

**LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS IN RURAL AREAS:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MIZORAM AND
ARUNACHAL PRADESH**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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**LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS IN RURAL AREAS: A COMPARATIVE
STUDY OF MIZORAM AND ARUNACHAL PRADESH**

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Year: 2024

DECLARATION

I, **Samuel Lalruatfela**, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/ Institute.

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List of Abbreviations

| | | |
|---------|---|---|
| AGPP | : | Annual Gram Panchayat Plan |
| BJP | : | Bharatiya Janata Party |
| BNRGSK | : | Bharat Nirman Rajeev Gandhi Sewa Kendra |
| CAG | : | Comptroller and Auditor General |
| CCC | : | Course on Computer Concepts |
| CDP | : | Community Development Program |
| CEM | : | Chief Executive Member |
| CSC | : | Community Sanitary Complex |
| CSO | : | Civil Society Organization |
| CSR | : | Corporate Social Responsibility |
| EIC | : | East India Company |
| FHTC | : | Functional Household Tap Connection |
| GDP | : | Gross Domestic Product |
| GP | : | Gram Panchayat |
| GPDP | : | Gram Panchayat Development Plan |
| HADP | : | Hill Areas Development Programme |
| HPC | : | High Power Committee |
| IAY | : | Indira Awaas Yojana |
| IHHL | : | Individual Household Latrine |
| ICT | : | Information and Communication Technology |
| INC | : | Indian National Congress |
| JDU | : | Janata Dal Union |
| JJM | : | Jal Jeevan Mission |
| LAD | : | Local Administration Department |
| LoB | : | Left out of Baseline |
| LSG | : | Local Self-Government |
| MGNREGA | : | Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act |
| MGNREGS | : | Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme |
| MHIP | : | Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl |

| | | |
|---------|---|---|
| MLA | : | Member of Legislative Assembly |
| MLA-LAD | : | Member of Legislative Assembly - Local Area Development |
| MNF | : | Mizo National Front |
| MNP | : | Minimum Needs Programme |
| MoPR | : | Ministry of Panchayati Raj |
| MU | : | Mizo Union |
| MUP | : | Mizo Upa Pawl |
| NAPDDR | : | National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction |
| NDRGGSP | : | Nanaji Deshmukh Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar |
| NE | : | North East |
| NEFA | : | North Eastern Frontier Agency |
| NEFT | : | North Eastern Frontier Tract |
| NGO | : | Non-Governmental Organization |
| NOLB | : | No One Left Behind |
| NPP | : | National People's Party |
| NRLM | : | National Rural Livelihood Mission |
| NSS | : | National Service Scheme |
| ODF | : | Open Defecation Free |
| ODF+ | : | Open Defecation Free Plus |
| PC | : | People's Conference |
| PCC | : | Plain Cement Concrete |
| PESA | : | Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas |
| PHE | : | Public Health Engineering |
| PIREP | : | Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Project |
| PMAY | : | Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana |
| PMAY-G | : | Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin |
| PMAY-U | : | Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban |
| PMGSY | : | Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana |
| PMKSY | : | Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana |
| PPC | : | People's Plan Campaign |
| PRI | : | Panchayati Raj Institution |
| RMSA | : | Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan |

| | | |
|--------|---|--|
| SBM-G | : | Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen |
| SECC | : | Socio Economic Caste Census |
| SFDAP | : | Small Farmers Development Agency Programme |
| SLWM | : | Solid & Liquid Waste Management |
| TADP | : | Tribal Areas Development Programme |
| UMFO | : | United Mizo Freedom Organisation |
| UN | : | United Nations |
| VAP | : | Village Action Plan |
| VC | : | Village Council |
| VEC | : | Village Education Committee |
| VEC | : | Village Employment Committee |
| VPRP | : | Village Poverty Reduction Plan |
| WATSAN | : | Water and Sanitation |
| YMA | : | Young Mizo Association |
| ZMP | : | Zoram Peoples' Movement |
| ZNP | : | Zoram Nationalist Party |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

India is a democratic country wherein the power of administration is in the hands of people through elected representatives at various levels of government. With decentralization of administration, a system of decentralisation is also followed in planning and implementation of social and economic development. Democratic decentralisation became a necessity in order to ensure a capable and efficient economical administration. It allows a better penetration of the policies and programmes that had to be implemented from the central government, by handing over certain tasks to a local level administrator.¹ A system of Community Development Programme and the Panchayati Raj Institutions were important steps to foster rural economy in India.² India with its vast population and diversity is quite successful in bringing about a democratic government.

Local administration reflected the level of public awareness on politics, and gave an insight into the degree of political behaviour of the region. People involve more in politics when the need arose, or when the domestic activities are interlinked with schemes and programmes from the authorities.³ The local community possesses its version of legal and customary rights, along with established organisations that would help in rendering its own affairs. The significance of local self-government in contemporary states lies in its ability to alleviate the burden on state and national governments. Local self-governance is vital for the prosperity of democracy. These institutions educate the population on how to effectively rule. Furthermore, democracy is effectively manifested through local self-governance.

¹ Goel, S. L., & Rajneesh, S. (2009). *Panchayati Raj in India: Theory and Practice*. Deep & Deep Publications Pvt. Ltd.

² Sinha, H. (2012). *Bureaucracy and Rural Development in Mizoram*. Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd.

³ Dutil, P. (2021). What Do People Want from Politics? Rediscovering and Repurposing the “Maslow Hierarchy” to Teach Political Needs. *Journal of Political Science Education*. 18(1).

De Tocqueville observes that the local assemblies of citizens were the cornerstone of Free states.⁴ ‘Local assemblies’ referred to an organised group of individuals in a locality, which aimed at nurturing efficacy in local administration. Town meetings are akin to primary schools in their role in promoting liberty. They make freedom accessible to the people and educate individuals on how to utilize and appreciate it.

Local administration in India is generally called the local self-government. India has the Panchayati Raj system as per the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992, and Village Council which function under the Block administration under the Local Administration Department in the state of Mizoram; and Municipality as per the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992.⁵ Panchayati Raj systems and Village Council are meant for administration of rural areas whereas Municipality is meant for the administration of town local units.

The term ‘local self-government’ is synonymous with grass-root democracy and democratic decentralisation. All these terms denote a governance system that was applied to a specific locality pertaining to its internal administration and affairs.

1.1. Meaning of Local Self-Government

Local Self-Government is basically the third level of government after the State Government and the Central Government. It is the level in which village or local administration is exercised, where the citizens of a country enjoy their freedom of speech, freedom of thoughts and their preferential expressions.⁶ The idea of democracy is justified with local administrative body ushering in the deliberations of local population.

Local self-government entails the transfer of governing power to individuals situated at the lowermost level of political hierarchy. In this context, involvement of individuals at the local level of society is incorporated into the governance process.

⁴ Gannett, R. T. (2009). Tocqueville and Local Government: Distinguishing Democracy’s Second Track. *The Review of Politics*. 67(4).

⁵ Lallianchhunga. (2018). A Comparative Study of Village Councils in Mizoram and Panchayati Raj Institutions: A Critical Appraisal. *Senhri Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*. Vol 3(2).

⁶ Das, B. (2021). Role of Panchayati Raj System in Transforming Rural India. *Webology*. 18(6).

In rural India, Block Samiti, Panchayats, and Zilla Parishad are instituted to fulfil their roles as local self-governing entities. Nevertheless, in metropolitan regions, entities such as municipalities and municipal corporations are founded to facilitate local self-governance.⁷

The concept of local self-government is not a new phenomenon in India. It evolved from the Vedic times and attained its shape from a long process of evolution. During the period of Janapadas, administration of village was entrusted to a local chieftain's assembly. The Post-Mauryan period saw the decision-making in the village made by Sabhas. Traces of revenue collection and assessment of taxes in the village was found in the Chola dynasty.⁸ These kinds of local governances were found in the Indian history since the Vedic period. However, the issue of local self-government in India has been a subject of discussion and analysis even before the country gained independence. While freedom fighter like Mahatma Gandhi advocated for the establishment of village republics⁹ and the notion of subsidiarity, and political leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and BR Ambedkar supported a centralized government with significant authority.¹⁰

The present systematic structure of local self-government took birth as a result of the British colonialism in India. A Municipal Corporation was established by the British in 1688. A reform took place in 1872 when Lord Mayo introduced electioneering in the municipal corporation, whose representatives were elected.¹¹ There was a landmark development as per the provisions of Government of India Act, 1919. This Act or the Montagu-Chelmsford Reform had listed the local-government machinery as a transferred subject.¹² The provincial governments thus

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Subramanian, S. G. (2019). *Indian Constitution and Indian Polity*. Pearson India Education Services Pvt. Ltd.

⁹ Friedman, J. S. (2008). Mahatma Gandhis's Vision for the Future of India: The Role of Enlightened Anarchy. *Penn History Review*. 16(1).

¹⁰ Bijukumar, V. (2013). Politics of Contested Modernity: Gandhi, Nehru and Ambedkar. *Journal of Polity and Society*. 5(1).

¹¹ Parashar, P. N. (2003). *History and Problems of Municipal Administration in India*. Sarup & Sons.

¹² Ramachandran, J. (1956). *Evolution of Provincial Autonomy: An Experiment with Dyarchy in India*. University of Chicago.

established local self-government in their respective provinces. The Government of India Act, 1919 lasted until India's independence in 1947.¹³

After India got her independence, a new local administration setting found its place in Part IV of the Constitution of India in the Directive Principles of State Policy. Article 40 provides that the State would take steps to organise village Panchayats and endowed them with such powers and authority as might be deemed necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.¹⁴ Following this, the Balwantrai Mehta Committee was appointed in 1967, and the committee recommended for setting up of three-tier system of rural local self-government at the village, block and district levels which came to be popularly known as the Panchayati Raj system.¹⁵

In other words, the system of local government can also be called a grass-root level administration. The citizens, residing in their respective locality involve in the administration to a great extent. The needs, demands and aspirations of people towards the authorities are manifested in the grass-root level of administration, where the people directly interacted with the government officials.¹⁶ V. Venkata Rao¹⁷ rightly said about local self-government that "It is that part of the government which deals mainly with local affairs, administered by authorities subordinate to the State Government but elected independently of the state authority by the qualified residents".¹⁸ Rao's definition clearly highlighted that the jurisdiction of Local Self-Government was limited only to local realm. They did not have any authority or power to decide on affairs other than the purview of locality. They exerted their administration power which they get from the state government. And they are elected as representatives by the people of locality. However, their administration involved a lot more than a mere local affair, mainly due to their responsibility got widened as a

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Malik, A. S. (2005). Local Self Government at Village Level – An Assessment. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*. 66(4).

¹⁵ Chakrabarty, B. & Pandey, R. K. (2008). *Indian Government and Politics*. SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.

¹⁶ *Op. Cit.* Malik, A. S. (2005).

¹⁷ Rao, V. V. (1975). North East India: Problem and Prospects. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*. Vol 3(1).

¹⁸ Sharma, M. (2004). *Local Government: Rural and Urban*. Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd.

result of the rising decentralisation that provided many tasks in relation to the state government.

An important feature of local self-government is that it operated only in a well-defined area in which demarcation for its jurisdiction had been fixed by the state government.¹⁹ With the exception of specific territory it governs, such as a city, town, or village, a single local government lacks the power to oversee any other locations within a state. The elected members from the local community possessed the power of authority.

1.2. History of Local Self-Governments in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh

The first decentralized governance system at the village level in India was instituted by the state of Rajasthan in 1959 in the Nagaur district, subsequently followed by Andhra Pradesh.²⁰ Subsequently, the system was embraced by majority of the states. The primary issue pertaining to the local self-government was its architectural design, extent of delegated power, financial matters, and other related factors. Each union government formed multiple committees to develop a methodology for the same purpose.

Since ancient times, rural populations have eagerly embraced the responsibility of self-governance. During this time, rural institutions were referred to as the Panchayat Raj System, and they held the distinction of being the most ancient form of local self-government. In 1882, Lord Ripon implemented the local self-government act.²¹ This pioneering act bestowed upon Indians the privilege to engage in local governance by means of elected local councils. The objective of the act was to enhance the development of municipal institutions that were formerly under the direct jurisdiction of British Crown.²²

Lord Ripon prepared the groundwork for democratic administration and increased autonomy within local communities by engaging Indians at the grassroots

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Alok, V. N. (2011). *Role of Panchayat Bodies in Rural Development since 1959*. Indian Institute of Public Administration – New Delhi.

²¹ Harshraj, A. (2020). Lord Ripon: Father of Local Self-Government in India. *The National*.

²² *Ibid.*

level. Lord Ripon earned the title of father of local self-government due to his significant contributions in this field.²³ The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments were enacted, mandating the establishment of such committees in both urban and rural areas of every state in India. Additionally, there was an obligation to conduct elections for the local self-government bodies on a 5-year basis.

Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh are two of the twenty-eight states in India. The two states are situated in the North East region of India, and are included among the eight states which are generally called the 'North East' by mainstream media and writings. North East India has territorial boundaries with foreign countries, over ninety-eight per cent of its border was shared with foreign countries like China, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh. The rest with only two per cent of its boundary was shared with mainland India. The entire North East is predominantly a rural area. Over 84 per cent of people live in rural areas. But in the case of Mizoram, almost half the population lived in towns. Of the total 635 tribal groups in India, over 200 of these groups reside and inhabit in North East alone.²⁴ The region is known as 'ethnic cauldron'. Because, within the North East, diverse and distinctive social, cultural and ethnically different people lived.

1.2.1. Historical Background

The East India Company was summoned by the Ahom king of Assam with a view to help resisting the Burmese invasion of modern-day North East lands in 1824 – 1826. Then, the British colonial regime extended their territory in the tribal lands of NE India, one after another.²⁵ So, on 24th February, 1826, the East India Company (EIC) signed the peace treaty called the Treaty of Yandaboo with the Burmese invaders, in order to settle peace and tranquillity in the region. The Treaty was signed by General Archibald Campbell and Governor Min Hla Kyaw Htin respectively from

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Datta, P. K. & Sen, P. (2020). Governance in the Sixth Schedule Areas in India's North-East: Context, Content and Challenges. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*. Vol. 66(2).

²⁵ *Ibid.*

British and Burmese side.²⁶ This had marked the British victory in the war between Burmese and British, and also the British occupation of NE India.

The colonial power knowing the differences from central India decided to recognise and protect the autonomous 'social cultures' by implementing the Inner Line Regulation (1873), Scheduled District (1874), Backward Tracts (1919), and the declaration of the region into 'Excluded and Partially Excluded Area' as per the Government of India Act 1935.²⁷ This was carried out in order to uphold and retain the autonomous culture of tribes, and to maintain the unity and integrity of Indian states which was yet to be an independent country during that time. So, the hill areas of Northeast and princely states (Manipur and Tripura) were kept out of politico-constitutional processes. The inhabitants of NE region were thus prohibited to take part in the electoral process, in the election to representatives at the provincial and imperial governments.

Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh share almost the same level of political development and recognition. Due to the inability to control these regions by the British-Indian government, the erstwhile Lushai Hills (Mizoram) and North East Frontier Tract (Arunachal Pradesh) was declared Backward Tract by the Government of India Act, 1919, Section 52 A. And they were also excluded in the administrative reform measures taken by the British in which they were put as Excluded Area by the Government of India Act, 1935 Part 1.²⁸ This was essentially aimed at keeping the tribes aloof from the mainstream of Indian nationalism and also to maintain their rule through the chiefs. Due to these harsh treatments towards the two regions, a feeling of alienation and isolationist tendencies became a reality.

So, all other political developments and government activities were limited in these two areas, rather than the other North East states, which are visible calculating the degree of political socialization of these two areas. As Venkata Rao commented, "These tribal areas are very backward in every aspect. Of all the tribal areas,

²⁶ Phayre, A. P. (1967). *History of Burma (2nd Edition)*. Sunil Gupta.

²⁷ *Op. Cit.* Datta, P. K. & Sen, P. (2020).

²⁸ Dounel, J. (2021). Colonial Administration in Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas of Undivided Assam with Special Reference to Lushai Hills. In Maguni Charan Behera (Ed.), *Tribes-British Relations in India: Revisiting Text, Perspective and Approach*. Springer.

Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram are in a disadvantageous position. In these places the fight against hunger, disease, ignorance and isolation is tremendous”.²⁹ The situation has not been very different till recently, particularly for Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram. There was in great demand of local administrative system that instigated a few developmental programmes.

For rural administration of Mizoram, a system of local governance called Village Council was adopted. And in the case of Arunachal Pradesh, Gram Panchayat under the Panchayati Raj Institution system was adopted.

1.2.2. Village Councils in Mizoram

The earlier account on Mizoram local administration was the institution of chieftainship, the chief was a sole ruler in a village, a chief may rule over two or more villages. The internal affairs and local governance were in the hands of chief alone with the council of elders to advise and assist the chief in his needs.³⁰ Mizos did not construct a vast empire or kingdom capable of supporting a large population. Indeed, villages were founded in locations where the total number of homes rarely exceeded one hundred. The government was organized under the leadership of chiefs, who held ultimate authority over village governance. They received guidance and advice from the council of elders.

The topography of Mizoram is characterized by challenging terrain, consisting of steep slopes and narrow valleys. The entirety of expanse of Mizoram is predominantly mountainous. Consequently, there was a scarcity of expansive, level terrain suitable for the construction of urban settlements. Furthermore, Mizos have limited interaction with neighbouring tribes, and the village economy primarily relies on internal barter. Due to absence of commerce and business interactions, expansion or development of villages into huge cities was unattainable. Consequently, Mizos resided in dispersed, diminutive settlements, with each having their own chiefs

²⁹ Op. Cit. Rao, V. V. (1975).

³⁰ Parry, N. E. (1928). *A Monograph on Lushai Customs & Ceremonies*. Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd.

serving as executive leaders of the village administration.³¹ The chief relied on a council of esteemed elders, whom he regarded as advisors, to aid him in making legislative judgments. The chief typically exercises authority over a singular administrative entity, although there were specific cases in which the chief expanded their jurisdiction to encompass many villages.

Mizoram is one of the few states in the country where Village Council as a form of local self-government had been an accepted policy for a long time.³² In most of the states of India, the Panchayati Raj Institutions served as agents of democratic decentralisation. As per the Article 243 (M) of the Constitution, state of Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sixth Schedule Areas and hill areas of Manipur are exempted from application of Part IX of the Constitution.³³

After India got independence, Lushai Hills was upgraded to Lushai Hills District Council. This District Council then passed an Act for the establishment of local government system which came to be known as the Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act, 1953.³⁴ However, this Act was not simultaneously implemented due to the reign of chiefs not yet over across Lushai villages. This Lushai Hills District Council again made an Act in 1954, which was named, the Assam Lushai Hills District (Acquisition of Chiefs' Rights) Act, 1954, which lead to the dethronation of 259 Lusei chiefs and 50 Pawi-Lakher chiefs. Chieftainship in Mizoram was then abolished on 14th April, 1956.³⁵

The Village Council Act of 1954, which was passed by the then Lushai Hills District Council has had some constitutional features with reference to paragraph 3, Sub.-para (1), Clauses (e) & (f) of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India.³⁶ Mizoram adopted village council system as a form of local self-government and has been in function till date. Mizoram was exempted from the 73rd Constitutional

³¹ Prasad, R. N. (1983). A Study of Village Administration in Mizoram. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*. 29(4).

³² Prasad, R. N. (1991). Administration of Justice in Mizoram. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*. 37(1).

³³ Press Information Bureau (2011). *Three Tier Panchayati Raj System*. (2011). Government of India.

³⁴ Nunthara, C. (1996). *Mizoram: Society and Polity*. Indus Publishing.

³⁵ Lallianchunga. (2018). A Comparative Study of Village Councils in Mizoram and Panchayati Raj Institutions: A Critical Appraisal. *Senhri Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*. Vol 3(2).

³⁶ *Ibid*.

Amendment Act of 1992 that gave constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj Institutions to establish Gram Panchayat at village-level administration. Because Mizoram already had a local self-government institution called Village Council.

1.2.3. Gram Panchayats in Arunachal Pradesh

The Panchayati Raj institution was first launched in Arunachal Pradesh in 1969. It was launched with an intention to foster community development programme inside Arunachal Pradesh like the rest of states. But the introduction of Panchayati Raj system in Arunachal Pradesh had another objective, i.e., “to establish uniform political practice throughout the state”³⁷ in the erstwhile North Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA) with PRI as the instrument.

The Governor of Assam on 4th May, 1964 appointed a committee of four members in order to consider about the establishment of modern form of local self-government in Arunachal Pradesh, the then North East Frontier Agency. This Committee was later on known as the Ering Committee, named after its chairman Daying Ering, who was the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs.³⁸

After touring the breadth and length of Arunachal Pradesh, the Committee made recommendations on how democratic decentralisation in the field of judiciary, local development and administration could be best carried out with respect to every different tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. The Committee recommended for the formation of local bodies at four levels – village, circle, district and one at the state level.³⁹

At village, the Ering Committee recommended that the existing traditional village council system should be recognised with giving a formal administrative authority. And, in other areas (in the absence of village council), villagers shall be encouraged to evolve traditional village council system that should be based on social customs and traditions.

³⁷ Gyati, A. (2011). Panchayat Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh: A Historical Perspective. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 72(4).

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

After the recommendations were submitted by the Ering Committee to the Government of Assam, the NEFA Panchayati Raj Regulation was promulgated in 1967, and this came with effect from 2nd October, 1969. Thus, an institution of Panchayati Raj was established in Arunachal Pradesh which was to be the first from North East.

Under this Regulation, a Gram Panchayat was established at the village level, Anchal Samiti at the circle level, and Zilla Parishad at the district level. There was also an Agency Council for the whole of Arunachal Pradesh, which was linked with the Panchayati Raj system. The existing traditional village council system was regarded as a Gram Panchayat.⁴⁰

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 has some implications on the local self-government of Arunachal Pradesh. In order to meet the requirement of the Act, the government of Arunachal Pradesh issued an ordinance called 'The Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Ordinance, 1994' that replaced the NEFA Panchayati Raj Regulation of 1967.⁴¹ The Ordinances' main impact was introduction of elections at regular intervals in all levels of Panchayat. The State level Finance, Election Commissions and reservation of seats for women were also added. Thus, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 refined and improved the PRIs in Arunachal Pradesh.

1.3. Review of Literature

Different books and Journals related to the study were reviewed as part of review of literature. Books about Panchayati Raj Institution were found in huge number, while books relating to a specific region, namely Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh are hardly available. Documents pertaining to village council in Mizoram were even rare. In total, 11 books and 19 journal articles were reviewed as part of review of literature. These books and journals provided important insights in to the matter of subject.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Role of Panchayati Raj in India (1992) provided clear image of the works of PRI as a development agency. This book by S. K. Singh examines the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the administrative arrangements, and implementation of NREP, which was an employment programme for rural population in Bihar and West Bengal. The book explicitly discussed that the PRI was progressively proving effective as an implementing agency in the area studied. Hence, it was helpful for understanding the PRI as an implementing agency of developmental programmes in rural India.

K. P. Kannan in his article *Local Self-Government and Decentralised Development* (1993) asserted that the combination of bureaucracy and political leadership may pose a threat to the success of an attempt on decentralisation. Devolution of adequate financial resources was necessary for real decentralisation. It also stated that if local level government was to be performing as per its full potential, an effective and politically competent leadership was a prerequisite. For this, people were to show more enthusiasm towards attaining more political power. The article was instrumental in understanding the importance of leadership in execution of legal authority, as well as to attain the trust of population which were governed.

In a book *Mizo District Council Kha* written by K. Lawmzuala (2002), has shown the electoral history of Village Councils in Mizoram in the initial years. Village Council as a replacement for chief's authority was constituted and the first election was therefore, held in April, 1954. Principal belligerents of the election were Mizo Union (MU) and United Mizo Freedom Organisation (UMFO), while candidates from Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual (meaning Women's United), Tribal Union and independent candidates also contested in the election. The book also stated that the percentile of vote share was distributed as – Mizo Union 86.3%, UMFO 9.9%, and the other 3.8% by Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual, Tribal Union and independent candidates. Villages were grouped into ten (10) Circles for administrative convenience during elections. And as per notification no. D.C.6/54/64 dated 11.8.1954 of the Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Lushai Hills District Council, Village Councils started their function from 16th August, 1954. The book

traces the development of village council in Mizoram since the District Council era; it provided necessary information about election to village council in its formative years.

Craig Johnson in his book *Decentralisation in India: Poverty, Politics and Panchayati Raj* (2003) offered a significant framework for comprehending how decentralization can impact informal institutions that would govern the effectiveness and extent of poverty alleviation programs. India's substantial size and its notable endeavours to decentralize governance make it a significant case study for comprehending how decentralization might enhance the effectiveness and responsibility of local government organizations. In the year 1993, the Government of India enacted a set of constitutional reforms aimed at democratizing and granting authority to local political entities known as Panchayats. The primary emphasis is on the 73rd Amendment, which pertained to the establishment of institutions at the district, sub-district, and village levels in rural areas.

Johnson's analysis of two Indian states, namely Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, revealed that both states had adhered to the fundamental provisions of the 73rd Amendment by conducting two cycles of Panchayat elections after 1993. Both regions exhibit significant variance and diversity, which can be attributed to their distinct combination of colonial governance, feudal inheritance, and agricultural transformation. Ultimately, both states have adopted contrasting strategies when it comes to the issue of 'self-governance,' namely at the local level. Since 1994, the Government of Madhya Pradesh adopted a series of reforms aimed at enhancing the authority of the Gram Sabha (the village population) and the responsibility of the Gram Panchayat. In 2001, the enactment of Gram Swaraj, also known as village self-rule, marked the pinnacle of this development. In contrast, Andhra Pradesh has implemented a policy that effectively circumvented the publicly elected institutions by relying on the non-elected bureaucrats as the primary mechanism for implementing poverty programs. The Government of Andhra Pradesh not only failed to implement similar changes, but it is also believed to have weakened the authority and independence of the Panchayats by means of the Janmabhoomi initiative. The

two states offer an intriguing foundation for evaluating how democratic institutions influence the effectiveness and scope of government-funded poverty programs.

This article elucidates the political dynamics that occurred before to the constitutional revisions in 1993, and thereafter examines the degree to which these reforms have been put into practice in Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. This article also critically examines the existing body of research on decentralization in India, specifically focusing on three factors that had been identified as contributing to the erosion of authority and independence of village-level Panchayats. These factors include India's federal system, the bureaucratic resistance, and the phenomenon of elite capture. Subsequently, it formulates hypotheses to elucidate the circumstances whereby Panchayats can be enhanced in their responsiveness and accountability towards groups who have historically been marginalized by local political mechanisms. Thus, the article provided insightful information on Panchayats by analysing the reforms initiatives in two states, viz., Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh which was helpful in understanding reforms procedure in local self-government institutions.

Local Government: Rural and Urban (2004) by Manoj Sharma had provided the meaning, nature and scope of the local government and gave a theoretical concept about the topic. Sharma had studied the different types of local governments in the world – studying each from India, USA, UK and France. The book also contains the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments and the changes brought about by them in the structure and functioning of local governments, both in rural and in urban areas. The final part highlighted the relations between these local self-governments and state government, and holds that the state government entrusted its own department to ensure the rural development programmes are undertaken in connection with local administrative units. This work had a worthy contribution for studying local self-government and its role in bringing about progressive development in both urban and rural areas in India.

S. Baluchamy in his book *Panchayati Raj Institutions* (2004) traced how the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) came into existence through a long process of

evolution, and he also asserted that the PRI were empowered and strengthened to cope with the rising level of responsibilities and duties pertaining to local affairs. The book focused deeply on studying the functions and structure of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Dindigul District of Tamil Nadu. The powers enjoyed by the Panchayati Raj Institution systems, the resources that the PRI have had, and the decision-making procedures within the system were also highlighted. Moreover, the relationship of these PRIs with the state government in the domain of support, attitude and cooperation was also highlighted. This book had great significance in the present study largely because it comprehensively gave an account on how PRI system evolved in India.

Bibhas Dhar in his book, which is titled *Arunachal Pradesh: The Monpas of Tawang in Transition* (2005) mention that the British colonial rulers adopted the policy of leaving alone the tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh, largely due to the difficulty of administering the border areas, and also the people were wild and savage. It depicted that the officials of colonial rulers wanted to leave alone the tribesmen also largely due to the tribes being happy in their style of life. The book also focussed on a case study of particular tribe group known as the Monpas who lived in the Tawang District of Arunachal Pradesh, and they differ from the other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh in their technique of building houses and also has a different feature in their social relations. This book gives a clear picture of the Monpas and how they differ from other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, thus helpful in understanding the different social life and institutions in Arunachal Pradesh.

H. C. Thanhanga (2007) in his book *District Councils in the Mizo Hills* held that the advent of British colonial administration had a profound impact on the traditional governing structures of Mizoram. The implementation of a more centralized type of governance by the British administration resulted firstly in the demarcation of boundaries between Chiefs. And over the course of time, grassroots democratic institutions in Mizoram have undergone a process of evolution in order to effectively respond to the dynamic societal requirements and the aspirations of its populace. Village Councils were established in Mizoram under the provision enshrined in Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, where Autonomous District

Councils and Regional Councils were provided with legal authority to constitute the Village Councils within their jurisdiction.

In accordance with this, the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act of 1953 authorised the establishment of Village Councils and thus, the first Village Council was set up on 16th August, 1954 after an election to the office was held in June the same year. The book also highlighted that village councils had undergone adaptations in response to evolving circumstances, thereby extending its scope beyond conventional government responsibilities. They engage in active involvement in regional development initiatives, advocate for the advancement of education, healthcare, and environmental preservation, and serve as intermediates in facilitating communication and collaboration between the government and local communities. The book encompassed the development of local self-administration in Mizoram by tracing traditional institution of chieftainship and its transition to democratic set up as per Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act of 1953, thus provided important contribution in understanding the formative years of village council in Mizoram.

The book *Indian Government and Politics* (2008) written by Bidyut Chakrabarty and Rajendra Kumar Pandey highlighted that the structure of Panchayati Raj system was different in each state due to misconception in the minds of policy-makers. Due to this, the PRI could not bring fruitful result as it was expected. It also holds that reservation for women in PRI was a great move not only it empowered women, but also salvage women from their isolation in the grass-root political system. This can bring about a considerable change in the leadership and added to constructive thinking within the local self-government. The book was helpful in understanding the reservation policy and empowerment of women in local self-government bodies.

Indian Constitution and Indian Polity (2008), was a book written by S. G. Subramanian and it highlighted some aspects of local self-government in India. The author has traced the evolution and growth of local self-government system in India. The author also stated the constitutional provisions of PRI and made a comparison with municipalities. After analysing the functions of PRI, same suggestions were

made that stated there must be regularity and clarity in the flow of funds to local self-governments for their smooth functioning and timely implementation of development works. This book was instrumental in understanding the importance of timely-allocated fund for local self-government bodies.

The genesis of Panchayati Raj Institution system could be seen from the work of S. L. Goel and Shalini Rajneesh in their book *Panchayati Raj in India: Theory and Practice* (2009) which argued that a form of Panchayati Raj Institution existed in India since the Vedic period. The Indian government after the independence set up a systematic Panchayati Raj Institution to fulfil the vision of Gandhi's Swaraj or self-rule. The PRI comes as a saviour to salvage the rural India from poverty, illiteracy and backwardness, unemployment, and many traditional customs and beliefs. The book also focuses on people's participation in the Panchayati Raj Institution, reservation for women, women empowerment, and how the programmes were administered. The PRI relationship with the NGOs and the state control over PRI was also discussed. The book assumes great place in understanding the PRI and its implications.

Aruna Gyati in his article *Panchayat Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh: A Historical Perspective* (2011) traced the historical perspective of Panchayati Raj system in Arunachal Pradesh. A committee called the Ering committee was constituted in 1964 in order to study the traditional local administration throughout Arunachal Pradesh and make suggestions for imparting local self-government in its place. After submitting their report, the NEFA Panchayati Raj Regulation was made in 1967. Soon after that, in the year 1969, the PRI system was introduced in Arunachal Pradesh in four levels. The Gram Panchayat at the village level, Anchal Samiti at the block level, Zilla Parishad at district level and there was also an overall administrator for these that operates at the Agency level. The article provided a systematic structure of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh.

