscious efforts to build capacities of its team members, especially those at the grassroots who are in direct interface with the disadvantaged.

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## **Present Scenario of Holding Tax Management of Local Government in Bangladesh: A Case Study on Union Parishad of Bogura District**

**Maruf Ahmad, Md Al Amin, Gopinath Annadurai, Naznin Islam**

### **Abstract:**

Effective and efficient governance of local administration mainly underlies on proper and competent taxation systems whereas holding tax is one of the major revenue sources. The study is an effort to assess the performance of holding tax management system of Union Parishad (UP) (the lowest administrative unit) in Bangladesh. Following a cross-sectional design with qualitative research method approach, the study was conducted in Sherpur Upazila of Bogura district covering three UPs of RDA's laboratory area. Analyzing the data collected from the sources, the study reveals that the realization of the holding tax varied from year to year and the average amount of collection was 34.31% during the study period. The study indicates that the highest amount of holding tax collected in a UP annually was Tk. 406,497 (\$4772.04) and the lowest was Tk. 600 (\$438.94). As the

taxpayers were not well-informed about the direct benefits against the payment of tax, they were reportedly reluctant to pay full tax each year. Besides, Union Parishad representatives did not take initiative seriously in collecting holding tax in fear of losing their popularity. However, the respondents suggested three measures for the recovery of the arrear holding tax of which motivational work heads the list. Moreover, chronic defaulters in tax payment should be dealt with legal measures and new households need to take into assessment after every three-year interval. Finally, the study suggests to earn more revenue locally by growing competition among bidders for leasing of Hat-Bazar, khash ponds, khoar, etc; as well as planting high growth trees for increasing their sources of income.

**Keywords:** Holding tax, Local administration, Local council, Revenue of local council, Bangladesh



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## 1. Introduction

Union Parishad (UP) is a formal corporate body at the local level. It is formed with the elected representatives. These representatives are entrusted with specific powers to exercise within the orbit of their jurisdiction (Jain, 2003). In reality, it is an organized social entity with a feeling of ownership. The purpose of the local government institution at Union level is to help concerned authorities to maintain law and order and at the same time, it is entrusted with the responsibility of union-level development in various degrees following an overall policy of the country (Islam, 2015; Sarker, 2006).

Although the local government systems – specially the rural local government – in Bangladesh have changed tremendously in the past few decades, it could not gain sufficient financial strength for discharging its responsibilities smoothly (Mia, 2019; Khan & Obaidullah, 2013). For it has got limited sources of income. The main sources of revenue of UPs are taxes and rates, non-tax revenues, voluntary contributions, government grants and loans from other sources (Moore, 2013; Musleh, 2017). At present voluntary contributions and loans are insignificant sources of revenue for local bodies. UPs' source of income is very limited whereas sufficient financial strength is essential to carry out its assigned role. As a local

government institution, UP is not able to increase income from own source. It mostly depends on the government grant (Peter et. al., 1998; Shah, 2006). Moreover, some integral factors of financial management like budget allocation, records/accounts keeping, and audit appear to compound the financial problems on many counts.

Holding tax was specifically levied on small villages which were used to pay for the chowkidars who were guards to supplement the small police force in the rural areas in Eastern India (Giuliani, 2015). During the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930–31 Eastern India became the scene of the no-tax campaign against chowkidari tax (Chakrabarty, 1996). The first movements against the Chowkidars and their appointers (Panchayats) were started in Bihar. The Government retaliated by confiscation of property worth hundreds and thousands in place of a few rupees of tax, among others (Bose, 1998).

Union Councils (UC) were given the authority to impose the taxes which was legitimized by the Basic Democracy Order 1959 (Chowdhury, 1979). During post-independence period, the structure of UPs and sources of their income have been changed. Under the 1976 Ordinance, the UPs were vested with power to mobilize resources from 28 sources. This was fairly larger compared to past

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arrangements. The 1983 Ordinance drastically cut the sources of income from 28 to 5 only. These sources were: 1) tax on homestead and buildings; 2) village police rate; 3) fees on birth, marriage, and feasts; 4) community tax on adult males living in the locality for purposes of public welfare; and 5) fees charged for some public welfare purposes (Khan 2008).

The Local Government (Union Parishad) Amendment Act 1993 replaced the 2nd Schedule of the 1983 Ordinance with a new schedule that included 6 sources of revenues for UPs. The financial strength of local government institutions especially the UP could be enhanced with the improvement of its financial management, which includes an assessment of taxes and their collection, utilization of funds, preparation of the budget and its execution and maintenance. Efficient financial management is essential for the effective operation of UP through ensuring mobilization and proper utilization of local resources at its disposal (Absar, 2006).

A huge amount of taxable income from UPs' sources remain unrealized, collection of taxes is not done in due time. Sometimes, it remains unrealized for a long period. In this situation, UP becomes very much dependent on government grants. But the actual allocation of government grants is

generally lower than the demand. The situation also deteriorates due to the delay in the approval of the budget. The budget of UP is approved by the appropriate authority when a considerable period (3 to 6 months) of a financial year has already passed. This creates an adverse effect on the collection as well as on the expenditure of the UPs (Ahmad, 1983).

The UP is financially weak because of its limited sources of income. Although seven sources are earmarked for the formation of UPs' funds, only a single source i.e. tax, rate, and fee is generally adopted by most of the UPs. Though the UPs are authorized to impose tax, rate, and fees on 6 items, this power is not equally exercised by most of the UPs located in different parts of the country. UP can improve its financial strength by undertaking various positive measures. There is a provision of making a list of the annual evaluation of houses for fixation of tax after every five years; most of the UPs are not following this rule. Moreover, UPs are very much reluctant to maintain the evaluation list, receipt book of taxes, etc. (Saqui, 1998).

It is mandatory for UPs to bear the operating and personnel cost. But in most cases, UPs are not able to pay salaries to the Secretaries, Defenders and Chowkidars regularly. As a result, their salary and allowances remain unpaid for months together. As they are

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not paid in due time they are not serious in performing their duties properly. Whatever may be the nature of problems, it is warranted that some measures should be taken to bring in efficiency in revenue generation and better financial management. An efficient system of financial management is imperative for the smooth functioning of UP. UP needs to accomplish certain works for the well-being of the rural people under its jurisdiction. To perform these activities UP needs to develop its own financial management system. Some researches were undertaken in different areas of local government institution, but very few studies were conducted on financial management in respect of accounts keeping and financial management, especially in holding tax. This study may help the policy planners and professionals to know the nature of problems and devise ways and means to improve the situation. Apart from that, the findings may indicate some new areas for further research and experiment.

**Objective of the study:**

1. To explore the holding tax management systems in Union Parishad of Bangladesh.
2. To assess the performance of holding tax management system of Union Parishad in Bangladesh.

**2. Review of existing literatures**

There is a plethora of literature on local government in Bangladesh, but there is a paucity of literature exclusively focusing on financial resources mobilization and expenditure processes at the local level. However, a few research studies are conducted on financial resources mobilization of UP. The core analyses of those studies are pointed out here.

Though tax paying is a civic responsibility, citizens are not willingly interested to pay taxes since public service delivery in Union Parishads are not to their satisfaction. Khan (2008) stated that citizens are hardly cooperative to the Union Parishads in terms of watchdogging of accountability, transparency and responsibilities since our UPs are centrally dependent. Khan (2008) also identified UPs' local resource mobilization has three dimensions for both service receivers and service providers. Firstly, government found a submissive UP system; secondly, minimizing the chance of losing popularity by UPs; and finally, UPs gets the public scrutiny protection. Hence, the corruption, nepotism, and inefficiency of UPs increase exponentially.

According to Ullah and Pongquan (2011) "like many other lowest tier rural local governments, Union

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Parishad cannot be a complete self-sustained body with its legally assigned sources but this body should try to raise own financial resources to the optimum level from the existing bases, so that, more development schemes can be implemented in rural areas.

Professor Rahman and Hossain (2009) describe as Instead of generating local resources and becoming self-reliant, the local government is becoming more and more dependent on external resources. The local government could achieve neither democracy nor fiscal decentralization.

According to Hye (1985), The size and freedom of the local government are considered crucial aspects that determine the structure and generation of revenue and adequacy of local finance. In theory, it is contended that a sizeable local government in terms of human settlements and productive land area have better prospects of more revenue generation.

According to Bahl (1984), 'But rural local governments' revenue generation in developing countries is always a great challenge and the mechanisms by which local revenue can be mobilized have raised some pertinent issues, like revenue-raising ability, the effect on economic efficiency, equity implications and

administrative feasibility. The very aim of the literature review is to point out a pen picture on the financial expenditure of Union Parishad concerning local development in Bangladesh. But In this journey, only a few attempts have so far seen to exclusively examine the financial expenditure of Union Parishad at the local level.

Fiscal structure for each UP is provided with authority to assess and collect only on the following six bases as per guidelines and rates stipulated in the Model Tax "Schedule, 2003 that set under the local government (Union Parishad) ordinance 1983 which is recently replaced by local government (Union Parishad) Act, 2009".

The feasibility of own revenue generation at the local government level depends on local fiscal efforts and fiscal and non-fiscal supports of the national government but expenditure must be made by the instruction of the government which is enacted in the Article 54(3) of Union Parishad Act 2009, it was mentioned that "Surplus money kept in the account, will be expensed by the time to time, instruction from the government". Again the Parishad can raise and develop any fund to perform a specific purpose but they have to take prior permission to encash it. Article 55(2) of Union Parishad Act 2009 enacted that "Parishad, taking prior permission

from the government, can develop a fund for or specific objective which will be operated and controlled by the government.”

### 3. Methodology

#### Study design and method:

This is a cross-sectional study design which was conducted to assess the performance of holding tax management systems in rural local administration in three selected Union Parishads to identify the prevalence and perceptions. The study was conducted from January to March 2020 in Bogura District of Bangladesh. We adopted a mixed-method approach of study where both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from the respective sources.

#### Study area and people:

The study was conducted in three UPs of Sherpur Upazila (RDA's

laboratory area) under Bogra district. Target population of the study who paid holding tax in selected UPs. There are nine UPs in Sherpur Upazila of which three were selected randomly namely Khamarkandi, Bishalpur, and Sughat Union Parishad.

#### Sample and sampling technique:

Depending on the study nature and aims, the researchers planned a selective sample size. Since holding tax management is governed by the Union Parishad (UP) where UP representatives – chairmen, members, and secretaries are primarily responsible for executing holding tax, so the information was collected from them – along with ex-chairmen and some community people. We reached respondents through purposive sampling technique. A total of 36 respondents were selected for the study. The respondents' categories are presented in the table 1.

**Table 1: Numbers of the respondent's survey for the study**

SI no.	Category	Total number
1	Community people	3 UP*06= 18
2	UP chairman	3 UP*01= 03
3	UP member	3 UP*03= 09
4	Ex-chairman	3 UP*01= 03
5	UP secretary	3 UP*01= 03
<b>Total</b>		<b>36</b>

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**Data collection tools and procedures:**

The primary data was collected from field study by In-depth interview (IDI) with respondents. We adopted a semi-structured IDI guideline where respondents provided their open responses along with some pre-determined structured questions. For collecting the secondary data on the taxation policy, tax rate and enlistments, we rigorously reviewed the existing documents. Some of the important documents, records, statements related to budget, planning, accounting, finance and audit were consulted during the period of data collection. Interview and informal discussions were also made with the chairmen, secretaries and members of the respective UPs by the research team. The study team also attended UPs' monthly meeting as an observer and tried to collect data from the discussion of the meetings.

**Data analysis and ethical consideration:**

The data were analyzed through using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software for quantitative data analysis. The descriptive statistics, frequency and percentage were done for structured response. The narrative synthesis and thematic analysis was done for unstructured responses. The study protocol was approved by Rural Development Academy (RDA), Bogura. The researchers have obtained the written permission from the

concerned Union Parishad authorities to conduct the study. The individual oral or written consent was also collected before interviewing the participants.

**4. Result and discussion:****4.1 Assessment of taxes and their collection**

UPs generally earn their income from different sources mainly local taxation and government grants. Among the local taxes, holding tax is one of the major sources of income for UPs. So income received from this source plays an important role in implementing economic activities of UP in each year.

In this section an attempt has been made to discuss about levy of holding tax and its collection, reasons for arrears, causes of non-assessment of tax based on valuating tax payers' houses and passivity of UP in realizing arrears in tax.

**4.1.1 Holding tax**

The largest revenue source for the UP is the "Union Tax" a tax on holdings and buildings combined with the traditional holding tax. It also includes tax on immovable property. The procedure of charging this tax provides that a list of households is prepared and then UP chairman, members of the parishad and the secretary through meetings determine the amount to be

collected for a particular fiscal year. Though the secretary is not a member of the Parishad, his presence at the meeting is considered essential in order to have some required information. However, the amount to be determined

in the meeting is usually based on the experience of the last year's budget and thus it is increased by a small amount. Generally, the assessment is done on the basis of valuation of the property of the assesses.

**Table-2: Distribution of taxpayers' holding tax in study area**

Name of UPs	No of mouzas	No of households in UPs		Holding tax levied on households (%) 2019	% of households enlisted under levy of holding tax	
		2011	2019		2011	2019
Khamarkandi (K)	05 (7%)	5451 (31.75)	5751 (26.36)	4751 (33.12)	87.16%	82.61%
Bishalpur (B)	38 (57%)	6696 (39.00)	8895 (40.76)	4956 (34.56)	74.01%	55.72%
Sughat (S)	24 (36%)	5022 (29.25)	7175 (32.88)	4636 (32.32)	92.31%	64.61%
Total	67 (100.00)	17,169 (100)	21,821 (100)	14,343 (100)	83.54%	65.73%

*Source: As per record of (2018-19FY) kept at Khamarkandi, Bishalpur, and Sughat Union Parishad Office under Sherpur Upazila.*

The survey shows that in the year 2010-2011 there were 17,169 households in Khamarkandi, Bishalpur and Sughat Unions of Sherpur Upazilla. But this number increased to 21,821 in 2018-19 (Table-2). During 8 years (2011-2019) there is an increase of 4652 households, which indicates the increase of population in the sample Unions. However, the number of households brought under holding tax in 2019 did not increase. In other words, the number of households under this tax remained almost same over a period of eight years. It means that new households were not taken into account of assessment for holding tax, though there is a provision of charging fresh tax

in each year covering all the households.

#### **4.1.2 Levy of taxes and its realization**

The last ten years' records of three UPs under study – (Khamarkandi, Bishalpur and Sughat) – do not show any variation in assessing of holding tax (Table-3). Data reveal that the yearly realizable holding tax for Khamarkandi and Bishalpur was Tk. 275,000 and Tk. 350,000 respectively except the year 2009-10. However, Sughat UP was to some extent and exception in this respect. In Sughat UP there was a little change in imposing holding tax for the last ten years. It was



found that Sughat UP levied a slightly higher amount of taxes after every alternate five and three years. It appears that in fixing holding tax the UPs are very much rigid in the sense that once the amount of tax is assessed it remains unchanged for many years.

Regarding realization of holding tax, there was no evidence of regular and systematic collection over the period of last ten years and it varied from year to year. The average amount of collection of holding tax was 34.31% during the period under study.

**Table-3: Holding tax levied and realized by three ups during last ten years**

Years	Holding tax levied				Holding tax realized				Holding tax unrealized			
	K (%)	B (%)	S (%)	Total (%)	K (%)	B (%)	S (%)	Total (%)	K (%)	B (%)	S (%)	Total (%)
2009-10	275000 37.93	350000 48.28	100000 13.79	725000 100.00	15448 2.13	0 -	0 -	15448 2.13	259552 35.80	350000 48.28	100000 13.79	709552 97.87
2010-11	275000 37.93	350000 48.28	100000 13.79	725000 100.00	42500 5.86	47416 6.54	600 0.08	90516 12.48	232500 32.07	302584 41.74	99400 13.71	634484 87.52
2011-12	300000 40.00	350000 46.67	100000 13.33	750000 100.00	97000 12.93	33750 4.50	30000 4.00	160750 21.43	203000 27.07	316250 42.17	70000 9.33	589250 78.57
2012-13	300000 40.00	350000 46.67	100000 13.33	750000 100.00	102000 13.60	32250 4.30	19892 2.65	154142 20.55	198000 26.40	317750 42.37	80108 10.68	595858 79.45
2013-14	300000 40.00	350000 46.67	100000 13.33	750000 100.00	107000 14.27	31155 4.15	31818 4.24	169973 22.66	193000 25.73	318845 42.51	68182 9.09	580027 77.34
2014-15	300000 32.83	350000 38.30	263852 28.87	913852 100.00	104770 11.46	36970 4.05	91081 9.97	232821 25.48	195230 21.36	313030 34.25	172771 18.91	681031 74.52
2015-16	300000 32.83	350000 38.30	263852 28.87	913852 100.00	107840 11.80	215321 23.56	8651 0.95	331812 36.31	192160 21.03	134679 14.74	255201 27.93	582040 63.69
2016-17	321000 25.50	674170 53.55	263852 20.96	1259022 100.00	115068 9.14	228020 18.11	211394 16.79	554482 44.04	205932 16.36	446150 35.44	52458 4.17	704540 55.96
2017-18	321000 22.04	674170 46.28	461550 31.68	1456720 100.00	216887 14.89	271505 18.64	242200 16.63	730592 50.15	104113 7.15	402665 27.64	219350 15.06	726128 49.85
2018-19	321000 22.04	674170 46.28	461550 31.68	1456720 100.00	233660 16.04	406497 27.90	247860 17.01	888017 60.96	87340 6.00	267673 18.38	213690 14.67	568703 39.04
Total	3013000 31.06	4472510 46.11	2214656 22.83	9700166 100.00	1142173 11.77	1302884 13.43	883496 9.11	3328553 34.31	1870827 19.29	3169626 32.68	1331160 13.72	6371613 65.69

Source: As per record of (2018-19FY) kept at Khamarkandi, Bishalpur, and Sughat Union Parishad Office under Sherpur Upazila.

