

PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT IN THE 6TH SCHEDULED STATE OF MEGHALAYA

Introduction

The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India introduced the institution of Panchayati Raj. Three NE states Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland found themselves excluded from the provisions of this amendment. Of these three states Meghalaya till to date still struggles in coming to terms with the principles of empowered and participative Local Self Government at the grass root level. In the process the whole state and its people are denied the benefits of local self governance and of a Bottom-Up Demand-Driven development paradigm. The root cause for this administrative lapse is the inability of the State Government to recognize the need to empower and to bring on board the (a) Traditional grassroots institutions and to make the same efficient vehicles in local self governance and (b) to coordinate and work together with the Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) towards introduction and establishment of a more efficient paradigm for Good Governance through a Participatory Process. A working ethos that could coordinate the ethics of good governance between State, Autonomous District Councils and Traditional Institutions, especially for the state of Meghalaya is expected to bring in the following benefits to the people:

- Bring in Participatory and Decentralized Planning which will ensure sustainability in development by introducing the element of community ownership over all development initiatives.
- A Participatory based development paradigm, especially in the rural areas of Meghalaya will provide the women of the state, space in the decision making process of the community. At present this is absent and a Gender Perspective in local administration and governance is totally absent. This is at odds with the rest of the country and needs immediate rectification.
- Bring in the much needed and long awaited process of restructuring, improving and streamlining the Traditional Institutions of the state and to bring them at par with other democratic grassroots institutions of India.
- Participation of empowered and capacitated communities of Meghalaya will ensure that there would be a transformation in the delivery mechanism of public utilities and civic services such as Water supply, health care, sanitation, and education. It will also address the question of improved livelihoods through efficient participatory marketing strategies.
- Empowered and capacitated communities, endowed with sound resource and finance management techniques will ensure the emergence and survival of accountable and transparent mechanisms in all community activities. *These are aspects that highlight the practice of Good Governance and are the crying need of the day.*
- Community participation, especially the inclusion of women and the socially marginalized in such participatory practices will ensure the existence of an equity based justice system at the grassroots level.

Sadly the above are still to be implemented in the State of Meghalaya.

Attempts of the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council

The Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council has been alive to the urgent need to streamline the administration of the Council towards Participatory Grassroot Governance as per the emerging trends of the Constitution of India as reflected in the 73rd Amendment of the same. Towards this end the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council has passed a Bill called the Khasi Hills Autonomous District (Constitution and Administration of Community Development Organisations) Bill 2006 (CACDO). The salient features of the Bill are as follows:

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- Traditional Institutions (TIs - Village Durbars) exist in all villages of the state. They however are traditions bound and inclusion of women in the Durbar is strictly taboo. *Interference with the composition and structure of the Village Durbar is socially, politically and culturally sensitive and is not advisable.*
- The CACDO Bill of the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council mentioned above proposes to introduce a legalized planning body in the village level called the Community Resource Management Group (CoRMG).
- The CoRMG will be composed of all adult members of the community. To ensure gender equity in the composition of the CoRMG, its members will compose of two adults from each household, one of which should be a women.
- To ensure meaningful participation of women CoRMG members and to enable them to take part eloquently and articulately in decision making process of the CoRMG, women of the community will be empowered and capacitated through the active formation of women SHG s.
- Transparency and Accountability of the CoRMG will be ensured through the introduction of meaningful participatory management techniques and interventions.

Unfortunately the above attempts of the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council has been blocked and thwarted by the State Government who has refused to endorse the Bill and to get the same approved by the Governor of the state.

PROPOSALS OF THE KHASI HILLS AUTONOMOUS DISTRICT COUNCIL TOWARDS AN ACCEPTABLE PARADIGM FOR DECENTRALISED AND PARTICIPATORY MODE OF LOCAL SELF GOVERNANCE FOR MEGHALAYA.

The Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council recognizes the existence of apprehension on the part of the Meghalaya State Government towards approving the Khasi Hills Autonomous District (Constitution and Administration of Community Development Organisations) Bill 2006. The State Government apprehends overlapping of jurisdiction and activities despite the existence of the 6th Schedule of the Constitution. This fear is recognized though it does not justify the blocking of the Khasi Hills Autonomous District (Constitution and Administration of Community Development Organisations) Bill 2006.

The Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council has no interest in entering into a legal and constitutional battle between itself and the Government over the Bill. *Its concern however lies over the fact that the whole state of Meghalaya till to date has been unable to come up with any legal paradigm which will introduce the element and concept of good governance at the grassroot level. In the process it is the people of the state who ultimately are the losers.* To break this stalemate the following proposals are therefore made:

1. Let the **principles** of the Constitution and Administration of Community Development Organisations Bill 2006 of the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council be recognized as the most viable towards bringing about a developmental and good-governance paradigm that is participatory, demand driven and bottom up in nature.
2. Allow these Principles to operate at state level where the jurisdiction of both state and ADCs will be clearly earmarked and demarcated. This will ensure that duplication and overlapping of efforts is eliminated.
3. Allow this mutually accepted mode of development to operate within the whole state so that the state and its people can enjoy the benefits that accrue from the 73rd Amendment.
4. That experts/Consultants who are capable of bringing in the required networking between ADCs and State Government be employed to deliver the required mechanism towards such an objective.

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Sample Only (KACDO)