Soonhee Kim and Jooho Lee in their article *E-Participation, Transparency, and Trust in Local Government* (2012) examine the correlation between e-participation and trust in local government by evaluating five key elements of the e-

participation process: user satisfaction with e-participation applications, government responsiveness to e-participants, the personal growth of e-participants through participation, the perceived impact on decision making, and the assessment of government transparency.

This article utilizes data from the 2009 E-Participation Survey conducted by the Seoul Metropolitan Government to demonstrate a correlation between the ratings of government transparency by e-participants and their satisfaction with e-participation applications. Based on the findings, e-participants who perceive themselves as influencing government decision-making express more satisfaction with the government's level of responsiveness. Furthermore, there is a positive correlation between the level of belief e-participants have in their ability to influence policy decisions and their perception of the government's transparency. Finally, the article asserts that the trust of e-participants in the local government, which provided the e-participation program, was directly linked to their impression of government transparency. The article was helpful in comprehending the importance of electronic devices in the working of local self-government to provide useful information to the beneficiaries and to ensure transparency in the nature and working of local bodies.

Vanthangpui Khobung in his article *Local Self-Governing Institutions of the Tribal in North-East India: A Study of the Village Authority/Council* (2012) presented an evolution of traditional machinery of local governance into modern and improved structure, wherein, the study was conducted exclusively among tribal population in three states of North East India, viz., Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland. Following India's independence from British rule, the tribal groups were given the authority to develop institutions that reflected their traditional customary rules and practices. This measure was implemented to protect their cultural identities, secure their interests, and address their worries about exploitation by persons outside the tribal community. As a result, there are a wide range of institutions that were mostly controlled by traditional tribal culture. These institutions have semi-autonomous and self-governing indigenous local institutions at different levels. Improvements have been introduced at regular intervals. Usually, these changes have been made to meet the administrative needs of the state's various developmental policies.

This study conducts a thorough analysis of the consistencies and modifications in the local self-governing bodies, Village Authorities/Councils, in the states of Manipur, Mizoram, and Nagaland, located in North-Eastern India. The Village Councils in Mizoram and Nagaland; and the Village Authority in Manipur, was the exclusive institutions at the village level that upheld traditional values within a modern local government setting.

These institutions have evolved from traditional institutions that initially existed to uphold the spirituality, safeguards, and social cohesiveness of the society. The traditional institutions were devoid of any substantial economic roles, but the village Authority/Council possesses notable economic roles in addition to its customary socio-political roles, albeit its religious role is not as prominent. The Village Council plays a crucial role in the economic planning and execution of policy programs at the local level. However, it is essential to recognize that women were excluded from participating in village administrations since ancient times, and this inequality continues to exist in the Village Authority/Council at present. Hence, it is crucial to modify the existing legislation to incorporate women into Local Self-governing Institutions so as to adequately fulfil their varied duties and roles. The article was important to understand local bodies in tribal areas of Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland.

Pratyusna Patnaik wrote an article titled *Does Political Representation Ensure Empowerment? Scheduled Tribes in Decentralised Local Governments of India* (2013). The essay analysed the procedure of political participation through elected representative and its potential to empower Scheduled Tribes in decentralized government in India. The text views political representation as a systematic procedure and aims to examine how this representation might effectively incorporate and strengthen the Scheduled Tribes in the realm of decentralized government. The paper analyses the depiction of Scheduled Tribes under Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) by conducting a theoretical analysis of the idea of representation, focusing on both substantive and descriptive representation. The article concluded that political representation, as demonstrated by the involvement of representatives in PRIs, might be a necessary factor in including Scheduled Tribes in decision-making institutions.

However, it is not enough to empower them, particularly when there is a lack of encouraging and assisting institutional structures. The article provided information on participation of tribal groups in local administration as a means of empowerment.

What Ails Panchayati Raj? (2013) is an article written by Rahul Banerjee about the obstacles in Panchayati Raj that hindrance the functioning. Banerjee found that due to a lack of extensive devolution of three F's – functions, functionaries and funds, the Panchayati Raj institutions operated poor. The article reviewed the process of devolving power to them and also find out the main obstacles in the path of establishing a vibrant self-governing local body in rural areas, thus it was significant for this research.

S. C. Srivastava & Rosalyn S. Bunghai (2014) in their article *A Comparative Analysis on Village Council and Traditional Local Self-Governing System* investigated the extent of decentralization in rural governance in West Garo Hills District in Meghalaya, in comparison to Lawngtlai District in Mizoram. Both the West Garo Hills District and Lawngtlai Districts are included in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. They have their own Autonomous District Councils, which are responsible for protecting their respective traditions and customary laws. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in India has strengthened rural government through decentralization, emphasizing the active involvement of local residents at the grassroots level. The West Garo Hills District relies heavily on the traditional indigenous self-governing system known as the 'Nokma System', in which the Nokma plays a significant role in decision-making. In contrast, the Lawngtlai District in Mizoram has a Village Council.

Either the village council or Nokma system has legislative and judicial authority, which is determined by the local customs and traditions observed in each respective territory. Nevertheless, the paper emphasized some significant points of divergence. According to the publication, village councils have been established in both Lawngtlai and West Garo Hills Districts, in compliance with the terms of Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. Regarding the elections, selection of village council members in the Lai Autonomous District Council is carried out by the

peoples' assembly, consisting of individuals who possess the right to vote in any election. The process of selecting members for the village council occurs once every five years. In the West Garo Hills District, officers of the Village Council are not subjected to popular elections. The Nokma is a paramount authority or ruler of a certain territory that is under his ownership, and the village council typically consists of the elderly relatives of the Nokma. This is the conventional system that was practiced in managing local governance.

The representation of women as members of the village council is determined through direct elections conducted by the peoples' assembly, in accordance with the 73rd constitutional amendment. This amendment mandates the reservation of seats for women in elected offices under the Lawngtlai Autonomous District Council. While in the case of West Garo Hills District, despite the hereditary nature of Nokma pattern and its adherence to the matrilineal pattern of inheritance, women are notably absent from the Nokma Council of members. As the article provided information on local self-governing system in West Garo Hills and Lawngtlai District, it was helpful in understanding the administrative working of local administration in the area.

Democratic Decentralization in India: An Overview by Younis Ahmad Sheikh (2014) offered a great deal of understanding about the term 'decentralization' in general and in the Indian scenario. Decentralization facilitates the identification of individuals' needs and preferences by involving them directly in the process of formulating and implementing plans. It provides strength and opportunities to disadvantaged groups and somewhat reduces the control of privileged class. The Panchayati Raj system in India is recognized as the primary means of decentralization, enabling democracy to be genuinely representative and responsive. The Indian states operated as a federation, but only at two levels: the Union and the states. The 73rd Amendment enhances the process of decentralization in India and transfers authority from state governments to the local entities. This study examines the trend of decentralization in India and the primary emphasis focuses on the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution, which pertains to the establishment of institutions at the district, sub-district, and village levels in rural areas. Decentralization is frequently praised as a fundamental element of effective governance and progress.

Enhancing decentralization and democracy could enhance the prospects of achieving effective economic development. To effectively address poverty and foster sustainable development in India, it is evident that a significant transfer of government authority was necessary, extending well beyond the state level. The book provided an important text to understand the notion of decentralization in India.

In his article *Rural Development in Mizoram without PRIs: A Study*, Abdul Hannan Barbhuiya (2015) said that Mizoram is one of the Indian states that adhered to a traditional form of local self-government known as the Village Council, which serves as the administrative unit. Due to absence of Panchayati Raj Institution in Mizoram, responsibility of implementing rural development programs fell on the block administration. The primary goal of block administration is to address poverty, enhance the quality of life for citizens, and provide essential amenities and infrastructure through innovative wage and self-employment programs. The study analyzed different initiatives undertaken by the Department of Rural Development, Mizoram with the aim of fostering progress in the state, such as Indira Awaas Yojana, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, Integrated Watershed Management Programme, Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, Border Area Development Programme, Integrated Wastelands Development Programme, State Institute of Rural Development and Backward Region Grant Fund. This article encompassed the role of Rural Development Blocks in bringing about initiatives to progressive development in rural areas of Mizoram, which was helpful in understanding development patterns in rural areas.

Ayangbam Shyamkishor (2016) in his article *Democratic Decentralization in India: A Comparative study between Village Panchayat and Village Council in Mizoram* offered a comparative analysis of Village Panchayat and Village Councils under certain heads such as – autonomy of the local body, constitutional status, structure, tenure of office, and funding pattern. The state government's interference curtails the powers and functions of Village Council in its attempt to being local democratic organization which aimed at decentralization; such forms of interfering are not feasible within the framework of Panchayati Raj System. The Panchayati Raj System in India has been given constitutional recognition with the inclusion of Part

XI and incorporation of the XI Schedule (Article 243 G) in the Constitution, as mandated by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992.

The Constitution explicitly delineates the authorities, functions, and obligations of the Panchayats. In contrast to the panchayats, the Village Council did not possess a connection with the Parliament. However, Assam Government established the Village Council in Lushai Hills as per the Lushai Hills District Village Council Act, 1953. The Village Council is the sole democratic institution at the Block level in Mizoram. Whereas the Indian Constitution has established a three-tier framework for the Panchayati Raj system in all states, consisting of Panchayats at the village, intermediate, and district levels. The Gram Panchayat holds office for duration of five years; while the Village Council, with tenure of three years, is rather brief considering its responsibilities. The Village Council has financial constraints as a result of limited funds. The Village Councils's sources of income are entirely dependent on the state government. In the absence of financial resources, Village Councils appear to be inconsequential local entities. In contrast, Panchayat bodies have the right to receive funding from both the state and central government through various initiatives, besides generating their own regular sources of revenues through taxation and the utilization of locally accessible resources. In addition, the establishment of the State Financial Commission was implemented to avert financial crises in the Panchayat organizations. The article provided insightful information on constitutional provisions, duration of terms, funding to local self-government by contrasting Panchayats and village council, which was useful for this study.

Pradeep Nair and Sandeep Sharma in their article *Gandhi and Governance: Relooking Development at Grassroot Level* (2016) provided a knowledge on Gandhian concept of governance and development, highlighting that the grassroots level is where development is a people-centric strategy that encompassed many actions to guarantee that rural individuals had access to pertinent information, enabling them to actively cooperate and participate in development initiatives. By use of information and knowledge, individuals living in rural areas may articulate their demands and exchange their expertise. Community governance is a potent catalyst, particularly for marginalized individuals, to improve their lives. The

Gandhian concept of governance and government aims to improve rural communication facilities at the grassroots level in order to enable local communities to strategize and oversee development initiatives.

The comprehension of governance as well as management according to Gandhi is crucial as it provides guidance to all individuals involved in government and governance. Its purpose is to enhance the responsiveness and accountability of governance institutions, in order to deliver good governance, a promise that each and every representative government in India had made and continues to make for the past seventy years.

The distinguishing feature of Gandhian concept of village and government is its participatory and comprehensive nature, setting it apart from other governance models. The text discusses an integrated strategy that recognized the importance of grassroots participation through debate, information sharing, and mutual learning. In the Gandhian perspective, governance is not a hierarchical method of transmitting information and knowledge. Instead, it is a comprehensive approach implemented by means of collective decision-making and collaboration, with the aim of promoting the well-being of all individuals, regardless of their caste, religion, class, or ethnicity. In order for growth and governance to occur, collaborative community activities are necessary for the process of diagnosing, discussing, and addressing problems. This article provided an important dimension of Gandhian philosophy in local governance, which was significant for the study.

Atul Sarma and Debabani Chakravarty in their book *Integrating the Third Tier in the Indian Federal System* (2017) depicted that the states of North-East India have established Autonomous District Councils as a form of self-governance, thanks to their inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of Constitution. This article examines the differences between the Panchayati Raj framework of self-governance in various parts of India and the districts governed under the Sixth Schedule. Following a brief analysis of the North-East's geography, economics, and history, the second section proceeds to explore the establishment of a governmental framework that encompassed both the periods of colonialism and independence. Last section of the

essay examines the unique framework of self-governance implemented according to the Constitution's Sixth Schedule for the mountainous states of the Northeast. Section four provides a detailed examination of the operational mechanisms of Autonomous Councils. Section five establishes a comparison comparing the Sixth Schedule institution and the Panchayati Raj Institutions, which both serve as forms of third-tier government. Section six finishes with final reflections. The book was helpful in understanding local self-government bodies in different states of India.

Lallianchhunga in his article *A Comparative Study of Village Councils in Mizoram and Panchayati Raj Institutions: A Critical Appraisal* (2018) has mentioned that the Village Council constitutes the lowest unit of local administration in Mizoram. Due to limited financial resources, its credibility has been questioned from time to time. The paper studied both Village Councils and PRIs with reference to Mizoram, the powers and functions performed by the Village Council in comparison with the PRI. An important point it brought forward is that Mizoram was exempted from the implementation of PRI as per the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992. But as a matter of fact, the Amendment which was made in 2014 in the power and structure of Village Council was in line with principles of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992. The article was important for the study in gathering information on village councils in Mizoram and Panchayati Raj system.

The publication *Village Administration in Mizoram: A Case Study of the Village Council of Lungleng-I Village* authored by David Zothansanga (2018) presented an in-depth analysis of a specific Village Council, i.e., Lungleng-I Village Council in Aizawl District in Mizoram. The study conducted a comprehensive analysis of village administration, focusing on its efficiency and the interaction between the village council and civil society organizations. The Village Council's primary responsibilities in supporting farmers engaged in agriculture were the construction of roads, water tanks, terraces, agricultural ponds, and fish ponds. The effectiveness of schemes such as MGNREGS and Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) was thoroughly evaluated and determined to be highly successful. Additionally, the village of Lungleng-I has demonstrated exceptional dedication to wildlife protection and preservation. The Gram Sabha retained its esteemed role as a legislative body for

the selection of beneficiaries for the Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY). The dissemination of public notification was efficiently facilitated with the valuable support of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) such as YMA, MHIP, and MUP. The article was insightful in gathering information on Centrally Sponsored Schemes and their implementation in villages in Mizoram.

Anand Kumar and Raj Kumar Yadav in their article *Panchayati Raj System and Community Development in India* (2019) asserted that the Panchayati Raj in India specifically denoted the system that was established by a constitutional amendment in 1992, drawing inspiration from the traditional Panchayat system of South Asia. The contemporary system of local self-governance, known as Panchayati Raj, and its village-level governing bodies, called gram Panchayats, should not be mistaken for the non-legal Khap Panchayats (or caste Panchayats) that exist in certain regions of northern India. Prior to the formalization of Panchayati Raj system in 1992, several Indian committees conducted studies on several approaches to adopting a more decentralized administration.

Mahatma Gandhi promoted Panchayati Raj as the fundamental basis of India's political structure, envisioning a decentralized form of governance in which each community would assume responsibility for its own affairs. The term used to describe this idea was Gram Swaraj, which means 'village self-governance'. India, on the other hand, adopted a highly centralized system of government. Nevertheless, the devolution of multiple administrative tasks to the local level has mitigated this issue, giving elected Gram Panchayats with greater authority. There are notable distinctions between the conventional Panchayati Raj system, the one envisioned by Gandhi, and the system established in India in 1992. The article was helpful in gathering information on Panchayati Raj system and Gandhi's influence on its formulation.

Joseph K. Lalfakzuala in his article *Ensuring Social Justice in Tribal Society: Reservation of Women in the Local Bodies of Mizoram* (2021) held that tribal lives had been characterized as having a more egalitarian approach to gender interactions since it lacks the caste system and tight class structure. However, when it comes to

political awareness, social and political establishments of tribal society discourage the involvement of women. This exclusion of women from traditional institutions is due to their duality, serving both social and political roles. Customary legislation and practices have resulted in the marginalization of women. There has been an on-going debate on the means by which social justice may be guaranteed in tribal societies. Conversely, the Indian state provides accommodations for most indigenous tribes to safeguard their 'ways of life' through specific legislation.

When Part IX and Part IX A of the Constitution became applicable to the whole country, the requirements did not apply to tribal-dominated areas, including the state of Mizoram. The Village Council in Mizoram was established in 1954 for the purpose of local administration and has remained in operation ever since. While the Village Council Act does not explicitly exclude women from participating, the prevalence of traditional attitudes and behaviours inside the institution often results in women being marginalized and not receiving the credit they deserve. Prior to 2014, representation of women in the local governance was extremely low until the implementation of mandatory women reservation. This article was useful in understanding the condition of women in traditional Mizo social institution, as well as after the establishment of Village Council in Mizoram was established in 1954.

Umamaheswararao Chandaka (2021) in his article *Local Self-Government in India: A Historical Evolution* traces the origin of the term Panchayat, and examined that the term referred to a gathering of five respected individuals who are chosen by the villagers through an election process. The establishment of Panchayati Raj dates back to the inception of Indian civilization. The Arthashastra, written by Kautilya around 400 B.C., also provides an account of these village assemblies. During the Mauryan period, villages served as the fundamental entity of governance. In the past, villagers would coordinate efforts to carry out tasks that benefited the community, such as public infrastructure projects and recreational activities. They also played a role in resolving conflicts and were responsible for managing the assets of underage individuals. However, their organizations had nevertheless not developed formalized governing bodies. The Mughals implemented a complex administrative system that included a structured hierarchy of officials, specifically in the area of revenue

management. The British arrived in India as traders and quickly gained influence in the cultural hubs of the region. The enactment of the Bengal Chowkidar Act in 1870 initiated the resurgence of customary village panchayati arrangement in Bengal.

Lord Ripon made significant contributions to the advancement of Local Government. In 1882, he discontinued the prevailing system of municipal governance by the formally appointed individuals. The Montagu-Chelmsford changes were enacted in 1919 against this background. Despite the majority government in the provinces administered by the Congress stepping down after the declaration of Second World War from 1939, the status of local government institutions continued the same until August 1947, until the country achieved independence. Local governments received a boost following the implementation of the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts. Prior to that, certain initiatives had already been undertaken to establish local government entities. The territories populated by the Adivasi people in various States of India were not subjected to the restrictions of the 73rd Amendment. In 1996, a distinct legislation was enacted to expand the features of Panchayat system to include these regions. The State government can choose a State Election Commissioner that would be responsible for overseeing elections for the Panchayati Raj institutions. The 73rd and 74th amendments have established consistency in the configurations of Panchayati Raj as well as Nagarpalika institutions nationwide. The existence of these local organizations is a notable accomplishment in its own right and would establish an environment and platform for citizens' engagement in governance. The article provided information about the genesis of Panchayati Raj institutions by tracing its historical background, which has tremendous significance for the study.

Parul Ratra and Jagdeep Dahiya in their article *Decentralization and Challenges Related to Panchayati Raj Institutions in India* (2022) commented that decentralization is the process of transferring authority, financial resources, and power to multiple local authorities or groups. Various methods exist by which a government might delegate authority to the sub-national level. Decentralization can manifest in several forms such as political, economic, or administrative. The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) play a crucial role in Indian social life. The 73rd

Indian Constitution Amendments Act of 1992 proposed the establishment of the framework of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and breathed fresh life into them across the whole country.

The World Bank in 2007 asserted that fiscal autonomy was the essential component of decentralization, and the sustainability of local government authority relies on enough budgetary empowerment. The most effective approach to enhance the integrity, accountability, efficiency, and autonomy of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) is by creating their own sources of income. According to the 14th Finance Commission, the money generated by Panchayats from their own sources is little and mostly relies on the transfer of cash from the state and national governments. Successful implementation of decentralization relies on the strengthening of revenue sources of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

The article also specifically examines the decentralization of fiscal issues within Panchayati Raj Institutions and the suggestions made by the Finance Commissions. It further highlighted the obstacles and concerns encountered by Local Self-Government in India with regard to fiscal devolution. It also provides recommendations for the policies of financial relationship between State and local governments. It suggests that this relationship would undergo a thorough assessment, taking into account the experiences of government-specific fiscal devolution and the recommendations of the state finance commission. The article ended by suggesting that local governments would have a greater role in designing development initiatives and maximizing returns, while considering the availability of local funds. Thus, this article is crucial for the study.

Majji Jhansi Lakshmi (2022) in her article *Democratic Decentralization: Indian Experiences* held that decentralization involved granting local authorities and representative substantial powers. The key difference between participatory techniques and democratic decentralization lies in the fact that the latter focused on involving entire communities in decision-making processes through representative authority. Efficient decentralization is a crucial instrument for enhancing democracy. Decentralization is not exclusive to India, but rather a worldwide phenomenon.

In India, establishment of local governing institutions, known as Panchayati Raj, dated back to 1882. The issue of grassroots governance has been a significant focus of the procedure of planning in India since the implementation of Panchayati Raj in 1959. The Indian government implemented the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in 1992 that provided constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions, with the aim of enhancing involvement of rural individuals in development processes, decision-making, and decentralized planning. The 74th Amendment, similar to the 73rd Amendment, establishes the framework for urban local bodies. It ensures that these bodies have had regular, unbiased elections and included provisions for reserving seats for SC, ST, and OBCs. The amendment sets the term of these bodies to five years and safeguards them from arbitrary dissolution. It also outlines their responsibilities and powers and aims to enhance the financial foundation of urban local bodies. The article provided deep understanding for democratic decentralization in India which was significant for this research.

Mohd Faheem in his article *Grassroots Democracy and Local Governance Issues: Perspectives from Rural India* (2023) asserted that with the exclusion of reserved and tribal regions, every state in the country follows a comparable PRI framework, as mandated by law. The Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act of 1996 extends the 73rd Amendment to tribal and forested areas in 10 states of India, with certain modifications and exceptions. However, tribal areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram are governed by District or Regional Councils and are not covered by this extension. These sections have been implemented to protect traditional practices in the management of communal resources, cultural and religious traditions, and customary legal systems.

The article further highlighted that Panchayats played a significant role in the execution of the majority of rural development initiatives. Additional departments and ministries like as Agriculture, Health, Water, Sanitation, Women and Child Development, Tribal Development, and other social sector ministries also carry out programs at the Panchayat level. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Grameen (PMAY-G), and Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) are three of the five primary

centrally sponsored projects that engage Panchayats. Additional significant initiatives carried out at the Gram Panchayat level are the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, National Health Mission, and Swachh Bharat Mission.

In addition to these initiatives, the Fourteenth Finance Commission allocated more than Rs 200,000 for the period of 2015-20 to Gram Panchayats. Panchayats are expected to allocate these funds towards fundamental municipal responsibilities like as water provision, sanitation, street lighting, parks, and crematoriums. Several states also execute their social sector programs at the Gram Panchayat level. The State Finance Commissions have the ability to allocate funding to Panchayats for a variety of projects. All these factors have significance for the development of capabilities of Panchayats. The article articulated about the implementation of Central Government's initiatives to bring about progressive change in rural communities in India, which was instrumental for understanding development packages for rural areas in India, thus contributed significantly for the research.

All books and journal articles reviewed in this study had their specific importance and relevance, and also had contributed to the understanding of local self-government institution in India in general and North-East India in particular. Although there were plenty of literatures about the system of PRI and its implications, there was hardly any specific book or journal article that dealt with PRI in Arunachal Pradesh. And, literature about the Village Council system in Mizoram was even more insufficient, and literally rare.

The unavailability of literatures in this regard constitutes as a research gap that led the scholar to have this comprehensive research. Furthermore, systematic comparative analysis of local self-government bodies – Village Council system and Panchayati Raj system between Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh had not been made. Therefore, the study is a new area in the field of local self-government study in comparison between Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

1.4. Statement of the Problem

India is a vast country with diverse demographic features along with different people, language, religion, ethnicity, social relations and other features. Due to its huge diversity, there has always been a problem of ensuring effective and widespread participation of citizens in public affairs. There is a lack of extensive devolution of functions, functionaries and funds, and because of this most local self-government operated poor.

The progress and developments India observed over the past few years have not been significantly bringing the same level of nourishment for the North Eastern states, particularly Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. Achievement in industrialization and urbanization, though considerable, has not significantly affected the agricultural and rural character of North Eastern society.⁴² Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, having shared almost the same similarities in terms of state building and constitutional development, also suffered from inadequacy of development.

In order to bring about a positive change in the democratic structure and functioning of Indian political system, strengthening the local self-government was a necessity. And the study of that particular subject constituted an important centre of attention. The urban as well as the rural population contributes to the economy of India.

For this research, the scholar studied the Local Self-Government system in North East India to understand their structure, role and functions. A comparative study analysing the functions, role, as well as similarities and differences between Village Councils in Mizoram and Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh have been made.

1.5. Objectives of the Study

1. To study the nature and scope of local self-government in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

⁴² Srinivasan, N. (1956). Village Government in India. *The Far Eastern Quarterly*. Vol. 15(2).

2. To examine the powers and functions of both the rural institutions in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.
3. To analyse the working of Village Councils in Mizoram and Gram Panchayats in Arunachal Pradesh.
4. To explore the issues and challenges before the Local Self-Government in the two states.
5. To examine the emerging trends in Local Self-Government in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

1.6. Research Questions

1. What is the nature and scope of Local Self-Government in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh?
2. How are the powers and functions of these Local Self-Governments different in both the states?
3. What are the main activities of Village Council and Gram Panchayat in the two states?
4. What are the main challenges before the Local Self-Government in Mizoram and Gram Panchayat in Arunachal Pradesh?
5. What are the emerging trends in Local Self-Government in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh?

1.7. Research Methodology

The research methodology involved in this study was both qualitative and quantitative. A comparative analysis was made between two local self-government institutions, viz., Village Council and Gram Panchayat in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. The needed resources and data were gathered through the use of primary and secondary sources.

The universe of this research is not confined only to a single state, but involves inter-state study that covered the local self-government systems in North East India. An in-depth study was carried out in two states, namely Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram, to understand the local self-government that performed grass-

root democracy functions. This study was carried out by tracing the local self-government from the state government department, to the district administration, to the rural block development division, and then finally at the rural units of administration. For this, unstructured interviews were carried out to collect first-hand information from the competent authorities. Besides interviewing, other forms of data collection of primary source include official government gazettes, annual reports, and departmental files. Secondary source data require literatures generated from books, journal articles, articles from newspapers and magazines.

The total number of villages in Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram is 5616 and 853 respectively. Thus the ‘universe’ or the ‘population’ of the study is 5616 in Arunachal Pradesh and 853 in Mizoram. As the universe of the study is huge in number, the field of inquiry is also similarly large, the only viable option is to adopt sampling technique in order to select some items from a finite universe.

For sample design, a representative basis was followed in which non-probability sampling technique was adopted, villages were selected with convenience sampling. Thus, the entire region of Mizoram was divided into - North, South, East, West and Central. Two (2) villages from each of these five (5) different regions, namely North, South, East, West and Central were selected in order to represent the entire state of Mizoram. And then the number of villages studied in Mizoram was $2 \times 5 = 10$. The same pattern was followed in the case of Arunachal Pradesh. Thus, the number of villages studied for this research is $10+10 = 20$ villages in total.

Table 1.1: Selection of villages in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

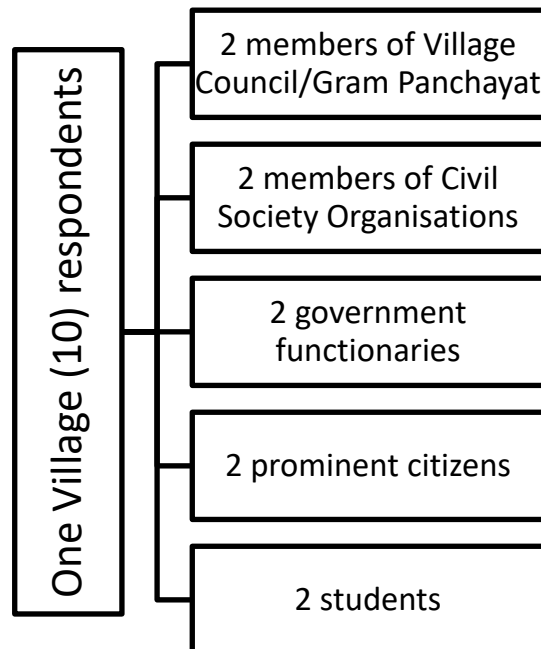
| Sl. No. | Villages in Mizoram (with District) | | Sl. No. | Villages in Arunachal Pradesh (with District) | |
|---------|-------------------------------------|----------|---------|---|-------------|
| 1. | Nisapui | Kolasib | 1. | Bene | West Siang |
| 2. | Kawnpui VC-3 | | 2. | Darka | |
| 3. | Mualkawi | Champhai | 3. | Korang | East Siang |
| 4. | Melbuk | | 4. | Sido | |
| 5. | Chungtlang | Mamit | 5. | Rupa | West Kameng |
| 6. | West Lungdar | | 6. | Jigaon | |

| | | | | | |
|-----|--------------------|---------|-----|-------------|-----------------|
| 7. | Ramlaitui | Lunglei | 7. | Borum | Papum Pare |
| 8. | Haulawng | | 8. | Rayo | |
| 9. | Seling | Aizawl | 9. | Lempia West | Lower Subansiri |
| 10. | Thingsul-Tlangnuam | | 10. | Tajang | |

Source: Primary data from field work.

All important stakeholders of the Local Self-Governments in rural areas of both the states were approached. For data collection method, an unstructured interview was carried out, as there may be a need for flexibility in the approach of questioning an informant. In each of the villages, interview respondents were selected as - two political representatives (members of Village Council or Gram Panchayat), two government functionaries, and two members of civil society organizations, two prominent citizens and two students. Thus, the number of interview respondents in a single village was 10.

Figure 1.1: Selection of interview respondents in a village..



Source: Primary data from field work.

Therefore, the total number of interview respondents in Mizoram were 10 (villages) x 10 (respondents) = 100. And also, the total number of interview respondents in Arunachal Pradesh were also 10 x 10 = 100. Hence, 200 interview

respondents from both the states were approached in total, 100 respondents from Mizoram, and another 100 respondents from Arunachal Pradesh.

1.7.1. Data Analysis

Data gathered from secondary sources were apparently analysed using descriptive analysis. On the other hand, primary data from 20 villages, and interview respondents' answers were analysed with (i) descriptive analysis – to provide descriptive connotation from data, and (ii) quantitative analysis – to establish set of information by displaying certain quantitative data with tables and graphical figures using Microsoft Excel. All quantitative data displayed in tables and figures were also followed by description.

1.8. Scope of the Study

The study covers two states of North East India, namely Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. The Local Self-Governments in both states were studied and made a comparison between them. The study mostly covered the administration, development processes undertaken, local self-government link with civil society organisations in villages and, peoples' participation. The study covered 20 villages in total, both in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. The time frame for the study is 2010 – 2020, so the performances of both LSG for a period of ten years were studied.

1.9. Chapterization

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

The first chapter covers introductory words of the research, the origin, meaning and definitions of the research topic. Besides, it also comprised of the review of literature containing books and journals; statement of the problem; objectives of the research; research questions; research methodology; scope of the study and the chapterization of the research. Review of literature reflected a comprehensive dimension of local self-government in India.

CHAPTER 2: Local Self-Government in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

The second chapter deals with the nature and scope of the local bodies in both Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. This chapter traces the theoretical foundation of Panchayati Raj in India by drawing ideas from Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and BR Ambedkar. This chapter highlighted how local self-government was an institution of decentralization by looking deep into their role in grassroots administration in rural India. This chapter also encompasses decentralization in village council and in Panchayati Raj institution; to present a comprehensible nature of decentralization in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1954 and Arunachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1997 were thoroughly studied. Qualification, election procedure, tenure of the local self-government body, tenure of membership and executive composition of each of these local bodies were also studied. This chapter also identify the research area where primary data were collected, in addition to the number of village council or gram panchayat members in each village. Political party affiliation of members of Village Council or Gram Panchayat was also highlighted in this chapter.

CHAPTER 3: Powers and Functions of Village Council in Mizoram and Gram Panchayat in Arunachal Pradesh.