It was also found that during the ten years' time the highest and lowest amount of holding tax collection of Khamarkandi was Tk. 233,660 and Tk. 15,448 respectively. In case of Bishalpur and Sughat it was Tk. 406,497 and Tk. 31,155 and Tk.

247,860 and Tk. 600 respectively. If the highest amount of realization in three Unions is judged against the budgeted amount of the concerned year it shows a difference of Tk. 87,340, Tk. 134,679 and Tk. 52,458 respectively. In addition to that, in Bishalpur and



Sughat Union there has been no realization for the year 2009-10. It indicates that all the UPs under study are far behind their target.

#### 4.1.3 Reasons for arrears in holding tax

As evident from the records, holding tax collection was irregular and unrealized. An attempt was made to examine the causes of the low recovery of taxes. The respondents identified as many as five reasons that may be described here in descending order of importance. (Table-4); (i) Taxpayers have little knowledge about the justification for payment of taxes. As they are not well informed about the direct benefit against the payment of tax, they are reportedly reluctant to pay

full taxes (100%); (ii) Fear of losing popularity of the chairmen and members discourages them in taking initiative in collecting taxes seriously (83.33%). As they want to be elected in a future election, they try to avoid charging/collecting taxes strongly; (iii) Payment of salary is made from Government Fund for the Secretary and other staff of UP and as such they do not feel encouraged to realize the tax properly (66.67%); (iv) irregularity in payment of taxes makes the taxpayers habituated to do this very often (50%). Since the holding tax of UP remains unrealized for years together, the people usually do not show their willingness for payment of tax regularly; and (v) Absence of any permanent and salaried tax collector in UP hampers the realization (50%).

**Table: 4 Reasons for arrears in respect of holding tax.**

Reasons	No of Respondents	%
People had little idea about why they should pay tax. Therefore, they were not so serious to pay taxes.	36	97.22
Due to fear of decreasing popularity, UP chairmen/members did not take serious initiatives to collect taxes.	30	83.33
As the secretary and other staff of UP were receiving salary from Govt. fund they felt less interest to collect holding tax properly.	24	66.67
As the holding tax of UP was remaining unrealized for years together the people became habitual in delaying payments.	18	50.00
Non-availability of the permanent tax collector in UP hampers realization of taxes.	18	50.00

#### 4.1.4 Causes of deficiencies in the valuation list

According to the rules of assessment of holding tax for a particular UP, the

valuation of houses is to be made after every five years. This valuation needs to be approved by the Deputy Commissioner. But in practice, this is rarely followed. During data collection,

it was reported that none of the UPs had prepared any assessment list of buildings in compliance with the instructions prescribed in the Tax Schedule.

**Table: 5 Causes of non valuation of tax payers' house/homesteads relating to holding tax**

Causes	No of Respondents	%
Instead of evaluating taxpayers' house/homestead UP, management charged as usual tax by adding or subtracting something to/from the previous chart.	36	100
Though there was a provision of valuating taxpayers' house/homestead land in the Manual of UP in every five years alternative; people representatives did not do that due to lack of their experience in this regard.	24	66.67
As the tax of UP remained unrealized year after year they did not feel the necessity of evaluating the taxpayers' house/homestead regularly.	18	50.00
The economic condition of local people under UP is so bad that the Management of UP did not think of charging any different rate of taxes on humanitarian grounds.	12	33.33

To know the reasons for overlooking the tax assessment rule, chairmen and secretaries of three UPs (Khamarkandi, Bishalpur, and Sughat) were interviewed. The respondents mentioned four causes (Table-5); (i) As the UP management does not face any problem in imposing holding tax without evaluating the condition of the residence categories of the taxpayers' house, they do not feel any need for it. Instead of evaluating the condition of the taxpayers' house/homestead land, UP revises the taxpayers, list by making some modification in the amount either by addition or subtraction disregarding the need for considering the real situation (100%); (ii) Lack of knowledge/experience

about the procedure of evaluating the house or homestead land (66.67%); (iii) Since the people of the locality do not repay the tax in arrears for years together, the UP management loses interest in evaluating the condition of taxpayers' house regularly (50%); (iv) Poor economic condition of rural people living in the UP leads the management of UP to avoid charging different rate of taxes on humanitarian grounds (33.33%).

#### **4.1.5 Measures for realizing arrears regarding holding tax**

As discussed earlier, the sample UPs were able to receive only 34.31% of levied tax on average during the last ten

years. However, it goes as high as 65.46% in one year itself. In the backdrop of poor tax collection, an attempt was made to seek opinions from the sample respondents regarding the possible measures for improving tax collection, especially the recovery of arrears. Six respondents pointed out three measures for realizing arrears in holding tax (Table 6): (i) All respondents (100%) expressed that a

notice regarding the collection of arrears of holding tax should be served among the defaulters giving them sufficient time to pay their dues. They should also be advised not to make further delay in future, (ii) Meeting could be arranged with the defaulters to make them aware of paying their arrears in due course (66.67%); (iii) Chronic defaulters in tax payment should be dealt with legal measures (50%).

**Table: 6 Measures for realizing arrears of holding tax**

Measures	No of Respondents	%
A notice regarding the collection of arrears of holding tax to be served among those taxpayers who were defaulters.	36	100.00
Through a meeting convened in the respective village/villages by the Management of UP, people to be made aware of paying arrear taxes duly.	24	66.67
Taxpayers to be informed that if they failed again to pay arrears of taxes in time their property would be taken away by UP as per rules.	18	50.00

All the measures discussed above could be followed by UP management to realize arrears in holding tax. The UP chairman do not opt for legal measures (Issue warrant) in most of the cases due to fear of public criticism and losing their popularity.

#### **4.2 Steps for increasing UPs' own income**

From the previous discussion, it is evident that the UPs under study are not financially sound as institutions of local self-government. Therefore

every year UPs received more or less 30% of their total income from the government as a grant. In the context of the deterioration of the financial strength of UPs, an attempt was made to know the measures that were undertaken for boosting up their income. The respondents gave three answers (Table-7); (i) The new households need to be taken into assessment (100%) for increasing the collection of holding tax after every three-years interval. (ii) The taxpayers of UPs should be made conscious through motivation so that they can

come forward to pay holding tax regularly (66.67%). As holding tax was a major source of local income, UP management should try to realize it by using their optimum capacity; (iii) Arrangement should be made by UPs to lease out the local 'Hat-Bazar' and 'Khash ponds' (under the jurisdiction of respective UPs) at a higher rate (66.67%). As the taxing power of local body (UP) is reportedly limited, there

is only one option to earn more money locally by encouraging increased competition among bidders for leasing of Hat-Bazar, khash ponds, khoar, etc; (iv) UP management should increase its local income by plantation of trees in fallow land or roadside (50%). There should be some link roads within the area of UPs and UP bodies could prefer in planting high growth trees for increasing their sources of income.

**Table: 7 Steps for increasing UPs' own income**

Measures of UP for increasing its own income	No of Respondents	%
New households need to be taken into account for assessment	36	100.00
UPs to try to make the people conscious so that they might come forward to pay taxes.	24	66.67
The arrangement to be made to earn income by leasing Hat Bazar or ponds under the jurisdiction of UPs at a higher rate.	24	66.67
In UPs steps to be taken to increase income through the plantation of trees in fallow land of government and or on the sides of public roads.	18	50

## 5. Conclusion

From the study of UP's financial aspect, it appears that there are various problems relating to assessment, and realization of holding tax, etc. In most cases, holding tax remains outstanding for years together. To increase the volume of local income, holding tax should be realized regularly. Proper action should be taken by UP management; they could even utilize the power of warrants of distress in realizing the arrears in holding tax ignoring the unnecessary fear of losing

their popularity. To enhance income from a local source like holding tax, UP management must make a list of evaluation for taxpayers' homestead after every five years. Permanent staff should be engaged in ensuring the proper realization of holding tax.

Every year the UP management used to invite bids for local Hat-Bazar, Khash Pond and Khoar. But income from this source was found not so satisfactory due to the influence of some local powers. Unless these activities are stopped, the situation

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cannot be improved. So the UP management should keep themselves away from those elements and try to stop their activities with the help of Upazila administration.

As a local government institution, UP is supposed to play an important role in the socio-economic development of rural people. It can play this role effectively when its economic foundation grows strong. Income from local sources and the government grant combine together for meeting its revenue expenditure and undertaking different development activities. If the income from local sources increases, the dependency of UP on government grants will gradually decrease with subsequent attainment of its self-reliance. This situation calls for the firm commitment of the elected officials of UP to the overall improvement of the revenue collection from local resources. Otherwise, the situation will remain unchanged. We are hoping for the best waiting for bright days in the future.

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## Panchyati Raj and Capacity Building: A Study

**Manas Chakrabarty**

### **Introduction:**

As we stand in today's society, the terms Panchayats and capacity building have become complementary and supplementary to each other. The Panchayats are regarded as backbone of Indian democracy, a vibrant mechanism of the democratic system. On the other hand, capacity building has also gained wider importance and significance in view of the fact that without capacity building, the system of Panchayat can never be successful. To be precise, in order to function properly and to realise real gains of the system of Panchayat, it is of utmost importance that there should be a mechanism of 'capacity building'. Without this mechanism, the Panchayat system cannot be successful.

### **Meaning of Panchyati Raj**

The Panchayati Raj is a pretty old concept in India and in a way it is one of the earliest concepts of democracy in the history of civilization. The term 'panch' or five elected seniors in a

village form a sort of self government of the organization to settle matters of dispute in the community; such system has not been found anywhere else in the world except India. This aspect has been recorded by the Chinese travelers like Fa Hien and Hue-en Tsang in their diaries. The records of history show that the Panchayat system has been in existence in India since the dawn of civilization. India has witnessed the rise and fall of the empires but the village Panchayats continued to survive by providing continuity to the Indian village traditions. It should be said that the Vedas, particularly the Rigveda reveal that ancient Hindus used to lead a cooperative life. A reference to the Valmiki's Ramayana, the Mahabharata should also be made here. These epics have also described the existence of such institutions. In fact, the inspiration of the Panchayati Raj system is derived from the tradition of 'Panch Parameshwara' where God speaks through the five and the official publications speak of village republic.



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However, the meaning of the term Panchayati Raj is wide. Some regard it as an administrative agency for rural development; others as an extension of democracy at the grass-root level. The Panchayat is an organization of people for performing administrative activities and settling judicial disputes. It is the operational unit for popular representation as well as planned development. It refers to a system by which we mean a statutory multi-tier institutional structure endowed with a defined status by a competent legislature performing functions pertaining to local-self government as determined from time to time by the legislature and or the executive at the State or the Centre.

### **Capacity and Capacity Building**

The term 'Capacity' refers to the ability to perform appropriate tasks and fulfill roles effectively, efficiently and sustainably. In order to achieve any developmental objective individually and collectively, appropriate capacity both at the individual and organizational levels is important and essential. In the most general terms, capacity consists of a party's ability to solve its problems and achieve its objectives. (Capacity.org). At the outset it should be stated that a glance through the development literature – from scholarly articles to agency PR – confirms the 'buzzword' status of capacity building. Some dismiss it for

this reason as a piece of aid jargon. For others, it is a synonym for institutional or organisational development. (Cornwall and Eade, 2010). However, Capacity building is the combination of efforts, initiatives and performance to enhance and utilize skills and capabilities of people and organization or institution at local, national, regional and global levels, which aims at sustaining the developments. Further, the term 'capacity building' refers to enabling the indigenous people of developing countries to carry out development processes successfully by empowering them through strengthened domestic institutions, provision of domestic markets, and improvement of local government efforts to sustain infrastructures, social institutions, and commercial institutions. (Awofeso, 2017). Most important, capacity building encourages a 'bottom-up' or grassroots effort for sustainable development. The grassroots effort begins with the family unit. Capacity building addresses all areas of social, economic and health, and environmental processes through a holistic approach (Awofeso, 2017). In this connection it should be referred that 'capacity building' and 'capacity development' are used in numerous contexts with a view to describe a wide array of activities. Capacity building aims to strengthen parties' ability to work together for their mutual benefit by providing them with the skills and

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tools they need to define problems and issues and formulate solutions (Bush). It is important to note that capacity building is a matter of development at all levels of the society. Capacity-building is an integral part of development theory and practice (Deborah, 1997). It includes institutional development, community development, and economic development as well. In the process of capacity building, some central assets like individuals, organizations, communities, and governments need to develop their full potential which include knowledge and technical skills, institutional and organizational capacity, and the ability to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts. It should be pointed out that one central component of capacity building of the individuals at the local level is popular education. There is no denying the fact that popular education greatly helps to strengthen local citizens' awareness, of their rights and responsibilities. At the same time, it helps to keep them informed about the current legislations of the country. It should be mentioned that literacy significantly helps to build awareness, raise political consciousness, and give people the information they need to think critically and become independent (Aithal) When individuals have the ability to read, write, and can access information, it is quite natural that they would be in a better position to make better decisions and articulate their

demands for bringing about social change. In capacity building, the most important task is defining, designing, creating, and implementing a process to solve a challenge or meet an objective (Blokdyk, 2018).

There is no denying the fact that democracy requires an educated citizenry. Sufficient knowledge to make the right choice of the candidates in the voting process and to take part in the political debates is absolutely essential. For a constructive participation in the democratic political processes, it is of utmost importance. Additional skills that enable individuals to participate effectively in public life include discussion and communication skills, problem-solving and decision-making skills, and the ability to negotiate and work as part of a team. If members of local communities are to advance social change, they also need to learn skills of advocacy and effective policy influence (University of Sussex).

Again, if the citizens are equipped with this knowledge, individuals are more likely to participate in the elections process, make contact with elected representatives, and attempt to articulate their voices politically. Likewise, voter education programs can help to develop a more informed citizenry who can articulate grassroots needs and interests and hold elected representatives more accountable (University of Sussex). It is

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perhaps mandatory that the people need to be exposed to the practices of governance and learn about how to get involved in the life of their communities, regions, and nations. If individuals are able to develop an understanding of their own living conditions and social environment, this awareness may lead them to initiate structural change and take an active role in their communities. However, the capacity to analyze political and social problems and organize for social change does not come automatically. Individuals need access to skills training, technological knowledge, and problem solving techniques. In addition, they should have the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes at the village level so that they may gain a sense of self-confidence and self-reliance. In this connection, it should be noted that some theorists regard capacity building as an important part of development work. They describe it as a matter of strengthening the ability of individuals, groups, institutions, and organizations to identify and solve development problems over time (Lusthaus, et.al, 1999). In short, capacity building involves skills transfer, training, human resource management, organizational development, and the strengthening of communities and social networks. It is important to train the individuals in order to serve in national or international technical assistance programmes; and also to train policy makers and practitioners to implement

sustainable development strategies (The East Timor National NGO Forum). It may be stated that the National programmes are sometimes implemented to develop the capacities of institutions to address people's needs. Through the process of institutional capacity building, individuals and organizations attempt to strengthen their abilities to mobilize the resources necessary to overcome that nation's economic and social problems. The goal is to bring about a better standard of living within that society by putting in place institutional reform, altering accepted rules of behavior, and developing new policies (Rondinelli). This typically requires the strengthening of the core institutions of government, the private sector, and civic organizations to build their capacity for economic and social transition. Another way to build the capacities of poorer nations is to support the growth of academic and scientific communities in developing countries and link up these communities with international academic networks. One should always remember that capacity building is a long term, ongoing process.

### **Capacity Building and Training**

It is said that Capacity Building and Training (CB&T) of various stakeholders of Panchayats is a complex task. It is so because it involves a large number of people as well as a wide range of stakeholders.

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The major challenge is to reach out to this diverse group and at the same time to ensure high quality and context specific CB&T. Moreover, as Panchayats are local governments, the subjects to be covered are also large: ranging from management, finance, social mobilization to the 29 subject areas that are to be devolved to Panchayats.