Third chapter dealt with the powers enjoyed by the two local rural bodies, the decision-making powers within their respective area of confinement, and also the executive functions that had been played. Rural local self-government bodies were entrusted to perform 29 essential sectors consisted of variety of task such as health, education, housing schemes, poverty eradication, and encouragement and promotion of small-scale production industries in villages, among many. The chapter envisaged powers and functions of village council in Mizoram, the powers of Gram Sabha under village council, and the procedure of village council meeting. It also provided the responsibility of village council president, vice president and secretary. The powers and functions of Panchayati Raj institution was also highlighted in this chapter. It stated that Panchayati Raj institution was divided into three layers – Gram Panchayat, which operated at the village level, Anchal Samiti, operated at block level, and Zilla Parishad that operated at district level. The Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) is a comprehensive strategy devised by Gram Panchayats

across India to promote social justice and economic development in their respective areas. These plans are formed via the active involvement of all stakeholders, resulting in a logical plan that was tailored to the needs and financial capabilities of people.

CHAPTER 4: Working of Village Councils of Mizoram and Gram Panchayat in Arunachal Pradesh.

Chapter four highlight the major works of Village Councils of Mizoram and Gram Panchayat in Arunachal Pradesh by looking deep into their present status and achievements. The degree of community development rendered by LSGs of both states were analysed; in addition to their contribution in education, water management, sanitation, environmental protection, relieving rural poor, youth affairs, among others. Detailed analysis was made from LSG bodies in every 20 villages.

CHAPTER 5: Issues and Challenges of Local Self-Government in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

Chapter five dealt with major issues and challenges in local self-governments in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, in addition to certain emerging trends such as implication of ICT. Transparency and openness as an issue was thoroughly discussed, assessment of LSGs in both states on matter of transparency was also presented. This chapter also highlighted the issue of lack of autonomy in LSG entities and issue of low attendance in Gram Sabha. On the positive side, the implication of ICT in LSG was also discussed with certain primary information from 20 selected villages in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion.

The final chapter deals with the concluding part of the research, summary and findings of the research.

1.10. Conclusion

Primary objective of the local self-government bodies was community development. They were given the role of organizing, formulating, and implementing

development programs in the community, with the aim of advancing the nation towards modernity. Local self-government occupies the third level of government structure and serves as the primary channel for citizens to participate in politics, especially in rural regions. India did not simply adopt the Western practices when it came to local self-administration. This is because the assembly of chieftainship was already operating during the Janapadas period. During the Post-Mauryan period, a system of decision-making by a group of officials known as Shabhas was present. Additionally, the Chola dynasty adopted the practice of collecting revenue and taxes in villages.

The establishment of Village Councils in Mizoram as a means of local self-governance occurred in 1954, following the deposition of chiefs who previously had administrative authority in the villages. In the case of Arunachal Pradesh, the Gram Panchayat, or Panchayati Raj Institution, was established as a result of a political development. This occurred when the Government of India passed an Act in 1969, which compelled the creation of such a body under the NEFA Panchayati Raj Regulation. Both these entities experience evolution and revisions through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992, as well as other amendments and ordinances pertaining to their implementation.

Local self-government is an institution of grassroots democracy in which citizens participate in politics and power is given to locally elected representatives who work for the well-being of people. Local self-government in India serves as a system of governance that fostered grassroots democracy and rural development by empowering residents to participate in local decision-making processes. The Panchayati Raj System in India was granted constitutional status in 1992, establishing the foundation for the present system of local self-governance. In rural areas, the Panchayati Raj system and Village Council system endeavour to build elected local self-governing institutions in order to bring governance directly to the grassroots level, hence decentralizing governance. The Gram Panchayat operates at the village level, the Panchayat Samiti at the block or mandal level, and the Zilla Parishad at the district level. Corporations and municipalities embrace local autonomy in urban areas.

Extensive literature reviews revealed a significant abundance of publications on the topic of Panchayati Raj Institution. But there is a scarcity of works specifically focused on the states of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. Nevertheless, every book and journal article examined in this study possessed distinct significance and pertinence, and furthermore, they made valuable contributions to the comprehension of the local self-government institution in India as a whole, and North-East India in particular. The study focused on a detailed examination of 20 villages in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, analysing the functioning and achievements of these villages from 2010 to 2020.

CHAPTER 2

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN MIZORAM AND ARUNACHAL PRADESH

2.1. Introduction

India is one of the biggest democracies in the world with a crystallized feature of periodical elections; rule of law, human rights, and amongst many features, decentralization of power. Local Self-Government is that structure in governance which aimed to render governance to the general public at the local level. It is a governmental jurisdiction at the grass-root level where the local residents elect their representatives called ‘councils’, who would act as the village or locality head, equipped with legal authority.

India is a republic country with the existence of three tiers of government – national, state and local. Apart from the legislation provisions in national government (Parliament) and state governments (Legislatures), the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment provided rural and urban local bodies that offered recognition and protection to local bodies, and to make legislation on their own on certain areas.¹ Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development oversee the responsibility in local self-government. According to a report by the Commonwealth Local Government Forum in 2019, India has a total of 2,67,283 local bodies, out of which 262834 are rural local self-government bodies.²

The 73rd constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 had its profound influence all over India, by providing constitutional status to the village administration in rural areas, viz., the Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI).³ Historically, the erstwhile Arunachal Pradesh, the Northeastern Frontier Tract is inhabited by different tribes, with different tribes managing their own affairs. The Panchayati Raj Institution was a new forum for modern political set up in the state.

¹ Sharma, B. M. (2017). A Step Towards District Government as the Third Tier of Indian Union (With Special Reference to 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments). *Indian Journal of Public Administration*. 56(2).

² A Report on Common Wealth Local Government Forum, 2019.

³ *Op. Cit.* Sharma, B. M. (2017).

Except for the reserved and tribal regions, which are exempt from using the Panchayati Raj system, every state in the country follows a similar PRI structure. With the exception of tribal areas administered by District or Regional Councils in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram, the 73rd Amendment is extended to tribal and forested areas in ten states of India under the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act of 1996 (with certain modifications and exceptions). These provisions were inserted to preserve social and religious norms, customary law, and traditional ways of administering community resources.⁴

Article 243M of the Constitution asserted that nothing in Part – IX shall apply to the Scheduled Areas referred to in clause (1), and the tribal areas referred to in clause (2), of article 244.⁵ Further, it also added that nothing in this Part shall apply to different states like Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram; and also the hill areas in the State of Manipur for which District Councils exist under any law for the time being in force.⁶ Thus, this particular Article of the Constitution laid down protective mechanism for Mizoram to retain village council system as unit of administration in rural areas.

Modern form of democratic and representative polity started to grow its roots in Arunachal Pradesh in the late 1960s. Consequently, the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act was enacted by the state legislative assembly on 1997.⁷ Thus, Arunachal Pradesh followed the footsteps of neighboring states having legal constitutional set up in the grassroot democracy. Thereon, full-fledged Panchayati Raj Institution set up was laid that comprised of Gram Panchayat (village level), Anchal Samiti (intermediate level) and Zila Parishad (district level). Thus, Village Councils in Mizoram was taken up by Local Administration Department;⁸ whereas, Panchayati Raj System in Arunachal Pradesh falls under the jurisdiction of the State's Panchayati Raj Department.

⁴ Faheem, M. (2023). Grassroots Democracy and Local Governance Issues: Perspectives from Rural India. *Revista de Gestão Social e Ambiental*. Vol 17(10).

⁵ Bijoy, C. R. (2012). *Panchayat Raj (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act of 1996*. UNDP.

⁶ Press Information Bureau (2011). *Three Tier Panchayati Raj System*. (2011). Government of India.

⁷ Gyati, A. (2011). Panchayat Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh: A Historical Perspective. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 72(4).

⁸ Prasad, R. N. (1983). A Study of Village Administration in Mizoram. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*. 29(4).

2.2. Theoretical Foundations of Panchayati Raj in India: From the Ideas of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and BR Ambedkar

The concept of Panchayati Raj was never novel to India. Indian villages have had Panchayats, consisting of a council of five individuals, since ancient times; while ‘*panch*’ literally means ‘five’. These Panchayats possessed primarily executive and judicial authority and were responsible for managing matters such as land allocation, tax collection, and resolving conflicts within the community.⁹ Panchayats were instrumental in shaping village’s social, political and economic activities, their decisions were obligated as ‘rule of law’ even though there was no such thing as law.

As far as Panchayati Raj was concerned, three major political leaders of India had exerted their view on the notion of the subject. Mahatma Gandhi advocated for the empowerment of Panchayats as a means to foster economic growth of rural areas.¹⁰ While Nehru has stressed its significance for socio-economic self-sufficiency; Ambedkar also acknowledged the capacity of Panchayati Raj institution to ensure participation of all sections of the society irrespective of caste and gender or any other distinctions through its decentralized model of administration. Hence, acknowledging their significance, framers of the Indian Constitution incorporated a provision for Panchayats in Part IV (Article 40) of the constitution in the DPSP.¹¹

2.2.1. Mahatma Gandhi

Gandhi articulated his ideas regarding village Panchayats. The realization of his idea of a local Panchayat could not be materialized till India achieved independence from British colonial rule. An example of such a concept is presented as follows:

⁹ Nadkarni, M. V. (2021). Seeing PRIs in India and their history from a Gandhian Perspective. In D. Rajasekhar (Ed.), *Handbook of Decentralised Governance and Development in India*. Routledge India.

¹⁰ Mandal, S. (2020). Gandhian ideas of Grassroot Development and Indian Development Policy in 21st Century (Special Reference of Panchayat Raj Institutions). *International Journal of Research – Granthaalayah*. 8(11).

¹¹ Kaur, N. & Singh, B. P. (2022). Impact of 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Constitution of India. *Indian Journal of Law and Legal Research*. 4(5).

*“My concept of village Swaraj entails the establishment of a self-governing community that is self-sufficient in meeting its essential needs, while also relying on neighbouring communities for certain other needs that require interdependence”.*¹²

Therefore, priority of each community is to cultivate its own grain crops and textile for its textile needs. The area should include designated space for livestock, as well as areas for leisure activities and play for both adults and children. Furthermore, if additional land is accessible, it is utilized for cultivating profitable crops, specifically barring ganja, tobacco, opium, and similar substances.¹³

The village upholds a village theatre, school, and public hall. The facility is equipped with its own waterworks to guarantee a reliable and uncontaminated water supply. This can be achieved by utilizing regulated wells or tanks. Education will be mandatory until the completion of final foundational curriculum. Every action is undertaken cooperatively to the greatest extent possible. There is a complete absence of social classes, including the current system of hierarchical untouchability.¹⁴

The village community adopts non-violence as a means of achieving its goals, using the techniques of Satyagraha and non-cooperation. A mandatory village guard service is implemented, with individuals picked on a rotational basis from a registration maintained by the community.¹⁵ The governance of village shall be carried out by a Panchayat consisting of five individuals who are elected on an annual basis by the adult local residents, both male and female, who meet the minimal standards set forth.¹⁶ These will possess all the necessary power and legal control. As there is no conventional system of penalties, this Panchayat serves as a unified body responsible for legislation, judiciary, and executive functions during its term in office.

¹² Cholkar, P. (2005). Making a Village Community: Gandhian Concept of Human Settlement. In Misra, R. P. & Grangrade, K. D. (Eds.) *Gandhian Alternative: Towards Gandhian World Order*. Concept Publishing Company.

¹³ *Op. Cit.* Nadkarni, M. V. (2021).

¹⁴ *Op. Cit.* Cholkar, P. (2005).

¹⁵ *Op. Cit.* Nadkarni, M. V. (2021).

¹⁶ Dwivedi, T., et al. (2021). *Mahatma Gandhi's Relevance in Today's World*. Sharp Digital Prints Pvt. Ltd.

In any contemporary society, village has the potential to transform into a republic without any sort of interference, regardless of the current government. The only meaningful interaction the government has with the community is collecting revenue. Here is an exemplary form of democracy that was founded on the principles of individual liberty. An individual has the power to shape and create their own government. He and his people have the ability to resist the power of the entire world. The law stipulates that every villager is obligated to defend their own and their village's honour, even if it means facing death.

The villagers ought to acquire a level of expertise that would enable the goods they produce to be highly sought for in external markets. Village poets, painters, architects, linguists, and research professionals will be present. Essentially, all the valuable things in life may be found in the villages.¹⁷ Gandhi's concept of a village unit is as powerful as the most powerful one. The population of his fictitious village is comprised of 1000 individuals. A well-organized unit that is self-sufficient may perform effectively.¹⁸

An ideal Indian community is designed to facilitate impeccable sanitation. The cottages are constructed using a locally available material within a five-mile radius, ensuring ample light and ventilation. The houses are equipped with courtyards, allowing the residents to cultivate vegetables for personal consumption and accommodate their livestock.¹⁹ All unnecessary dust will be eliminated from the village alleys and streets. The wells are tailored to meet the specific requirements of the community and will be easily accessible to everyone. The community includes various houses of worship, a central meeting place, a common area for grazing cattle, a cooperative dairy, primary and secondary schools with a focus on industrial education, and village Panchayats for resolving conflicts. The system generates its own crops, vegetables, and fruits, as well as its own Khadi fabric.

¹⁷ Garg, B. S. & Raut, A. V. (2015). Adarsh Gram: A Gandhian Dream of Gram Swaraj. *Indian Journal of Community Medicine*. 40(1).

¹⁸ *Op. Cit.* Cholkar, P. (2005).

¹⁹ *Op. Cit.* Nadkarni, M. V. (2021).

Gandhi unequivocally stated that the accumulation of both economic and political authority would contravene the fundamental tenets of participatory democracy. And hence, Swaraj was the solution. Gandhi proposed the establishment of village republics as a means to encourage decentralization. These republics would serve as both platforms for alternate political systems and as entities with economic self-sufficiency.²⁰ In a decentralized society, a village is the smallest unit. Politically, a village is small enough to allow every individual to directly participate in the process of decision-making, which was the fundamental principle of participatory democracy.

According to Mahatma Gandhi, utilization of local resources is essential for the growth of Panchayat Raj system. The Panchayats, together with the Gram Sabhas, should be structured in a manner that enabled them to effectively identify the locally available resources for advancement in the fields of agriculture and industry.²¹ The Gram Panchayat, comprised of adult villagers who meet the minimal standards, both male and female, govern the village on an annual basis.

In terms of the Gandhian perspective, as Cholkar²² stated, the Panchayat is expected to engage in three categories of activities: administrative, municipal, and developmental. The Indian National Congress took on the task of popularizing the concept of 'Panchayats' through artwork. Starting in 1920, the congress initiated the historical non-Cooperation movement, which involved boycotting government courts and establishing village Panchayats as alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. The diligent work and relentless efforts of Congressmen, which had dispersed themselves across the villages, led to the establishment of several Panchayats due to various circumstances. Mahatma Gandhi advocated for the implementation of Panchayati Raj for the foundation of India's political system. Panchayati Raj is a decentralized style of governance in which each community is responsible for its own affairs. Subsequently, the time frame for this particular form of vision was altered to Gram Swaraj, which denotes self-governance at the village level.

²⁰ *Op. Cit.* Garg, B. S. & Raut, A. V. (2015).

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Op. Cit.* Cholkar, P. (2005).

Mahatma Gandhi envisioned that true democracy could be achieved through active participation of people at the village level, a concept known as ‘Gram Swarajya’. He advocated for the establishment of Gram Swarajya inside the village.²³ His concept of Gram Swarajya is founded on the belief that every village should have authentic democracy, where each individual takes responsibility for fulfilling their own essential requirements. The achievement of true self-governance, known as Swarajya, cannot be accomplished by centralizing authority in the hands of a few individuals. Instead, power must be distributed among a larger number of people. This can be achieved through the implementation of Panchayati Raj system, which is particularly effective due to the high proportion of population residing in rural areas.

Mahatma Gandhi firmly believed that in order to achieve complete self-rule, the government must grant Gram Swaraj for the rural people, which constitute over 85% of the country’s inhabitants. Gandhi believed that genuine Swaraj, or self-rule, could not be attained by concentrating power in the hands of a select few individuals or influential figures, such as elected representatives.²⁴ Instead, he argued that Swaraj could only be achieved by decentralizing power and empowering the rural villagers who reside in the countryside. Mahatma Gandhi always advocated for the principle of genuine democracy in rural areas, which are home to large segments of the population.

2.2.2. Jawaharlal Nehru

Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India, made his most significant contribution to the development of Indian nation by establishing a strong foundation for its democratic institutions and ensuring their legitimacy. It is a significant accomplishment that had a greater and more widespread impact than any of the beliefs he previously employed to influence India’s intellectuals periodically. Expanding upon the influence of nationalist movement, the country has experienced the infiltration of new institutional advancements, particularly at the lowest levels of nation. Implementation of the new multi-tier structure of Panchayati Raj has resulted

²³ *Op. Cit.* Dwivedi, T., et al. (2021).

²⁴ *Ibid.*

in a deeper integration of democratic institutions into society, as advocated by the progressive leaders at the national level.

Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, regarded Panchayats as a crucial socio-economic and political establishment at the local village level. During the inauguration of Panchayati Raj in Rajasthan in 1959, he emphasized the significance of individuals assuming responsibility.²⁵ He acknowledged that uplifting millions of villages was a formidable undertaking and attributed the slow progress to our reliance on bureaucratic systems. Nehru believed that an officer was likely essential due to their expertise, but this can only occur if individuals assume responsibility for themselves.²⁶ The people should not only be consulted, but also given effective power. Jawaharlal Nehru proposed that Panchayati Raj bodies should take on the role of addressing the needs of all individuals in the village, serving as a safeguard against illness, unemployment, illiteracy, and other disadvantages.²⁷

Nehru implemented Panchayati Raj due to a multitude of factors. Initially, he held a strong belief in the principles of liberalism, which he acquired while studying in England and also due to the influence of his father, Moti Lal Nehru, who had been profoundly devoted to this ideology. Furthermore, Nehru's decision to implement Panchayati Raj can also be attributed to the impact of Mahatma Gandhi on him. Furthermore, Nehru's decision to implement Panchayati Raj was motivated by his desire to ensure the success of Village Development Programme in India.²⁸ Furthermore, Nehru's choice to implement Panchayati Raj in all Indian states was motivated by his vision of nation-building, which aimed to establish the influence of central government in the outer regions. Balwant Rai Mehta's plan for democratic decentralization may serve as a valuable tool in achieving this goal. Furthermore, as noted by Paul Wallace, Nehru's approach was characterized by politicization and

²⁵ Singh, R. & Malik, S. (2020). Nehru's Paradigm of Panchayati Raj and its Contemporary Relevance. In Baljit Singh (Ed.), *Revisiting Nehru in Contemporary India*. Routledge India.

²⁶ Tyagi, Y. (1993). Nehru's Vision of Planned Development for India. In N. B. Das Gupta et al., (Eds.) *Nehru and Planning in India*. Concept Publishing Company.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Op. Cit.* Singh, R. & Malik, S. (2020).

decentralization, and the implementation of Panchayati Raj achieved both of these objectives.²⁹

During the inauguration of Panchayat in Nagaur on 2nd of October 1959, Jawaharlal Nehru expressed that India had embarked on establishing the fundamental principles of democracy or Panchayati Raj in this country.³⁰ The inauguration of Panchayati Raj program on Mahatma Gandhi's birthday is a significant and appropriate event. Advancement of our nation is intricately linked to the advancement of our rural areas. Consequently, it is observed that it was necessary for each village to establish a village Panchayat having enhanced authority to support its economic endeavours. Everyone in one Panchayat should be treated with equality, without any differentiation based on gender or social status.

2.2.3. B. R. Ambedkar

B.R. Ambedkar opposed the establishment of Panchayats due to his concerns about the perpetuation of caste dominance.³¹ He was primarily perceived as an advocate of equality and a champion of social change. In relation to the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, it is worth noting his belief that the solution lied in establishing a fair and genuinely democratic Panchayati Raj framework throughout the country. He advocated for the implementation of reservation in Panchayats to ensure the inclusion of all marginalized social groups.³² Ambedkar expressed his stance on decentralization, stating that he would only support it if self-governing institutions included provisions that ensured special representation for the depressed classes, in order to safeguard their rights. Without such provisions, he could not agree to the initial part of the Bill.³³

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Chakrabarty, B. (2006). Jawaharlal Nehru and administrative reconstruction in India: A mere limitation of the past or a creative initiative? *Journal of South Asian Studies*. 29(1).

³¹ Weiner, M. (2001). The Struggle for Equality: Caste in Indian Politics. In Atul Kohli (Ed.) *The Success of India's Democracy*. Cambridge University Press.

³² Verma, V. (2019). A Crisis of Representation: Interests, Identities and Politics. *Journal of Social Inclusion Studies*. 5(1).

³³ *Op. Cit.* Chakrabarty, B. (2006).

Gandhi and Ambedkar held divergent viewpoints on the subject of Panchayat Raj. Gandhi considered the principles of Gram Swaraj as well as Panchayati Raj to be essential components of his political philosophy and vision for the future of Indian nation. B.R. Ambedkar's perspective on Panchayat Raj was influenced by the actual conditions of rural living in India during his time. His personal experiences provided further evidence for this. Ambedkar regarded Gandhian concept of Panchayati Raj with fervour. According to Ambedkar, those villages were simply a breeding ground for narrow-mindedness, a stronghold of ignorance and sectarianism. Under his Chairmanship, the proposed Constitution did not include any provisions on Panchayat Raj.³⁴ While formulating the Constitution of India, the Panchayati Raj Institutions were included in the non-justiciable section of the Constitution known as the Directive Principles of State Policy, specifically mentioned in Article 40.³⁵

In 1960, Nehru delivered a speech based on the recommendations of Balwantrai Mehta Committee, declaring that the implementation of Panchayati Raj would be a very transformative development for independent India. In the present-day environment, Panchayati Raj has become a potent political tool for Dalits to bring about significant changes in the way village functions, a cause that Baba Saheb had previously expressed empathy towards. B.R. Ambedkar emphasized the importance of a comprehensive and enduring process of rebuilding our nation, characterized by inclusive economic development and cultural assimilation, free from any form of caste-based discrimination.

Ambedkar asserted that the liberation of Dalits in India could only be achieved by a comprehensive strategy consisting of education, protest, and establishment of structured institutions.³⁶ Throughout his lifetime, he actively advocated for social fairness. According to his perspective, the caste system comprises not solely a division of labour, but also a division of the individuals who perform the labour. It poses a significant barrier to the progress of economic

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Kapoor, V. (2010). *Human Rights Based Approach to Development and People's Empowerment through Participatory Governance: A Critical Examination of Panchayati Raj Institutions in India*. Centre for Study of Human Rights – LSE.

³⁶ Velaskar, P. (2012). Education for Liberation: Ambedkar's Thought and Dalit Women's Perspectives. *Contemporary Education Dialogue*. 9(2).

development. It hampers mobility, resulting in decreased productivity. Untouchability is a severe kind of oppression than slavery, as it involves exploiting of other citizens.

Ambedkar stated that the solution to the issue lied in establishing a fair and genuinely democratic Panchayat Raj system in the country, in accordance with the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts. He advocated for the implementation of quotas in Panchayats to ensure the participation of all marginalized communities in rural governance.³⁷ However, these Constitutional Amendments were ratified by Parliament in December 1992 to establish local self-governance in both rural and urban areas of India. The Acts were enacted as the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 on April 24th, 1993; and the Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, 1992 on June 1st, 1993. The Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Act of 1994, in accordance with the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, has established explicit proportional reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, as well as one-third reservation for women.³⁸

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act was passed with optimism and anticipation, as B.R. Ambedkar stressed the importance of including Dalit participation in decision-making processes and in the administrative apparatus responsible for implementing and monitoring policies, initiatives, and programs. He advocated for the inclusion of Dalits at every level, ranging from the legislative branch to the implementation of laws. He advocated for an equitable policy that aimed to incorporate Dalits into all aspects of the democratic system, economy, society, and cultural sphere.³⁹ Therefore, his method is comprehensive and all-encompassing. The Act also includes provisions for the allocation of seats and positions of authority to Scheduled Castes at Panchayati Raj Institutions. Nevertheless, although the hurdles have not completely vanished, there is a heightened necessity to enhance the inclusivity of the Panchayat.

³⁷ *Op. Cit.* Chakrabarty, B. (2006).

³⁸ Balaramulu, C. & Ravinder, D. (2017). Governance of Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh: The Need for Revitalisation. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*. 54(1).

³⁹ *Op. Cit.* Kapoor, V. (2010).

There is a misunderstanding regarding Ambedkar's concept of decentralization. He was concerned that giving more authority to the village in a society with a very unequal distribution of assets and power would only continue to exploit those who have been deprived of resources. On October 6th, 1932, B.R. Ambedkar delivered a statement in the Bombay Presidency Assembly, expressing his opposition to the passage of the Panchayats Bill in the province of Bombay.⁴⁰ While he did not oppose the idea of devolution, he argued that the principle of self-government for India would only be acceptable if there was a guarantee that every single self-governing institution included provisions for special representation of the depressed classes, in order to safeguard their rights.

Nevertheless, he emphasized that the conventional Panchayats were inadequate for managing a contemporary and all-encompassing government. He believed that achieving this required implementing affirmative action, which would guarantee representation of all communities in local governments, particularly in a society characterized by inequality.

2.3. Local Self-Government as an Institution of Decentralization of Power

Decentralization has been a prevailing tendency in global politics. According to a 1998 report by the World Bank, nearly all of the 75 developing and transitional nations with populations over 5 million had initiated a process of political devolution, with only 12 exceptions.⁴¹ Central to this change are several intricate yet interconnected ideas. Firstly, an ideological change has occurred, questioning the validity of central state-led growth due to its negative impact on national economic growth and effective policy implementation.⁴² Secondly, political change that referred to a political strategy that advocated for the decentralization of public administration and the establishment of locally elected authorities. This approach aims to create governance systems that were more effective in addressing the needs of disadvantaged and politically marginalized sections in society. Another

⁴⁰ *Op. Cit.* Chakrabarty, B. (2006).

⁴¹ Crook, R. C. & Manor, J. (1998). *Democracy and Decentralisation in South Asia and West Africa: Participation, Accountability and Performance*. Cambridge University Press.

⁴² Johnson, C. & Start, D. (2001). *Rights, Claims and Capture: Understanding the Politics of Pro-Poor Policy*. Overseas Development Institute.

interconnected concept posits that democratic decentralization served as a political tactic employed by national elites to uphold legitimacy and exert power during political fragmentation. It can be contended that the traditional nation state had been undermined due to economic liberalization, political regionalism, and the emergence of influential inter- and sub-national actors. These factors have also created an environment conducive to the development of more localized identities.⁴³

As Local Self-Government bodies lie at the grassroots of government administration, they serve as a medium through which the government and public directly interact with each other. With rural local bodies in the administration, citizens can directly participate or involve in the government. However, this can be possible only through decentralisation of power, by enabling the rural local bodies some sort of power to oversee the administration and functions of the government in their hands as authorised by the state governments.

2.3.1. Decentralisation in Village Council

In order to oversee development in Village Council administration, a system of power distribution is needed. In other words, decentralization of power is the key to a successful democratic polity. Village Council provides a platform where the local self-government institution and the general public work together to improve the administration of rural population, as well as ushering a gradual development in the welfare of administration. Decentralisation of power involves a distribution of power in different tiers of government – village, block, district, state and national so that every tier of governance had their responsibility and duty performed. In planning a public policy, executing the policy and initiating and management of the policy and programs of the government, all the tiers of government were equally important.⁴⁴

In India, a planned document called the Five Year Plan was formulated to implement every 5 years. It generally consists of planned activity which the government focuses on it for a specific time period. The 1st Five Year Plan was

⁴³ Giddens, A. (1998). *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*. Cambridge University Press.

⁴⁴ Pakhuangte, K. (2018). *Mizoram Village Council Puitu*. State Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj – Mizoram.

launched in the year 1951, where focus was given to emancipation of village localities, launching the Community Development Program (CDP). The underlying objective of this program is to give some sort of authority to the people to manage their own affairs in various matters related to village development. The approach here was 'Top-Down Method' which literally mean giving power from the top until the lowest strata of government.⁴⁵

The 2nd and 3rd Five Year Plans, during 1960-70 under the study report of Balwantrai Mehta Committee regarded that distribution of power was necessary in the Village, Block and District level of administration. Therefore, a need for local system of governance was discussed, i.e., the institution of Panchayati Raj. Accordingly, it was implemented in some states. However, since Article 40 of the Constitution empowers states to abide or not to do so, it was a difficult task to ensure its implementation in all states. Seeing its unsuccessful results, the Ashok Mehta Committee was constituted in 1977 which recommended establishing administrative system in village and block level only.⁴⁶

The 4th and 5th Five Year Plans, during 1970-80 envisaged the idea that more funds were to be allocated in the downward level of administration. The Gadgil formula was put in place, as a form of fiscal policy, where 30% of state fund to be allotted as a form of budget fund, whereas the remaining 70% to be given as a form of loan. However, since these formulae were deemed unsuccessful and failed to reach the target groups, the Central Government then initiated another Seven (7) schemes.⁴⁷ Some of which were:

1. The Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Project (PIREP)
2. The Small Farmers Development Agency Programme (SFDAP)
3. The Tribal Areas Development Programme (TADP)
4. The Hill Areas Development Programme (HADP)
5. The Minimum Needs Programme (MNP), among others.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

From this point, Rural Development Blocks start to function instrumental in working as a platform to manage village development processes.

The 6th and 7th Five Year Plans (1980-90) gave importance to planning in District and below administration. Under the leadership of Prof. C.H. Hanumantha Rao, a study was done to understand how District Plan was necessary and how to undertake it. The administrative functioning for rural development propagated by the GVK Rao Committee in 1985 was accepted.

The 8th and 9th Five Year Plans (1990-2000) saw a new chapter in an attempt to establish decentralisation of power in the administration. The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India in 1992 gave Panchayati Raj Institution a constitutional status. Thereon, any area other than Scheduled Area shall establish Panchayati Raj institution, which functions as unit of village administration.⁴⁸ For states under Scheduled Area, as per recommendation by Bhuria Committee, Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 also known as PESA was enacted. Thus, states such as Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan and Telangana had implemented the provision of Panchayati Raj system. Whereas, tribal areas in Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Assam under the Sixth Schedule provisions had their established administration for rural administration.

Decentralisation of power had four main aspects; functional, financial, administrative and political.⁴⁹ The authoritative allocation of values to make laws and decisions, policy framing, financial management concepts, administrative autonomy, political power – all involved in decentralisation of power.

When Central Government allotted funds to State Governments, they were done in an orderly manner. Gadgil formula was used – looking at the overall territorial expansion, population, poverty population, GDP, and also how the state undertook the Centrally Sponsored Schemes as a parameter to allot fund for the

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Choudhury, J. & Gupta, P. (2016). Decentralisation of Local Self-Government in India and Bangladesh: A Comparative Analysis. *Conference on Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences (SHSS-2016)*. Singapore.

states.⁵⁰ Those features were put into consideration by the Finance Commission, which was formed after every five years as provided in Article 280 of the Constitution. And the provision for allocation of funds for Panchayati Raj Institution was also mentioned in Article 243 (i).⁵¹

Moreover, decentralisation of power is important in the management of service sector. It is necessary for Central Government or State Government to distribute power so that the central as well as state administration could be checked upon. The same case is with local self-government, i.e., village council. For instance, if power is given to village council to look after the management of Middle School and Primary School in their area, then the irregularity and limitation of teachers that hampered village education can be checked. Likewise, doctors, nurses, workers and staffs in the Community/Public Health Centres could be checked upon by village council of their area, so that service nature could be improved.

2.3.2. Decentralisation in Panchayati Raj Institution

The Panchayati Raj Institutions are one of India's most significant political reforms, helping to promote grassroots democracy and ensure more public engagement in the political process. One of the main goals of Panchayati Raj system is to give local residents more influence by decentralising authority. Gandhi was right when he said that freedom must start at the bottom. Every village should have a republic or panchayat having the power and resources to realise the village's potential for social and economic development. In Article 40 of the Constitution, Gandhi's ideas were articulated. It directs the states to take measures to create village panchayats with such authority and rights as might be necessary to allow them to function as a unit of self-government.⁵²

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) was established on May 4, 2004 to concentrate on the decentralization of powers and the empowering of Panchayats as

⁵⁰ Ramalingom, R. & Kurup, K. N. (1991). Plan Transfers to States: Revised Gadgil Formula: An Analysis. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 26(10).

⁵¹ Ratna, P. & Dahiya, J. (2022). Decentralization and Challenges Related to Panchayati Raj Institutions in India. *Asian Journal of Sociological Research*. 5(1).

⁵² Siga, G. (2015). Decentralized Democracy: Evaluation of Panchayati Raj in Arunachal Pradesh. *International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies (IJHSSS)*. 1(4).

local self-government entities.⁵³ This was achieved by separating the Panchayati Raj Division from the Ministry of Rural Development. The primary role of the Ministry is responsible for overseeing the implementation of Part IX of the Constitution, which was added by the Constitution (Seventy Third Amendment) Act, 1992. This includes the provisions of Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996, as well as Article 243 ZD of Part IX-A of the Constitution, which pertains to the District Planning Committees. These committees are guided by the Eleventh Schedule, which provides a list of 29 matters that the State Legislatures might consider delegating to the Panchayats, in order to ensure that they functioned as autonomous governing bodies.⁵⁴

Additional functions include providing support to the Empowered Sub-Committee of the National Development Council (NDC) in enhancing the administrative and financial powers of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). This involves evaluating the Centrally Sponsored Schemes of Ministries that pertained to the subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule, in order to define the roles and responsibilities of the PRIs. The department also focuses on enhancing the skills and knowledge of elected representatives of PRIs through capacity building and training programs. Furthermore, it aims to improve the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of the PRIs.

2.4. Local Administration Department of Mizoram

The Mizoram Administration established a new division called the Local Administration Department in 1972 with the establishment of Union Territory of Mizoram. The department was established on 1st January, 1973.⁵⁵ Except for the villages under the three autonomous district councils of Lai, Mara, and Chakma, the Department assumed responsibility for the administration of Village Councils and its related issues. The Department's principal objective is to empower the Village Councils while providing them with a strong support structure in order to ensure their

⁵³ Jha, B. (2019). Rural Local Self-Government. In Abhay Prasad Singh & Krishna Murari (Eds.) *Constitutional Government and Democracy in India*. Pearson India Education Services Pvt. Ltd.

⁵⁴ Ananth, P. (2014). Panchayati Raj in India. *Journal of Education & Social Policy*. 1(1).

⁵⁵ Lalnithanga, P. (2006). Administration of Justice in Mizoram – Past and Present. In R. N. Prasad & P. Chakraborty (Eds.) *Administration of Justice in Mizoram*. Mittal Publication.

efficient operation.⁵⁶ The Department is entrusted with variety of important functions.⁵⁷

Certain businesses are handled by the local administration department. Housing and Village Council Affairs are two major categories into which the duties can be separated. In Mizoram, village councils are the rural local governments that were the most prominent. The Village Councils have been around for 70 years at this point. The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act of 1954 authorised their establishment. The local administration department is responsible for managing village council business. Every three years, elections were held. The State Election Commission has been in charge of organising and overseeing Village Council elections. Election preparations for the Mizoram Legislative Assembly are similar. Mizoram Election paraphernalia is just like that of Election to Legislative Assembly.

The Department provide possible assistance in the execution of its duties while the Village Councils undertake their own affairs. The Government promptly resolved disputes resulting from boundary demarcation, Jhuming and works to reach a peaceful compromise between the parties (villages).

2.5. Panchayati Raj in Arunachal Pradesh

The Panchayati Raj System's initial stages of development during the NEFA era significantly benefited the lesser-known tribal areas. The isolated indigenous tribal communities were introduced for the first time to contemporary grassroots political processes after which an entirely novel model of collaborative growth and village management was developed, greatly mobilising the tribes.⁵⁸ Thus, both at the

⁵⁶ Handbook of Government of Mizoram Local Administration Department, 2017.

⁵⁷ Functions of Local Administration Department:

- i. Village Council matters and Village Administration.
- ii. Matter relating to Panchayati Raj Institution.
- iii. Naming of Streets, Roads and Village.
- iv. Animal control and taxation.
- v. Park & Recreation, Registration and regulation, Park and Places like Picnic Spots.
- vi. Housing Loan and Advances.
- vii. Local Development works funded under State Plan Fund including Housing assistance outside Aizawl City and its agglomeration.
- viii. Preservation of place of worship of SCs/STs/MCs including burial ground, crematorium.

⁵⁸ *Op. Cit.* Siga, G. (2015).

local and national levels in Arunachal Pradesh, the Panchayat Raj Institutions built the modern political system. It is reasonable to conclude that the establishment of contemporary governing bodies in Arunachal Pradesh had played a significant role in the advancement of rural community.

In the panchayat elections, the populace had an initial chance to exercise their right to vote. The PRIs have so opened the eyes of rural populations to the democratic political process at the local level. People in Arunachal are actively engaged in the electoral process since the inception of Panchayati Raj. As a result of the transition from traditional to elected authority, there are several positive effects on the state's rural leadership patterns.⁵⁹

Political parties operated at the village level, which had a tremendous impact on rural residents' political socialisation and extended their perspectives on politics. The Panchayat leaders took over from the numerically smaller clans as the dominant force in rural affairs. The limited cultural preferences of villagers were minimised as a result of the broadening political perspective of the populace.

Through a strategy of gradual modernization, the Panchayati Raj system therefore gave the long-standing ethnic political structure of Arunachal Pradesh a new dimension. Later, on April 13, 2001 (Act no. 5 of 2001), the President of India gave his assent to the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Bill, 1997, which had been lawfully enacted by the Arunachal Pradesh State Legislative Assembly.⁶⁰ The Arunachal Panchayati Raj Act, 1997, is the name of this law. The NEFA Panchayati Raj Regulation of 1967 was replaced by this Act with a complete regulation that complied with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992. All of Arunachal Pradesh is included under the scope of Act of 1997. This law establishes a three-tier Panchayat structure with increased developmental responsibilities and wider representation.⁶¹

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Modernising the Arunachal Panchayati Raj Institutions in accordance with all India pattern has become a milestone achievement as a result of the new Act. The panchayat bodies have also been revitalised as a result of this development to better represent the socially disadvantaged sections in the state, particularly the tribal women. Additionally, the new Panchayati Raj Act has given substantial developmental responsibilities for accelerating socioeconomic development in Arunachal Pradesh villages. Overall, the Panchayati Raj Institutions have had significant impact on how Arunachal Pradesh has developed its modern political system.

2.6. Village Council as per Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1954

Firstly, it was imperative that many changes have taken place after certain amendments in the Act such as, Lushai Hills District (Village Council) (Amendment) Act, 1999, 2011 and 2014.⁶² According to Section 2 of the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1954, there shall be a Village Council constituted up of one or more villages as determined by the State Government and declared in the Mizoram Gazette. The Act additionally stated that a village might be de-notified at any time if it ceased to be a constituent of a Village Council as a result of widespread emigration of the villagers or if a situation arises that demanded such action for an appropriate reason of administrative, developmental, or security reasons deemed necessary by the Government.⁶³ A Village Council shall be composed of members according to the number of houses it contains.⁶⁴ It can range from three members at minimum to nine members at maximum; women reservation was also ensured in each composition.

⁶² Pakhuangte, K. (2018). *Mizoram Village Council Puitu*. State Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj – Mizoram.

⁶³ Pakhuangte, K. (2018). *Mizoram Village Council Puitu*. State Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj – Mizoram.

⁶⁴ Membership strength of Village Council as per Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1954:

- i. For Village not exceeding 200 households, there shall be 3 (three) elected members, of whom 1 (one) shall be woman.
- ii. For Village with more than 200 households, but not exceeding 500 households, there shall be 5 (five) members, of whom 1 (one) shall be woman.
- iii. For Village with more than 500 households, but not exceeding 1000 households, there shall be 7 (seven) elected members, of whom 2 (two) shall be women
- iv. For Village with more than 1000 households and above, there shall be 9 (nine) elected members, of whom 3 (three) shall be women. (As amended in 2014).

The total number of members as determined by sub-section (2) was elected by adult suffrage in accordance with the Election to Village Councils Rules adopted by the Government under this Act, which provided that the Government might appoint individuals not to exceed the total membership to hold office of the Village Council for that particular Village in instances where an election to a Village Council cannot be held and the circumstance requires immediate constitution of such a Village Council. It also stipulated that the election process for village councils had to be completed before the end of that year preceding the date specified for the Village Council first meeting.

The Government may dissolve a village council if it determines that the number of households in the village had decreased to the point where it was no longer necessary for the village to have its own village council or if it decides that it was essential to merge two or more village councils for convenience of administration. In such a scenario, the village was to be made up of nearest village with a village council as defined in subsection (1) or as otherwise determined by the Government.

The total quantity of members that constituted a village council was decided by the state government, subject to the limitations of subsection (2). A list of the village(s) must be issued in the Mizoram Gazette for the purposes of this section by the State Government. The State Election Commission shall have supervision, direction, and control over the creation of the voter database and the conduct of the Village Council elections.

2.6.1. Qualification of Members⁶⁵

⁶⁵ A person is ineligible to run for office and to serve on the Village Council, if:

- i. he is not a member of a Scheduled tribe;
- ii. he is under the age of 25;
- iii. he is not registered to vote in the village where he seeks office;
- iv. he is a member of another Village Council;
- v. he has been declared mentally incompetent by a competent court of authority;
- vi. Whether the offence occurred before or after the start of this Act, he has been found guilty under the Lushai Hills Autonomous District (Administration of Justice) Rules, 1953, or under another Indian law currently in effect, unless three years have passed since his conviction and, if incarcerated, since his release from jail.

The criteria for qualification of membership of Village Council were provided in The Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act, 1953 (Lushai Hills Act. No. V of 1953).⁶⁶ The Act stated that a person must be member of Scheduled Tribe, he/she must attain the age of at least 25 years to ensure maturity, and he/she mandatorily shall be registered to vote in the village where he seeks office. A person contesting for election in a particular village council shall not be a member of village council in other locality; and, a person was ineligible to run for office if he/she was declared mentally incompetent by a competent court of authority.

Further, in terms of criminal concerns, a person shall be free of charges against him if, he/she committed offence under Lushai Hills Autonomous District (Administration of Justice) Rules, 1953, or any Indian law in effect before or after the start of the Act. Therefore, the Act mandated such convicted candidate to run for office after three years from the time of conviction, or in some cases, three years from release from imprisonment. Another important criterion for membership of village council was that, a person shall not hold any office of profit from the Central Government or state government. After taking into consideration all these, the Booth Level Officer, or Returning Officer for election to Village Council, scrutinized the nomination papers of candidates.

2.6.2. Tenure of Office of Village Council

Every Village Council shall remain operational for duration of five years from the date specified for its first meeting unless sooner dissolved in accordance with section 25 of this Act (as per latest Amendment of the act in 2015). With the exception that the State Government may, by order, alter or shorten the term of office of a Village Council for such periods, not to exceed an aggregate of eighteen months.

vii. He holds any profit-making positions with the federal or state governments. Profit-making positions or 'Office of profit' in this phrase refers to a regular payment given in the form of salary or wages.

⁶⁶ Pakhuangte, K. (2018). *Mizoram Village Council Puitu*. State Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj – Mizoram.

Further, it provided that the election procedure for a Village Council shall be accomplished before the office's tenure terminate.⁶⁷

2.6.3. Tenure of Membership

Every member of a village council is required to serve for the whole duration of the council. However, if a village council is dissolved according to section 25 and a new election is conducted, the newly elected members must fulfil the remaining period of the council's term. The period of service for a member elected to fill a sporadic vacancy is the remaining duration of that member's tenure. The village council has the authority to declare a member's seat empty if they fail to attend three consecutive council meetings without permission, as determined in a specially convened meeting. Following this event, the member will have the opportunity to put forward their case, and if required, the Village council will inform the State Government of their decision.

2.6.4. Executive Composition

Each village council will consist of a president, a vice president, a treasurer, and a secretary. These four individuals will be in charge of carrying out the village council's executive obligations. The Vice President will act as Treasurer if a Village Council with three (3) seats only has two members due to any reason whatsoever.⁶⁸

2.7. Formation of Gram Panchayat under the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1997

The Arunachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1997 (Act No. 5 of 2001) was an Act enacted by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Arunachal Pradesh. It replaced the Northeast Frontier Agency Panchayat Raj Regulation, 1967. The Act was extended to the whole territory of Arunachal Pradesh, which means that all villages in Arunachal Pradesh should have a grassroots democracy based on the Panchayat Raj system. The Act came into force on 13th March, 2001 when the

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ See Appendix – I 'Executive Composition of Village Council'.

government by notification declared so.⁶⁹ The Arunachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1997 specifically mentioned the formation of Gram Sabha, Gram Panchayat, Anchali Samiti and Zilla Parishad.

2.7.1. Gram Sabha

The Gram Sabha simply means a group of people forming a village body, and those individuals involved within can be registered in the electoral roll in that village. As per the order of Government, the Gram Sabha convenes a village meeting from time to time. The interval of these meetings shall not be longer than six (6) months. The Gram Panchayat, which consists of elected members from Gram Sabha shall prepare all the necessary agenda, and put to the floor for discussion.⁷⁰ Those matters which were commonly raised for discussion includes – Firstly, yearly report of the Gram Panchayat with matters pertaining to accounts and finance; administrative proceeding report for the preceding fiscal year; brief overview of the developmental programs implemented in the preceding year; and, intended developmental initiative to be implemented in the present year.⁷¹

Apart from these, various matters that concerned welfare mechanisms and overall village administrative systems and necessary actions were also commonly discussed. Besides, the Gram Sabha exercise certain functions such as, aiding in matters related to implementation of development programs undertaken by Gram Panchayat; proposing and identifying the beneficiaries among different stakeholders upon which development programs shall be implemented.⁷² The above-mentioned resolutions in order to be enacted need an approval in terms of majority of votes among the members present in the particular Gram Sabha. Other than these, there are certain matters in which the Gram Sabha may fail to identify the beneficiaries, or fail to make a concrete conclusion. In such matters, the Gram Panchayat may stand up to

⁶⁹ The Arunachal Pradesh Gazette. (2018). The Arunachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Act, 2018. (Act No. 6 of 2018) AP EOG NO 148 Vol XXV Dtd 21.4.2018.

⁷⁰ Dhavaleshwar, C. U. (2014). People's Participation in Gram Sabha and Rural Development – A Study. *International Journal of Research in Commerce and Management*. 5(1).

⁷¹ Kumar, D. J. (2018). Gram Sabha and Deliberative Democracy. In Teresa Joseph & Siby K. Joseph (Eds.) *Deliberative Democracy: Understanding the Indian Experience*. eBook. Taylor & Francis Group.

⁷² *Ibid*.

organise a voluntary social service that would induce a welfare program for the society; for the promotion of adult education and family related welfare schemes; and, to protect and promote unity and integration among various sections of the society. Thus, Gram Sabha meeting constitutes an important platform in which development and various keys for improvement in the working and functioning of the village administration was discussed, resolved, and enacted. Due to its immense importance, all meetings of the Gram Sabha were chaired by Chairperson of the Gram Panchayat, and in his/her absence, other leaders from Gram Panchayat sit on his/her behalf.

To initiate a meeting of the Gram Sabha, and to discuss programs of action the necessary quorum of Gram Sabha was one-tenth of its total membership. If the required member for the meeting were not present, the meeting Chairperson shall wait for thirty (30) minutes. Even after waiting for thirty minutes, if in a case the required members were not present or turned up, the Chairperson shall adjourn the meeting to the same time on the same day in the coming week.⁷³ Thus, it was evident that people in the village also had to perform their duty as citizens to attend the meeting. The essence of democracy and decentralisation of administration was manifested through the institution of Gram Sabha, where citizens took part in discussion and resolution of important village issues and developmental processes.

2.7.2. Gram Panchayat

The Gram Panchayat generally refers to a village or group of villages that have a population of not less than three hundred (300) individuals. The Deputy Commissioner, in accordance with the general order of government can declare any area having such requirements as a Gram Panchayat to constitute a unit of administration. Thus, the provision of Arunachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1997 can be implemented in such afore-mentioned area.⁷⁴ There are also other certain jurisdictions where power was vested in the hands of Deputy Commissioner such as - increasing/enlarging the area of a particular Gram Panchayat; diminishing/shrinking

⁷³ *Op. Cit.* Dhavaleshwar, C. U. (2014).

⁷⁴ Mibang, T. & Modi, K. (2019). Role of Panchayati Raj institutions in Rural Development: An Analytical Study of Arunachal Pradesh. *Asian Review of Social Sciences*. 8(2).

the area of a particular Gram Panchayat, changing the name of a particular Gram Panchayat area; declaring any area ceased to be a Gram Panchayat area.⁷⁵ Due to these provisions where the Deputy Commissioner was eligible to enlarge or diminish particular Gram Panchayat, single village having huge population tend to bifurcate their Gram Panchayat area as more than one unit of Gram Panchayat. In areas such as hamlets or farmland where there was no sufficient number of individuals to constitute a Gram Panchayat, the region shall fall into the jurisdiction of the nearest village Gram Panchayat.

The Gram Panchayat consisted of members of the Gram Sabha, which shall be elected as one member for every hundred population. In case the population of a particular village failed to reach hundred (100), but attained fifty (50), then one (1) member can be elected as a representative of that village. And, in case the population of a particular village fail to reach three hundred (300), but attained one hundred fifty (150), the number of elected Gram Panchayat members can be increased to two (2). In a population more than three hundred (300) or so, the number of elected members of the Gram Panchayat was one member per hundred populations.⁷⁶

Thus, the membership of Gram Panchayat can differ from village to village, depending on the population of the village. However, unlike Village Council where there was a possibility of large number of elected Village Council members in a village, Gram Panchayats usually have small elected representatives or members. This is mainly due to split in administrative regions in a village; some villages opted to have two or more Gram Panchayat area rather than one big unit of administration. Most villages with more than 400 houses generally split administration in to two or more; therefore, one village would have one or more Gram Panchayat units.

⁷⁵ Swain, P. C. (2008). *The Grassroots Dynamics in Arunachal Pradesh*. APH Publishing Corporation.

⁷⁶ *Op. Cit.* Mibang, T. & Modi, K. (2019).

Table 2.1: Membership capacity of Gram Panchayat in relation to village population.

| Sl. No. | Village population | No. of members of Gram Panchayat |
|---------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. | Less than 100, but attained 50 | 1 |
| 2. | Less than 300, but attained 150 | 2 |
| 3. | Attained 300, but less than 400 | 3 |
| 4. | Attained 400, but less than 500 | 4 |

Source: Arunachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1997.

Election to the Gram Panchayat shall be held with ballot system. The conduct, supervision, and other necessary measures for conducting election to the Gram Panchayat fall under the responsibility of State Government. The tenure of office for the Gram Panchayat shall be five (5) years from the date in which official notification was declared by the Deputy Commissioner.⁷⁷ It was the legal authority of the Deputy Commissioner to publish in a prescribed manner the name of elected members of the Gram Panchayat. In election to the Gram Panchayat every voter has as many votes as there are members to be elected, but no voter can give more than one (1) vote to a single candidate. Not less than one-third of the total seats in the Gram Panchayat shall be reserved for women. The Deputy Commissioner shall also make a declaration defining and determining the number of seats.⁷⁸

In the first meeting of every Gram Panchayat, the meeting quorum shall elect as per the prescribe manner, one of its members to be the Chairperson of Gram Panchayat. The Chairperson shall play the role of a convener as a prescribed authority in every meeting of the Gram Panchayat. The term of office of Chairperson shall cease on the expiry of his term of his office as member of the Gram Panchayat. There are certain responsibilities of the Chairperson of Gram Panchayat as per Arunachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1997.⁷⁹ However, the Chairperson shall not

⁷⁷ Siga, G. (2015). Decentralized Democracy: Evaluation of Panchayati Raj in Arunachal Pradesh. *International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies (IJHSSS)*. 1(4)

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ responsibilities of the Chairperson of the Gram Panchayat:

- i. Convening and presiding over the meeting of Gram Sabha.
- ii. Convening and presiding over the meeting of Gram Panchayat.
- iii. Maintaining the important records of the Gram Panchayat.

exercise powers, perform or discharge a duty on matters which were against the direction made by the Government. Chairperson/s can also be removed from their office in such manner as provided in section 64 of this Act.⁸⁰

2.7.3. Election in Gram Panchayat

Any individual with a valid voter ID card within the constituency is eligible to vote for the election to Gram Panchayat in their area, and any individual whose name did not appear in the voters list were ineligible to vote. No individual can cast a vote in more than one constituency, if that happens so, all his/her vote shall be deemed invalid. There can be no alteration in transposition and delete of entry in the electoral roll in Gram Panchayat constituency after the nomination was filed, or before the completion of election to the office of Gram Panchayat. The members of Gram Panchayat were elected for a term of five years.⁸¹

Article 243 (K) of the Constitution provides that a State Election Commission comprises of State Election Commissioner who is appointed by the Governor shall be in responsible for overseeing, directing, and controlling the creation of electoral rolls for and the conduct of all Panchayat elections.⁸² The terms and conditions of service and duration of the position of State Election Commissioner shall remain such as the Governor may by rule determine, subject to the provisions of any law passed by the Legislature of a State; provided, however, that the State Election Commissioner cannot be dismissed from the office except in the exact same way and on the same grounds as a Judge of a High Court and that the terms of services of State Election Commissioner could not be altered to his disadvantage after getting appointed.

-
- iv. Financial and executive administration of the Gram Panchayat were also the general responsibility of the Chairperson.
 - v. To exercise administrative supervision among the staffs of the Gram Panchayat in matters related to works and services that were placed at the disposal of the Gram Panchayat by other authorities.
 - vi. Making authorised order, exercising powers and performing functions which were provided in the Act.

⁸⁰ *Op. Cit.* Siga, G. (2015).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Op. Cit.* Swain, P. C. (2008).

When authorised by the State Election Commission, the Governor of a State is obligated to make staff accessible to the State Election Commission in order for it to carry out the duties assigned to it by clause (1). Subject to the requirements of this Constitution, a State's legislature may pass laws that address whatever problems pertaining to or associated with elections for Panchayats.⁸³

2.7.4. Composition of Panchayats under Article 243 C

The Legislature of a state may, subject to the provisions of this Part, enact laws regulating the composition of Panchayats, provided that, to the greatest extent possible, there shall be uniformity throughout the state in the ratio between the population of a Panchayat's territorial area at any tier and the number of seats within that Panchayat to be filled by election. Each Panchayat area can be divided into territorial constituencies according to a way that the proportion between the total population within every constituency and the total number of seats provided to it, so far as reasonable, remain identical throughout the Panchayat area. All seats in a Panchayat shall be filled by individuals elected directly from geographical constituencies in the Panchayat area.⁸⁴ A state's legislature has the power to enact laws that will ensure representation;

- (a) Among the Chairpersons of the Panchayats at the village level, within the Intermediate Panchayats, or, in the case of a State lacking Intermediate Panchayats, in the District Panchayats;
- (b) Of the Chairpersons of the Panchayats at the Intermediate Panchayats, in the District Panchayats.

The Chairperson of a Panchayat and other members of a Panchayat, regardless of whether they are selected by direct election from territorial legislatures in the Panchayat area, shall have the right to vote in the meetings of Panchayats. This right to vote is shared by members of the House of people and the Legislative Assembly of the state who represent constituencies that entirely or partially comprise a Panchayat area at a level other than the village level. The Chairman of a Panchayat

⁸³ *Op. Cit.* Ananth, P. (2014).

⁸⁴ *Op. Cit.* Siga, G. (2015).

at the village level can be chosen in accordance with the laws of state's legislature, and a Panchayat at the intermediate or district level must be chosen by and from among the members of that level.

2.7.5. Duration of Panchayats

Each Panchayat continues to operate for five years from the date set for its initial meeting and no longer unless earlier dissolution is stipulated by any legislation already in effect. A law that was in force could be amended in a way that would result in the dissolve of a Panchayat at any tier that was already operational before to the amendment, at least not before the time period allotted by clause (1) had passed.⁸⁵

An election to form a Panchayat must be finished before – firstly, the time indicated expires; and secondly, six months have passed after the completion of its dissolution: With the caveat that no election under this paragraph for creating the Panchayat for the remainder of the term within which the dissolved Panchayat could have remained must be held if it is less than six months.⁸⁶ A Panchayat that was formed after a Panchayat dissolve before the end of its term may only continue for the remaining time that the dissolved Panchayat could have remained under clause (1) if it had not been so dissolved.

2.7.6. Disqualifications for Membership

As per Article 243 F, a person is ineligible to be elected to and serve as a member of a Panchayat if he is so disqualified pursuant to any law currently in effect for the purpose of elections to the state's legislature of the concerned state; provided, however, that no individual shall be disqualified for the reason that he is under the age of twenty-five if he has reached the age of twenty-one; or if he is so disqualified by or according to any law enshrined by the law-making branch of the State.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Patle, S. S. *et al.* (2017). Role of Gram Panchayat Members in Village Development. *Agriculture Update*. 12(4).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Op. Cit.* Siga, G. (2015).

2.7.7. Procedure of Gram Panchayat Meeting

Gram Panchayat meeting must be convened at least bi-monthly to deliberate on subjects pertaining to the operations of the Gram Panchayat. The chairperson has the authority to convene a special meeting if at least one third of the members of the Gram Panchayat make a request. Upon receiving the request, the chairperson must call for this special meeting within fifteen days. For regular meetings, members must be advised of the meeting at least seven days in advance. However, for extraordinary meetings, members of the Gram Panchayat must be told three days prior to the meeting. Non-members of the Gram Panchayat who are government officers are allowed to attend and actively participate in the meetings. However, they are not permitted to vote on specific motions.⁸⁸

If the chairperson is unavailable or fails to call a special meeting, certain concerns will be addressed. The Gram Panchayat members have the authority to appoint a chairman, who can then convene a special meeting if requested by more than one third of the members. The chairman must call this meeting within fifteen days of receiving the request.

The quorum required to call a meeting in Gram Panchayat was one-third of the entire membership. If the required one-third of members is not present at the designated time and location of the meeting, the chairperson or any other chairperson may wait for fifteen minutes. If the required one-third of members did not appear within fifteen minutes, the meeting must be adjourned to a later date as determined by the person in-charge.

For every resolution, decisions will be determined through a majority vote of the members present at the meeting. The chairperson or any designated proxy should have the option to abstain from voting during deliberations. However, in specific instances where he desired to vote, he must first cast his vote before announcing the number of votes in favour or against, in order to demonstrate impartial chairmanship.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

If an issue of debate is of particular interest to the members of Gram Panchayat rather than of public interest, chairperson shall be excluded from participating in the discussion and voting. If the topic is of particular interest to the chairperson or any other chairman acting on behalf of the chairperson, they will not preside over the meeting when that matter is brought up for discussion. In addition, if any member is suspected of having a personal interest in the topic that is not in the best interest of the public, the same procedure can be followed.⁸⁹

2.8. Characteristics of Local Self-Government in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh

The characteristic nature of Local Self-Government in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh differs in many entities. Firstly, villages in Mizoram were mostly independent from each other, forming a separate unit of administrative and local structure; while villages in Arunachal Pradesh were constituted under a ‘circle’ that encompasses a number of villages. But at the same time, what is similar feature in both the state was that in large villages, where village population was over a thousand, there existed a bifurcation or trifurcation, or more, of the village into different Village Council area or Gram Panchayat area with an intention to provide efficient and effective administration and distribution of resources.

2.8.1 Membership of each Local Self-Government Bodies in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh

For this study, a total of 20 villages were taken for sample design, membership strength of a Local Self-Government differs from village to village, depending mainly on the basis of population. However, this did not mean that large village simultaneously had higher membership; larger villages opted to divide their villages into two or more units.

Table 2.2: Strength of Village Council members and Gram Panchayat members in selected area (Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh)

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

| Sl. No. | Villages in Mizoram (with District) | | No. of Village Council members | Sl. No. | Villages in Arunachal Pradesh (with District) | | No. of Gram Panchayat members |
|---------|-------------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|---------|---|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. | Nisapui | Kolasib | 5 | 1. | Bene | West Siang | 3 |
| 2. | Kawnpui VC-3 | | 5 | 2. | Darka | | 3 |
| 3. | Mualkawi | Champhai | 3 | 3. | Korang | East Siang | 3 |
| 4. | Melbuk | | 3 | 4. | Sido | | 3 |
| 5. | Chungtlang | Mamit | 3 | 5. | Rupa | West Kameng | 4 |
| 6. | West Lungdar | | 5 | 6. | Jigaon | | 2 |
| 7. | Ramlaitui | Lunglei | 3 | 7. | Borum | Papum Pare | 4 |
| 8. | Haulawng | | 7 | 8. | Rayo | | 8 |
| 9. | Seling | Aizawl | 7 | 9. | Lempia West | Lower Subansiri | 4 |
| 10. | Thingsul-Tlangnuam | | 5 | 10. | Tajang | | 3 |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

Thus, from the field work data, the village that had the highest number of members of Local-Self Government was Rayo with 8 members, followed by Haulawng and Seling with 7 members; while Nisapui, Kawnpui VC-3, West Lungdar and Thingsul-Tlangnuam has 5 members each. Rupa, Borum and Lempia West have 4 members each; majority of the villages like Mualkawi, Melbuk, Chungtlang, Ramlaitui, Bene, Darka, Korang, Sido and Tajang has 3 members each. The village that had the least number of members was Jigaon with only 2 members.

The strength of membership did not ultimately determine the quality of development processes in the village, or the quality of administration. It is the quality of each individual in the village administration as well as the support of the people that helps in achieving development and fluency of administration. However, what was certain was that in villages where there were large numbers of Gram Panchayat or Village Council members, the decision-making outcome of those members tends to be going in line according to public consent.

2.9. Political Party Affiliation of Village Council Members in Mizoram and Gram Panchayat Members in Arunachal Pradesh

Political party affiliation of members of Village Council and Gram Panchayat also differs tremendously between villages, between districts as well as between states. It was highly crucial for political parties to establish stronghold in rural areas where many voters were illiterate. Political parties, with their competent units in villages, seek for notable and prominent candidate to run for election in local bodies. Having a respectable and prominent individual for contestant was significant for political parties not only for the sake of winning in local self-government election, but also for wider spectrum of earning peoples' trust for their party. It was noteworthy to highlight that 'free symbols' other than party symbols were used by candidates in Village Council elections prior to 2014. This was done to minimise the degree of party-favouritism in local election.

It was evident that independent candidates also had a chance of survival in local politics. Table below shows the ruling party in each village Local Self-Government for a period of 10 years (from 2010 to 2020).

Table 2.3: Political Party in power in village Local Self-Government in Mizoram for a period of 10 years (from 2010 to 2020).

| Sl. No. | Name of the village | Political Party in power in village Local Self-Government for a period of 10 years (from 2010 to 2020). | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|---------------------|---|------|------|------|------|-------------------|------|------|------|------|-------------------|
| | | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
| 1. | Nisapui | MNF ⁹⁰ | MNF | MNF | MNF | MNF | INC ⁹¹ | INC | INC | INC | INC | ZPM ⁹² |
| 2. | Kawnpui VC-3 | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | ZNP ⁹³ | ZNP | ZNP | ZNP | ZNP | ZPM |
| 3. | Mualkawi | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | MN F | MN F | MN F | MN F | MN F | MNF |
| 4. | Melbuk | INC | INC | MNF | MNF | MNF | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | MNF |
| 5. | Chungtlang | MNF | MNF | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | MNF |
| 6. | West Lungdar | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | MN F | MN F | MN F | MN F | MN F | MNF |
| 7. | Ramlaitui | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | MN F | MN F | MN F | MN F | MN F | MNF |

⁹⁰ Mizo National Front

⁹¹ Indian National Congress

⁹² Zoram People's Movement Legislature Party

⁹³ Zoram Nationalist Party

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|------|-----|
| 8. | Haulawng | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | MNF |
| 9. | Seling | INC | INC | MNF | MNF | MNF | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | MNF |
| 10. | Thingsul-Tlangnuam | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | MN F | MN F | MN F | MN F | MN F | ZPM |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

Table 2.4: Political Party in power in village Local Self-Government in Arunachal Pradesh for a period of 10 years (from 2010 to 2020).

| Sl. No. | Name of the village | Political Party in power in village Local Self-Government for a period of 10 years (from 2010 to 2020). | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|---------------------|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------------------|------|------|------|
| | | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
| 1. | Bene | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | BJP ⁹⁴ | BJP | BJP | BJP |
| 2. | Darka | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP |
| 3. | Korang | Ind | Ind | Ind | Ind | Ind | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP |
| 4. | Sido | INC | INC | INC | INC | Ind | Ind | Ind | Ind | Ind | BJP | BJP |
| 5. | Rupa | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | BJP |
| 6. | Jigaon | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP |
| 7. | Borum | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | BJP | BJP | BJP |
| 8. | Rayo | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP |
| 9. | Lempia West | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC |
| 10. | Tajang | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

Table 2.3 shows that the Indian National Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party, which were the dominant political parties in Indian politics, remained the two belligerents in local politics in Arunachal Pradesh. While in the case of Mizoram, the Indian National Congress and Mizo National Front Party were the two major contenders, with a healthy portion of ZNP and ZPM affiliated candidates also secure positions in local elections. Interestingly, the BJP with its huge waves in National politics since 2014 was unable to make any significant mark in the Local Self-Government bodies in Mizoram. It was important to note that independent candidates⁹⁵ stand a chance to win election in Local Self-Government in Arunachal Pradesh, notably in Korang and Sido village from East Siang District.