### **Capacity Building Initiatives**

So far as the capacity building initiatives are concerned, we may mention the RGPSA. The Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan (RGPSA) was a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) which was implemented during the financial year 2012-13 to 2014-15 having State component and Central component.

The key objectives of the Scheme included:

- a) To enhance the capacities and effectiveness of the Panchayats and the Gram Sabhas;
- b) To enable democratic decision-making and accountability in Panchayats and promote people's participation;
- c) To strengthen the institutional structure for knowledge creation and capacity building of the Panchayats;

- d) To promote the devolution of powers and responsibilities to the Panchayats according to the spirit of the Constitution and PESA Act;
- e) To strengthen the Gram Sabhas to function effectively as the basic forum of people's participation, transparency and accountability within the Panchayat system;
- f) To create and strengthen democratic local self-government in areas where Panchayats do not exist;
- g) To strengthen the constitutionally mandated framework on which Panchayats are founded.

### **Capacity Building Programme for EWRs**

As we all know that in India, women constitute almost half of the population of the country yet, women were completely deprived from the arena of the decision-making process at the grass root levels before the enactment of the 73rd Amendment Act, 1992. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, was in the true sense, a landmark for the women's political empowerment, mandating reservation in at least one-third of the seats of all Panchayat Councils and one-third of the Pradhan (Head of the Panchayat) positions for women. Women representation in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) can definitely be viewed as an

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instrumentalist approach leading towards empowerment of women through upliftment of their economic, social and political status in the society. The Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations Organisation, to which India is a signatory, in tandem with the National Priorities of actualizing development at the grassroots level, aims to promote strategies at the Panchayat level by supporting States on capacity-building and strengthening all local governments by the year 2030. Accordingly, the vision of the Ministry of Women and Child Development is to have empowered women living with dignity in an environment free from violence and discrimination and have well-nurtured children who can be provided with full opportunities for growth and development in a safe and protective environment. In view of this, this initiative of training the Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) of the Panchayati Raj was undertaken with the belief that strengthening the understanding of the EWRs towards issues related to women and children that hamper their development and the role of Gram Panchayats in addressing these would pave the way forward towards Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls under Sustainable Development Goals. In this backdrop, the Capacity Building Programme for EWRs was conceived by the Ministry of Women and

Child Development (MWCD) in collaboration with the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD) with the broad objective to develop EWRs as agents of change and help them discharge their duties effectively. Further, it sought to improve their leadership qualities and management skills for better implementation of various schemes of the government. It should be stated that the capacity building program for EWRs was initiated in 2017-18 (Phase-I) and based on the success of Phase-I, the Phase-II (2018-19) was been initiated in the selected states/UTs. It had the following broad objectives:

### **Objectives**

The major objectives of the training programme of EWRs were to:

1. Deliberate upon issues related to empowerment of women and children and functioning of the PRIs.
2. Discuss the flagship programmes of Central and State Government for women, children and marginalized groups.
3. Impart knowledge on legislations for the protection of the vulnerable.
4. Provide practical know-how to monitor asset creation and public

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works in the villages and process of participatory planning in the system of local governance.

5. Discuss recent developments related to dry dairy farming and e-banking, cashless transactions, etc., and
6. To enable the women to identify their leadership potential to contribute effectively as change agents.

It is also to be mentioned that the Government of India has also initiated the Capacity Building Programme for Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

### **The Objectives of the Capacity Building Programme**

The major objective of this programme is to empower EWRs by developing leadership capacities so that they can serve as catalysts for social change and function as peer facilitators in the field, become vocal for their rights, and participate effectively in the governance processes.

The major features of these training programmes are:

1. It is a significant endeavour in creating a forum for EWRs to understand their roles and responsibilities in a more complete manner.

2. In spite of the fact that it was the first step towards harnessing the full potential of EWRs, this is envisioned as a continuous process in order to instill confidence, courage, conviction, and motivation. Apart from that it provided hand-holding support to EWRs for mainstreaming them in the governance process.

### **State Governments' Contribution**

In India, the State Governments also have been actively involved in imparting these trainings. In this regard, the State Institutes of Rural Developments (SIRDs) and State Resource Centers (SRCs) are actively collaborating with the Ministry of Women and Child Development in the process of conducting the training programmes across the States. But it should be remembered that for the success of this objective, collaborating with institutions of the Departments of Panchayati Raj, Agriculture, Women & Child Development, Rural Development, etc are essential.

### **Background**

At this juncture, one should focus at the background of this project. At the moment, the project is being implemented by National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD), an autonomous body functioning under the aegis of the Ministry of Women and

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Child Development, Government of India. The following aspects need a special mention.

1. In order to make the target a successful one, the Ministry of Women & Child Development has also developed training modules regarding laws for protection of women and children, development schemes and programmes (State and Center), Information Communication Technology (ICT) for the EWRs, participatory planning and asset creation, monitoring of Public Works and leadership qualities.
2. This approach to build capacities of these grassroots leaders has been envisaged to yield more desired development outcomes.

In order to make the system of capacity building an effective instrument, it should be kept in mind that the provision of staff for Panchayats is primarily the responsibility of State/UT Government concerned. The staff pattern at the Panchayat level varies across the States. In general, the posts which are available at the Panchayats are: Panchayat Development Officers (PDOs), Gram Vikas Adhikari, Head Clerks, Junior Superintendent, Accountant, Assistant Engineers, Gram Sevaks, Gram Rozgar Sahayaks,

etc. It should be mentioned in this connection that under the Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan (RGPSA), provision for augmenting technical and administrative support at GP level has been made available for the States/UTs. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj provides financial assistance to the States for training of ERs and functionaries of Panchayats mainly under the Capacity Building component of the Backward Regions Grant Fund (BRGF) and Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Yojana (RGSY). The financial assistance provided by the Ministry for the capacity building and training of ERs and functionaries of Panchayats has enabled the States to extend their outreach and improve the quality of the training programmes. Training for capacity building has been provided by the States on basis of Panchayat functioning, and the Centrally Sponsored Schemes.

#### **Capacity Building and the 73<sup>RD</sup> Amendment Act**

The entire system of the democratic decentralization has undergone a complete change after the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. In fact, there has been a radical metamorphosis or a cosmetic change in the true sense of the term. The system of Panchayat is now considered as a very important department not only in view of the quantum of funds it handles but



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also for the major reason that its activities have a direct bearing on the rural development and poverty alleviation programmes. Therefore, there is no denying the fact that political education and training to the representatives of the PRIs are of utmost importance because without this training they cannot become well functioning and active participants in the democratic system. In order to fulfill the objectives, various training institutions like the State Institute for Rural Development, Panchayati Raj Training Institutions (PRTIs), and Extension Training Centres (ETCs) have been devised which are involved in delivering scheme specific training programmes to the stake holders. It includes those that are aimed at improving capacities of elected representatives and officials of the PRIs. It should be specifically mentioned that in this area of operation, a substantial number of NGOs have also been working either directly or in partnership with the training institutions in order to gain real success. In this regard, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has also provided adequate funds and other supports under Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Sashaktikarana Abhiyan (RGPSA) in order to strengthen the State and the District level Training Institutions with a view to enhance their CB & T delivery capabilities in partnership with the State Panchayati Raj Departments.

### **Challenges of Capacity Development of PRIs**

The path of success of the mission of capacity building is not a bed of roses. In fact, there are several challenges which stand as stumbling blocks on the way. The major challenge of capacity building is definitely to reach out to the large number of the ERs and the functionaries. There are 2.48 lakh GPs and number of ERs is about 28 lakh. Added to these, there are more than 10 lakh functionaries who are working at the Gram Panchyats and levels below under various Ministries/Departments of the State Rural Development Institutes along with other support training institutes and the NGOs who are dealing with the issue of capacity building of this huge number in many different ways. In spite of all these, the infrastructure which is currently available is not adequate and the lack of quality trainers at the Panchayat level capacity building programmes has been a great challenge which has to be addressed in a serious way. The following are absolutely essential in order to gain real success.

#### **1. Preparing Appropriate Training Modules**

In order to reach out to a large number of stakeholders, it is absolutely essential to ensure that the standards of the training modules are properly maintained and the needs of the people with diverse backgrounds are properly



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addressed. This requires a great deal of institution building, networking, monitoring mechanisms and many other things. Since the ERs of PRIs is a heterogeneous group which consists of mainly illiterate or less educated and particularly of marginalised sections such as women, SC and ST, the task has become more challenging. It is of prime importance to prepare a training module which can cater to this heterogeneous group. This is a real challenge. The Development of the ERs and the functionaries of the PRIs involves the tasks of imparting knowledge, making arrangements for skill development, and attitudinal change. Therefore, all the three components need to be addressed by a module. Again, since the PRIs have to deal with various subjects, it is also necessary that the sectoral experts are required to give inputs in the preparation of modules which is also a big challenge.

## **2. Deploying Adequate Quality Trainers**

The deploying of adequate number of quality trainers is another major challenge in this mission. In fact, different modes of training require the availability of quality trainers with specific subject matter specialization and expertise. Apart from this, in view of the change in the approaches to training, the trainers are required to be equipped with special skill-sets for such modes of training. It is also of utmost importance that these trainers have

adequate and extensive knowledge of all the levels of the grassroots' functions in order to develop the capacity to tailor make all the training programmes as per the requirement of the ERs.

## **3. Hand Holding At Gram Panchayat Level**

For an effective capacity development of the ERs, apart from classroom training programmes, it is also necessary that they are given proper inputs which have a bearing or relevance with the ground reality. The lectures at these sessions explain the various rights, powers and duties of the ERs and PRI functionaries. But, in reality neither would the PRI have been devolved any functions by the State Government, nor would have been involved in any of the Government programmes. We should keep in mind that mentoring is a necessary and important component for realizing the gains from a good training programme. There are extremely rare cases where we find that handholding of a PRI has been done properly.

## **4. Unviable Size of Panchayat**

There are about 250,000 Gram Panchayats in India. Naturally, it is a herculean task to deal with this huge number. Nonetheless, attempt must be there for capacity building of the members of the Panchayats otherwise, the main purpose would be defeated.

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## 5. Lack of Office Buildings and Staff

Proper infrastructural facility is one of the most important requirements. It is seen that about 48476 Panchayats (about 20%) are without Panchayat building and many Panchayat buildings are in dilapidated condition. Only 63% of the Gram Panchayats have sanctioned posts for the Panchayat functionaries (Secretary or equivalent) and approx. 31% of total sanctioned posts of Secretary or equivalent are vacant. Lack of requisite manpower at Panchayat level makes it difficult for proper functioning of the Panchayat as an institution for local governance and development, and severely constrains their activities and proper reporting. In this connection we may consider the work of UNNATI. Unnati has been working on the Capacity Building of the PRI representatives right from the first round of election after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act came into force. Besides various learning modules and materials, the Panchayat Resource Centre (PRC) as an intermediate level capacity building instrument for strengthening PRIs in general and Gram Panchayats in particular was conceived. The PRC aimed to provide necessary support to the Gram Panchayats for an effective delivery of the public services, promotion of social justice, and creating an enabling environment in order to hold the Panchayats

accountable to the people through the institution of the Gram Sabha and social audit. Most of the Panchayat representatives, particularly the newly elected women and Dalit representatives can work effectively if they are provided timely support and training required to perform and undertake their responsibilities. The information and skill level of the representatives can be continuously upgraded given the nature and demand of the work to be done through a mechanism that provides continuous support to make Panchayati Raj system an effective instrument for social change.

### Training Methodology

In order to impart the training to the target group, a two-tier training strategy has been adopted in Phase I & II to impart training to the Elected Women Representatives throughout the country.

### First Tier

In the first tier, the Institute identified various partner organisations that are competent to impart training to the EWRs. For this purpose, the Master Trainers had to be trained from each district who would further impart training to 45 EWRs of their respective districts. These trainings were conducted at the NIPCCD Headquarters and their

Regional Centres. The trainers were oriented to the content and pedagogy of training in a three-day 'Training of the Trainers' (ToT) Programme organized by the NIPCCD.

### **Second Tier**

At the second level, the trained Master Trainers further imparted requisite training to EWRs in every district with support from the local resource persons. The NIPCCD apart from imparting training in some selected districts also monitored the quality of training imparted to the Master Trainers in various districts.

The table below shows the performance in Phase I and Phase II. The accomplishment of 33,403 EWRs Training in Phase-I and Phase-II are as under:

### **Training Framework**

During Phase-I, a Training Framework was prepared for the purpose of training of the Master Trainers of EWRs keeping in view that the deliberations are gender-friendly and the content focuses on issues from the perspectives of women.

### **Training Material**

#### **Booklets**

As a mechanism to impart training, a set of eight booklets was also prepared for the purpose of distribution amongst the EWRs. These booklets were not only prepared in English and Hindi, but also in Marathi, Kannada, and Malayalam. The booklets were prepared in simple language and these had lot of handy information on different subjects which are relevant to

<b>Year</b>	<b>EWRs Phase -I : 2017-18</b>	<b>EWRs Phase -II : 2018-19</b>
States/UT covered	14	19
Districts	414	345
Partner Organizations in collaboration	28	18
Master Trainers	486	409
EWRs Trained	18578	14825

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the functioning of the EWRs and their role in the process of village development. The booklets were illustrative and replete with several case studies, figures, pictorial depictions. The titles of these set of eight booklets prepared were as under:

1. Empowering Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions
2. An Introduction to Programmes and Schemes
3. Laws and Acts
4. Leadership
5. Participatory Planning, Asset Creation and Monitoring of Public Work
6. Accessing Public Services
7. Information Communication Technology
8. Dry Dairy Farming

### **Handbook**

During Phase-II period, all the eight booklets which were prepared for the EWRs in the first phase of the project, were further simplified and revised in the form of one Handbook which was even more illustrative and comprehensible in nature which focused on various issues from the perspectives of women and children. In order to serve in a better way, this Handbook was translated and made

available in many languages including English, Hindi, Gujarati, Assamese, Kannada, Punjabi, and Oriya and was distributed to the EWRs during the Training programmes.

### **Conclusion**

It must be admitted that India having a huge population and comparatively low level of economic development, there is without doubt, 'lack of capacity'. Any attempt to empower the people requires 'capacity'. It should be remembered that Capacity Building is an approach to solidarity-based partnerships with an infinite variety of expressions. While some of the ingredients can be identified, there is no global recipe, no quick fix in this regard. However, there must be attempts on the part of the governments for proper capacity building to ensure lasting success of the Panchyati Raj Institutions in the country.

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## **A Study of Women & Social Movements in North-East India**

**Padmalaya Mahapatra, Asim Ranjan Parhi**

### **Introduction:**

Change is a social reality and so is conflict. Conflict is a universal and general process found in every society, be it a highly integrated community or an open pluralistic group. Every social system develops its own mechanism to resolve conflicts. But the structural contradictions in such systems subsequently become dominant and the available mechanism become inadequate in accommodating change and resolving conflicts. A strong desire is felt for transforming the system among those who become conscious and sensitive to such contradictions. Under such circumstances the enlightened groups organize themselves around certain ideas with a programme of action for effecting change in the existing system. Such a process of organization initiates a movement.

Rudolf Heberle defines “a social movement as a collective effort to transform established relations within a particular society.”

In the words of Neilsmeiser, social movement is directly oriented towards a change in social institutions and social norms. A social movement essentially involves sustained collective mobilization through either informal or formal organization and is directed towards bringing about a change in the existing system of relationships.

The north-eastern region of India comprising the seven sister states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura is one of the most sensitive regions of the country. This sensitivity is increased by its strategic geographic location, interface of diametrically opposite ideological regimes, value systems, heterogeneous cultural landscapes and cross currents of civilizational diversity. Loss of identity, sense of cultural alienation and psychic nomadism has increasingly become the way of life of these numerous socio-cultural groups.

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The spread of modern education without accompanying compatible changes in the socio-economic base of people's life in the region has not only created a rupture in the traditional and modern ways of life but it has also inculcated aspirations and ambitions among the people with non-existent opportunities available for their realization. Spread of the imperfect education has brought in the Parkinson's syndrome characterized by proportionate increase in the ailment with the additional instalments of treatment given to the victim. Meaning thereby, the spread of education increases the level of ignorance and the so-called skill formation increases their economic and social redundancies.

In societies of the north-eastern regions of India civil society as well as the ideological apparatus of the state are still in the nascent stages and hegemonic control of the state is still not in a dominant form. Such a change is most often retaliated by the masses in creating counter hegemony and such developments are potentially the basis of social movements in the region.

#### **Women's Movement in Assam**

The women's movement in Assam was historically linked with India's freedom struggle during which women played a significant role between 1920s and 1940s organizing themselves as Mahila Samitis. The first Mahila

Samiti was established at Dibrugarh in 1915 followed by another at Nagaon and the next at Tezpur in 1919 that were based on Gandhian ideologies. In 1926, the state level apex body of Mahila Samiti was formed under the name of Assam Pradeshik Mahila Samiti. Chandraprova Saikiani was the secretary of this apex body which resulted in the formation of various district and primary or village level Mahila Samitis keeping in mind the objectives including maternity and child welfare, mass education, social reforms and weaving projects.