There are certain political parties that contested in Village Council elections in Mizoram but failed to make a mark like the People's Conference Party, widely known as 'PC Party'. Political parties like National People's Party (NPP) and Janata

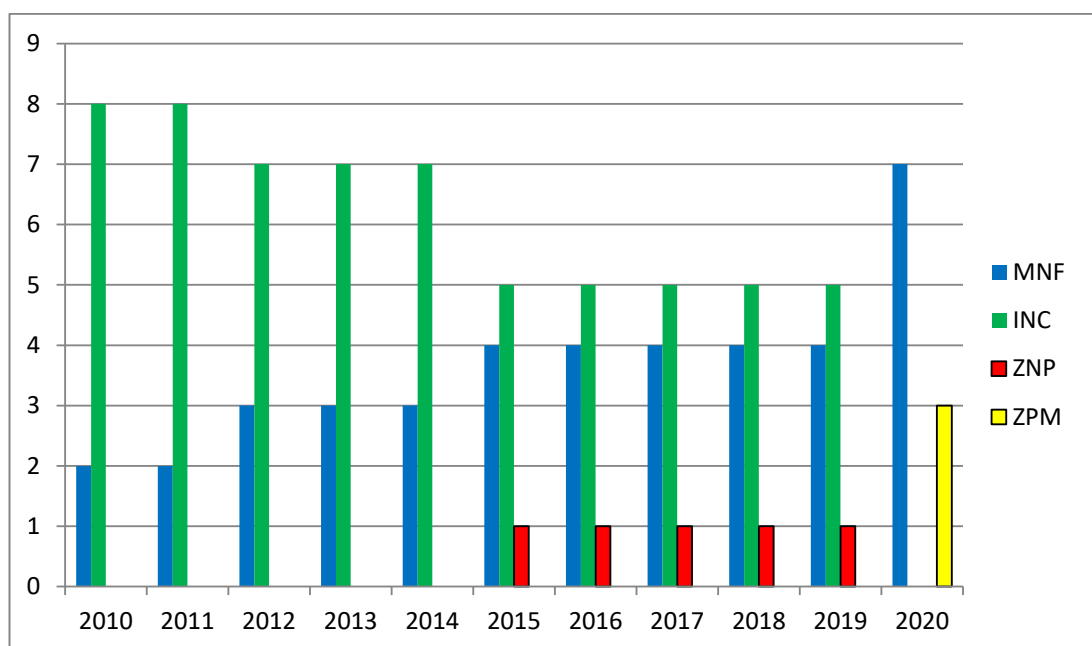
⁹⁴ Bharatiya Janata Party

⁹⁵ a contested candidate having no specific political party.

Dal (Union) (JDU) also contested in Gram Panchayat elections in Arunachal Pradesh, but failed to make a huge impact.

In the 2020 Village Council election, the MNF, which gained power in the 2018 Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election, exerted its influence by winning in 7 out of 10 villages in the study area. Therefore, it was apparent that regional parties played an essential role in both local and state politics in Mizoram. Nevertheless, the Indian National Congress (INC) emerged victorious in the Village Council elections held between 2010 and 2019 in Mizoram, securing a majority in all 10 villages. Therefore, it may be concluded that state politics exerted effect on local politics, whereas national politics had less impact on it.

Figure 2.1: Performance of political parties in Village Council election in Mizoram from 2010 to 2020 in 10 selected villages.



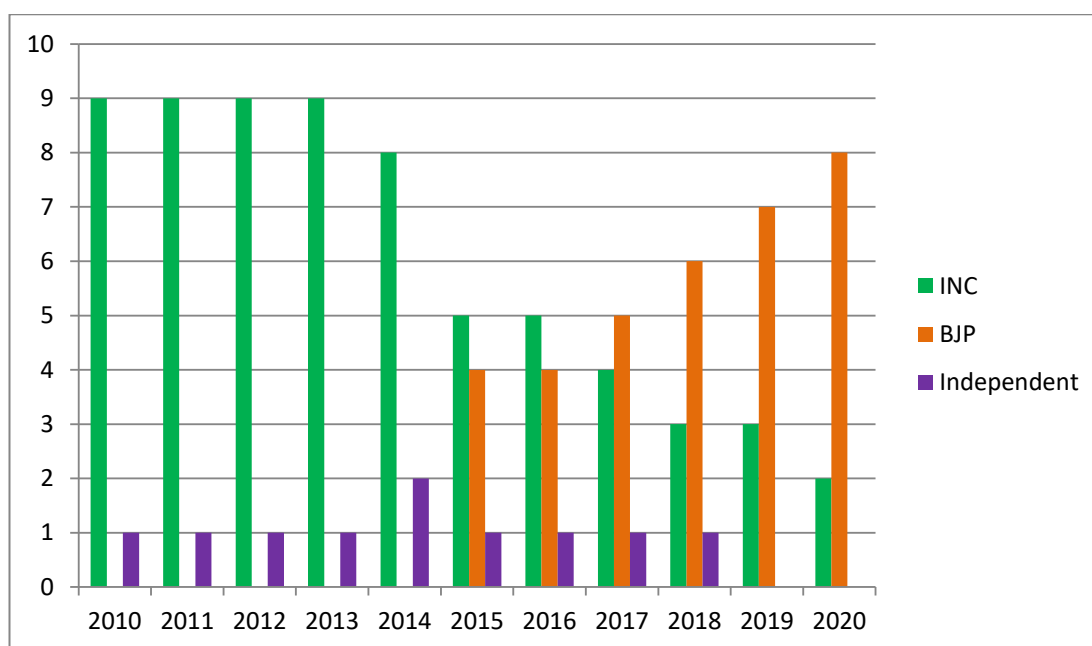
Source: Primary data collected from field work.

In Arunachal Pradesh, there was a noticeable tussle between two major political parties - the Indian National Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party - in both the State Legislature election and the Gram Panchayat elections. The Indian National Congress (INC), which had been in power since the Second Legislative Assembly election in 1980, managed to maintain its hold on power till the year 2014. Subsequently, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) assumed power following the 2019

Legislative Assembly election. From 2010 to 2020, the INC was clearly the dominant political party until 2014. In 2015 and 2016, there was a fair fight amongst the parties. However, after 2017, the BJP has been the dominant force in local politics until 2020.

A chapter from Arunachal Pradesh's Gram Panchayat election showed that national politics had its enormous influence on local politics, largely because even though BJP came to power in the State Assembly only from 2019, it already exert its dominance in local politics since 2017, and it gained more and more power in the later stages as shown in figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Performance of political parties in Gram Panchayat election in Arunachal Pradesh from 2010 to 2020 in 10 selected villages.



Source: Primary data collected from field work.

2.10. Conclusion

One of the key characteristics of democratic governance in India was the decentralization of power. All three levels of government have utilized certain powers granted within their respective jurisdictions. The Union List, the State List, and Concurrent List in India represent the relationship between the federal

government and the state governments, indicating the distribution of power or decentralization.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment conferred constitutional status for rural administration, to be managed by local bodies. Nevertheless, Article 243 M of the Constitution explicitly declares that the provisions of Part - IX, which refers to Panchayats, did not apply to the state of Mizoram. As a result of this provision, Mizoram successfully established the village council system as a means of local self-governance. This system developed from the era of District Councils under Assam and was further enhanced and reorganized through the enactment of Village Council Acts by the state government. The Arunachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1997 superseded the Northeast Frontier Agency Panchayat Raj Regulation, 1967. The Act was expanded to encompass the entire territory of Arunachal Pradesh, thereby mandating the implementation of a grassroots democracy founded on the Panchayat Raj system in all villages of Arunachal Pradesh.

Mahatma Gandhi supported the strengthening of Panchayats as a way to promote economic development in rural areas. Nehru emphasized the importance of Panchayati Raj for achieving socio-economic self-sufficiency. Ambedkar also recognized that Panchayati Raj has the ability to ensure the involvement of all members of society, regardless of caste, gender, or other differences, through its decentralized administrative structure.

Local Self-Government entities are situated at the lowest level of government administration. They provide as a conduit for direct interaction between the government and the population. By incorporating rural local bodies within the administration, residents are afforded the opportunity to directly engage and participate in the government. However, achieving this goal can only be accomplished through the decentralization of power, granting rural local organizations the authority to control government administration and functions as authorized by state governments.

An extensive analysis of 20 villages in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh demonstrated that National Parties such as the Indian National Congress and the

Bhartiya Janata Party have exerted significant influence in local politics in Arunachal Pradesh over the years. In contrast, the Indian National Congress and state parties like the Mizo National Front have been the primary contenders in local politics in Mizoram. Local self-government bodies served as a means for rural people to directly engage in political activity. It is crucial to emphasize that local politics did not necessarily have an impact on state politics.

Thus, the institution of Village Council and Panchayati Raj are established differently as Village Council was constituted by an Act of State Legislature, while the latter was established as a result of Constitutional provision under which the State took measures for the development of the body. Both the bodies reflected the federal structure and nature of India, as well as division of powers even in the lowest strata of governance.

CHAPTER 3

POWERS AND FUNCTIONS OF VILLAGE COUNCIL IN MIZORAM AND GRAM PANCHAYAT IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

3.1. Introduction

In order to carry out their duties of fostering economic growth and social equity in their respective jurisdictions, local government entities are vested with the authority to draft development plans. For rural local governments, it is important to carry out a variety of programs covering 29 essential sectors, such as healthcare, education, housing, poverty reduction, and small-scale industry promotion, as highlighted in Part XI of the Constitution.¹ Nevertheless, the laws of state in which these institutions operate determine their real powers and activities, as it is the responsibility of individual state governments, not the federal government, to oversee the operations of their local governments.²

Construction, maintenance, and repair of roads, tanks, wells, and other administrative duties, such as preserving village records, are carried out by the PRIs, who are crucial to rural development. Among other things, boosting rural economy, medical care, schooling, and children's and women's welfare are all part of improving socio-economic conditions and overall well-being. Further, Gram Panchayats and specialized law Panchayats are responsible for handling cases involving petty civil and criminal issues, such as small-scale thefts and financial disputes.³

Local governments in democracies receive their budgets from a variety of sources. Every five years, states formed the State Finance Commission to assess the financial health of local government entities and report back with suggestions to ensure that local authorities had sufficient funds to function. It is common practice for rural local bodies to rely on both internal and external revenue streams. An

¹ Sodhi, J. S. & Ramanujam, M. S. (2006). Panchayati Raj System: A Study in Five States of India. *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*. 42(1).

² Faheem, M. (2023). Grassroots Democracy and Local Governance Issues: Perspectives from Rural India. *Revista de Gestão Social e Ambiental*. Vol 17(10).

³ *Ibid.*

organization's internal revenue might come from a variety of sources, including taxes on real estate and land as well as non-tax sources like rentals and user fees.⁴ However, internal revenue sources are unlikely to generate huge fund largely due to low degree of economic activities in rural areas. And thus, local self-government relied heavily on external revenue sources for implementation of programs as well as for administrative related expenditures.

3.2. Powers of Village Council in Mizoram

The Village Council enjoy powers and duties as per Section 8A of the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2014.⁵ The primary objective of a village council was bringing about development for village. Therefore, power is vested in the village council for creation of plan for development procedure in village, and managing those projects. These projects are granted by state government through different agencies. In order to successfully implement those projects, local knowledge was needed. The village council then supports the execution of those

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ The Village Council shall have the following powers and duties as per Section 8A of The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2014:

- 1) To formulate village development schemes, to supervise development works received from the State Government through various agencies.
- 2) To help various Government agencies in carrying out development works in the village.
- 3) To take up development works on its own initiative or on request by the Government.
- 4) To convene regular social audit for successful implementation of development works in the village.
- 5) To collect property tax as prescribed by the State Government.
- 6) To realize registration fees for each litigation within its jurisdiction.
- 7) To raise fund for public utility within its jurisdiction by passing a resolution subject to the approval of the State Government.
- 8) To administer relief and rehabilitation to the people during calamities.
- 9) To assist the State Government in public distribution system.
- 10) To initiate or assist the State Government in all preventive measures on the outbreak of an epidemic or infectious disease.
- 11) To co-operate with Government officials in charge of any of the above functions within its jurisdiction".

development projects. There are also times when the village council initiated development projects at the request of state government. Another important power of village council is schedule of periodical social audits. Social audit is necessary to convene regularly because sustainability and efficiency of any minor and major undertaking needed to be examined, so that accountability of development project was maximized.

Village council also has the power to collect taxes on property in accordance with state government regulations. The state government or any officer authorised by it identified tax collectors or assign the task of collecting taxes to competent individuals, describing their duties and any other issues related to the collection of taxes. Taxes can be collected strictly in compliance with the regulations or accordance to the directives and instructions provided by the state government duly empowered in that respect. Apart from taxes, village council is mandated to collect registration fees for each lawsuit falling under its remit. Village council can also pass a resolution to raise money for public utilities under its purview, subject to the state government's assent.

In the event of an epidemic or any transmissible illness in villages, the village council initiate steps to prevent the disease from proliferating, or when the state government issued notice for public concern. The village council has the power to uphold the notification of state government. While in times of unpredictable natural calamities like landslides, wild fires, floods and others, the village council taken up responsibility as custodian of village security and they provide assistance and rehabilitation in that respect.

Village council also have the power to support the Public Distribution System of the state government to ensure that fair price shops were impartial and free from conduct of undesirable behaviour.

3.3. Functions of Village Council

Village Councils were given certain functions as per the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1953. No. TAD/R/61/52.⁶ A particular region within each village's boundaries can be allocated for jhums each year, and the distribution of jhum plots must take place in accordance with the laws enacted by the State Government under paragraph 3 (1) (d) of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. This responsibility falls on the Village Council or any official of the State Government designated by it.

When the situation calls for it, the Village Council has the authority to enforce *Hnatlang*⁷ in the best interest of community, as long as none of these factors, including caste, class, or religion, are cited as justifications for discrimination. If a person refuses to follow a *Hnatlang* order, he/she may be subject to a 'Run'⁸, which can be imposed by the government by order from time to time and is limited to Rs. 50 every *Hnatlang* day, unless the individual is exempt from *Hnatlang*.

The Gram Sabha holds the Village Council accountable for all of its decisions and actions. Every Village Council has to produce a report on its administration in the manner specified and with the data that was required, and it is required to be submitted to the State Government twice a year. The State Government could subsequently withhold to pay grants and remuneration to Village Councils if the evaluation report is not provided.

3.3.1. Management of *Hnatlang*

The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1953. No. TAD/R/61/52, the 9th December, 1953 clearly outlined the regulation of *Hnatlang*. Every Council shall have the authority, in its sole and absolute discretion, to exempt any individual or individuals from *Hnatlang*. The justification for the exemption ought to be

⁶ The Assam Gazette. (1953). The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1953. No. TAD/R/61/52, the 9th December, 1953.

⁷ 'Hnatlang' is a profit-less social work service in which every house in the village shall render one individual to work for a purpose designated by village council.

⁸ 'Run' means when an individual did not attend Hnatlang without citing any information to the village authorities, i.e., village council. The village council can impose a fine on such individual.

documented in writing. Persons who are 60 years of age or beyond may not be compelled to take part in any *Hnatlâng*.

Individuals under the age of 15 are not allowed to serve as a *Hnatlâng* member. Every person has the option of waiving his duty to provide *hnatlang* service in exchange for cash remuneration at a rate to be determined by the Village Council, however not to exceed Rs. 25 each *hnatlâng* day.

3.4. Powers of the Gram Sabha under Village Council

The power of Gram Sabha under Village Council was enshrined in Part 11 A of The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1953.⁹ Before taking them up for implementation, each Gram Sabha approves the annual plans, programmes, and initiatives for economic and social growth in the village in consideration. Further, each Gram Sabha can be in charge of screening or identifying people to be beneficiaries of programmes that focused on alleviating poverty and other projects.

The President of the Village Council will typically call for a Gram Sabha and preside over it. 10% of the registered voters of the most recent Village Council voter list were to be present for a Gram Sabha to constitute a quorum. It is the duty of every Gram Sabha to protect and safeguard communal assets. Before determining on the resettlement and rehabilitation of the individuals affected, Gram Sabha and the Village Council has to be consulted. There has to be a minimum of three Gram Sabha meetings annually at least.

3.5. Powers in Relation to Conduct of Business in Village

The Village Council has been enshrined with different powers to conduct business in the village for overall smooth functioning of village administration.

3.5.1. Village Council President and Meetings

The Village Council President is to preside over all meetings of the aforementioned Council. When appropriate and upon receiving a written request from two-thirds of the members, he is obligated to call meetings of the village

⁹ The Assam Gazette. (1953). The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1953. No. TAD/R/61/52, the 9th December, 1953.

council. In an entire year, the Village Council must hold a minimum of 6 (six) regular sessions. The written records of such meetings shall be precisely written and incorporate the President's and Secretary's signatures.¹⁰

3.5.2. Voting During Village Council Meeting

A majority vote is required to decide on all resolutions and questions during this meeting. In the event of a tie vote, the President of the Council or any person acting on his behalf is entitled to a casting vote, which he or she will use. A person other than a member of the village council may speak, vote, or participate in its deliberations. Anyone who breaches this provision may be fined not to exceed than Rs. 50/- by the village court in such deliberations if the village council so requests, but they may not participate in voting.

3.5.3. Maintenance of Order in Meeting of Village Council

The meeting occurs with appropriate order, and the President shall have the discretion necessary in carrying out the decisions he makes. He has the authority to force any member whose conduct he deems disruptive to exit the meeting for the day immediately. The Member whoever received an order in this fashion must promptly comply with it. The President may suspend a member for the remaining hours of the same session if that member received a second order to leave a council meeting during the same session. The President must communicate to the State Government regarding the conduct of any member who refuses to follow the order stipulated to him under subsection (1) or subsection (2). Following acquiring such a report, the State Government may, if it deems it essential, dismiss the member for any amount of time it deems appropriate.¹¹

3.5.4. Village Council Fund as per an Amendment to the Act in 2011

A fund to be designated as the 'Village Council Fund' must be established for each village council. Any tax and income collection permitted by law to be collected by a village for the sake of populace, aside from District revenue, must be deposited into the aforementioned Fund. The Secretary will be in charge of keeping a list of the

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

contributions, and the President will also act as the fund's treasurer. Any subscription to the collection may open this account and examine it.¹² The Village Councils have the authority to levy property taxes on items of value and at the rates which the State Government deems reasonable within their respective regions. The Village Council might choose a Treasurer from among its members who will be in charge of managing the funds. This will be subject to inspection by the Village Council at its regular sessions and by a government official with the proper authority, and keep development grants and other funds aside from those authorized by law.

3.5.5. Responsibility of Members of the Village Council

The portfolio or responsibility charged under different posts of Village Council are enshrined in the Amendment to the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1953 in 2014¹³ as under,

a) Responsibility of President for compliance of order: When notices, orders, circulars, or letters are received from the State Government for redistribution to pass on to other villages, the President shall promptly bring about them to be delivered through the Secretary. The President shall cause notices and guidelines for the prevention of dangers such as an outbreak of fire and epidemic in the village to be made public by engaging the '*Tlangau*'.¹⁴

The President is in charge of ensuring that all directives and notifications issued by the Deputy Commissioner were adhered to. All these directives and notifications must be read out by the Secretary within the Village Council meeting, and if it is necessary to bring them to the attention of the general population, the President has to provide the Secretary with the information so that it could be broadcast either by *Tlangau* or by an announcement to the public.

Further, the President has the responsibility to periodically review the Secretary's minute book as he deemed appropriate. It is the President's responsibility

¹² The Mizoram Gazette. (2012). The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2011. No. H. 12018/28/2012-LJD, the 10th January, 2012.

¹³ The Mizoram Gazette. (2014). The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2014. No. H. 12018/28/98-LJD, the 4th December, 2014.

¹⁴ *Tlangau* means village crier.

to forward the letters he obtains to the Village Council Secretary for documentation. The President shall entirely abdicate his Village Council office and turn over all Village Council records, documents, assets, and seal to the incumbent Village Council President, if appropriate as per an amendment to the Act in 2014.

b) Vice President: The Vice President shall sit next to the President and perform over the President's duties as necessary. During this period of time, the President's authority will be entrusted to him. A Village Council's treasurer is responsible for keeping all of the village council's funds and adhering to state government regulations for the correct operation of the cash register and cash book. If the Treasurer cannot afford to continue in office for whatever reason, he or she must transfer authority over to the newly appointed Treasurer or another individual authorised by the State Government.¹⁵

c) Secretary: The Secretary serves as the village record and be in charge of various responsibilities. He/she is responsible for keeping a record of all Village Council and Village Court proceedings, and the President has to endorse the record. He/she must publish such orders, notifications, and records whenever necessary, and the President must endorse all such orders, notifications, and records.¹⁶

The Secretary shall cause any orders, notices, circulars, or messages to be served or transmitted to any other Village Council as may be directed upon receipt of such orders, notices, circulars, or letters from the State Government or from the Deputy Commissioner and his Administrative assistants for service or for onward transmission to other villages. The Secretary shall be responsible for carrying out such direction.

He/she is responsible of upholding all the Village Council and Village Court's books and records. With his own signature and that of the President, he/she shall send all documents and papers to the State Government that might be demanded by it. According to a 2014 amendment, all books and documents must be maintained

¹⁵ The Mizoram Gazette. (2014). The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2014. No. H. 12018/28/98-LJD, the 4th December, 2014.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

accessible for review at any time by properly authorised state government officials or any official of the village council.

The Secretary has to preserve all village statistical data under the supervision of Village Council, including information on beneficiaries of different schemes selected from the village, and submit the evaluation to State Government as needed. In the event that the Village Council is unable to carry out its duties for any reason, he will still act as Secretary. The Secretary shall be remunerated as such remuneration as may be fixed by the State Government.

d) Officers: In each District that is covered by this Act extends, the State Government may nominate a District Local Administrative Officer. The State Government may designate a Circle Officer for every circle and subdivide every district to which this Act pertains into two or more circles. The State Government can additionally designate any number of Circle Assistants and outline what they are accountable for each circle as it deems necessary.¹⁷

The District Local Administration Officer, Circle Officer, and Circle Assistant's obligations involve supervising the effective functioning of Village Councils in their respective jurisdictions, as well as examining the villages falling under their respective purview and directing the Village Councils on office procedures and other associated problems.

The Circle Officers must provide periodic updates to the Deputy Commissioner regarding their particular circles to the District Local Administration Officer. These reports must cover any significant subject, point, or occurrence for which the Circle Assistants can provide the relevant reports. A Village Council may not relocate the Village's Council to another location (*Khawthar*¹⁸) without the State Government's prior approval.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Khawthar means a newly established village.

3.6. Role of Village Crier or *Tlângau*

For every single Village Council, there should only be one *Tlângau*, which means village crier.¹⁹ If an additional *Tlângau* is deemed essential for a particular reason, the appointment must first receive the State Government's consent. A Village Council announcement setting an appointment for selection should be made in order to nominate *Tlângau*.

Tlângau will ultimately be nominated by the Village Council at its full meeting from among the applicants. The *Tlângau* may be terminated by the Village Council, but such instances must be informed to the State Government. *Tlângau* is responsible for notifying the public of any orders or announcements that the Village Council might ask for. He/she will call all parties and other individuals to the Village Council or Village Court's meetings as necessary.

The Village Council Secretary may also instruct the *Tlângau* to inform the public of any other subject that was not necessarily related to the operations of Village Council or the duties of any employees of State Government on assignment. Any village member may direct the *Tlângau* to summon everybody whenever there is an emergency necessitating the public to congregate in the best interests of village. This can be accomplished without the President's authorization. (v) The *Tlângau* is responsible for informing all Village Council members of all meetings that the President had scheduled.

3.6.1. Privileges and Remunerations to *Tlângau*

All *Hnatlâng*²⁰ imposed from the Village Council in accordance with Sub-section (2) of Section 8 shall not apply to the *Tlângau*. He is also exempted from paying land revenue called *Zoram Chhiah*²¹. The *Tlângau* is entitled to be granted such additional compensation and privileges that the State Government deemed reasonable from time to time.

¹⁹ *Op. Cit.* The Mizoram Gazette. (2014).

²⁰ 'Hnatlang' is a profit-less social work service in which every house in the village shall render one individual to work for a purpose designated by village council.

²¹ 'Zoram Chhiah' is land revenue collected by the Government of Mizoram.

3.7. Dissolution of Village Council

A dissolution provision was provided in Section 25 of the Amendment of Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1953 in 2014.²² The provision stated that if the State Government determined that a Village Council was too ineffective, incapable of carrying out village administration, acting against the interests of State, or for any other reason deemed sufficient for such dissolution, it may, by public notification, order its dissolution and issue orders for new Village Council elections. Copies of all such directives must also be supplied to the District's Deputy Commissioner, with the disclaimer that such dissolution might not occur until the Village Council had been allowed an adequate opportunity to present its case and why it should not be sustained.²³

If necessary, the State Government can shut down the Village Council's operations while undertaking an inquiry into the complaints. During the suspension, a State Government official will be placed in charge of administering the Village Council.

For such dissolution, the State Government may issue a notice appointing any individual or individuals to take over responsibility for the Village Administration and to serve the position of Village Court for the remainder of term or for the period beginning with the date of first Village Council meeting adhering to the new election. With the condition that the State Government may mandate a new election of the Village council during any period before the remainder of term expires if it deems it necessary to do so for the benefit of general public. The Village Council shall immediately cease to serve as the Village Court for the remainder of the time that it is required by law to act in that capacity.²⁴

3.8. Powers & Functions of Panchayati Raj Institution

Under the 73rd Amendment Act to the Indian Constitution, the Panchayat Raj system became officially recognised as the third tier of India's federal democracy for

²² *Op. Cit.* The Mizoram Gazette. (2014).

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

the first time in 1992. The Panchayat Raj system of governance at the local level was the oldest on the Indian subcontinent.²⁵ ‘*Panch*’, which means five, ‘*ayat*’, which means assembly, and ‘*raj*’, which means rule, are the three main descriptions of panchayat raj.²⁶ Every Panchayat has a leader, known as the Sarpanch or Mukhya, who is typically one of the village’s wisest and oldest residents.²⁷ According to the data for 2019, India has 6614 Block Panchayats, 630 Zilla Panchayats, and 253163 Gram Panchayats.²⁸

All Panchayati Raj institutions execute tasks associated with Panchayati Raj as outlined in state statutes, which are commonly referred to as Panchayati Raj system functions. There are two categories of Panchayat Raj system functions: obligatory and optional. Some states comply with the necessary Gram Panchayat system functions, whereas other states do not. Depending on the resources that are accessible to it, the Panchayat may or may not undertake the optional function. These Panchayat Raj system characteristics are optional, such as, establishing cattle breeding facilities; promoting agriculture; planting trees alongside roadways; and organising child and maternal welfare.²⁹

Panchayat Raj system’s mandatory or required functions comprises of providing primary healthcare, building public wells, public restrooms, social health, primary and adult education, minor irrigation, vaccination, the availability of drinking water, rural electricity, road cleaning, and sanitation are only a few of the priorities.

Following the 73rd Amendment to the constitution, the Gram Panchayat’s range of duties was enlarged. Certain programmes required to be carried out by the Panchayats include natural disaster relief; annual development plan prepared for the Panchayat region; implementation and oversight of programmes to reduce poverty;

²⁵ Ananth, P. (2014). Panchayati Raj in India. *Journal of Education & Social Policy*. 1(1).

²⁶ Alok, V. N. (2011). *Role of Panchayat Bodies in Rural Development since 1959*. Indian Institute of Public Administration – New Delhi.

²⁷ Bhavna, G. & Chakrabarti, D. (2016). Leading a Rural Transformation – A Case of Punsari Village. *Indian Journal of Sustainable Development*. 2(1).

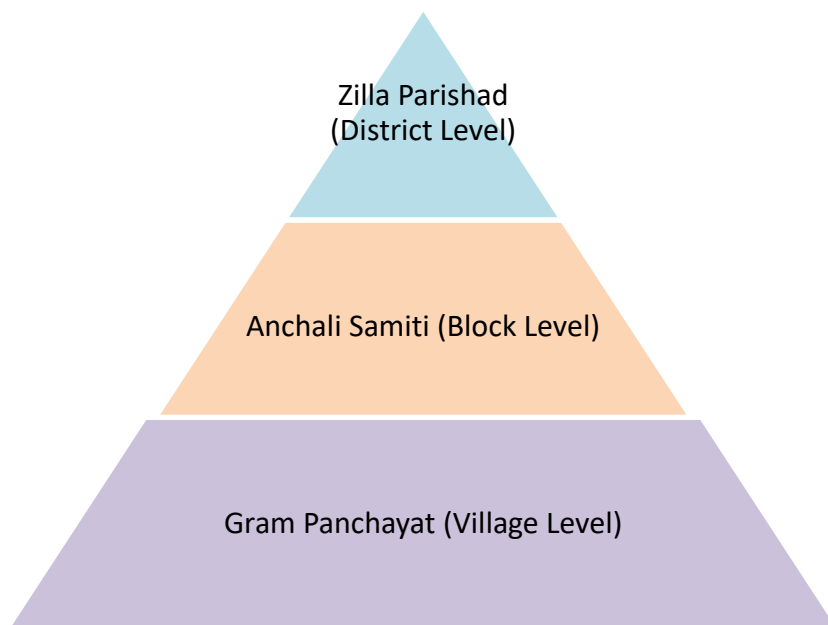
²⁸ Panchayat Knowledge Hub. (2020). Retrieved from <https://www.pria.org/panchayathub/>

²⁹ *Op. Cit.* Ananth, P. (2014).

annual budget; removing encroachment on government property, among others.³⁰ In some states, Gram Sabhas meeting, unconventional sources of energy, biogas plants, and public distribution system are also carried out by Gram Panchayats.

The Panchayati Raj system has a variety of duties, powers, and functions, and the state legislature grants authority to the Gram Sabhas. The state legislatures' grant of the Panchayati Raj system's power is a requirement for the Panchayats to be authorized as primary-level institutions of self-government. Obligations include creating plans for economic growth and an equitable society. The XI schedule's 29 significant subjects include rural housing, sanitation and health care, drinking water, agriculture, the welfare of weaker sections, agriculture, social forestry. These topics are part of the social justice and economic development plans.³¹ The Panchayat Raj system is structured into three levels or tiers.

Figure 3.1: Different tiers of Panchayati Raj.



Source: Panchayat Knowledge Hub. (2020).

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Op. Cit.* Panchayat Knowledge Hub. (2020). Retrieved from <https://www.pria.org/panchayathub/>

In order to improve the village in particular areas, such as health, women's development, children's development, primary education, women's involvement with local governance, development of agriculture, the Panchayati Raj system is crucial to the village's local government. There are a number of states, notably Mizoram, Nagaland, and Meghalaya, where the Panchayat Raj system does not remain in existence.