But the very nature and work of the Mahila Samiti has changed from 1950s and become political emphasizing on rights based approaches altering the ideology of social work. Ideas like gender equality, women's participation in the economy could bring about the Government's plans between the late 1970s and 1980s. But Assam during this period was wrapped in its internal problems that led to extreme violence in civil society. There were large numbers of women in almost every district joining the Assam Agitation of the 1980s. Their joining was certainly due to the patriotic spirit to seek an Assamese identity. There are instances of women being identified as Matrujati. The mother's role in ousting foreigners from Assam was immense. This agitation, known as the Assam Movement with the exception of a

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couple of organizations which question specific aspects of subordination of women, merged into a fold of Assam Agitation. Nari Mukti Sangharsh Sammelan is one of the exceptions. Women came out in protest challenging and questioning the state and the centre in large numbers which included apolitical groups like the Mahila Samitis as well as those with party affiliations.

Several women organizations have come up in Assam which are starting to question gender inequalities and discrimination. The Assam Mahila Samata Society (AMSS) formed in 1995 lays emphasis on the equal participation of women in the process of learning for social sense along with its wings known as 'Women's Sanghas' at village level. The members of AMSS were initially trained by reputed feminists in 1986-1988 and the Director of AMSS, a product of these trainings, has made all attempts to bring about deeper understanding of providing access to basic education, curtailing domestic violence, settling legal cases and the like. The Assam State Commission for Women (ASCW) was constituted under State Commission for Women's Act, 1994 aiming at economic and social upliftment of women setting the goal of raising the status of women.

One of the most critical problems faced by women is their inability to

claim rights or public services in situations of conflict. To protect the rights of both tribal and non-tribal women and to bring peace, there emerged various organisations like All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation, Bodo Women's Justice Forum, Kasturba Gandhi Memorial Trust, Anchalik Mahila Samitis and Sajagata Samiti of Assam. Various initiatives taken by the Assam police through the projects, namely PRAHARI and AASHWAS are admirable. The role played by several NGOs like- Drugs Abuse Information Prevention & Rehabilitation Centre (DAIPARC); Global Organization for Life Development (GOLD), Nivedita Nari Sanstha (NNS); North-East Network (NEN) are also important regarding movements for women's rights in Assam.

There are cases of individual women human rights defendants like Birubala Rabha who fought against the social ostracism of women and to wipe out superstition and witch-hunting in tribal areas. Along with the above initiatives, women in Assam played another important role through their literary works in continuing this movement in the post-independence period. Among them, Nirupama Borgohain, Nirmalprova Borfoloi, Mamani Raycham Goswami, Anuradha Sarmah Pujari, Rita Chodhury, Arupa Patangia Kalita are the names that come to our minds.



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New women's groups have formed in recent years which have rightly made attempts mobilizing women both at the urban as well as rural levels, but the rate of crime against women has gone up. Women's immobility, repressive social system, poor documentation, poor financial or infrastructural functioning, lack of self-esteem amongst a majority of the women resulted in functioning of the district and primary Mahila Samitis.

Challenges to Women's Movements in Assam:

- The cultural differences continuing social values and lack of consciousness among women for their rights are the main causes that challenge the movements for women rights.
- The women of Assam are unable to create strategies in the context of conflict and growing discrimination which leads to violation of their rights during conflicting situations.
- As the patriarchal norms are very dominant in the non-tribal Assamese Society, most women are unable to challenge such social values and norms.
- The weak connectivity between women's groups of the North-East region amongst themselves and with others in the country keeps them at a distance from mainstream India.

- The loopholes in the structure and functioning of the women's groups have also faded the movement for the right of women.

Because of the above challenges to the movements for women's rights in Assam, women are still facing a sense of discrimination and unequal status in the society.

### **Women's Movement in Manipur**

Manipuri women have been known for their valor, skill and active involvement in many social, economic and political activities. During the ancient period women provided leadership in the administration of the kingdom; in 33 A.D. a women's court existed in Manipur called 'Pacha' where women related cases were taken up and settled. This court was headed by chief queen Laisana who was also a member of the Council of Ministers. In the history of Manipur there is evidence of women's involvement in politics. Maharani Linthoigambi, Gamti and Kumudini had all shown their skill in the administration of the kingdom. Princes Kuanganayani, Princess Jandhabi and Tangja Kombi's contribution in the political sphere is still remembered.

The first Nupilal, 1904 and the second Nupilal, 1939 are glaring instances of Manipuri women's collective revolt against the political injustices and inhuman religious dogmas during the

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colonial rule. The two movements really have redefined the potential of Manipuri women and their contributions to socio-political transformation. Nupilan or Nupilal was an uprising by women which protested against exports of rice to Assam to feed the British when rice was scarce in Manipur in 1939. Nupuilal which started as a rice agitation against the government's policy later evolved into a movement of constitutional, political and economic reforms in Manipur.

In the post independent India, Kim Gange is the first woman MP of Manipur; Hangmila Saiza is the first woman to be elected in a Legislative Assembly. Liangjaneng Gange, W. Leima, K. Apabi Devi were former MLAs.

Okram Ongbi Landhone Devi was elected as MLA to Manipur legislature in the year 2012.

The origin of the present women's movement that started from the early 1980s rests on multiple factors. The first cause was the emergence of underground movement in Manipur in late 1970s. Women started to guard their husbands/ sons from the perceived harassment of forces by holding torch in their hands throughout the night. These women came to be known as Meira Paibi. Gradually every locality in Manipur formed Meira Paibi due to the increase in social problems.

The emergence of Nisha Bandh movement in 1970s was due to the rise in the sale of liquor and the menace created by the drunkard husbands for their wives. The husbands spent all their income in drinking and when they come home they would start beating, and throwing tantrums at their wives for petty reasons. Therefore the women folk collectively organized a movement called Nisha-Bandh to control the sale, purchase and drinking of liquor in their own locality.

The idea behind these women's movements is creative in nature. In these movements women fought not for change but to revive the old peaceful social atmosphere and to maintain status quo in the society by purging the anti-social movements.

#### **Role of Irom Sharmila**

Irom Sharmila, the iron lady of Manipur a civil rights activist and poet from Manipur was involved in local peace movements with regard to human rights in Manipur. On 2nd November, 2000 in Malam, a town in Imphal valley of Manipur ten civilians were allegedly shot by Assam Rifles while waiting at a bus stop. Sharmila who was 28 years at the time began to fast in protest. Her primary demand to the Indian government has been the repeal of Armed Forces Special Power Act. She began her fast in Malam on 5th November and vowed not to eat,

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drink and comb her hair or look in a mirror until her demands were met. She ended her fast on 9th August, 2016 after 16 years.

### **Women's Movement in Arunachal Pradesh**

Arunachal Pradesh was practically kept in isolation till independence with very negligible social changes by any kind of developmental process that may be termed as a movement. The process therefore was started in the 50s from a zero base i.e. from primitive mode of production and exchange mechanism. Therefore, as an effective instrument of raising people's consciousness to the level of their participation in the process of development, various factors like education, health, and hygiene had to be given the prime focus.

The customary position of women in the traditional Arunachalee society of different tribes remains full of social drudgeries under the burden of a primitive mode of production and exchange, a hostile geography and terrain. The monolithic patriarchal structure in almost every tribe gives the men the advantage of establishing their superiority over the women. While in public life the women are forced to be at the background; at home they are duty bound to perform every bit of household chores. Most of the tribal societies of Arunachal Pradesh inherit

an ethos of inter and intra-tribal feuds, which in the past warranted the men folk to remain always in a state of war preparedness thus limiting the women to cater to all the needs of the household. A primitive economy sustained by hunting, jhumming and frequent migration also has laid fetters in the mobility of women. On top of these, the major handicap is the total absence of the emergence of any intraneous forces of social change.

Hence, it appears that the position of women does not bear much of a difference from that of an agrarian society in any other part of our country, but due to extreme geo-social condition the impact of social backwardness has been a perpetual factor unlike that of other areas where social movements for women and women rights have taken a prominent shape. In this background understanding the changing profile of women in Arunachal today becomes more significant. Firstly, there has been immense change in the social attitude towards women as a whole. The continuous rise in the rate of female literacy is the most significant example, whereby, the parents and guardians have conceived the idea of importance of education for females and have led them out from the agrarian labour conditions. Coming to the second aspect regarding occupation and mobility, it is very clear that unlike the caste ridden social bindings about

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working of women outside the house that exist very strongly particularly among the higher castes, the position of a tribal woman is different - while looking after the family, she has to burden herself with the responsibility of earnings as well. As such she has been a constant working hand in the agricultural fields and at home. But it has never been accepted as a contribution, rather has been taken as a duty to be done under compulsion. This situation too is fast changing. Today, most of the educated/literate women seldom go to the fields and a tremendous shift from primary occupation to tertiary occupation is evident, particularly rise of number of women employees in the government offices. It, therefore, shows that a gradual movement has been occurring in the ladder of hierarchy as far as economic dependence is concerned.

But, again this trend is prominently seen in the urban areas and among the migratory groups only, while in rural areas this is very negligible in comparison. However, in an overall analysis, both education and economic freedom have been major forces which have pushed a section of the literate women to a conscious effort of arousing awareness against the existing social malpractices.

There have been organizations which aimed at the problem of women with all conscious efforts. One such

organization is the Arunachal Women's Welfare Association established in October 1979, by a handful of volunteers. They are working on women welfare measures at the grass-root level. While giving an outline of their activities, one must consider the wide aspects covered starting from craft centres, adult education centres, schools for the orphans and women welfare centres to support the needy, economically and morally.

Having their headquarters at Itanagar, most of the NGOs meet twice a year where a course of action is chalked out. Usually these NGOs visit the interior districts to enable the rural folks get a glimpse of development, creating an intricate linkage of conscious efforts to give the women a new dimension.

Unfortunately, despite all these, a major section of the women in Arunachal Pradesh, particularly the rural and also a section of the urban continue to reel under the social drudgeries. To quote Mrs. Jarjum Ete, who is one of the prominent social workers of Arunachal Pradesh, the social limits still persist creating a condition where women are treated as merely beasts of burden. Practices like bride price still exist in a very prominent manner which literally means bringing the women with customary rights to make her work under compulsion. The cases of child

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marriage and forcible marriage are also found where the girl is even kidnapped sometimes with the consent of her parents and is kept under shackles till she conceives. Besides, polygamy is still common. Murder and torture cases are also evident, but are seldom brought to the notice of law and are mostly settled in Kebang- Panchayats, where customary law settles the dispute.

Over the ages women have been gearing up to meet the challenges, and thus are much more efficient to accept the changes in an adjustable manner. Their role is and will be instrumental in shaping the social movement towards progress.

#### **Women's Movement in Nagaland**

The Indo - Naga peace process and its antecedent ethnic and political violence in the North-east have shown that like in all other movements the women in this identity movement – turned - insurgency have also suffered the most - physically, economically and mentally. Mukhim (2005) has rightly called them the cultural identity of the group. Naturally the women become the first target of the opposite camp.

Even in relief shelters where they are forced to spend many years, they have to sacrifice the minimum necessities of survival. It is the culture of violence in the North-east and the

consequent peace initiatives that have provoked the women to come forward and rejuvenate their traditional roles of “arbitrators” during the time of conflict. In the past, Naga women had to play an active role to stop war between antagonistic groups. The role of women as arbitrators is quite recognized and accepted. They assert their role so as to prevent the conflicting Nagas from self-destruction.

Since independence, women have been taking an active but largely unrecognized initiative in negotiations with the government of India. As early as 1955 a Naga women's delegation went to the Governor, Jairamdas Medhi, with an appeal to stop all atrocities and violence. Thus the peace initiative from the women is neither new nor alien to Naga culture. What is important is that Naga insurgency and the political turmoil in the North-east have compelled the women to get organized among themselves which in turn helped consolidate their efforts directly.

November 11, 1975 with a few Naga leaders agreed to accept the Indian Constitution instead of their own. The importance of the Shillong Accord was that it led to the intra-group rivalry and dissension within the Naga National Council (NNC), the most influential political organization of the Nagas. The point to note here is that although the women as such

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played no significant and visible role in the Shillong Accord, the political turbulence of that period affected the Indo-Naga peace process.

Another cause that facilitated women's mobilization on such large scale was the emerging social problems, particularly alcoholism and drug abuse among the Naga men during the late 1970s and early 1980s. As a consequence, the politically excluded section, the Naga women, became socially vulnerable.

If the Shillong Accord of 1975 was a turning point of North-east politics for the mobilization of women at the micro level, the formation of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in 1980 by some of the former members of NNC like Isak Chishi Swu, Thuingaleng Muivah, and S S Khaplang was another landmark in the history of the Naga imbroglio. From 1950 to 1980 Naga political events revolved around NNC under the leadership of A.Z. Phizo. But the establishment of NSCN brought its new leaders to the fore. They resorted to armed struggle and demanded a sovereign Naga state. And Naga insurgency became extremely violent.

Contemporary social scientists have pointed at three important features of North-east politics of this period (late 1970s and early 1980s). First, the influence of NNC and its

leader A.Z. Phizo radically declined. Secondly, NSCN emerged as the new guardian of Naga interests. And thirdly, as factional confrontations increased, the women's organizations started campaigning not only against the victimization of women but against all kinds of violence.

### **The Active Intervention**

In 1984 the Naga Mothers' Association (NMA) was established in Kohima as a state level voluntary organization with the objective of eradicating all social evils. Neidomo Angami, one of the founding members of NMA, popularly known as the mother of peace, served as its genial secretary from 1984 to 1994. In an article Naga Women's Intervention U A Shimray (2004) has clearly pointed out the holistic attitude of NMA to facilitate peace, eradicating violence and malpractices.

NMA, the apex body of Naga women's organizations came up at a time when the entire North-east became what may be called "the theatre of the longest state Vs community conflict in South Asia".

### **NMA and Peace Process**

What has made the entire North-east a "virtual killing field" is the Naga-Kuki clash that is going on since 1992. Anuradha M Chenoy has rightly pointed out that the women are "either

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victims” or “part of the infrastructure support” in these struggles and conflicts. NMA has used all possible ways to convince both the warring Nagas and the government of India that the Naga problem will not be solved through violence. Though factional killings have not ended, its rate has, no doubt, been reduced. But the importance of NMA in the peace process has not got its due respect though all through it has paved the way for reconciliation by keeping open the channels of communication between warring groups.

In fact, the contribution of NMA as a whole can be analyzed from three levels, each in its turn reinforces the other. Though the Naga tribes are patriarchal, the position of women in their society is not degradable. As has been observed by Shimray “many of the Naga parents prefer their first born child to be female. NMA has fully utilized this cultural tradition to project itself as the symbol of peace and human integrity. The role played by NMA at all the levels is based on this agenda. As a civil society organization, it has two faces - one social and the other political. The social face of this organization has undoubtedly helped mobilize the common people, which in turn, legitimizes NMA to speak politically.

At the village level NMA is more social than political. Here the primary objective of this organization is to

combat alcoholism, drug addiction and other malpractices. They try to make the women aware of the danger of these social evils and motivate them to establish a good Naga society. Needless to say in return the NMA gets large-scale support from the Naga civil society. While acting as a social welfare organization, NMA also organizes workshops and training programmes for the women so that they can have a positive impact on the ongoing peace process. It is through these campaigns that the NMA makes the women conscious of the current political situation and the need for peace in the region. It should be made clear that, women in Nagaland in general and NMA in particular play a very insignificant role in the formal political process.

#### **Peace initiatives**

At the district level the NMA acts as an apex body of women's organization and tries to extend cooperation at the village level to respective women's organizations in order to mobilize women. Here NMA is more concerned with protecting the dignity of Naga women in general. Whenever there is a violation of human rights, they protest. Similarly at this level NMA speaks of the developmental issues without which, they believe, “there cannot be peace in Nagaland. But these mothers have no access to policymaking, which, as Brara points out, is highly



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unfortunate. At this level also, NMA is more social in its vision.

The political project of NMA aimed at peacemaking and general solution to the Naga problem is clearly evident at the state level. This organization, as a first step towards trust building, has started a dialogue with opposing factions- the NSCN-IM and NSCN-K. It is only with their initiatives that a conducive situation for dialogue is expected to come up between these two groups.

Thus NMA attempts to reconstruct Naga politics and the Naga movement on a new basis. The women are not allowed in Naga village councils or in Naga Ho Ho, their apex body. However, the activities of NMA at these three levels – village, district and state - are well coordinated. That reflects their commitment to establishing peace and developing confidence among different warring groups and the officials of the government of India.

#### **Women's Movement in Meghalaya**

Meghalaya has a matrilineal system where the youngest daughter inherits ancestral property and female lineage is maintained yet this does not contribute to the equality with men. Social evils like dowry, bride burning, female foeticide are absent in the social system of Meghalaya. However, they have other problems like illiteracy,

broken marriage, divorce, lack of sex education, family welfare programmes for women and children, drunkenness, and unemployment.

One of the oldest women's organizations in Meghalaya is the Mothers' Union founded in November 1941 at Tima in Garo Hills and has completed its Golden Jubilee in November, 1991. This is one of the most powerful organizations in Garo Hills and it was founded on the general principles of Christianity. The main aims and objectives of the Union are:

1. To work together to bring up their children in the best moral character and conduct.
2. To work together to provide decent dresses to their children and to educate the Garo women who came to Tura almost exposing their bare anatomy on market days and to dress decently.
3. To educate and encourage women folk to respect their husbands and parents.

The Mother's Union is always in the forefront to work for the socio-economic upliftment of the society in general and the women in particular.

Ka Synjuk Kyanthei, an association of women was formed in 1947. It is the oldest voluntary welfare organization of Khasi women. Late Mr.



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Justman Swer inspired the women to form such an organization; with the objective of imparting instruction in crafts, knitting, embroidery, cooking, etc.

Khasi women are considered as the custodians of family and have a greater responsibility towards social and economic upliftment. They decided to form an association to be known as Ka Synjuk Ki Kynthei Riewlum or the Tribal Women Welfare and Development Association of Meghalaya. The constitution was accepted on 11th June, 1979. Their main concerns are the protection of tribal lands and trade, foreigners' issues, employment problem, social evils like drunkenness, etc.

The organization is solely a social organization and does not involve in any political activity. Two members are represented in the Executive Committee of the Laitumkhrah Dorbar. The organization has taken up one of its priorities, the problems faced by the consumers like the supply of inferior quality of rice from the fair price shop, irregular supply, shortage in supply of Kerosene, and so on. Sheer hard work and dedication and a commitment to make a difference has made many women in Jaintia Hills District realize their dreams. Ireenda Lyngdoh from U-Rim Khliehshnong has redefined her way of life.

U-Rim Khliehshnong is one of the poorest villages in the Jaintia District with about 48 households. Ireenda Lyngdoh has been a torch bearer in the village and a constant source of inspiration for many women who want to make a difference.

Lyngdoh is championing and motivating a group of 13 women to religiously save and invest in income generating activities. The group now has a sizable corpus and a promising income through basket making and knitting ventures. In a span of over one and a half years Lyngdoh has gained the respect and confidence of the village as a whole and was selected as the Secretary of Village Employment Council, a committee constituted to implement National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. This was not an easy task for her. Lyngdoh had commented "I had to overcome a lot of resistance from the male dominated power structure in the village". Her self-confidence is amply clear in the manner she participates in the VEC meetings, oozing confidence and taking both criticism and praise in her stride. In the true sense of being a torch bearer, Lyngdoh has set an example and is encouraging more women to make their presence felt in their respective VECs.

Although many women's organizations have come up in the state, most of them lack proper understanding of the problems and the

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scope of their proper functioning is limited. Women's movement has not been organized with a definite objective in Meghalaya. Perhaps this is due to the fact that most of the women are working women in government jobs, business, teaching, or homemakers. Women's organization should make a proper evaluation and investigate the condition of women. Proper statistics and information be provided regarding the progress of women's education, literacy, dropouts, employment, family and health programmes, etc. and take effective measures for the overall improvement of women in the state.

#### **Women's Movement in Mizoram**

The general assumption is that many aspects of life in the Mizo society have been influenced by modernization particularly from the early part of the 20th century. Traditional cultures have been redefined since the Mizos' contact with the British and Christian missionaries although sensitization towards the arena of women based issues continue to be confined within the model of western patriarchal paradigm. More than ever patriarchy is gaining a strong hold in the modern period especially when compared to the pre-colonial period (B. Lalrin Chhani, 1998). Modernization can be seen largely in terms of material culture, whereas traditionalism still influences Mizo society at the level of

consciousness and ideas. Mizo customary laws in relation to women practically have not changed (Laldena Hmar, 2002). Initially, consciousness towards women which started within the framework of the church was mostly based on protestant ethics.

Political consciousness during the post-independent era initiated a succession of changes in the Mizo society. Despite the rise of new educated class who created a consciousness within the society, political parties and social organisations fail to recognize gender issues. Hence, a group of Mizo women have continuously felt dissatisfied and this gave rise to the establishment of the Hmeichhe Tangrual Pawl in 1946 followed by the Mizo women organization (MHIP) in 1964. Initially, the new woman organization raised the need to reform traditional and cultural practices of the Mizos. They raised their voice against discrimination and injustice in the society. Now their activities range from the setup of orphanage, drug de-addiction camp, movement of protests against rape, domestic violence, customary laws, reform of bride price, and so on.

Marginality of women could be seen in the trend of women's participation in the political process of the state. In pre-British society women played significant role in the village administration as there were many

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female rulers among the Mizos. Ropuiliani Chieftainess gave her life for defending her territory where most Mizo Chiefs gave up. Now, the role of women in pre-British Mizo politics becomes history as current politics is virtually dominated by men.

In times of campaigns, political parties are usually generous in giving promises to women to better their future but mostly such promises remain on paper. Women do not find a place on decision-making committees of political parties. But mere entry into the political system should not end transparency, accountability and commitment for the women's movement. Instead of being submerged in the vastness of events, procedures, dogmas and ruthless competition, the movement must sail on to its destination of equality and empowerment.

In a historic victory for the women's movement in Mizoram, the State Law Commission finally took upon itself to review the Mizo Marriage Bill, 2013, the Mizo Inheritance Bill, 2013 and the Mizo Divorce Bill, 2013 and these three bills were passed by the state Legislative Assembly in November, 2014. It has been the long cherished dream of Pi Sang Khumi, former President MHIP to ensure reforms related to marriage and inheritance as she has seen the generations of Mizo women suffer because of legal biases in the system.

Women NGOs like Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhiyaan, All Mizoram women Federation and Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawn Pawl are putting pressure on the political party leaders for nominating women with party ticket. As a result of this initiative Vanlalawmpuii who contested in the By-election to Hrangturzo Constituency was elected to State Legislature from Congress party of Mizoram since the inception of the party in the state.

#### **Women's Movement in Tripura**

The Bengali and tribal women are in a better situation than those in many other states in India. There is gender equity and women's pride in the state. Women's groups have achieved tremendous success in this society.

The tribal women played a significant role in the late forties to uproot the crude form of feudal vestige in the hilly state of Tripura. Under the banner of Jana Siksha Samiti and Ganamukti Parishad a section of tribal women organized a strong resistance movement to protect the tribal chastity and womanhood. The crude system of Titun continued even till 1949 when the tribal women organized a movement at the village Padmabil in Khowai sub-division.

#### **Conclusion**

Social movements by women of North East India need to eliminate

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marginalization, devaluation, displacement and ultimate dispensability of women. To achieve genuine empowerment, women of the North East have to swim upstream so as to enable themselves defeat the traditional forces of logocentrism of the norm based society. Since each one of them is a vital agent they have to remember “all dyadic relations of a given type” (David Knoke, 1990: 236). That means they have to work with one another for the common cause: empowerment of women in general. Hence they must respond with alacrity to the politics of convergence, public-private partnership and eco-feminism.

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## Scientific Temper in Urbanites: A KAP Study on COVID-19

S. K. Kataria, Rashmi Singh

*A scientific man ought to have no wishes, no affections - a mere heart of stone.*

*-Charles Darwin*

Corona, pandemic, mask, sanitizing hands, quarantine, vaccine, antibody, plasma therapy, immunity, isolation, lock down and social distancing etc. have been some buzz words in recent months. However the core term is missing completely at every platform across the country and that is – 'scientific temper'. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru coined the term 'scientific temper' and he defined it in his book 'Discovery of India' in 1946, as an attitude of logical and rational thinking. He wrote “What is needed is the scientific approach, the adventurous and yet critical temper of science, the search for truth and new knowledge, the refusal to accept anything without testing and trial, the capacity to change previous conclusions in the face of new evidence, the reliance on observed fact

and not on pre-conceived theory, the hard discipline of the mind—all this is necessary, not merely for the application of science but for life itself and the solution of its many problems”. Later on, the cultivation of scientific temper was very well placed in India's first public policy effort on science that was the 'Scientific Policy Resolution, 1958'.

### Science and Indian Society

Although the term is included in the list of fundamental duties mentioned in the Constitution of India (Article-51A (h)), yet no one can say that the Indian society always follows scientific temper; rather it is still characterized by its traditional, feudal, irrational and sentimental nature.

It was the month of September, 2013 when a local seer named Shobhan Sarkar of Village Daundia Khera (Sangrampur), District Unnao, Uttar Pradesh wrote letters to the President of

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India, the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Mines and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and claimed that a 19th century king of Daundia Khera, Rambaksh Singh had appeared to him in a dream and told him that 1000 tons of gold treasure were buried under the ruins of an old fort located in the village. While his letters initially went ignored, later, the ASI and Geological Survey of India (GSI) were persuaded to inspect the place. A team of ASI visited the site on October 12 and drilled two holes at the locations suggested by Mr. Sarkar. The ASI said that they detected some metal around 20 meters below the ground. Interestingly, the GSI report also confirmed a prominent non-magnetic anomalous zone occurring at 5-20 meter depth, indicative of possible non-conducting, metallic contents or alloy. By that time the whole matter became international news and the Indian electronic media started the live coverage of the incident. Based on the initial reports of the ASI and GSI and beliefs of Indian society, the ASI started the excavation work on October 18, 2013. Heavy police security was deployed and night vision cameras were also installed. After three days and digging 48 cm in to the ground a brick wall, pieces of bangles and clay toys were found. On October 29, 2013 the ASI announced that there was no gold buried in the location and stopped excavation work and on November 18, 2013 the ASI began filling up the trenches.

The Scientific temper is a way of life (defined in this context as an individual and social process of thinking and acting) which uses the scientific method and which may, consequently, include questioning, observing physical reality, testing, hypothesizing, analysing, and communicating (not necessarily in that order). 'Scientific temper' describes an attitude which involves the application of logic and discussion, argument and analysis are vital parts of scientific temper.

Wherever the issues of spread of an infectious disease like Corona is concerned it becomes almost imperative to have a total acceptance of scientific measures to control and treat such dangers effectively. It is generally said that the Indian society is emotional rather than rational and this ultimately resulted into numerous socio-economic and political complications including health hazards.

#### **COVID-19: The Pandemic**

COVID-19 or Novel Corona Virus Disease also known as SARS Cov-2 is the most severe pandemic of recent decades which has affected almost all the countries (216 countries till Oct.10,2020) sparing some very small and isolated territories. Started from Wuhan city of China in December, 2019 the disease spread across the

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globe in next six months. India witnessed its first case of Corona on January 30, 2020 through a medical student who came from Wuhan to Thrissur, Kerala and on the same day the WHO declared it Global Health Emergency. The first death occurred on January 11 in China, and in India the first Corona casualty was reported on March 10 in Karnataka, that of a 76years old man returned from Saudi Arabia and comorbid with diabetes, asthma and hypertension.

The COVID-19 virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes. So, Face Mask, Social distancing (2 Gaz Ki Doori) and Sanitizing the hands became the worldwide practice during this pandemic. All the countries had initiated strict measures including imposing national emergency, lock down, closing of schools, hotels, markets, and religious places, with sealing of international and domestic movements, mass tracking, tracing and testing of suspected contact persons and following of protocols of isolation and quarantine. The Government of India initiated 'Janata Curfew' on March 22, 2020 and two days later first lock down was imposed and it was extended in many phases with certain guidelines. The process of unlocking was started from June 08, 2020.

Since lock down resulted in a severe panic situation among all segments of society especially in labour class, migration of working labour class took place from big cities to the rural and remote areas amid non availability of transport facilities. Economic growth dipped sharply due to closing of manufacturing units and drop in demand. Economies of all countries faced a historic jolt and at the same time the life style of modern societies was forced to adopt a new social order of distancing.

Rapid increase in number of Corona cases became a serious concern and challenge for every nation including for their economy, health machinery as well as law and order enforcing agencies. As on October 10, 2020 a total 3,74,75,839 cases of Corona positives were reported with more than 10lac deaths across the globe and the figure was more than 70 lac and 1.08 lac respectively, in India.

It is interesting to note that the Corona impacted urban societies more seriously across the globe and village population was less affected. While there could be numerous causes for greater impact on urbanites, the notion that urban populations are more aware, scientific, resourceful, and health conscious has been washed out by Corona completely in India and other developing countries too.

**Table: 1 Spread of COVID-19 (as on Oct. 10, 2020)**

Top 10 Countries in the World		Top 10 States in India		Top 10 Cities in India	
Name of the Country	No. of Cases	Name of the State	No. of Cases	Name of the City	No. of Cases
USA	78,95,026	Maharashtra	12,29,339	Pune	3,10,446
India	69,79,423	Andhra Pradesh	6,91,040	Delhi	3,01,046
Brazil	50,57,190	Tamilnadu	5,91,811	Bengaluru	2,67,362
Russia	12,85,084	Karnataka	5,61,610	Mumbai	2,22,784
Colombia	8,94,300	Uttar Pradesh	3,83,086	Thane	1,99,925
Spain	8,90,367	Delhi	3,01,046	Chennai	1,78,108
Argentina	8,71,468	West Bengal	2,52,806	East Godavari	1,03,898
Peru	8,43,355	Odisha	2,20,388	Nagpur	89,931
Mexico	8,09,751	Telangana	1,88,025	Hyderabad	63,859
France	6,91,977	Bihar	1,82,121	Ahmedabad	34,576

*Source- www.worldometers.info/ Ministry of Health and Family Welfare / Indian Express daily.*

### **Introduction and Methodology of the Study**

The present study is an effort to analyse the Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (**KAP**) of Corona protocols by the most highly educated segment of the Indian society i.e., university teachers. The study was conducted on the teachers of a State university of Rajasthan where about 200 teachers and 170 other staff are employed in various faculties and buildings of all faculties are not located in one campus. It is contextual to mention here that the faculty members of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences had a small formal 'meeting session on COVID-19 protocols' by the administration of concerned unit during the study period. The study was started from June 20, 2020 and ended on October 10, 2020. The following methods were used-

- A. Direct and participatory observation.
- B. Structured Questionnaire which were filled in face-to-face.

Every day on-the-job activities like meetings, group sittings, counselling of students and scholars, off line examination and admission duties of all faculty members were noticed and recorded with a checklist. The check list included observing the type and method of wearing the mask, hand sanitization, social distancing application, and following of other COVID-19 protocols issued by the WHO and government.

### **Objectives**

There were two objectives for the study, based on personal experiences-

1. To compare science and non-science faculties of the university in KAP Study about Corona.

2. To observe the gap between knowledge, attitude and practice about Corona, among the university faculties.

## Results and Discussion

Results of the primary data of the study with discussion are as follows -

**Table: 2 Demographic Information of the Participants**

Science Faculty			Non- Science Faculty		
Variables	N	Percentage	Variables	N	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>			<b>Gender</b>		
Male	28	77.77%	Male	30	50.84 %
Female	8	22.22 %	Female	29	49.15 %
<b>Age Group</b>			<b>Age Group*</b>		
Below 30 yrs.	2	5.55 %	Below 30 Yrs.	5	8.47 %
Between 30 to 45 yrs.	26	72.22 %	Between 30 to 45Yrs.	43	72.88 %
Above 45 Yrs.	8	22.22 %	Above 45 Yrs.	10	16.95 %

*\*one respondent did not mention age.*

According to the Table -2 which is about the demographic information of participants or respondents, it clearly showed that in the study two major literate groups were taken as a sample that is the faculties belonging to science and non-science subjects. In total there were 36 participants from science group and 59 participants from non-science group.

In science group out of total 36 responses 28 (77.77%) were males and

remaining 8 (22.85%) were females whereas in non-science faculty group that is total 59, males were contributing 50.84 % and rest were females contributing 49.15%. The maximum participants were from the age group of 30 to 45 years in both the science and non-science groups, while only 5.17% and 8.57% were below 30 yrs. and remaining very small percentage was of age above 40 years.