3.9. Power of the Gram Sabha as Headed by the Gram Panchayat

The Gram Sabha headed by the Gram Panchayat exercises its responsibilities and has authority allocated to it by the state assembly in compliance with the Indian Constitution.³² The Gram Sabha's various authorities and responsibilities are – Firstly, execution of the local Panchayat's development plans and initiatives. Secondly, it additionally indicates who the various initiatives and schemes' beneficiaries are. If they do not, the Gram Panchayat is in the position of finishing the job. Thirdly, it urges the villagers to make contributions in cash, kind, or both to a variety of welfare schemes and initiatives. Fourthly, it supports multiple programmes and initiatives pertaining to family welfare and mass education. Finally, it takes into consideration any other problem the Gram Panchayat refers as well as issues relating to the imposition of taxes or additional charges, among others.³³

3.10. Composition of the Gram Sabha and the Gram Panchayat

The entire village has been separated into wards, and each ward elects a representative known as a panch or ward member. The Gram Sabha elects the Sarpanch, who serves as the Panchayat's head. Thus, the Panch and Sarpanch who get elected for tenure of five years make up the Gram Panchayat. In addition to those, there exists a secretary who, unlike these members, is appointed by the government. This secretary also serves as the secretary of Gram Sabha and is responsible for

³² Buch, N. (2012). Gram Sabha and Panchayati Raj. *Social Action*. 62(1).

³³ The Arunachal Pradesh Gazette. (2018). The Arunachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Act, 2018. (Act No. 6 of 2018) AP EOG NO 148 Vol XXV Dtd 21.4.2018.

calling all sessions of both the Gram Sabha and the Gram Panchayat as well as keeping records of these meeting proceedings.³⁴

3.10.1. Functions of the Gram Panchayat

The Gram Panchayat's primary responsibility is to execute the various government programs and initiatives. In the instance that the Gram Sabha is unable to do so, identifying the recipients of various plans and programs was the responsibility of the Gram Panchayat. Local tax levying and collection was another important function. Beside this, building and maintaining public infrastructure, such as bridges, roads, schools, hospitals, in villages were also the function of Gram Panchayat.³⁵

3.10.2. Intermediate Level

Panchayat Samiti, commonly referred to as Anchalik, Janpad, or Block Panchayat, has been established at the intermediate level. The block level is a different acronym for the intermediate level. The Block Development Officer (BDO), that oversees a number of towns in this area, is in charge of it. According to Article 243B of the Indian Constitution, states with a total population of less than twenty lakh people are exempt from the requirement for an intermediate level.³⁶

3.10.3. District Level

Zilla Parishad exists at this level. The Zilla Parishad is ultimately responsible for all of the state's block development officers. With the assistance of the Panchayat Samiti, the Zilla Parishad prepares all development plans at the District levels.

All seats are filled through direct elections across all levels, in accordance with Article 243 (C) (2) contained in the Indian Constitution. According to their percentage of the population, seats are set aside for SC and ST people. Women are

³⁴ *Op. Cit.* Buch, N. (2012).

³⁵ *Op. Cit.* The Arunachal Pradesh Gazette. (2018).

³⁶ *Ibid.*

given one-third of the seats, as well as one-third of the seats set aside for SCs and STs.³⁷

3.10.4. Difference between Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat

Some of the basic differences between Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat could be manifested in the following manner.³⁸

Table 3.1. Major differences between Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat

| Gram Sabha | Gram Panchayat |
|--|---|
| Permanent body | Temporary body (election every 5 years) |
| Legislative Body | Executive body |
| It includes all the persons who are present in the electoral roll of the village and are of 18 years of age or more. | It includes ward members and Sarpanch. |
| Members are not elected. | Members are directly elected. |

Source: Buch, N. (2012). Gram Sabha and Panchayati Raj. *Social Action*. 62(1).

3.11. Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP)

Article 243G of the Indian Constitution outlines the powers, authority, and duties of Panchayats. According to the provisions of this Constitution, the Legislature of a State has the authority to grant Panchayats the necessary powers and authority to function as self-governing institutions.³⁹ This law may also include provisions for transferring powers and responsibilities to Panchayats, at the appropriate level, regarding the creation of economic development and social justice

³⁷ *Op. Cit.* Buch, N. (2012).

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Murthy, K. V. B. (2018). State-Local Financial Relations in India. *Journal of Indian Taxation*. 5(1).

plans, as well as the implementation of schemes related to these matters listed in the Eleventh Schedule.⁴⁰

Empowering local governments with the authority to create a developmental action plan is essential for achieving transformational development in rural India. The Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) is a comprehensive strategy devised by Gram Panchayats across India to promote social justice and economic development in their respective areas. These plans were formed through the active involvement of all stakeholders, resulting in a logical plan that was tailored to the needs and financial capabilities of the people.⁴¹

The primary goal of Panchayati Raj Institution is to promote economic growth, enhance social justice, and execute the programs of both the State Government and the Central Government, which encompass the 29 subjects outlined in the 11th Schedule. India has around 2.55 lakh Gram Panchayats, which are entrusted with the task of strategizing and executing initiatives for social justice and economic development in their respective regions. Initially, there was no established method for obtaining financial resources through the Panchayats. Consequently, they had to rely upon the state governments over funding.⁴²

In 2014, the Central Government allocated funds to the Panchayats through the 14th Finance Commission for the creation of the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP).⁴³ It was anticipated that the Panchayats would engage the community in planning for their respective areas and oversee the execution of these plans.

In 2015, the Fourteenth Finance Commission Grants were allocated to Gram Panchayats, providing them with a significant chance to strategize for their progress

⁴⁰ Sharma, B. M. (2017). A Step Towards District Government as the Third Tier of Indian Union (With Special Reference to 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments). *Indian Journal of Public Administration*. 56(2).

⁴¹ Ministry of Panchayati Raj. (2021). *Panchayat Development Plan*.

⁴² *Ibid*.

⁴³ Saxena, K. B. (2022). The Finance Commission Report and Action Taken by the Central Government. *Revolutionary Democracy*. 1(1).

and growth.⁴⁴ Subsequently, local authorities around the nation are required to create Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDP) that are tailored to the individual circumstances and needs of each area.⁴⁵

Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) provide a decentralized planning approach that involves the collaboration of residents and their elected representatives. GPDPs are anticipated to take into account development concerns, requirements, and community preferences, especially those of marginalized populations. In addition to addressing the need for infrastructure and services, resource development, and the alignment of departmental objectives, GPDPs also have the capacity to tackle social concerns. The construction of GPDP takes place annually from 2nd October till 31st December as part of the People's Plan Campaign (PPC) nationwide.⁴⁶

3.11.1. Budgeting in GPDP

The 15th Finance Commission has provided funds for three-tier Panchayats, along with traditional entities falling under the 5th and 6th Schedule to the Constitution of India as well. The budget has been allocated into two categories: tied fund and an untied fund. The fund has been allocated in a 60-40 ratio and distributed to the Gram Panchayat, Block Panchayat, and Zilla Panchayat.

From this total amount, 40% is untied funds that can be used for the works related to the 29 included subjects. The remaining 60% is tied funds, which have been divided in a 30% - 30% ratio. Out of this, 30% can be allocated for drinking water, rainwater harvesting, water recycling, and similar purposes. The remaining 30% can be allocated for sanitation, Open Defecation-Free (ODF) status maintenance, and similar purposes.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Op. Cit.* Ministry of Panchayati Raj. (2021).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Table 3.2: Budget allocations in three-tier Panchayats

| Gram Panchayat | Block Panchayat | District Panchayat |
|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| 70%-85% | 10%-25% | 5%-15% |

Source: Ministry of Panchayati Raj. (2021). Panchayat Development Plan.

3.11.2. Special Process for GPDP in Fifth Schedule Areas

The Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act 1996 (PESA) emphasizes the self-government of local communities by advocating for the involvement of Gram Sabhas in the design and execution of all development programs in the region. The active participation and agreement of individuals are also promoted in the domains of land procurement, relocation and rehabilitation, land restoration (in the event of dispossession), mineral extraction, consumption of substances, possession of minor forest resources, administration of local markets, supervision of water resources, and regulation of lending practices.

Hence, it is imperative to strictly comply with the essence of this legislation while formulating GPDP in regions governed by the Fifth Schedule. For GPs located in regions governed by the Fifth Schedule, it is imperative to guarantee the involvement of inhabitants at the hamlet/village level. Once the plans are formulated at the hamlet or village level, they should be seamlessly included at the GP (Gram Panchayat) level without any alterations.⁴⁸

3.11.3. Significance of Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP)

Panchayats have been empowered to enable to formulate strategies for the growth of Gram Panchayats. For the Panchayats to effectively use the resources at their disposal for economic development and social justice, it is necessary for them to have a thorough and inclusive planning process called the Panchayat Development

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Plans or PDP. This process should be based on the 11th Schedule, which ensures complete coordination with 18 different departments and ministries.⁴⁹

The Constitution of India and the State Panchayati Raj Acts prioritize decentralized planning for local economic growth and social justice through the involvement of Panchayats. The decentralized planning approach was vital for identifying and addressing the specific requirements of the local community, harnessing local resources, and implementing a system for achieving convergence at the grassroots level, taking into account local needs and demands.

Systematic decentralized planning also helped in facilitating access to marginalized individuals within a Panchayat region, thus addressing the varying requirements of distinct populations.⁵⁰ It also facilitated the mobilization of all sectors and their involvement in governance and development. It facilitated the incorporation of individuals' expertise and wisdom into local development initiatives; comprehending the process of development from the perspective of both citizens and elected officials. This is necessary for development of stronger connections between the Panchayats and the local populace.

The GPDP was also indispensable in enhancing economic productivity and optimizing resource use because it establish a system where the local government is directly answerable to its residents. It nurtured the Gram Sabha and other local organizations and structures as operational entities by enabling officials operating at the forefront level. Thus, GPDP was encouraging democracy and local control.

3.11.4. Issues on Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP)

After successfully implementing the instructions set by the Union and State Governments and formulating and implementing the GPDPs nationwide, new problems and possibilities have arisen. It is important to consider those for future endeavours in sustainable development and the promotion of social justice.

⁴⁹ *Op. Cit.* Ministry of Panchayati Raj. (2021).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Insufficient involvement of individuals in the planning process and Gram Sabha was a major issue as village residents were often negligent about the GPDP.⁵¹ Other issues on GPDP were highlighted in Appendix – II.

3.11.5. Village Poverty Reduction Plan (VPRP) under GPDP

Starting in 2018, the People’s Plan Campaign (PPC) guidelines and the joint consent from the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and the Ministry of Rural Development have required Self-Help Groups and their federations to take part in the Annual Gram Panchayat Plan (AGPP) formulation process under the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM). They must also include the Village Poverty Reduction Plan (VPRP) Scheme, prepared by these federations, in the GPDP Planning process. The VPRP is an all-encompassing demand plan that requires integration with the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP). The VPRP is given during the Gram Sabha sessions annually, namely from October to December.⁵²

The demands under the VPRP are classified into five primary components such as social inclusion, entitlement, livelihoods, progressive infrastructure, resource development, and social development.⁵³

3.12. Assessment of Gram Sabha in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh

Gram Sabha has the utmost significance within the Panchayati Raj System. The forum allows all villagers to participate and engage in discussions on the aims and strategies of Gram Panchayat, including most notably the GPDP. This demonstrates the evident decentralization of power through the proceedings of Gram Sabha. It is accountable for devising and executing the plans for advancement of the village, in addition to supervising the public assets and essential facilities for people. Furthermore, Gram Sabha serves as a deterrent against the improper use of funds or authority by the Panchayat members and ensures that they are held responsible for their conduct.

⁵¹ See Appendix – II ‘Issues on Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP)’

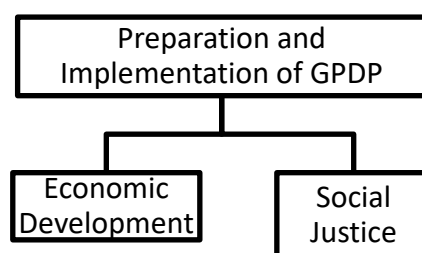
⁵² Ministry of Rural Development, GOI. (2020). Retrieved from <https://cdnbbsr.s3waas.gov.in/s316026d60ff9b54410b3435b403afd226/uploads/2023/03/2023031662.pdf/>

⁵³ See Appendix – III ‘Demands under Village Poverty Reduction Plan (VPRP)’

The significance of Gram Sabha as a crucial gathering was noted among rural communities. Nevertheless, the proportion of participants in Gram Sabha varies both among different villages and depending on the topics discussed during the meeting. Individuals typically assign significant value to discussions pertaining to the MGNREGA-related projects. Usually one representative from one family/one job card attended the Gram Sabha. Apart from this, members of Self-Help Group, leaders of civil societies and government functionaries like teachers were also generally invited to attend Gram Sabha in both Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

Since Gram Panchayats and Village Councils are obligated to develop a Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) in order to foster economic growth and social justice by making use of the resources that are available to them. The planning process for the GPDP has to be comprehensive and based on a participatory approach. It should also involve total coordination with the plans of all relevant central ministries and line departments that are connected to the 29 subjects that were specified in the 11th Schedule to the Constitution.

Figure 3.2: Major components of Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP)



Source: Ministry of Rural Development, GOI. (2020).

Table 3.3: Attendance in Gram Sabha in Mizoram.

| Sl. No. | Villages in Mizoram | Whether villagers regarded Gram Sabha as an important meeting | Appx. GS attendees during 2010 - 2020 (Calculated from total number of job cards) | Whether people were willing to speak out their opinion and ideas | Percentage of GS attendees who actually speak out their opinion and ideas (Calculated from total number of job cards) |
|---------|---------------------|---|---|--|---|
| 1. | Nisapui | Not much | 25% | Unwilling to speak | 5% |
| 2. | Kawnpui VC-3 | Yes | 65% | Yes | 12% |
| 3. | Mualkawi | Yes | 55% | Yes | 8% |
| 4. | Melbuk | Yes | 52% | Not many people exerted their views | 4% |
| 5. | Chungtlang | Yes | 66% | Yes | 10% |
| 6. | West Lungdar | Yes | 62% | Yes | 23% |
| 7. | Ramlaitui | Not much | 26% | Yes | 15% |
| 8. | Haulawng | Not much | 15% | Yes | 4% |
| 9. | Seling | Yes | 32% | Yes | 9% |
| 10. | Thingsul-Tlangnuam | Not much | 26% | Yes | 12% |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

Table 3.4: Attendance in Gram Sabha in Arunachal Pradesh.

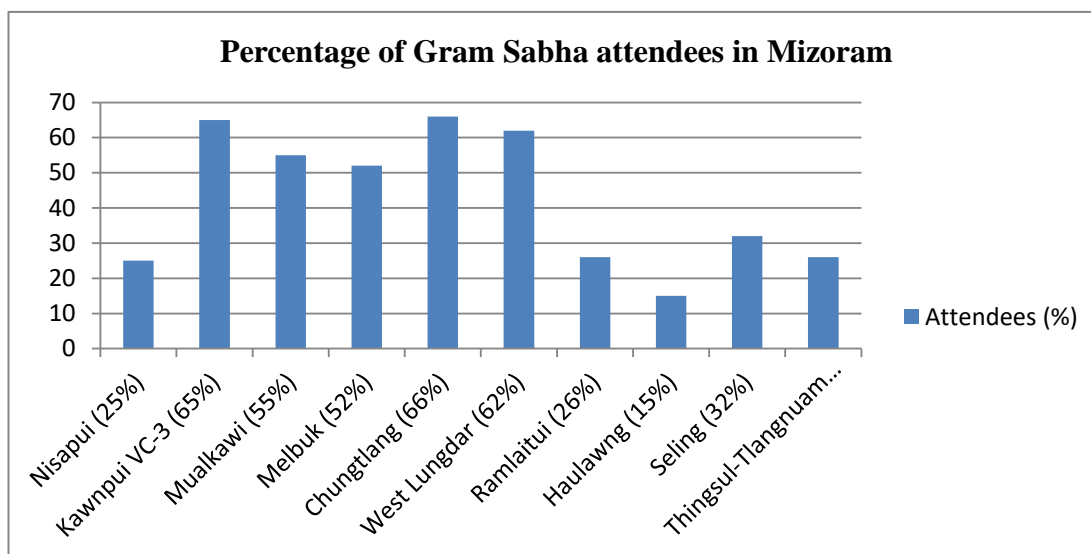
| Sl. No. | Villages in Arunachal Pradesh | Whether villagers regarded Gram Sabha as an important meeting | Appx. GS attendees during 2010 - 2020 (Calculated from total number of job cards) | Whether people were willing to speak out their opinion and ideas | Percentage of GS attendees who actually speak out their opinion and ideas (Calculated from total number of job cards) |
|---------|-------------------------------|---|---|--|---|
| 1. | Bene | No | 40% | Unwilling | 5% |

| | | | | to speak | |
|-----|-------------|-------------------------|-----|-------------------------------------|-----|
| 2. | Darka | No | 30% | Yes | 4% |
| 3. | Korang | Not much | 45% | Yes | 8% |
| 4. | Sido | Yes | 54% | Yes | 8% |
| 5. | Rupa | Not much | 43% | Yes | 16% |
| 6. | Jigaon | Depending on the matter | 37% | Yes | 7% |
| 7. | Borum | Depending on the matter | 26% | Not many people exerted their views | 6% |
| 8. | Rayo | Yes | 33% | Yes | 9% |
| 9. | Lempia West | Yes | 62% | Yes | 23% |
| 10. | Tajang | Yes | 51% | Yes | 11% |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

It was observed that attendance in Gram Sabha in both Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh for a period 2010 to 2020 was unsatisfactory, especially when taking into consideration the importance and significance of the meeting.

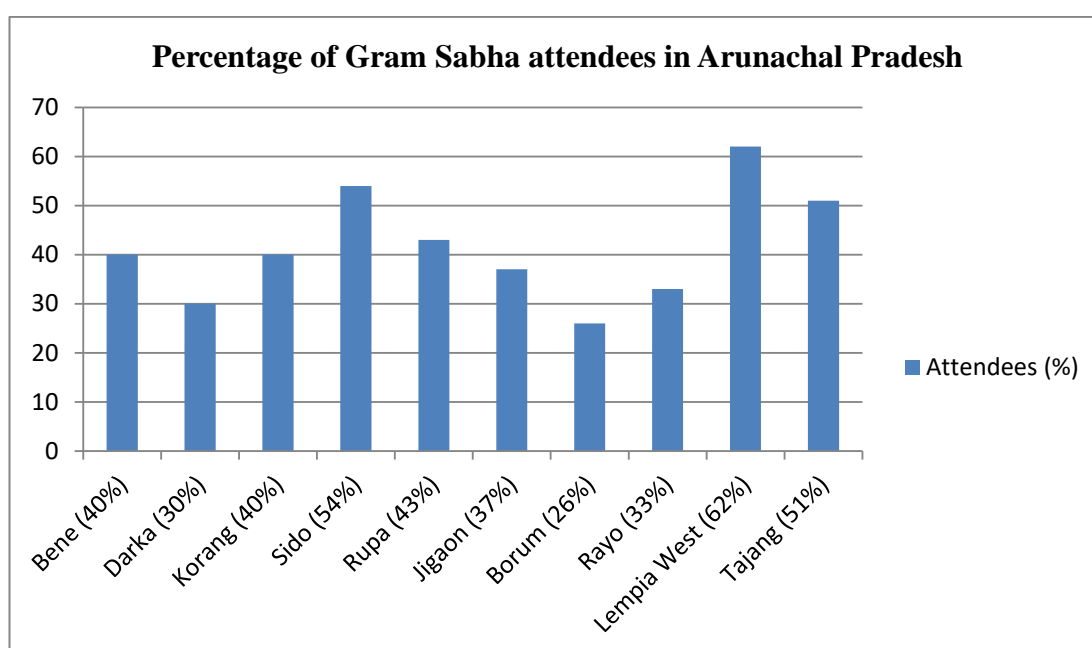
Figure 3.3: Percentage of Gram Sabha attendees in Mizoram



Source: Primary data collected from field work.

In Mizoram, Chungtlang village topped the division with 66% of attendees, followed by Kawnpui VC-3 with 65%, which was closely followed by West Lungdar with 62%. Mualkawi has 55%, Melbuk with 52%, Seling has 32%, Ramlaitui and Thingsul-Tlangnuam has 26% of attendees; while Nisapui and Haulawng have the least number of attendees with 25% and 15% respectively.

Figure 3.4: Percentage of Gram Sabha attendees in Arunachal Pradesh



Source: Primary data collected from field work.

In Arunachal Pradesh, Lempia West village had the highest percentage of attendees with 62%, closely followed by Sido with 54% and Tajang with 51%. Rupa has 43%, both Bene and Korang had 40% each, Jigaon had 37%, followed by Rayo with 33%; Darka and Borum have the least number of attendees with 30% and 26% respectively.

The cumulative average of attendees in Mizoram was 42.4%, while Arunachal has an average of 41.6% attendees. Thus, it was evident that rural communities hardly gave importance to Gram Sabha meeting. When interviewed with Village Council members and Gram Panchayat members on whether people were willing to speak out their opinion and ideas during Gram Sabha meeting, of

course some people exerted their views and opinions; but the generality of members of Gram Sabha remain silent. As observed from studied villages, the percentage of individuals who actually speak out their opinion ranges from 4% to 23% in Gram Sabha meeting, with the total number of job cards taken as 100.

It was also observed that people tended to give importance to Gram Sabha in various matters like planning of GPDP, which was held within 2nd October to 31st December in a year; discussions of matters related to MGNREGA wages – when to credit the amount to beneficiaries (job card holders).

3.13. Conclusion

The Village Council and Gram Panchayat was a unit of administration that enjoyed certain powers to execute what the State Government or Rural Block (Anchali Samiti in PRI) directed them to undertake. They perform a variety of functions so that decentralisation of power in the real sense could be fulfilled, nurtured and put to action so that distributions of resources in a society could be equal. They implemented various schemes and projects, programmes and directives from the government for elevating rural population of India.

The Village Council possessed powers and responsibilities in accordance with Section 8A of the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2014. The village council was granted the authority to devise a development plan for the village and oversee the implementation of those initiatives. The village council possesses the authority to levy taxes on property in compliance with regulations set by the state government. The Panchayat Raj system is authorised by Part IX of the Indian Constitution.

Panchayati Raj institutions carry out the specific activities related to Panchayati Raj as defined in state laws, usually known as Panchayati Raj system functions. The Panchayat Raj system functions can be classified into two categories: mandatory and optional.

The Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) is a comprehensive strategy established by Gram Panchayats throughout India to foster social justice and economic growth in their particular regions. Both the Village Council and Gram Panchayat were associated with creating plans based on the GPDP.

CHAPTER 4

WORKING OF VILLAGE COUNCIL IN MIZORAM AND GRAM PANCHAYAT IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

4.1. Introduction

This chapter is focused to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the working and functioning of local self-government, using a variety of characteristics. The level of progress achieved in providing community advantages in several areas such as education, water and sanitation, environmental protection and preservation, support for youth, privileges for economically disadvantaged categories, and efforts to eliminate drug-related problems has been studied.

Accordingly, two members of Village Councils (in Mizoram) in each village and two members of Gram Panchayat (in Arunachal Pradesh) in each village were interviewed. Additionally, former members of Village Councils and Gram Panchayats were also consulted and interacted in multiple villages to understand the working of village local self-government during their tenure, as the study covered a time frame of ten years.

4.2. Local Self-Governments on Community Development

According to the United Nations, community development is a deliberate process aimed at establishing circumstances that promoted economic and social advancement for the whole community, with the community's active involvement.¹ This concept encompasses a universal approach to collaborating with individuals that was applicable in all nations. The initiative acknowledged the predicament of several developing countries that were on the verge of gaining independence and required immediate establishment of fundamental infrastructure for transportation, healthcare, social well-being, water supply, and other essential needs. In the developed regions of the world, known as the global North, the circumstances are distinct in that

¹ Bhattacharyya, J. (2004). Theorizing Community Development. *Journal of the Community Development Society*. 34(2).

majority of individuals had access to these fundamental necessities.² However, it should be noted that the availability of services might not always be equitable, uncomplicated, or adequate. Thus, local self-government attempted to bridge the gap between those in inadequacy and those that in sufficiency³, so that equal distribution of resources and social justice was ensured.

Community development encompasses a broad spectrum of activities and can be evaluated based on either private or public resources.⁴ Local self-government bodies were responsible for overseeing the deficiencies and needs of village, such as the establishment of proper road connections between villages and within villages, as well as the creation of marketplaces for selling vegetables. In certain areas, there is a demand for reliable internet service. Therefore, community development encompasses any action that contributed to the overall well-being of the community, without any specific or predetermined focus.

Most of the undertakings as part of community development are undertaken with allocation of budgets from the 15th Finance Commission, the Mizoram Finance Commission (in Mizoram), Excluded Area Fund, or MLA-LAD funds.

In Nisapui village (Kolasib District), agricultural link roads were established as necessitated by the rural economy of the village. Majority of the villagers were engaged in agriculture (54% of houses), most of the agricultural practices were for commercial purpose, i.e., for selling in the markets. Variety of crops like ginger, chillies, brinjal, mustard, corn, cucumber, beans were cultivated on jhum land. While crops like cauliflower, cabbage, carrot were planted on fields, a portion of squash plantation and orange farming also gives employment to some farmers. Thus, as farming was highly important for the village's economy, focus was on the development and maintenance of agricultural link roads that linked the village with those plantations, so that products could be carried easily with trucks, ensuring timely distribution of perishable vegetables. Keeping this in view, leaders of the

² Gilchrist, A. (2019). *The Well-Connected Community: A Networking Approach to Community Development*. Bristol University Press.

³ Jones, G. & Stewart, J. (2012). Local Government: The Past, the Present and the Future. *Public Policy and Administration* (SAGE Journals). 27(4).

⁴ Green, G. P. & Haines, A. (2015). *Asset Building & Community Development*. SAGE Publications.

village council from term to term understand the need, as also highly demanded by the community to have an all-weather agricultural link road. During the span of study timeline, i.e., 2010 - 2020, over 13 kilometres long link road was constructed and widened to be able to access through trucks. Apart from this, approach roads were constructed inside the village with Plain Cement Concrete (PCC) flooring in four different places in the village.

In Kawnpui VC-3 (Kolasib District), as part of development of the community, a road was constructed by village council on the lower side of the village where new houses were constructed as the village expanded. For this, over 19 land owners donated portion of their land as requested by the village council, so that road can go through. Not only this, over 12 PCC flooring were made inside the village for convenient transportation for people, steps were also constructed using concrete and stones. Apart from construction of roads and small internal roads, the village council themselves built a Village Council house, where the upper floor was used for office and the ground floor for shops. The VC charged very low monthly rent as compared to other private buildings in the locality, and they meant these floors for economically weaker sections to start and open shops thus providing occupation for them. As of 2020, five families occupied five shops under the VC house.

In Mualkawi village (Champhai District), as part of community development, white topping (construction of village internal road with cement concrete) was made in various places, the total length of this white topping, if taken altogether was approximately 1.5 kilometres. It provided an efficient transportation inside the village. The village council was very much in supportive of youth recreation, they constructed volleyball ground and futsal ground where village youths could engage in sports and physical exercises. Not only this, public urinals were set up in five (5) different places, waiting sheds in two (2) places as well. As the village community hall was in a dilapidated condition, renovation task was taken up by the village council by making reinforcement in the roof, repairing the inside structures and extended the building to avail bigger crowd inside.

In Melbuk (Champhai District), there was hardly any community development rendered by village council during 2010 – 2020 in terms of providing commendable assets to the community. However, a 15 metre high mast worth Rs. 80,000 was installed in a junction in the village. Other than that, five (5) public urinals and three (3) waiting sheds were also constructed.

In Chungtlang (Mamit District), four (4) waiting sheds were constructed, two on each entrance of the village, in the north and south tip, and two inside the village. Plain Cement Concrete (PCC) flooring was laid on 5 destinations in the village for internal connection, village cemetery approach road was also widened and PCC floor was also constructed. With a view to establishing clean and hygiene village, seven public urinals were constructed within regular intervals of distance. Retaining wall was constructed on two places in the village where there was an instance of landslide and further possible recurrence; these walls were built with stones and concrete, thus ensuring safety and protection. Another important community development was the construction of agricultural link road, Chungtlang, like many other villages in Mizoram was a rural village that rely heavily on agriculture. Over 53% of the inhabitants were engaged in agriculture for their livelihood, cash crops like rubber plantation, beetle nut and palm oil were cultivated. Seasonal crops like paddy, corn, brinjal, mustard, ginger, chillies and other vegetables were planted on jhum fields. Most of these agricultural lands were located on the western side of village, and proper road connection was a necessity to transport the crops. Thus, an all-weather link road connecting the village up till river Tut, over a span of 18 kilometres was constructed by the village council.

In West Lungdar (Mamit District), many community assets were established and constructed over the stipulated time period. A community hall, that could fit 400 people inside was constructed by the village council with funding from the MLA, this community hall served as an important place for village gathering – convention of Gram Sabha, YMA day celebration, MHIP day celebration and other important village activities. A community sanitary complex, also known locally as ‘dumping ground’ was also specified by the village council for proper discharge of waste outside the village, although arrangements were further made by the village

committee on water and sanitation (WATSAN). The BNRGSK hall was also constructed, which was widely used for VC sitting on important topics of discussion; and seven waiting sheds were constructed within and on the entrance of village within the year 2010 – 2020.

In Ramlaitui (Lunglei District), as part of community development, community hall was constructed for utility usage like convention of Gram Sabha, YMA day celebration, MHIP day celebration and other important village activities. Retaining walls were also constructed in critical areas to prevent landslide that could protect village people. The Plain Cement Concrete (PCC) flooring was laid on three sites in the village for linking internal roads, composed pit was constructed in both ends of the village to allow decomposable items to decompose, and fencing was made with barbed-wire around the Health Sub-Centre to protect the premises from robbers and thieves. Agricultural link road stretching over 2 kilometres was constructed to enable trucks and other vehicles to go through so that villagers could deliver their cash crops at the earliest.

Haulawng was another village in Lunglei District. In this village, Plain Cement Concrete (PCC) flooring was laid on 15 places in the village during 2010 – 2020. These PCC flooring were very important to connect various streets within the village, as Haulawng village is quite big. The village council also constructed foot path in various areas (approximately 60 metres in total) for pedestrians. Village council members were very concerned about greenery and beautification of the village, thus, every year on a specific date, they launched tree plantation programme and plants inside the village; with an intention to provide healthy environment as well as beautification.

In Seling (Aizawl District), Plain Cement Concrete (PCC) was laid on 20 different places in the village to enable easy accessibility of different areas within the village. The village community hall was repaired with an objective to accommodate more crowds, apart from this; public urinals and waiting sheds were also constructed on various sites in the village. Retaining wall for landslide protection was built on 3 places in the village.

In Thingsul-Tlangnuam, located in the Aizawl District, the village council constructed a VC house. This structure serves as a crucial facility for the community, providing a place where residents can easily approach the village council for various matters. The village council constructed a bazaar shed, providing a space for several locals to operate shops without the burden of monthly rent. This initiative served as a means for the village council to assist the rural population. Additionally, four public urinals and two waiting sheds were built.

Thus, it was clear that village councils in Mizoram did certain jobs for the development of community at large. However, Gram Panchayats in Arunachal Pradesh also perform certain functions for community development in their respective villages.

In Bene village (West Siang District), the level of community development is comparatively low in comparison with other villages of Arunachal Pradesh. As Siyom River flows along the village, flood protection walls were built along the river line with the initiatives of Gram Panchayat to protect from floods. In order to regulate proper discharge of wastages, the GP also took certain steps like providing garbage cans in various areas of the village, in addition to providing awareness on cleanliness and hygiene.

The Gram Panchayat in Darka (West Siang District) implemented many community development initiatives, such as the building of public urinals in different locations across the village, as well as the construction of community halls and recreation centres during the studied time-frame, i.e., 2010 -2020.