**Table: 3 Results of the Knowledge Survey**

S.No.	Groups	Science Faculty N= 36		Non-Science Faculty N=59	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
Q.2	The prevention techniques of COVID are sanitizers, masks and social distancing.	100%	-	98%	2
Q.5	Did the corona make you wash your hands frequently?	97%	3%	93%	7%

S.No.	Questions	Science Faculty N= 36		Non-Science Faculty N=59	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
Q.9	Do you agree that twenty seconds through hand wash techniques should be used?	100%	-	98%	2%
Q.11	Do you agree that at least 1% of sodium hypochlorite solution should be used for mopping the fomites (surfaces)?	76%	24%	93%	7%
Q.21	Do you think that cotton fabric masks help us from the virus?	63%	37%	21%	79%
Q.22	Has somebody in your family or in relatives suffered from COVID- 19?	46%	54%	36%	64%
Q.23	Fourteen days observation is required for the corona sufferers?	97%	3%	97%	3%
Q.24	All persons did not have a serious effect of Corona, but the people who are elderly and have co morbid conditions can be affected more?	94%	6%	98%	2%
Q.25	Intake of non veg. food increases the chances of Corona disease?	38%	62%	56%	44%

**Graph: 1**

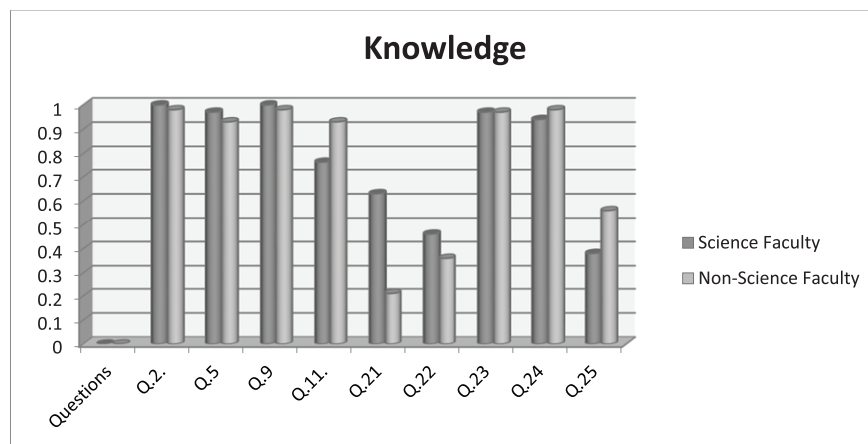


Table-3 and Graph -1 represents the result of the knowledge survey about the COVID -19 among science and non-science faculties. The majority of

participants from science group (100%) and from non-science group (95%) were aware about the prevention techniques of COVID-19. Further in

both the groups that is science groups (94%) and non-science group (98%) were aware that elderly people and those with co-morbidity are affected more by COVID-19. Majority of all the participants in both the groups were aware of hand wash techniques and also about fourteen days observation required for the corona infected.

In all we can say that in the knowledge survey there was negligible difference found in both the sample groups and they were having the correct and required knowledge about COVID-19. So, in overall knowledge survey there was no major difference found in the knowledge about Corona among science and non-science faculty members.

**Table: 4 Results of the Attitude Survey**

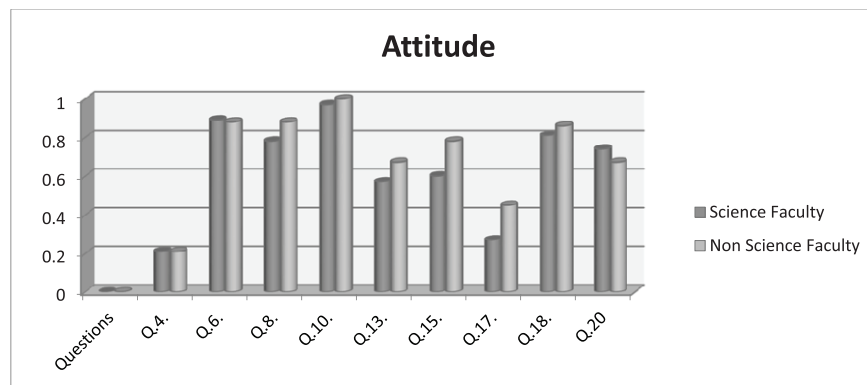
S.No.	Groups	Science Faculty N=36		Non-Science Faculty N=59	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
Q.4	Do you think that COVID 19 is not a pandemic rather it is a marketing strategy of some companies?	21%	79%	21%	79%
Q.6	Do you really feel that we all will survive this pandemic disease?	89%	11%	88%	13%
Q.8	Do you think that lockdown helps us in these situations?	78%	22%	88%	12%
Q.10	Do you feel that SMS (soap, mask, social distancing) can help us from corona?	97%	3%	100%	-
Q.13	Do you believe that COVID-19 is a man (lab) made virus?	57%	43%	67%	33%
Q.15	Do you really think it affected you mentally?	60%	40%	78%	22%
Q.17	Do you think that lighting candles <i>Diyas</i> ; ringing bells/ <i>Thalis</i> had helped us in this pandemic?	27%	73%	45%	55%
Q.18	Do you believe that any person can prevent its spread?	81%	19%	86%	14%
Q.20	Do you think that it will be successfully controlled?	74%	26%	67%	33%

Table - 4 shows the participant's attitude about Corona. In science group 79% were having the belief that this is a pandemic and not a marketing strategy of companies whereas in non- science this percentage was same as 79%. It means that the respondents of both

streams believe that this is a serious pandemic disease.

Maximum participants agreed that lockdown had helped us in this situation in both the groups. Some interesting results were that 57% in

**Graph: 2**



science group believe that COVID-19 is a manmade virus and in non-science group the percentage was 67%.

Also 27% of participants in science group and 45% participants in non-science group think that lighting candles, diyas and ringing bells/ thalis had helped us in this pandemic.

89% in science faculty group and 88% in non-science faculty group were found to be optimistic and they feel they can easily survive this pandemic disease.

Approximately 90 % of the participants rely on newspapers, and official websites for the information of about COVID-19 among science groups, whereas 80 % of the participants in non-science group rely on TV channels, newspapers, friend circle and colleagues, WhatsApp and social media and all these sources could be the reason of the development of attitude, beliefs in the non-science group.

**Table: 5 Results of the Practice Survey**

S.No.	Questions	Science Faculty N=36		Non-Science Faculty N=59	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
Q.1	Did the corona disease make you sanitize your hands very frequently?	100%	-	95%	2%
Q.3	Did you maintain the rules of social distance?	100%	-	100%	
Q.7	Do you use Sodium hypochlorite solution for mopping the floor and doors in your house and office?	50%	50%	72%	28%



S.No.	Questions	Science Faculty N=36		Non-Science Faculty N=59	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
Q.12	Did you follow the sneezing etiquettes during this pandemic?	89%	11%	100%	-
Q.14	Did you seriously follow the lockdown?	94%	6%	100%	-
Q.16	Did you avoid visiting the outdoor places?	100%	-	96%	4%
Q.19	Have you ever made an objection to anyone not wearing a mask properly?	94%	6%	97%	3%

**Graph: 3**

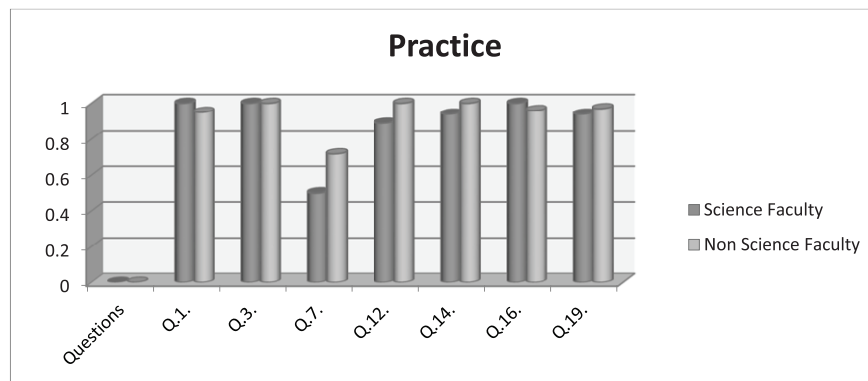


Table - 5 and Graph - 3 show the behaviour and prevention practices of the respondents. As per the responses to the questionnaire, 100 % participants of science faculty sanitize their hands very frequently, maintain the social distance, and also avoided visiting the outdoor places, whereas this percentage was 95%, 100%, and 96%% in non-science faculty group.

It was surprising to know that 89% of science faculty and 100% of non-science faculty follow the sneezing etiquettes during this pandemic, whereas it is a fact that the transmission

of CORONA virus happens maximum by the droplets. The percentage of respondents using the sodium hypochlorite solution for mopping the floor and doors in the house was found to be very low.

#### **Findings of Practice-observation**

In a KAP study, it is very difficult to have reliable data through a structured schedule or by a questionnaire so the direct and participatory observation technique was used in this study. All the respondents who filled the questionnaire have already been

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observed for about four months regularly at their work place. All the COVID-19 protocols especially type and method of wearing mask, maintaining social distancing and sanitization of hands were checked and observed by the team through a checklist.

It is important to mention here that 96% personnel of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education faculties were following COVID-19 protocol very religiously and also wearing surgical mask or N-95 marks, while in Science faculty this figure stood at 72% and almost half the faculty members and staff were wearing cotton masks there. It means that the responses on practice part filled by the science faculty respondents were not true. Even, 06 (16.66%) faculty members did not wear the mask during the interaction with the research team while they responded to the questionnaire stating that they always wear a mask.

#### **Discussion on responses of questionnaires**

COVID-19 is a very new virus which has changed the lives of people across the globe. People's thoughts, perception and attitude about life have changed. Work from home, online office and online teaching-learning and many more new trends came in vogue due to this pandemic. So, this KAP study is required to understand the knowledge, attitude, practices among

higher education faculty members which may affect it directly or indirectly in prevention and intervention. Thus, this study aimed to assess the KAP level of the highly literate population for this new corona disease namely COVID-19.

The first objective of the study was to compare the knowledge, attitude and practice between science and non-science group of university teachers. In the study findings, it was revealed that there was no major difference between the two different samples. This may be due to their work profiles and also the data collection time. This data is collected after lockdown and also after 6 months of the disease; therefore it is likely that all the faculties have gained the knowledge and awareness about the disease. Reason for this being that in the lockdown time people might have gathered knowledge about the disease through the newspapers, TV channels, friends and colleagues, and social media. This is also clarified by 90 percent of the science faculty members and approximately 80 % of the non-science faculty members. In all the three that is knowledge, attitude and practice there was negligible difference found in the percentages of science and non-science faculty members. In KAP both the groups showed almost the similar percentages. Most of the respondents were very much aware about the prevention, clinical symptoms, about quarantine

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and also how this disease is spread. Talking about knowledge, a very great effort has been taken by the government at all the levels for spreading and providing the information about COVID-19. Talking about attitude both the groups of faculty members, that is science and non-science, have positive and optimistic approach towards COVID-19. Results of the study show that the participants in both the groups also adopt good and safe practices according to the available knowledge. Maximum respondents in both the groups avoided going to the crowded places, thoroughly wash their hands, and also sanitize their hands very frequently. About 90% respondents take good measures like using mask, sanitizer, hand wash, hot water gargles, and use of kaadha, gloves, and also medicines like Vitamin C to prevent the Corona infection. The respondents also prefer to use the surgical three-layered mask and N-95. All these measures were used by both the science and non-science faculty members groups.

The second objective was to see the gap between knowledge, attitude and practice about Corona, among the university faculties. It was found that there was no such gap found between knowledge, practices and attitude between the two groups. Besides using the survey method, observation method was also used for finding out

how good practices are followed by the participants. And it was found that there was gap among some of the faculty members who were not taking proper precautions like covering of face and nose with mask, maintaining social distancing, and shaking hands.

### **Conclusion**

Although the sample size and area of the study were very small, the following important lessons are useful for policy makers and health administrators

1. Education (especially higher education) does not play decisive role in awareness generation and promoting sense of national duty. In the present study the organization (a State university in Rajasthan) there have been 03 deaths of employees due to Corona, in its administrative office and also 06 employees had lost their family members in the pandemic, but no remarkable change was seen in adopting COVID-19 protocols in the unit even after these casualties. The reason is that no top official is wearing mask in the unit. About 40% respondents say that Corona virus had entered in their family or in friends' circle and by this small sample we can assess the spread of Corona in India. The study also shows the basic nature of human being as being negligent.

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2. Training and continuous focus play a significant role in generating awareness and developing the attitude which may lead to the desired practice. In the present study area, it was noticed that overall, 19 personnel were infected by Corona virus (till Oct.10, 2020) in total, and among these 04 personnel were from Social Sciences and Humanities faculties and 15 from Science faculty. All infected personnel have been negligent in adopting COVID-19 protocols. As regards the responses on the question about cotton-made masks, 63 % science faculty said it can be effective for virus too, while only 21% non-science faculty believe that it is effective.
  3. It is clear that scientific temper is essentially not related with the studies of science because the higher spread of COVID-19 in Science faculty is an evidence of routine human negligence.
  4. About 67 % respondents of non-science faculty and 57% of science faculty believe that COVID-19 is a manmade virus. And fact is that nobody has the scientific evidence of lab-made virus. It simply means that popular media and also the forums of new media (Social media like WhatsApp, face book, and twitter) influence our lives up to big extent and common sense is not always found so commonly.
  5. Urban population which is more educated, comparatively richer, considered as highly aware, and having easy access to health facilities was more and severely affected by the pandemic in comparison to its rural counterpart. Further, there is low immunity level in urbanites and densely populated human settlements lead to fast spread of Corona virus in cities.
  6. There is limited preparedness in the country to face natural or manmade disasters and even after continuous efforts by the government the regular increase in Corona cases is not only a serious concern but also a question about the entire education system of the country. Very few citizens of India know that having scientific temper is a fundamental duty.
  7. The study roughly indicates that knowledge does not always decide attitude and attitude may not be totally converted into practice.
- Had we had a sound system of education, firm belief on science and logical social beliefs the situation of COVID-19 could have been far better and under control. The success stories of New Zealand and Hong Kong and some other countries are the examples of utility of scientific temper in holistic human development.

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### Limitations

The major limitation of this study was that the sample size is confined to the faculties of the State University and its related colleges. The sample used cannot be generalized to all the populations outside the University. As the questionnaires were self-answered by the respondents, there is also a chance of misrepresentations by the respondents. Area of study was limited and sample size was also very small. But with this, more studies can be conducted in various colleges and also with the general population. However, it is clear that, so far as scientific temper and its practices are concerned, we still have a long way to go.

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## Affordable Housing in Urban Areas of West Bengal under Prime Minister Awas Yojana, India

Joy Karmakar

### Abstract:

With the growing urban population in India there is a concern about the shortage as well as affordability of houses. To fulfill the shortage and make affordable houses in 2014, Prime Minister Awas Yojana Housing for All (PMAY HFA) for urban areas was launched. This paper makes an attempt to understand the challenges and opportunities presented by this program in the state of West Bengal. The paper finds that beneficiary led construction is the only strategy that dominates in the construction of affordable houses. Moreover no in situ slum redevelopment project has been taken up under this program so far in the state. Several enlisted beneficiaries opted out from projects due to various issues - inability to pay the beneficiary share, lack of land within city, etc.

**Keywords:** Affordable housing, Beneficiary led construction, Slum redevelopment

### 1.0 Introduction

With growing population and increasing income disparity, housing accessibility, housing provision and housing availability will be a major challenge in the Indian megacities. The current economic, political and policy discourse offers the platform from which the concerns about affordable housing, housing shortage and poor housing quality can be explored. In fact, availability of adequate affordable housing has become a key issue, impacting the lives of millions of Indian citizens in the megacities, as the process of migration in India is lopsided with people migrating directly from rural areas to megacities (Kundu, n.d, Karmakar, 2017) bypassing the intermediate or smaller towns. Therefore, need for affordable housing has been rapidly gaining recognition from the policy makers to scholars across the megacities of various countries. The Government of India has published a policy document

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which announces the aim of 'housing for all' by 2022 (GOI, 2007). The Honourable President of India, in his address to the Joint Session of Parliament on 9th June, 2014 had announced "by the time the Nation completes 75 years of its Independence, every family will have a pucca house' (MHUPA, 2015). In order to achieve this objective, Union Government has launched a comprehensive mission in the name of Prime Minister Awas Yojana for Urban areas (PMAY U). However, it is pointed out that inadequate attention has been paid by the government to the 'affordable housing' program formulation and implementation. Scholars argued that policy makers have failed to design housing schemes that will mitigate the shortages of affordable housing. Instead, it is pointed out that the country's housing programs have largely been myopic. More precisely it is reported that India needs five million houses each year but the actual supply is not even half a million in a year (Gupta, 2018). Moreover, housing schemes in India have been time-bound, chasing specified targets in terms of houses constructed. For example, the goal of PMAY- Housing for All (HFA) (U) is to deliver 20 million homes by the year 2022 (Das, Karmachandani and Thuard, 2016). This goal appears to have implicitly assumed that once this target is achieved, the problem of urban housing shortage will be solved

(D'Souza, 2019). Moreover after countrywide lockdown due to COVID 19 Pandemic the inadequacy of the affordable housing in urban areas become more visible through out-migration of labour towards rural area. Experts believe that lack of affordable housing is one of the many reasons for laborers moving away from the city (Chaturvedi, 2020). Bhan(2020) on the other hand argues for housing affordability in the context of urban informality and noted that housing has to be flexible, transitory but not vulnerable. Access to this kind of housing is to be on the basis of work status (D'Souza, 2019). Therefore, scholars raise questions about the concept of affordable housing and the various government programs concerned with this type of housing, since the idea varies at different levels. So, this paper makes an attempt to analyze the mission of Prime Minister Awas Yojana for urban areas (PMAY U) and understand the approaches for habitat development and its implementation methodologies in the context of West Bengal. It also throws light on the problematic areas of this mission based on case study of West Bengal.

The next section will discuss briefly, the situation of affordable housing in India. The third section will focus on the detailed conceptual understanding of Prime Minister Awas Yojana for urban areas. The fourth section will deal with

the implementation methodologies of affordable housing in West Bengal and its challenges. The conclusion will synthesize the observations drawn from the analysis done in the previous sections.

### 1.1 Plight of Housing in Urban India

In the past decades Government of India has adopted a plethora of policies and programs to solve growing housing problem of the country. The cumulative effect of these policies has been quite limited as is evident from the continuing worsening of housing situation especially for the urban poor. There are different challenges involving urban housing for poor, which include shortage, overcrowding, ownership of housing and lack of affordable houses. There is a need to provide safe, secure and affordable housing to the urban poor people for the growth and development of the country and to create a more inclusive society.

In India, the 2012 report of the Technical Group on Urban Housing Shortage for the 12th Plan (TG-12) set

up by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation to estimate the urban housing shortage in the country for 2012-2017 pegged the total number of households without “decent” housing in cities at 18.78 million.

The Census of India 2011 figures reveal that the housing stock has increased from 24.9 crore in 2001 to 33.1 crore in 2011, indicating a growth of 33 per cent. However, housing shortage still remains a challenge, since there is discrepancy between the people for whom the houses are being built and those who need them. The 2012 report of the Technical Group on Urban Housing Shortage for the 12th Plan (TG-12) set up by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation estimated that urban housing shortage in the country for 2012-17 is at 18.78 million. In which about 95 percent of the housing shortage belongs to economically weaker sections and lower income group categories (GOI, 2014). Table 1 shows the shortage of urban housing across the different economic sections of the society.

**Table 1: Estimated Urban Housing Shortage in India 2012-2017**

Category	Shortage in Million	Percentage
Economically Weaker Sections (EWS)*	10.55	56.18
Lower Income Group (LIG)*	7.41	39.44
Middle Income Group (MIG)	0.82	4.38
Total	18.78	100



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*Source: Urban Housing Shortage (2012-17) Report of the Ministry of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation to estimate the Urban Housing Shortage for the 12th Five Year (2012-17)*

*Note: \*The Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MoHUPA) vide their letter dated November 14, 2012 has advised that the income ceilings for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) and Low Income Groups (LIG) have been revised as follows: (i) For Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) : - ` 1,00,000/- as household income per annum (ii) For Low Income Groups (LIG) : - ` 1,00,001/- to ` 2,00,000/- as household income per annum*

It is evident from Table 1 that the shortage of houses in urban areas is maximum among the EWS followed by lower income groups. Apart from the shortage of houses, significant segments of the housing stock were characterized by congestion and obsolescence. Congestion is particularly acute in inner city slums and peripheral slums. The congestion factor contributes to 12.67 million of households and need for fresh housing

contributes to 16.29 Million units (GOI, 2012). In fact, recent report on the affordable housing<sup>1</sup> 2022 by KPMG suggests that urban housing is to account for about 85 to 90 percent of the total investments and the focus should be on affordable urban houses, which is 70 percent of the total urban housing requirement (Bansal, 2014). Table 2 below shows the estimates of affordable urban housing in India.

**Table 2: Estimates of Affordable Urban Housing**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Slum Areas Million</b>	<b>Non Slum Areas Million</b>	<b>Total in Million</b>
Need for fresh housing units	10.61	5.68	16.29
Incremental housing to address congestion	4.78	7.89	12.27
Provision of infrastructure for new housing units	10.61	5.68	10.61
Up gradation of infrastructure in existing slums	10.85	0.00	10.85

*Source: Report on trend and progress on housing in India, 2012*

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It is apparent from Table 2 that both slum and non-slum areas need huge investments to create affordable houses and eradicate homelessness and over congestion in urban areas. In fact, both the State and the Union government have taken measures to provide affordable houses across the country. Dedicated fund allocation in National Housing Bank, cut in Goods and Service Tax (GST)<sup>2</sup> are some of the steps proposed in 2018 (NK Realtors, 2018) as effective measures for affordable housing program. However Prime Minister Awas Yojana for urban areas is major initiative that has been taken since 2015 for construction of affordable housing all over India except in Lakshadweep. The next section will throw light on the mission and its challenges.

## **1.2 Urban Housing Scheme: Prime Minister Awas Yojana**

India had many urban housing schemes for urban poor since independence. In the beginning of the 21st Century urban housing schemes included the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) under which two submissions were Basic Services for the Urban Poor (BSUP) and Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme (IHSDP). The objective of this mission was to create “economically productive, efficient, equitable and responsive cities” (D'Souza, 2020). Rajiv Awas

Yojana (RAY) was another program launched in 2011 for affordable housing and its motto was “Slum free India”. The motivation behind the programme underscores the failure of the market and the government to secure the rights of the urban poor to a decent and dignified life.

In 2015 Prime Minister Awas Yojana for Urban areas (PMAY U) was launched by ministry of housing and urban poverty alleviation with the objective to provide houses for all the urban poor people. The mission covers 4041 statutory towns as per Census 2011 with focus on 500 Class I cities. The mission supports construction of houses upto 30 square meter carpet area with basic civic infrastructure. It is implemented through four verticals which provide options to beneficiaries, ULBs, and State Governments. Following are the details of the four pillars.

### **1.2.1 Pillars of the Mission**

#### **1.2.1.1 In-situ Slum Redevelopment using land as Resource**

In-situ slum redevelopment utilizing land as an asset with private cooperation for giving houses to qualified slum dwellers is the main significant part of the “Housing for All” mission. This approach plans to use the bolted capability of land under slums to give houses to the qualified slums inhabitants carrying them into the formal urban settlement.

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### **1.2.1.2 Credit-Linked Subsidy Scheme**

Second part of the mission is credit linked subsidy to urban poor (EWS/LIG) for securing, development of house. Beneficiaries of Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) and Low Income Group (LIG) looking for housing credit from Banks, Housing Finance Companies and other such establishments would be qualified for an interest subsidy at the rate of 6.5 % for tenure of 15 years or during tenure of loan whichever is lower.

### **1.2.1.3 Beneficiary-led individual house construction or enhancement**

The third part of the mission is to help individual qualified families belonging to EWS category to either develop new houses or upgrade existing houses to cover the beneficiaries who cannot utilize other segments of the mission. Such families may avail the central assistance of Rs. 1.5 lakh for development of new houses under the mission. A beneficiary wishing for this assistance will approach the ULB with satisfactory documentation in regards to accessibility of land claimed by them. Such recipients might be dwelling either in slums or outside the slums. Beneficiary in slums which are not being redeveloped can be covered under this segment if beneficiary has a Kutchha house.

### **1.2.1.4 Affordable Housing in Partnership**

Under this, an affordable housing project can be started in association with the private sector, to qualify for Central help provided such activities fulfil certain specified criteria. Explicitly, a housing project, in which 35 percent of the housing stock is reserved for the EWS category and the total size of the project is at least 250 houses, gets qualified for a central grant of INR 1.5 lakh per EWS house for all EWS houses in the project.

### **1.2.2 Target Groups**

As per the scheme guidelines the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) is defined as households having an annual income up to Rs.3,00,000 (Rupees Three Lakhs) and LIG households are defined as households having an annual income between Rs.3,00,001 (Rupees Three Lakhs One) up to Rs.6,00,000 (Rupees Six Lakhs). In the State of West Bengal income criteria and classification of urban poor is as mentioned below. This income classification is recommended to be aligned to the national categorization:

It is apparent from the Table 3 that plinth area of each income group varies over 200 sq. feet to more than 840 sq. feet with monthly income.

**Table: 3 Classification of Urban Poor in West Bengal**

Category	Monthly Family Income	Min. Plinth Area (sq. ft.)	Maximum Price
EWS	Up to INR 10,000	200	INR 1.75 lakh
LIG	INR 10,001 - 15000	400	INR 4.10 lakh
MIG (L)	INR 15,001 - 25000	600	INR 9.20 lakh
MIG (U)	INR 25,001 - 40000	800	INR 15.00 lakh
HIG	INR 40001 - above	841 and above	

*Source: West Bengal Urban Affordable Housing and Habitat Policy, 2015*

### **1.2.3 Approach for Habitat Development**

Under the project various typologies of habitat development are proposed. Firstly, Multi-Family housing includes housing structures that are designed to house several different families in separate housing units living independently of each other. Secondly, An integrated township is a self-sustained urban development, which addresses the basic needs of the residents, has the necessary infrastructure for education, health care, shopping and has provisions for offering connectivity to the rest of the city within which it is housed. Mixed land-use development helps to bring vitality to neighborhoods besides generating environmental benefits and fostering social cohesion.

This mixed land use can be horizontal or vertical, within multiple buildings of different uses within one site and usually comprising two or more land uses. Composite housing refers to a large scale housing provision catering to different income groups. Here, clusters of housing facility catering to the needs of different income groups would be developed. Within this type of housing approach, work shed cum home model may also be developed to facilitate the accommodation of such home based entrepreneurs within the target population group. Infill Development may also be included as a separate category for the purpose of redevelopment of old areas, non-conforming uses and underused lands of 1.0 Ha and above. This may be accompanied by incentivizing the developer for higher/ mixed, high

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density and FAR. All of this category of habitat can be developed either by the beneficiary or jointly by private developers and government authorities.

#### **1.2.4 Strategies of Implementation**

To implement the program, cafeteria approach has been adopted. This approach focuses on four developmental methods inclusive of fully subsidized development by the government, cross subsidized development, PPP initiated development and rental development. Fully subsidized development will be given only to EWS and LIG group. In the last three methods of development participation of the private developer is essential. Number of incentives for the private developers is given; for example the private developer will receive land free of cost as a 99 year lease, free of encumbrances, with all clearances in place such as land conversion etc. Moreover, the developer is free to undertake any kind of construction on that portion of land which is other than the land used for affordable housing.

#### **1.3 Case of Affordable Housing in Urban West Bengal**

Currently, the largest affordable urban housing scheme<sup>3</sup> running in the state is the Prime Minister Awas Yojana. The program has already crossed five years since its implementation in the state. In this

section the coverage, projected demand of affordable house under the program and major challenges in the implementation will be analyzed. Till December 2019 under PMAY- HFA(U) program 10 million houses have been built all over India and in West Bengal only 0.4 million houses have been built (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2019).

##### **1.3.1 Demand of Affordable House**

Under this program housing beneficiaries in urban areas of the state have been projected and categorized into four, based on implementation strategy. Total number of beneficiaries of affordable houses in the state is projected at 11,62,917. It is estimated that only 3 percent affordable housing has to be built in slum areas through in situ slum redevelopment strategy. Along with in situ slum redevelopment it is estimated that more than 70 percent houses have to be built through Beneficiary Led Construction (BLC). 19 percent is projected for Affordable House in Partnership (AHP) category out of overall demand. Following Fig 1 shows the breakup of the overall projected demand of affordable houses in urban areas of the state.

Under this program 'relocation of slums' is not prioritized, only in situ slum redevelopment is given importance for the construction of affordable house. It is because perhaps the failure of previous Slum

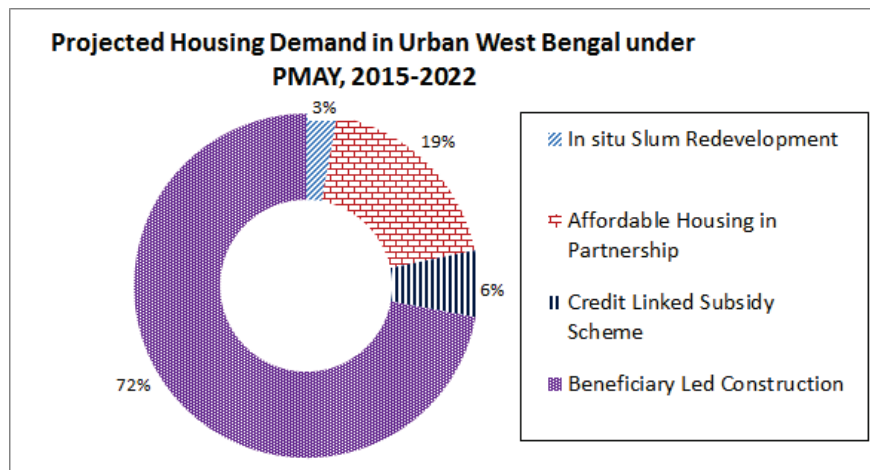


Fig 1 Source: Urban Development Ministry, Govt. of West Bengal

modernization schemes<sup>4</sup> of 1960s and 1970s in Kolkata and other cities in India has been kept in consideration while framing the policy. Mostly Beneficiary Led Construction (BLC) of affordable house has been given priority.

### 1.3.2 Coverage of the Program

In West Bengal 125 ULBs and Development Authorities are covered

under this programme. 355 BLC projects have been taken up till 2019 comprising 3,31,916 dwelling units. So far total of 1,57,408 dwelling units have been grounded out of which 90,584 are completed and occupied. As per the mandate of Govt. of India all the grounded dwelling units are Geo-tagged. The Table 4 shows the number of approved projects, total beneficiaries and per-project beneficiary in the state.

**Table 4: Progress of Beneficiary Led Construction Project under PMAY in Urban West Bengal**

Year	No. of Sanctioned Projects	No. of Approved Beneficiaries	Per Project Beneficiary
2015-16	108	74,880	693
2016-17	42	68,664	1635
2017-18	86	59,929	697
2018-19	119	128,443	1079
2019-20	34	26,393	776

Source: Urban Development Ministry, Govt. of West Bengal

An overview of the Table 4 shows that number of approved beneficiary and sanctioned projects over the year has reduced. But, the total number approved project beneficiaries have already crossed the projected number. This reflects the higher demand of affordable housing in the state. However it is worthwhile to note that number of dwelling units constructed under Beneficiary Led Construction (BLC) is much higher compared to other strategies of implementation. Till

December 2017 only 10,317 dwelling units are made under affordable housing in partnership program. So far no in situ slum redevelopment program in any municipal area has been taken in the state under this program. It is worthwhile to point out that under Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission's (JNNRUM) housing scheme, canal bank settlers were resettled and given affordable houses in Kolkata (Karmakar, 2019).

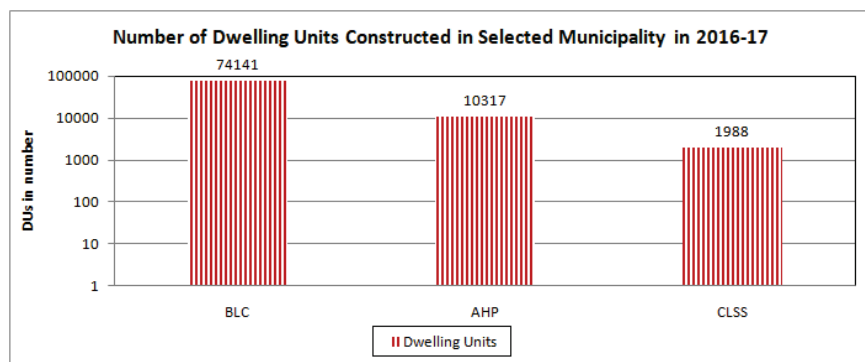


Fig 2 Source: Urban Development Ministry, Govt. of West Bengal

It is evident from the figure 2 that credit linked subsidy scheme (CLSS) is least preferred (2.29 percent) among the beneficiary of the affordable housing. While, only 11.93 percent dwelling units are constructed under Affordable housing in Partnership (AHP) strategy in these selected municipalities<sup>1</sup>. It was estimated that under AHP strategy 19 percent affordable houses would be constructed. It is reported that first-time home buyers are facing inordinate

delays in receiving subsidies under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (PMAY-CLSS). Moreover, several complaints received regarding non receipt of the subsidy under this program (Sharma, 2019).

### 1.3.3 Challenges of the Program

It is reported that from the very beginning PMAY-HFA in urban areas encounters multiple challenges at

<sup>1</sup>Selected municipalities include Coochbehar, Dinhata, Jalpiguri, Jangipur, Joynagar-Mazilpur, Siliguri MC, Titagarh, Bidhannagar MC, Mathabhanga, New Barrackpore, Ranaghat, Tarakeswar, Uluberia, Uttarparakotrung

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different level in the country. The significant difficulties include absence of low cost land inside the city limits, extensive legal approval process. The other factor include lack of proper planning and designing of affordable housing project, absence of interest because of low-net revenues by key market players, absence of upkeep system, high subsidizing costs for development, issues in beneficiary determination and insufficient assets and team selection process (Affordable Housing: Its Impact, Challenges, and Solutions, 2020). Within five years of implementation of the program, West Bengal also encountered such multiple problems. For instance, in 2015-16 an aggregate of 1471 beneficiaries have quit from the list of beneficiaries appended for 46 ventures out of 108 projects sanctioned because of reasons like land issues, beneficiaries movement to different states, inability to pay recipient share, and so on and so forth. Out of 1471 opted out beneficiary, 289 (19.64 percent) were from Bhatpara municipality. In the following year 53 beneficiaries opted out from the 42 projects and project delayed for 13,922 listed beneficiaries. The reasons noted in the official documents are three fold inclusive of land issues, migration to other states and beneficiaries' inability to pay their share for construction<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, it is alleged that some people who already owned a house were being enlisted as beneficiary and were making their

house two-storeyed or expanding it under this scheme. It is also found that the process of geo tagging of the beneficiaries house is very sluggish and disclosing the enlisted project with name of the beneficiary in the respective municipal website is also not prioritized. In fact very few municipalities used e-governance for dissemination of information regarding number of project beneficiaries.