The Gram Panchayat in Korang, located in the East Siang District, addressed the issue of an inadequate drainage system inside the village by constructing drainage lines in low-lying areas. This was done due to the hamlet's susceptibility to landslides during periods of high monsoon rainfall. The GP also undertook the maintenance and expansion of agricultural link roads, enabling people to conveniently reach paddy fields with automobiles, so alleviating the transportation load. In addition to this, the Gram Panchayat also constructed Plain Cement Concrete (PCC) on four areas in the village for internal connection.

In Sido (East Siang District), the main community development rendered by the Gram Panchayat was construction of community hall, this hall was built with different funds kept together, along with assistance from the MLA-LAD fund; the hall was very useful to convene any community-related activities like Gram Sabha, celebration of festivals like Mopin festival, and so on. Additionally, the GP also constructed community toilet across two destinations in the village. Drainage lines made of cemented concrete were also constructed in different areas of the village. As Sido lies in a terrain between two rivers, the village was vulnerable to floods and swift overflow of rivers especially during monsoon, thus with the consultation and discussion in Gram Sabha, it was unanimously agreed that the Gram Panchayat would take steps to build flood protection wall, the project thus started in 2020 and as of 2024, it was an ongoing project.

Rupa is a village in the West Kameng District of Arunachal Pradesh, the Gram Panchayat developed internal roads through Panchayat schemes in five destinations for internal connection. Cemented concrete steps were also constructed in three different places. Market shed has been constructed where villagers can sell their vegetables and other items, over 14 shops were opened in this shed, creating an opportunity for economically weaker sections to earn a livelihood. In addition to this, resting shed was also constructed, which was earmarked for utility purposes – village gathering, community festivals, and village-level functions and programmes.

In Jigaon (West Kameng District), the Gram Panchayat's contribution towards community development comprised of construction of community shed (waiting shed) in an approach to Dungjur Old Monastery; construction of community toilet at the general ground; maintenance of village internal roads by concreted with cement in four different destinations; as well as plantation of trees on roadsides of the village. Further, the GP also constructed water tank at Upper Jigaon which would assist the necessity of water supply in the event of shortage.

Borum is a village in Papum Pare District, located near the city of Naharlagun. The Gram Panchayat had no much contribution to community

development other than establishing solid & liquid waste management facility, construction of public urinal in three different destinations in the village.

Rayo was a small village in Nirjuli Circle Township, in Papum Pare District. As the Dikrong River flows through the village, flood protection walls were constructed by the Gram Panchayat in various areas which were prone to overflow of river water, the village in recent years had experienced severe flood resulted in destruction of people's houses and properties, cattle and valuable assets. Drainage system was also developed from time to time. Plain Cement Concrete (PCC) flooring was also established for village internal connections.

In Lempia West (Lower Subansiri District), disposal of liquid waste is a problem because the village lies in a flat ground, thus the Gram Panchayat took serious note of the drainage system and developed a drain that enables all liquid waste to be discharged in a specified location. The PCC flooring was laid in seven destinations to ensure proper internal connection. Moreover, footpaths for safety of pedestrians was constructed along the streets by the GP, the estimated length of footpaths in Lempia West was approximately 850 metres in total. As the village relied heavily on Siike Lake, an artificial lake which was expected to provide enough domestic needs and paddy irrigation around Ziro circle (including Lempia West), the volume of water in the lake was sometimes insufficient; the Gram Panchayat in order ensure sufficiency, find an alternative by establishing underground water well in three destinations within the village.

Tajang is another village in Lower Subansiri District, Arunachal Pradesh. The Gram Panchayat's primary focus on community development was establishment of proper drainage system, during 2010 – 2020. All areas inside the village had a proper drainage system. The other important work done by the Gram Panchayat was construction of footpaths along highway road, because a highway connecting northern Arunachal Pradesh and Itanagar runs through Tajang village.

The degree of community development undertaken by Village Councils and Gram Panchayats in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh differs greatly from village to village, from districts to districts, and also from state to state. Most of these

developments were possible with fund from Gram Panchayat fund, with GPDP-related fund under the 15th Finance Commission, the MGNREGA, and special package from respective MLAs and so on.

Most of the members of Village Council and Gram Panchayat are content with the development observed in their respective village. However, other beneficiaries – school teachers, prominent citizens from the village, leaders of civil society and students held their own view. These beneficiaries were asked – (1) their satisfactory level in the community development rendered by local self-government bodies during 2010 – 2020; (2) citizen's active involvement in community development with local self-government bodies during 2010 – 2020. The first question deals with satisfaction or un-satisfaction on community development, while the latter enquires about citizens' involvement. Citizens' active involvement mainly deals with whether the general public was supportive or cooperative of what the local self-government bodies did in relation to community development, either by rendering physical support on their work or by showing moral support.

Table 4.1: Village Council members and beneficiaries' satisfactory level in the community development rendered by local self-government body (Village Council in Mizoram) during 2010 – 2020.

| Sl. No. | Categories of Respondents | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Don't know | Total |
|---------|---------------------------|--------------|----------------|------------|-------|
| 1. | Beneficiaries | 52 (65%) | 16 (20%) | 12 (15%) | 80 |
| 2. | Village Council members | 17 (85%) | 3 (15%) | 0 (00%) | 20 |
| Total | | 69 (69%) | 19 (19%) | 12 (12%) | 100 |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

The above table showed that most beneficiaries (including school teachers, prominent citizens from the village, leaders of civil society and students) were content with the community development in their village (65%), while 20% were unsatisfied with it, another 15% have no stance as to whether satisfactory or unsatisfactory. The table also showed that the Village Council members were highly satisfied with community development (85%), only the rest 15% were dissatisfied

with their work. Thus, it can be asserted that majority (69%) of respondents (all beneficiaries and Village Council members) were satisfied with community development in villages in Mizoram. Another 19% were unsatisfied with it, while the rest 12 were not sure about whether they were satisfied or unsatisfied with community development provided by Village Council.

Table 4.2: Citizen's active involvement in community development with local self-government bodies (Village Council in Mizoram) during 2010 – 2020.

| Sl. No. | Categories of Respondents | Actively involved | Uninvolved | Don't know | Total |
|---------|---------------------------|-------------------|------------|------------|-------|
| 1. | Beneficiaries | 76 (95%) | 0 (00%) | 4 (5%) | 80 |
| 2. | Village Council members | 20 (100%) | 0 (00%) | 0 (00%) | 20 |
| Total | | 96 (96%) | 0 (00%) | 4 (4%) | 100 |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

As shown in the above figure, citizens' active involvement in community development activities in accordance with Village Council was commendable because over 95% of beneficiaries were content with it. Only 5% of beneficiaries were not sure about whether citizens were actively involved in community development. On the other side, all members of village council, i.e., 100% had their opinion that citizens were in supportive of the work undertaken by village council for community development in Mizoram.

Table 4.3: Gram Panchayat members and beneficiaries' satisfactory level in the community development rendered by local self-government body (Gram Panchayat in Arunachal Pradesh) during 2010 – 2020

| Sl. No. | Categories of Respondents | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Don't know | Total |
|---------|---------------------------|--------------|----------------|-------------|-------|
| 1. | Beneficiaries | 31 (38.75%) | 36 (45%) | 13 (16.25%) | 80 |
| 2. | Gram Panchayat members | 14 (70%) | 6 (30%) | 0 (00%) | 20 |
| Total | | 45 (45%) | 42 (42%) | 13 (13%) | 100 |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

The above table showed that most beneficiaries (including school teachers, prominent citizens from the village, leaders of civil society and students) were discontent or unsatisfied with the community development in their village, over 45% exerted their discontent; another 38.75% were satisfied with the development they have observed, the rest 16.25% were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied. The Gram Panchayat themselves were highly satisfied as evident in the table (70%). The rest 30% were not satisfied in their contribution towards community development.

Table 4.4: Citizen's active involvement in community development with local self-government bodies (Gram Panchayat in Arunachal Pradesh) during 2010 – 2020

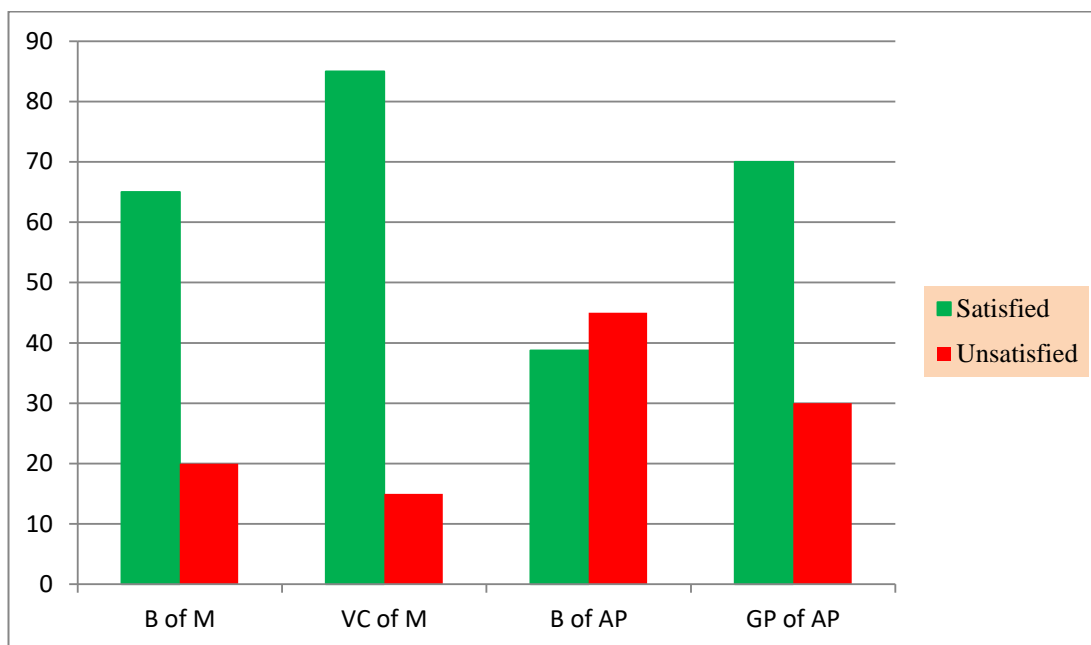
| Sl. No. | Categories of Respondents | Actively involved | Uninvolved | Don't know | Total |
|---------|---------------------------|-------------------|------------|------------|-------|
| 1. | Beneficiaries | 59 (73.75%) | 18 (22.5%) | 3 (3.75%) | 80 |
| 2. | Gram Panchayat members | 15 (75%) | 5 (25%) | 0 (00%) | 20 |
| Total | | 74 (74%) | 23 (23%) | 3 (3%) | 100 |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

In Arunachal Pradesh, citizens were actively engaged in community development activities and give commendable supportive and cooperative action as shown in the above table. Over 73.75% of beneficiaries held that citizens were actively involved in it; another 22.5% argued that citizens were uninvolved; the rest 3.75% had no idea on whether citizens were actively participating in community development. On the other hand, the Gram Panchayat themselves also had a stance that citizen's participation in community development was high (75%); only 25% held that citizens were uninvolved.

Thus, assessing the comparative analysis of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh in terms of community development, the satisfactory level of respondents (beneficiaries and members of local self-government bodies) was calculated. The following figure showed the satisfactory or unsatisfactory level of beneficiaries and members of local self-government bodies in both Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

Figure 4.1: Satisfactory or unsatisfactory level of beneficiaries and members of local self-government bodies in both Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh (in percentile from respondents' view)

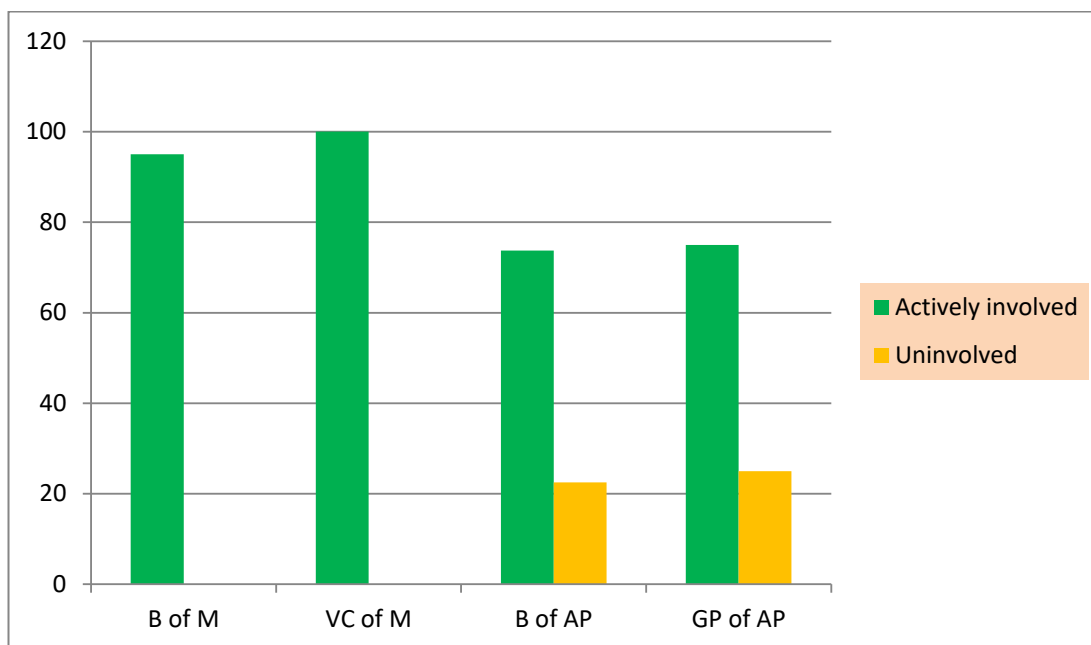


Source: Primary data collected from field work.

As the above figure showed, in all categories (Beneficiaries of Mizoram, Village Council of Mizoram, and Gram Panchayat of Mizoram) other than beneficiaries of Arunachal Pradesh, the community development in both the states was satisfactory.

When assessing citizen's active involvement in community development with local self-government bodies in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, it was observed that citizens had actively participated in community development both in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh as shown in the figure below.

Figure 4.2: Citizen's active involvement in community development with local self-government bodies in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh (in percentile from respondents' view)



Source: Primary data collected from field work.

As shown in the figure above, all beneficiaries of Mizoram and Village Council members of Mizoram exerted that citizens were actively involved in community development; in Arunachal Pradesh also, majority of respondents from both beneficiaries and members of Gram Panchayat held that citizens performed their duty on community development, very few respondents argued that the citizens were uninvolved.

Despite certain drawbacks and limitations faced by local self-government entities in promoting constructive change and development in villages, there has been significant progress. Nevertheless, several impediments such as corruption, delayed allocation of funds for projects, insufficient study on community need, and ineptitude of implementing organizations impede the progress of development. A significant number of members in the local self-government bodies in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh lack education and do not have access to modern technologies, as indicated by the responses from beneficiaries during interviews. This factor

contributes to the slow pace of development, which contradicts the aspirations and expectations of the citizens.

4.3. Local Self-Governments on Education

Education was the fundamental requirement for any form of progress in the world. Education was part of the 29 functions of Panchayati Raj System as enshrined in Schedule XI, Article 243G of the Indian Constitution that stated on number 17 - 'education, including primary and secondary schools'⁵. The significance of local self-government in enhancing the quality of education in rural areas cannot be underestimated. Rural villages, in contrast to towns and cities, lacked access to quality education or educational institutions. The schools that existed in these communities were predominantly government-run.

Local self-governing entities such as Village Council and Gram Panchayat need to educate the public about the significance of education. They should also instruct parents to permit their children to attend schools, so fostering a more promising future for them. Thus, division of responsibility or decentralization was necessary in education, especially in rural areas. Decentralization in education involves the involvement and coordination of several individuals in education, including Local Self-Government units, school principals, parents, and students at the local level, as well as the Ministry of Education and its branches at the national level.⁶ Thus, imparting education on youth involved the active participation and effort of all other parties – parents, teachers as well as local governments.

Nikolovska & Dimitrievska further asserted that in order to achieve maximum efficiency and effective administration of school education, which hold significant value for the local community, the local self-government must strategically plan and consistently offer support to schools in the following areas:

- a) Provide assistance to educational institutions in developing and executing annual curricula for in-class, extracurricular, and school-wide projects.

⁵ Syal, R. (*n.d.*). Local Self-Government. In *Indian Politics – I*. e-Adhyayan.

⁶ Nikolovska, F. & Dimitrievska, N. (2022). The Role of Local Self-Government in the Development of Education. In Angeloska Galevska, et al., (Eds.). *Educational Challenges and Future Prospects*. Skopje Institute of Pedagogy.

- b) Supply schools with necessary materials and technical equipment.
- c) Offer support to students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.
- d) Provide assistance to students with special educational needs.
- e) Promote and support successful individuals and effective educational practices.

Accordingly, the local self-government bodies both in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh were providing support and assistance in various aspects.

In Nisapui village (Kolasib District), Village Education Committee (VEC) was constituted under the chairmanship of Village Council, the Committee annually organised village-level gathering on education related programs by inviting lectures from prominent people in the field of education. The Committee also organised career guidance program in collaboration with the National Service Scheme (NSS) of Pachhunga University College. Not only this, Village Council helped repair work of Govt. Middle School building, in addition to Plain Cement Concrete (PCC) flooring of school courtyard of both Govt. Primary School and Govt. Middle School.

Kawnpui VC-3 was also located in Kolasib District. In this village, the Village Council establish Village Education Committee (VEC) with members composed of teachers from schools, civil society organisations and ex-servicemen. The Committee visited various government aided schools in their entity and interacted with school teachers, discussing the school need and also proposes areas where they could work together. Career guidance program was held in schools annually, approach road towards Govt. Primary School – I and II was repaired with cemented steps. Under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) fund, the Village Council also donated three water coolers to different schools. At the end of every calendar year, the Village Council commemorate students by awarding them citation of appreciation, who had successfully passed exams like HSLC, HSSLC, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, M. Phil., Ph. D., and others with a view to encourage students for further endeavours. At the Village Council house, free Wi-Fi connectivity was provided to students, in addition to provision of free access to printer for students. Remarkably in 2017, after taking into consideration the need of

the community, the Village Council established a High School for Class IX and X standard. Payment for school functioning as well as remuneration of teachers was wholly funded by the Village Council with donations from the community.

In Mualkawi (Champhai District), the Village Council in collaboration with civil society organisations like the YMA, the MHIP and other students' organisation had raised donation and hired two school teachers to fill insufficiency in Govt. Primary School. The VC also repaired school building of both Govt. Primary School and Govt. Middle School, in addition to construction of approach road with PCC flooring on both the schools.

Melbuk was another village in Champhai District, situated at 10 kilometres from Indo-Myanmar border. The Village Council took significant part in education of the village, they held regular visit to schools - Govt. Primary School, Govt. Middle School and Govt. High School; interact with teachers on how productivity can be ensured, discussing the needs of schools and provided them with assistance in terms of school building repairing, and so on. The VC also organizes celebration of Teachers' Day and Parents' Day every year with all government schools.

In Chungtlang (Mamit District), the Village Council annually organized education awareness by inviting prominent and successful educators to deliver lectures in both Govt. Primary School and Government-aided Middle School, with an objective to reduce the rate of school dropouts among young people, and also intended to impart career guidance counselling for those youths. As far as hygiene is concerned, Village Council also constructed a composed pit (with funding from the 15th Finance Commission) within the premises of both the schools and also within two Anganwadi Centres.

In West Lungdar (Mamit District), the Village Council contributed in many ways for education. Firstly, approach road in PCC flooring was laid in Govt. Middle School and High School. Secondly, the Village Council contributed fund from time to time in a community-run High School (the only High School in the village) that assisted in teachers' remuneration and essential fund for school functioning. Thirdly, as Govt. Primary School and Govt. Middle School encounter insufficiency on

teachers provided by the State Government, the Village Council members met, held a meeting and submitted an appeal to the MLA as well as towards the concerned minister. Fourthly, the Village Council was concerned about student's well-being and hygiene. Public urinals were constructed in Govt. Primary School and Govt. Middle School, composed pit for discharging waste materials were also constructed in Govt. Primary School and Govt. Middle School, as well as in Community Sub-Centre.

In Ramlaitui (Lunglei District), Village Council visited various government aided schools and Anganwadis in their entity and interacted with school teachers, discussing the school needs so that assistance could be given. Water connection was given to Govt. Primary School, Govt. Middle School, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) High School and two Anganwadis; retaining wall was also constructed to prevent landslide at the RMSA High School; composed pit for discharge of waste was constructed in Govt. Primary School, Govt. Middle School, and two Anganwadis. Further, the Village Council annually organized education awareness campaign and held public meeting on community hall, inviting all students and parents to attend the gathering. This ensured decentralization in education by active participation of local self-government, parents and teachers in nurturing students' education.

In Haulawng (Lunglei District), the Village Council assisted Govt. High School, Land Revenue Department-aided School in maintenance and repair of school building. Apart from this, with a need arose from community, the Village Education Committee under the chairmanship of Village Council President establish Higher Secondary School in 2013; as of 2020, the school had 5 teachers working currently, teachers' remuneration and other fund needed for school were obtained from community funding. This community funding got its source from MGNREGA, every job card holder in the village unanimously consented to cut Rupees 200 per month for funding, in addition to additional fund from the Village Council. Thus, the cumulative donation per month was approximately one lakh.

In Seling (Aizawl District), the Village Council also were cautious about the quality of education in the village. To fill the inadequacy of teaching posts, the

Village Council hired three teachers for various government schools in the village. Approach road towards schools were made in PCC flooring in three different places. Not only this, in every school inside the village, viz., Govt. High School, two Govt. Middle School, four Govt. Primary School, they constructed toilet and bathrooms. Composed pit for waste disposal was also constructed in each of these seven schools. Village Council also gave scholarship to various enthusiastic students that prepared for the State Public Service Commission and the Union Public Service Commission exams.

Thingsul-Tlangnuam was another village from Aizawl District. During 2010 – 2020, the Village Council of Thingsul-Tlangnuam constructed toilet and bathroom for Govt. Primary School, Govt. Middle School and Govt. High School; the roof of Govt. Middle School was also repaired with tin roof with fund from the VC. Barbed-wired fencing was made along the premises of Anganwadi Centre, Govt. Primary School and Govt. High School to protect the school from robbers. Moreover, every year before and during Matriculation exam was held, students went on to camp in schools to enable them to focus more on studies with teachers readily available at all times for supervision. The Village Council then provided necessities like bags of rice, groceries, and water to these students and teachers. Every year, the Village Council honours students who have successfully passed examinations such as HSLC, HSSLC, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, M. Phil., Ph. D., and others. This is done to encourage students to continue their efforts.

In Bene (West Siang District), the village always had shortage of qualified teachers in Govt. Primary School and Govt. Middle School. This had, according to accounts from Gram Panchayat members, contributed to deterioration of education standard in the village, apparently many students drop out of school even at an early age. Therefore, Gram Panchayat created awareness on education by organizing education awareness campaign every year, where students and parents were imparted about the importance of education. An auditorium for Govt. Middle School was constructed using Gram Panchayat fund in 2015.

Darka was also a village from West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh. In this village, the Gram Panchayat had constructed toilets and bathrooms in every government-aided school - Govt. Primary School, Govt. Middle School and Govt. High School.

In Korang (East Siang District), the Gram Panchayat had constructed toilets and bathrooms for Govt. Primary School and Govt. Middle School. They also made Concreted Cement Pavement as an approach road for both these schools. Gram Panchayat annually convened meeting of teachers, students and parents to imparting the importance of education.

In Sido, which was a village in East Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh, the village only had a Govt. Primary School; appeals have been made multiple times to the MLA as well as to the concerned department in the State Government, by submitting a detailed memorandum in the name of Village Education Committee (VEC) with Chairman of Gram Panchayat as the chairman. So far as of 2020, no progressive development could be observed. The Govt. Primary School was also most of the time running short on qualified teachers, the Gram Panchayat, with additional donations from certain political party units was able to raise enough fund for remuneration for two private teachers in Govt. Primary School.

In Rupa (West Kameng District), the Gram Panchayat in coordination with All Shertukpen Students' Union (which was a very young and energetic students' organisation), annually convened career guidance program that involved career guidance lectures from successful individuals, and sessions that focused on commemoration of students that excelled in education. In 2019, the Gram Panchayat opened library in Rupa market junction; the objective of the GP in establishing this library is to guide youths to develop a habit of reading academic books and newspaper. Additionally, the Gram Panchayat identified and locate those students whose family background and economic condition was unfavourable for continuing higher education, and ultimately grant them with a fund for educational purpose.

Jigaon was also located in West Kameng District of Arunachal Pradesh. In this village, the Gram Panchayat funded the maintenance and repair cost of 100-

boarder hostel of Govt. Middle School in 2017. As major highway running through Jigaon runs along the entrance of Govt. Primary School and Govt. Middle School, the Gram Panchayat constructed two speed breakers for the safety of students. The Gram Panchayat also provided water connectivity for both these schools.

In Borum village (Papum Pare District), an interaction with members of the Gram Panchayat revealed that the State Government paid very little or no attention at all to development of schools in Borum. The Gram Panchayat made series of appeals to the concerned department in the State Government to look into the matter. And as a result of their effort, the State Government then provided funding for the purchase of 30 desks and 30 benches in Govt. Middle School. In addition to this, the Gram Panchayat with every possible fund they can assist in the construction of assembly hall in Govt. Middle School. The PCC flooring was made in approach road towards both Govt. Primary School and Govt. Middle School.

The Gram Panchayat in Rayo village (Papum Pare District) assisted students from poor economic background by providing them Rs. 1500/- each student every year, starting from 2008. The number of students funded with this system varies from year to year. In the year 2020, over 32 students from low economic background were funded. Clean water supply connection was provided to Govt. Primary School, Govt. Middle School and Govt. High School. The GP also visited those schools, interacted with school authorities discussing their need, and funding for repair and maintenance were also provided when needed. There has also been remarkable contribution in allocation of school teachers in those schools, the Gram Panchayat submitted memorandum, stating the nature of inadequacy of teachers to the concerned department of the State Government.

In Lempia West (Lower Subansiri District), since the concerned department of the State Government took good care of schools within Lempia West, there has been no much intervention of Gram Panchayat for school development. However, career guidance programs were held by Gram Panchayat in collaboration with teachers, imparting the importance of education and career options.

Tajang was another village in Lower Subansiri District of Arunachal Pradesh. The Gram Panchayat commemorate students that passed examinations like HSLC, HSSLC, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, M. Phil., Ph. D., and other technical degrees with citation of appreciation after every academic year. The Gram Panchayat also provided books for libraries in Govt. Primary School, Govt. Middle School and Govt. High School. Career guidance programs for students of the village were held often; the Gram Panchayat also organized special lectures by inviting successful candidates for enthusiasts of State Public Service Commission and Union Public Service Commission.

Many of the studied villages had no higher education institutions or even Govt. High Schools. So, some students were to go to nearby villages to have access to high school and so forth. The contribution of both local self-government bodies also varied largely from village to village. Some villages had well-organized and well-developed government schools, that needed no further replenishment from Village Councils and Gram Panchayat; while others needed attention and interaction of local bodies for their efficiency.

In order to further understand the nature of local self-government bodies' contribution for education sector in their respective villages, questions were asked to the members of Gram Panchayat/Village Councils, as well as teachers of government schools. The first question asked was, "Are you satisfied with what the Gram Panchayat/Village Councils contributed in education sector in your village during the year 2010 - 2020?" Secondly, "What were the areas where you worked together (local self-government bodies & school teachers)?" And thirdly, "What do you think is important to build cooperation between local self-government bodies and school teachers?"

Table 4.5: Respondents satisfaction with what the Gram Panchayat/Village Councils contributed in education sector in their village during the year 2010 - 2020

| Sl. No. | Categories of Respondents | Highly Satisfied | Satisfied | Unsatisfied | Don't know | Total |
|---------|---------------------------|------------------|-----------|-------------|------------|-------|
| | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|-------|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----|
| 1. | School teachers in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh | 5 (12.5%) | 9 (22.5%) | 16 (40%) | 10 (25%) | 40 |
| 2. | Village Council members | 7 (35%) | 2 (10%) | 7 (35%) | 4 (20%) | 20 |
| 3. | Gram Panchayat members | 5 (25%) | 8 (40%) | 6 (30%) | 1 (5%) | 20 |
| Total | | 17 (21.25%) | 19 (23.75%) | 29 (36.25%) | 15 (18.75%) | 80 |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

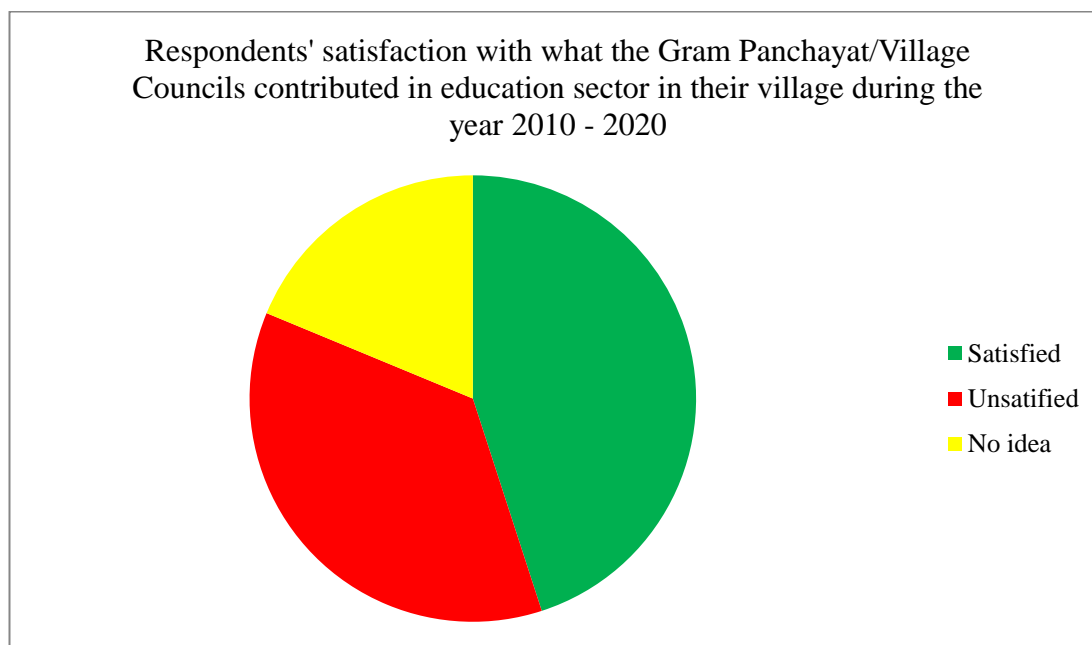
Thus, in terms of satisfaction to what the local self-government bodies contributed in education sector in villages, 12.5% of school teachers, both in Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram were highly satisfied with it, another 22.5% were also satisfied. Majority of the respondents, over 40% were not satisfied with local self-government bodies' activities for education development, another 25% did not like to express their idea or have no idea at all.

In Mizoram, interview with members of Village Council reveal that 35% of them were highly satisfied with what their body contributed for education sector, another 10% were also satisfied to some extent; while another 35% were not satisfied with what the VC performed for development in education. The rest 20% had no idea or opted not to reveal their stance.

In Arunachal Pradesh, interview with members of Gram Panchayat showed that 25% of them were highly satisfied with what their body contributed for education sector, another 40% were also satisfied to some extent; while another 30% were not satisfied with what the Gram Panchayat performed for development in education. Only 5% of respondent had no idea or opted not to reveal their stance.

Therefore, taking all the respondents' view of both school teachers and members of local self-government bodies in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, 45% were satisfied with contribution of local self-government bodies for education sector during 2010 – 2020. Whereas, 36.25% were not satisfied with it, and the rest 18.75% had no idea or opted to undeclared their opinion.

Figure 4.3: Respondents' satisfaction with what the Gram Panchayat and Village Council in Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram contributed in education sector in villages during the year 2010 – 2020.



Source: Primary data collected from field work.