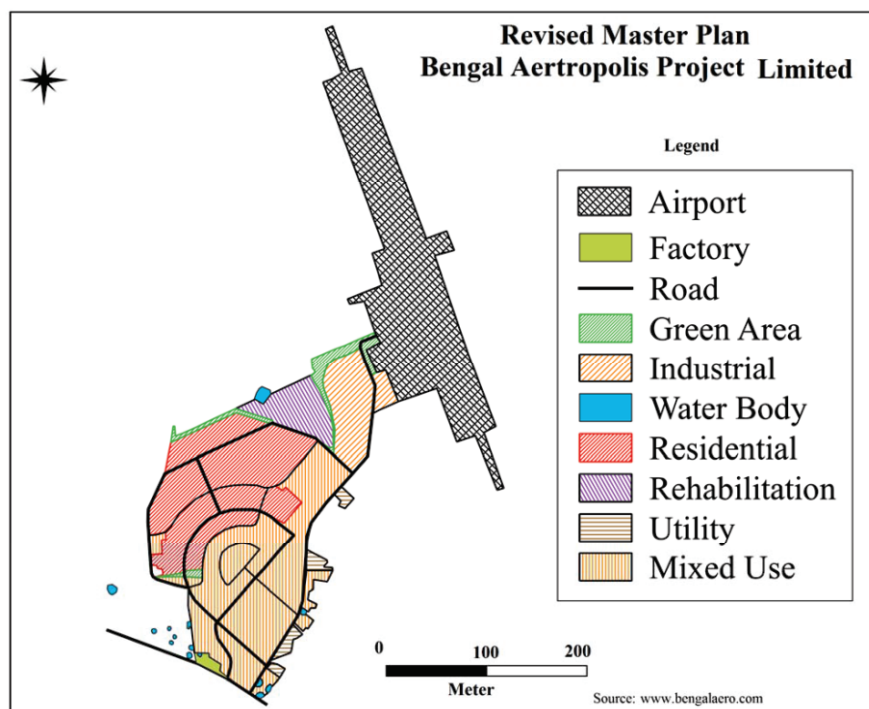
#### **1.4 Case of Andal Aerotropolis Affordable Housing project**

In this section a case of affordable housing project and its challenges in the state will be explained. Sujalam sky city is being developed under Bengal Aerotropolis project since 2009-10. Andal Aerotropolis has been developed as a private project on 2346 acres of land. This project incorporates an industrial park, IT park, logistics hub, business zone and social infrastructure like school, colleges, emergency clinics, golf course and amusement park. The Design and Build Contract for Andal Airport has been given to Bengal Aerotropolis Projects Limited (BAPL), Simplex Infrastructures Limited an Indian organization. Changi Airports International (CAI), the universal arm of Changi Airports Groups (CAG), has a 26% stake in BAPL. The air terminal has been constructed on 650 acres of land and 1,818 acres of land given for the air terminal city venture.



As per new township policy amendment in 2015 it is stated that 25 percent of the dwelling units of the township have to be kept reserved for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS). Prime Minister Awas Yojana also incorporates provisions which state that all Affordable Housing in Partnership ventures will be qualified for Central Assistance if not less than 35% of the houses in the project are for EWS category and a single project has at least 250 dwelling units. The BAPL has committed to adhere to these conditions.

Bengal Aerropolis Project Ltd. (BAPL) have additionally planned that the carpet area of the houses being built under this project will be upto 30 sq. m. for EWS category and upto 60 sq. m. for LIG class. BAPL has additionally stated that the State Government will choose the upper ceiling on the deal cost of EWS houses in rupees per sq. m. of carpet area. To meet these targets the State Government extended various concessions; for example, its state subsidy, land at moderate cost, stamp duty exemption and so on.



*Fig 3 Bengal Aerropolis Project Limited*

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Sujalam-Sky city is the part of Aerotropolis venture which is constructed as privately managed Greenfield city. This undertaking is given 'industrial township'<sup>6</sup> status with the goal that the project would turn into a self-administered body and will have all the municipal powers and duties. Under this venture 35 acres of land utilized for affordable housing venture through public private partnership under the lead program of Prime Minister Awas yojana Housing For All in urban area. Total 5000 dwelling units are proposed to be constructed and 25 percent of the dwelling units are reserved for Low Income Group (LIG) while 35 percent are reserved for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS)<sup>7</sup>.

This is one of the first private cities in the state where government plays different role unlike other privately built towns. However the project so far did not take off because although commercial operation of the airport started in June 2015, after six months it was stopped. Moreover no commercial flights are ready to fly from the airport due to the small number of passengers. Therefore demands for affordable housing in this project remains low.

Scholars raised concern about the viability of the airport in this region since the economy of the region is based on mining and manufacturing. Aviation sector mainly carries light weight commodity and such

commodity is not produced in an around the region. So it is speculated that project will not become successful unless the scope of the airport changes (Samanta, 2015).

### **1.5 Conclusion**

This paper attempted to explore the affordable housing provision under Prime Minister Awas Yojana for urban areas in West Bengal. Four pillars of the mission were thoroughly examined and it was found that among the four pillars of affordable housing implementation, maximum number of affordable houses is being built under beneficiary led construction process. Moreover, no affordable house is built under in situ slum redevelopment program in West Bengal so far. Only one percent of the projected affordable housing is built so far in the state.

It is also worthwhile to note that the program faced many challenges from different stakeholders. So many beneficiaries withdrew their name even after enlistment under the program. Lack of land in urban area, migration to other state by beneficiaries, and inability to pay beneficiary's share of construction are some the crucial issues encountered in the state.

Affordable housing in partnership is analyzed through the case of Andal Aerotropolis. The project receives land at cheaper cost from the government and assures to build more than

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thousand dwelling units. Project authorities claimed that they will choose beneficiaries under the stipulated guidelines of the State. However it is believed that success of Aerotropolis project is contingent upon scope of the airport. Since scope of the airport is limited, the success of affordable housing projects may not be as it was expected by the private developer.

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#### End Notes

<sup>1</sup>Affordable housing refers to housing units that are affordable by that section of society whose income is below the median household income. Though different countries have different definitions for affordable housing, but it is largely the same, i.e. affordable housing should address the housing needs of the lower or middle income households.

<sup>2</sup>As per the new recommendations proposed by the GST Council, home buyers availing the credit-linked subsidy scheme (CLSS) under 'Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana' will from now on get a relief of 4 percent in the Goods and Services Tax. The reduced rate of 8 percent, as compared to the existing 12 percent, will be applicable for all new and under-construction homes that are purchased under the credit-linked subsidy scheme.

<sup>3</sup>It is worthwhile to mention that state government also introduced a affordable housing scheme called "GITANJALI". This scheme follows

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the similar rules and regulations as Indira Awas Yojana (IAY). The amount of rupees given to the beneficiary is only 70000.

<sup>4</sup>In the Slum modernization scheme of 1960s and 1970s the dwellers were to be re-housed in four storied single room tenement and land released by the slum was utilized for remunerative purpose. This model did not run successfully because “apartment living” did not conform to the lifestyle of the slum dwellers who needed substantial open space in addition to the small covered area allotted to them.

<sup>5</sup>Per dwelling unit cost is estimated as 368000 Indian rupees and out of which beneficiary share ranges from 6.79 percent to 9.5 percent. Government India's share is 40.76 percent and rest of the share pays by the state government.

<sup>6</sup>It is noteworthy that according to 74th amendment under article 243Q state government can confer such powers to the project authority

<sup>7</sup>Carpet Area for EWS and LIG housing units is 60 sq. meters and 30 sq. meters respectively



### *An Invitation*

The Local Government Quarterly invites contributions in the form of articles and research papers from its readers and well-wishers.

Contributions may be e-mailed to us in digital form as a Word file.

Articles could normally be between 3000 and 4000 words, though we do not wish to limit the size. As we print in black and white, tables, charts, graphs, images, etc. need to be compatible. We reserve the right to edit for sense, style, space, etc.

Contributors may e-mail their articles to:  
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## **Report Review**

### **The Impact of COVID-19 on mental, neurological and substance use services: results of a rapid assessment**

*Read the report here: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/978924012455>*

The World Health Organization recently released the report of a survey it conducted between June and August 2020. It is a rapid assessment of service delivery for mental, neurological and substance use (MNS) disorders during COVID-19 pandemic using data collected through a web-based survey.

#### **Executive Summary**

The Executive Summary states that 130 WHO Member States participated by providing responses to the questionnaire. The vast majority, 116 of responding countries, reported that mental health and psychosocial support plans (MHPSS) response is part of their national COVID-19 response plans. The report notes however that only 17% of them have ensured full additional funding for the same.

In order to understand the extent of access to MNS services, the status of

closure of existing services was checked across different categories and settings. 10 types of services were included for the purpose including inpatient and outpatient services at mental hospitals; outpatient services, inpatient psychiatric and neurological units as well as treatment of substance use disorders at general hospitals; and services for MNS disorders at primary health care, residential, home and day care services at community level. None of the reporting countries reported full closure of all services; but in only 7% of responding countries were all services fully open, with 93% of countries reporting disruptions in one or more of their services for MNS disorders. Outpatient services in mental and general hospitals as well as community-based services were more affected. For example, community-based services were more impacted compared with inpatient facilities, with full or partial closure in more than 40% of countries and home care and day care services reaching levels of full or partial closure in 60–70% of countries.

Prevention services for mental health disorders as well as promotion of mental health services were severely affected. Also, 75% of school mental health or workplace mental health services were wholly or partially disrupted. Only about 30% of mental health services for children and adolescents or for older adults were available with no disruption, and fewer than 40% of antenatal or postnatal mental health services were not

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disrupted. Patient not presenting, travel restrictions hindering access to services for patients, and cancellations of elective care were reported as major causes of disruption.

In terms of their response, some 70% of countries have used telemedicine/teletherapy (including telephone and video-conferencing) to replace in-person consultations. Helplines were also deployed.

The survey highlights the need to strengthen the monitoring of changes in service availability, delivery and utilization at country level, and to establish informed decision making on required adaptations and strategies for MNS services during the pandemic.

## Results

In this section, the report classifies the WHO member countries that responded to the survey by region – African Region (AFR), Americas (AMR), Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR), European Region (EUR), South East Asian region (SEAR) and Western Pacific Region (WPR). The respondent countries are also classified by income levels – Low, Lower-middle, Upper-middle, and High.

Among the important findings, it notes the encouraging trend of more lower-income countries having MHPSS as part of their national

COVID-19 response plan. However, the level of funding of such plans, whether full or partial, was greater for higher income groups. The level of integration of MHPSS into COVID-19 response plans also varies with region. The findings note that regions with the largest number of pre-existing humanitarian crises could be more familiar with such integration, and thus these regions show a higher number of countries reporting MHPSS integration into their COVID-19 response plans. Eastern Mediterranean and African regions show the highest percentage of countries reporting MHPSS integration but with no additional funds allocated for this activity. They are followed very closely by the European and Americas regions.

These findings are well depicted by way of charts.

In terms of public spending on mental health, the report finds that even before the COVID-19 pandemic, levels of expenditure on mental health were minimal in low- and middle-income countries. Government expenditure on mental health was less than US\$ 1 per capita in low- and lower-middle-income countries, whereas high-income countries spent more than US\$ 80 per capita. The majority of spending was going to mental hospitals, which serve a small proportion of those who need care. In low-income countries, the number of mental health workers can be as low as



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two per 100,000 population, compared with more than 70 in high-income countries. During the COVID-19 pandemic, and at a time when MNS services are needed on a large scale, many countries are dealing with a challenging situation with very few already available resources and investments in this area.

The report also attempted to record the level of disruption in mental health services. A list of 16 interventions was used for the purpose. Complete disruption was defined as more than 50% of users not being served as usual and partial disruption as between 5% and 50% of users not being served as usual. The level of disruption combined across the 16 specific MNS-related interventions/services was also looked into. "Disruption in at least 75% of MNS-related interventions/services" was defined as 12 to 16 of the specific MNS-related interventions or services being reported as either completely or partially disrupted. In almost one-third (33%) of countries, at least 75% of MNS-related services were completely or partially disrupted. This percentage was higher for the African region (57%), as well as for countries in the community stage of transmission. High-income countries showed a lower level of disruption at 24% compared with the other income groups. In a key aspect, a significant number, 35% of countries reported disruption of management of emergency MNS manifestations.

Among specific age groups, mental health services for the most vulnerable were reported to be disrupted. Less than 30% of countries reported no disruption to children's and adolescent mental health services. In 70% of countries, MNS services for older adults were disrupted (56% partially disrupted, 14% completely disrupted). Fewer than 40% of antenatal or postnatal mental health services were not disrupted. Almost 60% of all psychotherapy and counselling services were reported as being partially disrupted. All this at a time when such services were much needed. Sadly, one in three countries at least partially closed down neurology inpatient units during the pandemic (33% partially closed, 2% fully closed), with surgeries for neurological disorders disrupted in two-thirds of the countries (42% partially disrupted, 25% completely disrupted) and the management of emergency conditions being at least partly disrupted in one-third of countries (30% partially disrupted, 6% completely disrupted).

A table in this section lists out the leading causes of disruptions in MNS-related intervention/services. At the top of the list is 'Decrease in outpatient volume due to patients not presenting' reported by 62.3% of countries. This is followed by 'Travel restrictions hindering access to the health facilities for patients' reported by 53.8% of countries, and 'Decrease in inpatient



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volume due to cancellation of elective care' reported by 46.9 % of countries. In addition, 9 other reasons are listed along with the percentage of countries reporting each.

Thereafter is given a table listing the various approaches for overcoming disruption in MNS-related interventions/services. Here, 'Tele-medicine /tele-therapy deployment to replace in-person consultations' is listed as the top approach with 70% of countries using this. This is followed by 'Helplines established for mental health and psychosocial support' used by 67.7% countries and 'Specific measures for infection prevention and control in mental health services' by 65.4% countries.

The report has compiled charts and figures to depict all this information in a reader-friendly way to enable easy

understanding and assimilation by the reader.

One may note that while the subject of mental health is very key and relevant currently given the wide ranging stresses caused by the global pandemic, this specific report by the WHO is limited to assessing the level of disruption in provision of mental health services to citizens, analyzed by WHO regions and World Bank Income levels across 130 countries (WHO members) that responded to a survey questionnaire. Needless to say, the pandemic by itself has resulted in a number of mental health disorders and challenges for most sections of the population, most notably, the economically vulnerable sections. This aspect calls for different studies and research to assess the severity and spread of the malaise and related aspects.

**V. Vijaykumar**





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## OBJECTIVES

The main emphasis of the Institute's work is to see that the local bodies can contribute more effectively to the development process and provide the citizens with better living conditions by meeting their aspirations in terms of required amenities, infrastructure and better environmental conditions, thus contributing to social and economic development of the society as a whole by better management of the human settlements. While these are the long-term objectives, the immediate ones are:

- ❖ To advance knowledge of the principles and practices of Local Government by conducting research and by organising training courses and programmes at various centres in India for officials and elected representatives in the local bodies.
- ❖ To strengthen and improve Local Government Institutions by improving their performance through education, orientation and bringing them together for common endeavor by organising specialised conferences, conventions and seminars.
- ❖ To make available a platform for members of local bodies and officials for exchange of views and ideas related to urban development and administration.
- ❖ To represent the views of local authorities supported by research work to the concerned higher authorities from time to time.
- ❖ To publish bibliographies, articles, books and other literature on matters of interest to local bodies.
- ❖ To publish journals, bulletins and other literature on different aspects of Local Government and on the working of Local bodies in different states.
- ❖ To undertake research studies in public administration, problems of local bodies and also in related topics of urban and environmental factors and arrange for their publication etc.
- ❖ To establish and maintain an information-cum-documentation service for local bodies.
- ❖ To undertake consultancy assignments in various areas of urban development and problems of local bodies with a view to improve and develop organisational, managerial and operational efficiency.

In view of the above, the Institute has been collaborating with the relevant government departments, Central and State, Universities, Organisations and Research Institutions. The work of the Institute covers several aspects involving a multi-disciplinary teamwork.

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