The second question deals with the areas where school teachers and local self-government bodies worked together. Again, 40 school teachers from both Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, as well as 20 members of Village Council and 20 members of Gram Panchayat were asked the same question. However, analysis of interpretation was recorded village-wise.

Table 4.6: Areas where school teachers and local self-government bodies worked together in education sector.

| Sl. No. | Nature of business of Village Council / Gram Panchayat | Village(s) involved |
|---------|---|--|
| 1. | Organising village-level gathering on education related programs like career guidance, awareness and workshop | 9 (Nisapui, Melbuk, Chungtlang, Ramlaitui, Bene, Korang, Rupa, Lempia West, Tajang) |
| 2. | Repair of school buildings | 9 (Nisapui, Mualkawi, Melbuk, Haulawng, Thingsul-Tlangnuam, Bene, Jigaon, Borum, Rayo) |
| 3. | PCC flooring for school approach road | 6 (Nisapui, Mualkawi, West Lungdar, Seling, Korang, Borum) |

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| 4. | Commemoration of students by awarding them citation of appreciation | 4 (Kawnpui VC-3, Thingsul-Tlangnuam, Rupa, Tjang) |
| 5. | Provision of water connection in schools | 4 (Ramlaitui, Thingsul-Tlangnuam, Jigaon, Rayo) |
| 6. | Construction of public urinals, bathroom or composed pit in schools | 7 (Chungtlang, West Lungdar, Ramlaitui, Seling, Thingsul-Tlangnuam, Darka, Korang) |
| 7. | Payment of remuneration of school teachers that were recruited as a result of inadequacy of teachers provided from the government | 6 (Kawnpui VC-3, Mualkawi, West Lungdar, Haulawng, Seling, Sido) |
| 8. | Providing financial assistance to students from low economic background or to students enthusiastic in exams in State PSC or UPSC | 3 (Seling, Rupa, Rayo) |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

Other than those major businesses shown in table 4.6, school teachers and local self-government bodies worked together in areas such as providing free Wi-Fi for students, construction of retaining wall for schools, providing library for students, and advancing pressure on state government for allocation of qualified teachers.

The third inquiry pertains to fostering collaboration between local self-government entities and school educators. A collective of 40 school teachers, spanning from both Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, was posed with the identical query. The most prevalent comments included the following: firstly, fostering collaboration via the establishment of trust, transparency, and frequent meetings. Furthermore, collaborating was vital to establish a shared goal in order to mitigate student concerns such as dropouts. The dropout rate among students was a significant problem in nearly all regions within the study area, especially in remote villages where parents had limited education. It is crucial to emphasize the importance of educating their children in these communities. Parents from economically disadvantaged backgrounds often send their children to work on farms or in family businesses at a young age. Furthermore, lack of competent teachers in rural government schools was a significant problem, prompting local self-government bodies to repeatedly bring the issue to the attention of state governments.

4.4. Local Self-Governments on Water Management

As local self-governments were part of the government at local level, they were entrusted with undertaking approaches to develop ‘minor irrigation, water management and watershed development’, as well as ‘safe water for drinking’ in part 5 and 9 of their listed Subjects.⁷ India has seen an exceptional amount of pressure on its water supplies in recent years, and the lack of useable water has received significant attention. The issue of shortage is worsened by the pervasive contamination of water bodies, which makes the existing water supplies unsuitable for usage. Historical evidence, both globally and in India, has shown that the most effective way to manage water resources is through a decentralized system that focused on specific geographic areas and includes the active participation of local populations. Hence, local self-governing bodies such as Panchayati Raj Institutions and Village Councils have the potential to play a pivotal role in the control of water resources.

In India, local self-government bodies are certainly responsible for managing water resources according to the constitutional structure. Nevertheless, the influence of such organizations on the management of water resources has been negligible and disappointing, as has been their participation in centrally-sponsored initiatives in this domain.⁸ The Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) is a significant project initiated by the Ministry of Jal Shakti of Government of India in 2019 with the aim of delivering piped water service to every rural family in India. The mission was named ‘*Har Ghar Lal*’ that means ‘water to every household’. The Mission acknowledges the importance of having access to clean and sufficient water for consumption as a basic entitlement and strives to guarantee the presence of drinkable water for every person residing in rural regions. The objective of the mission is to provide functional household tap connections (FHTCs) to more than 180 million households in rural areas by the time frame of 2024.⁹

⁷ Sodhi, J. S. & Ramanujam, M. S. (2006). Panchayati Raj System: A Study in Five States of India. *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*. 42(1).

⁸ Srivastava, A. (2020). The Role of Local Self-Governments in Protection of Water Resources. *The IUP Law Review*. 10(1).

⁹ Ministry of Jal Shakti. (2021). Jal Jeevan Mission.

The Village Council and Gram Panchayat function as the main entities of rural local governance and are accountable for carrying out diverse developmental initiatives within their respective regions.¹⁰ Both the Village Council and the Gram Panchayat bear significant obligations within the mission. Firstly, their responsibility involves locating and quantifying rural families that did not have access to a piped-water supply. This includes administering surveys, collecting data, and determining qualified recipients. In addition, these local self-government bodies participate in the development and execution of water delivery systems. They evaluate the accessibility of water in their regions, find appropriate sources, and strategize the necessary infrastructure for supplying piped water connections to families. Furthermore, local self-governments have a vital role in the distribution and usage of money for the implementation of JJM. Their responsibility includes budgeting and overseeing the efficient allocation of government expenditures. This entails giving priority to water supply projects, closely monitoring expenditures, and upholding accurate financial records.¹¹ In addition, they collaborate with government entities to ensure prompt disbursement of funding and may investigate alliances or donations to acquire extra financial resources.

Thus, assessment of villages was done with 10 villages each in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, on implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) in particular, as well as their contribution on watershed management. In most villages within the study area, Village Action Plan (VAP) was constituted under Gram Panchayat or Village Council, which facilitated the implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission in their respective area.

In Nisapui village (Kolasib District), solar-powered water pump was installed in the nearby Serlui River; in a distance of 4 kilometres from the village, that enabled regular supply of water throughout the year. Accordingly, water connection reaches every household under the JJM scheme. In Kawnpui VC-3 (Kolasib District), under

¹⁰ Abraham, M. (2023). Perceptions of the Tribal Population on Grama Sachivalayam (Village Secretariat) Concept and its Services in the Tribal Areas of Visakhapatnam: An Empirical Study. *Journal of Contemporary Research in Social Sciences*. 5(1).

¹¹ Narayana, B. (2023). The Role of Gram Panchayats in Effective Implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission in Karnataka. *Social Vision*. 10(3).

the JJM scheme, water connection was given to Kanan Veng, one locality under their jurisdiction, to enable supply of clean drinking water. Additionally, the Village Council also installed water cooler in Bazar shed, to provide clean drinking water for passer-by.

In Mualkawi village (Champhai District), the Village Council was able to achieve functional household tap connections (FHTC) in the whole village under JJM. However, no water tank or irrigation facilities were established under JJM, because the village had enough water tanks to feed the whole population prior to JJM mission. In the village of Melbuk in Champhai District, as part of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), the Village Council erected hand water pumps at three locations. However, they were unable to establish functional household tap connections (FHTC). In addition, the Village Council has installed water coolers at two locations throughout the community.

In Chungtlang village (Mamit District), as part of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), four (4) water tanks were constructed, drawing water from Kawitui River. The Village Council was able to successfully implement the mission by providing functional household tap connections (FHTC) to every house. West Lungdar village in Mamit District had always been a village with scarcity of water. Under JJM Mission, five (5) water tanks were constructed, that draws water from Chal River with gravity technique, a technique that involves the flow of water to a destined tank from upside source using irrigation pipeline. The Village Council was able to successfully implement the mission by providing functional household tap connections (FHTC) to every house almost throughout the year. Additionally, rainwater harvesting was also initiated by the village council during monsoon season.

In Ramlaitui village (Lunglei District), with solar-powered water pump, the village was able to draw water from Thingva River, which was approximately 3.5 kilometres from the village, as of 2020, they were unable to establish functional household tap connections (FHTC). Haulawng was another village from Lunglei District. In 2016, the village was chosen as a model village; accordingly, CL Ruala, the then Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) has allocated 15 lakhs as part of MP-

Fund to establish diesel-engine water pump for the whole village. Thus, as the village had established functional household tap connections (FHTC) prior to JJM, the Village Council established only a single water tank from JJM to assist the necessity in water reservoir.

In Seling village (Aizawl District), the Village Council prior to JJM had irrigated water from a source in Chalfilh Mountain. Thus the JJM scheme was utilised to repair the irrigation channels, as well as for installing more pipelines to ensure functional household tap connections (FHTC) to every household. Additionally, on an annual basis, the Village Council planted trees along river and stream to increase water volume. These lands along river and stream were purchased by the Village Council to protect them from deforestation. In Thingsul-Tlangnuam (Aizawl District), as the village had a well-established water connection under Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department, there is no activity of the Village Council in matters related to the JJM.

Table 4.7: Implementation of JJM schemes, availability of functional household tap connections (FHTC), and abundance of water in villages in Mizoram.

| Sl. No. | Village Name | JJM scheme in the form of:- | FHTC | Abundance of Water |
|---------|--------------|--|------|----------------------|
| 1. | Nisapui | Solar-powered water pump, Construction of pipeline network | Yes | Abundant |
| 2. | Kawnpui VC-3 | Construction of water tank & pipeline network | Yes | Abundant |
| 3. | Mualkawi | Construction of pipeline network | Yes | Abundant |
| 4. | Melbuk | Hand water pump | No | Abundant |
| 5. | Chungtlang | Construction of water tank & pipeline network | Yes | Abundant |
| 6. | West Lungdar | Construction of water tank & pipeline network | Yes | Scarce during summer |
| 7. | Ramlaitui | Solar-powered water pump, Construction of pipeline network | Yes | Scarce during summer |

| | | | | |
|-----|--------------------|--|-----|----------|
| 8. | Haulawng | Construction of water tank | Yes | Abundant |
| 9. | Seling | Repair of irrigation channels & Construction of pipeline network | Yes | Abundant |
| 10. | Thingsul-Tlangnuam | N/A | Yes | Abundant |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

Thus, most villages in Mizoram under the study area implemented the JJM scheme to provide water connection inside their village, with the only exception to Thingsul-Tlangnuam village that had an established water connection prior to the JJM. All villages other than Melbuk had functional household tap connections (FHTC) to every household. Additionally, all villages had abundant water supply throughout the year, except West Lungdar and Ramlaitui villages, where water was scarcely available during summer.

In Bene village (West Siang District), water tank with associated pipelines to every household was established in 2016. Water was piped from the nearby Siyom River to Aalo village; headquarter of the West Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh. As the village of Bene was nearby, it also benefitted from this water scheme. Thus, there were no undertakings under the JJM scheme. Darka was another village in the West Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh. In this village, there had been a good supply of running water prior to the JJM scheme. Water had been taken through pipeline from the Sipu River.

In Korang village (East Siang District), there was a good supply of water. Water was taken with pipeline from down the hill from the Loglu Koro River, the JJM scheme was utilised to construct more pipelines to ensure that functional household tap connections (FHTC) reached every houses. Sido is also a village in the East Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh. The village had sufficiency of water that derived its source from the Loglu Koro River, a river that flowed beside the village. No JJM scheme activities were seen in this village.

In Rupa village (West Kameng District), there was no scarcity of water because the village was able to meet its requirement in water from the Firong-Gsho River, natural fresh water from the Chilipam Mountain. Besides, the Tenga River

flows through the village that assisted in farming and other domestic need of water. No JJM scheme activities were seen in this village. Jigaon is another small village from the West Kameng District, Arunachal Pradesh. The village had acquired sufficiency in water supply from the Dublo-Kho River, the river flows along the village; water was drawn from this river using pipelines. The JJM scheme assisted in providing more pipeline network in the village to enable every household an access to tap water.

In Borum village (Papum Pare District), the Gram Panchayat undertook the JJM scheme in the form of constructing four water tanks. Water was filtered and drawn to these tanks from the Dikrong River that flowed along the village. It was also asserted that the Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department were also helpful in inspection and rendering help to the Gram Panchayat. In Rayo village (Papum Pare District), the village faced no water scarcity because water was provided by the PHE Department from the nearby town Nirjuli. No JJM scheme activities were observed in this village.

The primary water supply in Lempia West village, located in the Lower Subansiri District, was Siike Lake, an artificial reservoir situated in Old Ziro. The JJM program was used to establish pipelines in the area, creating an extensive and inclusive water supply network for the village. Tajang, a village community located in the Lower Subansiri District, derived advantages from the Siike Lake, an artificially constructed reservoir designed for the purpose of water storage. Every community inside the Ziro circle, including Tajang village, acquired sufficient water from this reservoir.

Table 4.8: Implementation of JJM schemes, availability of functional household tap connections (FHTC), and abundance of water in villages in Arunachal Pradesh.

| Sl. No. | Village Name | JJM scheme in the form of:- | FHTC | Abundance of Water |
|---------|--------------|----------------------------------|------|--------------------|
| 1. | Bene | N/A | Yes | Abundant |
| 2. | Darka | N/A | No | Abundant |
| 3. | Korang | Construction of pipeline network | Yes | Abundant |

| | | | | |
|-----|-------------|----------------------------------|-----|----------|
| 4. | Sido | N/A | No | Abundant |
| 5. | Rupa | N/A | Yes | Abundant |
| 6. | Jigaon | Construction of pipeline network | Yes | Abundant |
| 7. | Borum | Construction of water tank | Yes | Abundant |
| 8. | Rayo | N/A | Yes | Abundant |
| 9. | Lempia West | Construction of pipeline network | Yes | Abundant |
| 10. | Tajang | N/A | Yes | Abundant |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

In villages in Arunachal Pradesh, only four villages, viz., Korang, Jigaon, Borum and Lempia West had implemented the JJM scheme. All other villages had an established reliable water connection and functional household tap connections (FHTC) prior to the JJM. Furthermore, all villages in Arunachal Pradesh had abundance of water throughout all seasons.

Tuikhur, a watershed point, was present in most villages in Mizoram. These watersheds relied on streams formed by monsoon rain. However, they proved to be undependable during winter as the majority of streams dried up during this season. Due to the abundance of rivers in Arunachal Pradesh, water scarcity was hardly to be found in all communities. Majority of villages in Arunachal Pradesh had pipeline linking river to a local tank, from which water was supplied. A significant contrast existed in the fact that the bulk of Mizo villages were situated on hilltops, whereas communities in Arunachal Pradesh were predominantly located along flat plains of rivers. Consequently, there was a notable disparity in availability of water supply due to the differing village locations between Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

4.5. Local Self-Governments on Sanitation

Sanitation is defined as ‘the system used to keep healthy standards in a place where people live, especially by removing waste products and garbage safely’.¹² Thus, the term encompasses variety of actions associated with cleaning and removing waste products of any kind, discharging them in a specific space to ensure

¹² McIntosh, C. (2024). *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus*. Cambridge University Press.

clean and hygienic condition. In rural India, sanitation was an issue of concern and need redressed. Many villages had improper waste discharge system, leading to discharge of wastes in any areas accessible or available, which was again harmful not only for hygiene but also for natural environment.

Absence of adequate access to upgraded sanitation facilities and the consequent health hazards provide a significant challenge in India. It had implemented five national sanitation programs since attaining independence.¹³ Among these, the Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G) stands out as the largest sanitation campaign in the world. The Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen marks a significant shift in India's sanitation story, propelled by a legacy of ancient advancements and supported by government initiatives. The mission was launched on 2nd October, 2014 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The project was aimed to achieve Open Defecation Free (ODF) status for India.¹⁴ This immense endeavour effectively mobilised participation across the entire nation, establishing it as an enormous global movement for behavioural change. By 2019, the program achieved the installation of over 100 million family toilets, covering more over 600,000 villages.¹⁵ According to data from Press Information Bureau, the number of individual household latrines (IHHLs) constructed under Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen in Arunachal Pradesh was 1,44,608 units; and 44,141 units in Mizoram.¹⁶ Throughout the campaign, there was a noticeable improvement in the effectiveness of the SBM-G scheme in both the construction of toilets and in promoting behavioural change to encourage people to use toilets.¹⁷

An international survey on global distribution of safe water and sanitation revealed that a significant portion of India's population continued to engage in open defecation, despite the implementation of government initiatives over several

¹³ Dhar, R. *et al.* (2018). Sanitation Programmes in India: An Evaluation Study with Special Reference to Health and Growth. In *Reflecting on India's Development: Employment, Skill and Health*. Springer Nature Singapore.

¹⁴ Ministry of Jal Shakti. (2024). Swachh Bharat Mission. Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation. Government of India.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Ministry of Jal Shakti. (2022). *Toilets Built Under Swachh Bharat Mission*. Press Information Bureau.

¹⁷ Seth, P. & Jain, P. (2024). India's National Sanitation Policies: Evolution, Impact and Recommendations. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Rural Development*. 33(1).

decades. India exhibits a high prevalence of open defecation in comparison to countries with more poverty and lower levels of literacy.¹⁸ Study showed that open defecation was prevalent in high density of population like India where people have to compete for clean water supply.¹⁹ Contrary to the government's assertion that India had been designated an open defecation-free (ODF) country on 2nd October 2019 after the conclusion of Swachh Bharat Mission, other official data sources from the government of India suggest otherwise.²⁰ In reality, government programs have shown little concern for understanding the reasons for prevalence of open defecation among rural Indians, instead of utilising affordable pit latrines. Government initiatives prioritise subsidising the construction of toilets, although data indicated that the constructed toilets remain underutilised.

Local self-government bodies were the nodal agencies for implementation of public policy on sanitation and cleanliness at village level. They were responsible for promoting behavioural change to maintain cleanliness and waste disposal, so that epidemics of all sorts could greatly be reduced. ODF and ODF+ status were designated to villages according to the degree of implementation of cleanliness and wastage disposal. Villages where every household had an individual toilet inside their home, either by assistance from SBM-G, were designated as the ODF villages. On the other hand, villages that achieved ODF along with proper solid and liquid waste management were designated as ODF+ villages.²¹ Local self-government were entrusted with 'health and sanitation' in Article 243G of Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution, to undertake necessary steps accordingly.²²

Mizoram attained the ODF status on March 31st, 2018.²³ In Mizoram, 19,082 Individual Household Latrines (IHHL) were built throughout the state for APL, in addition to 84,647 IHHLs for BPL. 567 Community Sanitary Complex were also

¹⁸ *Op. Cit.* Dhar, R. *et al.* (2018).

¹⁹ Chambers, R. & Medeazza, G. V. (2013). Sanitation and Stunting in India: Undernutrition's Bind Spot. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 48(25).

²⁰ *Op. Cit.* Seth, P. & Jain, P. (2024).

²¹ Ministry of Jal Shakti. (2023). *India Achieves Another Major Sanitation Milestone – 50% Villages Are Now ODF Plus Under Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen Phase II*. Press Information Bureau.

²² Bora, A. & Kumar, S. (2023). The Right to Sanitation in India: A Constitutional Perspective. *CPJ Law Journal*. 14(1).

²³ NDTV Convergence Limited (2024). North East Takes Yet Another Steps Towards Its Swachh Goal, As Rural Mizoram Is Declared Open Defecation Free. Retrieved from <https://swachhindia.ndtv.com/>

built. The number of toilets built for schools was 4,050 and 1,453 toilets for Anganwadis. The Solid & Liquid Waste Management (SLWM) complexes were also built in 71 villages.²⁴

Arunachal Pradesh has attained the Open Defecation Free (ODF) status according to the Baseline Line Survey (BLS) conducted in 2012. This achievement was accomplished 22 months earlier than the projected timeframe. During this period, a total of 1,83,058 Individual Household Latrines (IHHL) were built throughout the state. In addition, a total of 14,237 Individual Household Latrines (IHHL) have been installed under the Left out of the Baseline (LoB) initiative in 2018-19. Furthermore, another 10,076 IHHL were constructed under the No One Left Behind (NOLB) program. In addition to the construction of Individual Household Latrines (IHHL), a total of 1,838 Community Sanitary Complexes (CSC) were also built as part of the Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen Phase-I. Solid & Liquid Waste Management (SLWM) activities were partially implemented at the Gram Panchayat level.²⁵

In Nisapui (Kolasib District), Village Council under the SBM-G had constructed individual household latrines to family that had no access to household latrines. Public urinals were also constructed on two destinations in the village. Further, committee on water and sanitation called the Watsan (Water and Sanitation) was established with the President of Village Council as chairman. The Watsan committee ensured the cleanliness and safety of village water sources by checking water reservoirs and pipelines at regular intervals of time. The same committee also established solid waste management system where dumping truck collected trash in locality thrice every week, and dumped them in a designated dumping ground.

Kawnpui VC-3 was another village from Kolasib District, Mizoram. The Village Council established Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Committee with leaders of civil society organisations. The Village Council provided two water coolers in the Bazar shed. Dustbins were provided to multiple destinations in the

²⁴ Government of Mizoram. (2018). PHE Department. Retrieved from <https://phed.mizoram.gov.in/page/total-sanitation-campaign-15-01-12>

²⁵ Government of Arunachal Pradesh. (2020). PHE & WS Department. Retrieved from <https://phedarunachal.org/sbm.asp>

village, and seven public toilets were built within the locality. The Village Council, in order to systematically deal with garbage, hired sanitation van for garbage disposal. The sanitation truck collected garbage twice every week and dumped them into the Solid Waste Management Centre established by the VC at a designated place. Additionally, the VC of Kawnpui VC-3 organised a rally every year with students of different schools in the locality to pick up garbage there from. Proper drainage channels were also constructed within the locality.

In Mualkawi (Champhai District), the Watsan was established like in other villages in Mizoram did. However, the Watsan had no much intervention other than providing dustbins inside the village. Eleven IHHLs were constructed under the SBM-G for poor villagers to eradicate open pit latrines. In Melbuk (Champhai District), the Sanitation Committee constituted by the Village Council hired an individual by paying Rs. 10,000/- per month for maintaining cleanliness inside the village. The hired individual was entrusted with collection of garbage from people's house and discharged them in a designated area. Sewer drainages were functional in some areas.

Chungtlang was a village in Mamit District, Mizoram. The Watsan Committee under the chairmanship of Village Council regularly cleansed watershed inside the village, along with pipelines that derived water into those watersheds. Under the SBM-G, ten IHHLs were constructed for poor families that were unable to construct household latrines. The village was also declared as ODF+ village. Sanitation van hired by the Watsan Committee collected garbage twice every week and dumped them on dumping site outside the village. Additionally, two public urinals were constructed by the Village Council during 2010 – 2020. In West Lungdar village (Mamit District), Community Sanitary Complex was established by the Village Council for proper discharge of solid waste material. Five IHHLs were constructed under the SBM-G for poor villagers who were unable to build household latrines on their own. Public toilets were constructed on two places within the village. Additionally, side drains for discharge of liquid waste were constructed by the VC.

Ramlaitui was a village in Lunglei District. The Watsan was constituted with the President of the VC as chairman. With the initiative of Watsan, the garbage was collected twice every week with a hired garbage van and individual. Four IHHLs were constructed under the SBM-G for poor villagers who were unable to build household latrines on their own. Public toilets were constructed in three different destinations in the village by the VC. In Haulawng (Lunglei District), all village solid wastes were dumped in a designated dumping ground, with the Village Council arranging collection of garbage with a van twice every week. Clean and Beautification Committee was established under the Village Council. Members of the Committee included leaders from Civil Society organisations like YMA, MHIP, Haulawng Zirlai Pawl and Haulawng Drivers' Union. The Committee every year organised a challenge to maintain cleanliness in and around peoples' houses and reward were given to excellent performers. The cleanliness challenge was initiated with an aim to raise awareness on cleanliness and hygiene.

Seling was a village in Aizawl District. The Village Council constructed toilet, urinal and bathroom to seven government schools, along with installation of public urinals to seven destinations in the village. The village was declared as ODF+ village after construction of six IHHLs under the SBM-G. In terms of garbage disposal, sanitary trucks were on service thrice every week and disposed them in a designated dumping area. In Thingsul-Tlangnuam village (Aizawl District), the Watsan was established like in many villages in Mizoram. The Committee under the chairmanship of Village Council President organised cleanliness drive four or five times a year, with the inclusion of students from government schools. The cleanliness drive was organised with an intention to impart the importance of cleanliness among the next generation population from an early age. Sanitary van was hired by the Watsan Committee that collected garbage three times per week and dumped them in a designated dumping area. *Hnawm bawm*, literally dust bins were placed in different locations in the village. Three public urinals were also constructed during 2010 – 2020.

In Bene village, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, over fourteen IHHLs were constructed as part of the SBM-G. Four public toilets were also

constructed during 2010 – 2020. The Gram Panchayat also constructed drainage system across the village for proper discharge of sewer waste. Awareness on cleanliness and hygiene were conducted regularly every year to raise awareness among youth and children. Solid waste was collected by garbage van twice every week and discharged at a specific location outside the village. Darka was another village in West Siang District. The village Gram Panchayat with provision from the SBM-G had constructed six IHHLs and three community sanitary complexes in the village, as well as another two toilets in government schools in the village. The village also had a good running water supply with connected pipelines to every household, which were maintained and invigilated regularly by the Gram Pannchayat. The village was declared as an ODF+ village.

In Korang village (East Siang District), the Gram Panchayat under SBM-G had constructed twelve IHHLs and two public urinals during 2010 – 2020. Every household in the village was equipped with individual household latrines and a proper drainage channel. The village attained ODF status in 2016, while it also attained ODF+ after completion of construction of drainages in 2019. The Gram Panchayat annually convened cleanliness drive with the participation of village community every year on the birth occasion of Mahatma Gandhi. The solid wastes were discharged at a specific location twice every month by a garbage van that collected garbage across the village. Sido was another village in East Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh. In this village, the Gram Panchayat organised community social service 4 or 5 times every year as part of cleanliness drive. Additionally, awareness program on sanitation and cleanliness was also held annually. With the construction of six IHHLs and two community sanitary complexes under the SBM-G, the village was declared ODF. Solid wastes were collected by hired van by the Gram Panchayat at regular intervals of time. However, the problem of drainage was still a challenge to overcome in this village.

Rupa was a commercial village in West Kameng District, Arunachal Pradesh. Most houses were equipped with household latrines prior to the SBM-G. However, three IHHLs were provided for families belonging to weaker sections of the society. Three community toilets were also constructed within the locality under the SBM-G.

Soak-pit facilities were also provided for houses with no option of discharging their liquid waste into village drainage channels. Awareness campaign on cleanliness and sanitation was held annually to educate people on hygiene and safe drinking water. In Jigaon village (West Kameng District), during 2010 – 2020, five IHHLs were provided as part of SBM-G along with two community sanitary complexes. Drainage channels were constructed throughout the village for discharge of liquid waste. Further, the Gram Panchayat remarkably assured the proper supply of sanitary pads being provided by the Government of India.

Borum was a village in the Papum Pare District, Arunachal Pradesh. Over sixteen IHHLs were constructed for families with lower economic income, and four community toilets were constructed under the SBM-G. Steps were taken for the Solid & Liquid Waste Management. While solid waste were regularly collected and discharged them into a designated dumping ground, liquid waste were still a problem. Moreover, many families still discharged their solid and liquid waste into the Dikrong River that flows along the village. Rayo was another village in the Papum Pare District in Arunachal Pradesh. In this village, five IHHLs were constructed for families with lower economic income, and three community toilets were constructed under the SBM-G. Cleanliness drive was held regularly with an active participation of schools in the village. Although the Gram Panchayat took certain steps to eliminate liquid and solid wastes through collection of garbage with trucks and construction of drainage channels, many people still discharge their waste directly into the Dikrong River.

In Lempia West village (Lower Subansiri District), the Gram Panchayat under the SBM-G had constructed community sanitary complexes on four different destinations in the village. Every house was equipped with individual toilets. Therefore, no activities in terms of construction of IHHLs were to be found. The village had a properly managed solid and liquid management system by providing garbage trucks by the Gram Panchayat and construction of drainage channels for liquid waste. Tajang was another village in Lower Subansiri District, Arunachal Pradesh. In this village, two public toilets were constructed as part of the SBM-G. Prior to the scheme, every household in the village had a well-established household

latrine inside their house. However, awareness campaigns on sanitation and maintenance of hygiene were conducted within the Gram Panchayat from time to time, focusing especially on school children.

Table 4.9: Activities of Village Council in Mizoram during the year 2010 – 2020 in terms of construction of IHHLs and Community Sanitary Complexes, as well as ODF statuses.

| Sl. No. | Village | IHHLs under SBM-G (in numbers) | Public toilet/urinal | ODF status |
|---------|--------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|------------|
| 1. | Nisapui | 12 | 2 | ODF+ |
| 2. | Kawnpui VC-3 | 0 | 7 | ODF+ |
| 3. | Mualkawi | 11 | 0 | ODF |
| 4. | Melbuk | 0 | 0 | ODF |
| 5. | Chungtlang | 10 | 2 | ODF+ |
| 6. | West Lungdar | 5 | 2 | ODF+ |
| 7. | Ramlaitui | 4 | 3 | ODF+ |
| 8. | Haulawng | 0 | 8 | ODF |
| 9. | Seling | 6 | 7 | ODF+ |
| 10. | Thingsul-Tlangnuam | 0 | 3 | ODF+ |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

Table 4.10: Activities of Gram Panchayat in Arunachal Pradesh during the year 2010 – 2020 in terms of construction of IHHLs and Community Sanitary Complexes, as well as ODF statuses.

| Sl. No. | Village | IHHLs under SBM-G (in numbers) | Public toilet/urinal | ODF status |
|---------|---------|--------------------------------|----------------------|------------|
| 1. | Bene | 14 | 4 | ODF+ |
| 2. | Darka | 6 | 5 | ODF+ |
| 3. | Korang | 12 | 2 | ODF+ |
| 4. | Sido | 6 | 2 | ODF |

| | | | | |
|-----|-------------|----|---|------|
| 5. | Rupa | 3 | 3 | ODF+ |
| 6. | Jigaon | 5 | 2 | ODF+ |
| 7. | Borum | 16 | 4 | ODF |
| 8. | Rayo | 5 | 3 | ODF |
| 9. | Lempia West | 0 | 4 | ODF+ |
| 10. | Tajang | 0 | 2 | ODF+ |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

Local Self-government entities in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh have made significant efforts to implement sanitation campaign, as outlined in the SBM-G, in order to guarantee that every household had access to adequate toilets that accomplished the necessary standards. The setting up of community sanitary facilities was a commendable effort to eliminate the widespread habit of open defecation and uphold hygiene in villages. Despite the effective implementation of solid waste management in numerous communities in both states, the management of liquid waste remained significantly inadequate.

The number of individual household latrines (IHHLs) constructed in 10 villages in Mizoram during 2010 - 2020 was 47, and 67 in Arunachal Pradesh. In Mizoram, six villages had undertaken the scheme for construction of individual toilets. While in the case of Arunachal Pradesh, eight villages were engaged with IHHLs under the SBM-G. In Mizoram, village that constructed the most IHHLs was Nisapui with 12 units, while in Arunachal Pradesh, Borum village had 16 IHHLs constructed closely followed by Bene with 14 IHHLs.

In Mizoram, villages like Kawnpui VC-3, Melbuk, Haulawng and Thingsul-Tlangnuam undertook no construction of IHHLs under SBM-G. These villages had every household equipped with individual household latrines, and no pit latrines were used by village population prior to the scheme. In Arunachal Pradesh, Lempia West and Tajang village had every household was equipped with individual household latrines and construction of IHHLs under the SBM-G was unnecessary.

Community sanitary complexes were built mostly in the form of public urinal, especially in crowded areas within villages. Most of these sanitary complexes

had no toilet facility for defecation. Generally, these sanitary complexes lacked running water and shortage of maintenance. The total number of community sanitary complexes in ten villages in Mizoram was 34. Whereas, ten villages from field survey in Arunachal Pradesh had 31 community sanitary complexes. Mualkawi and Melbuk were the only villages that had no community sanitary complexes constructed under the SBM-G. Whereas on the other hand, all villages in Arunachal Pradesh from field work showed that community sanitary complexes were built under the SBM-G.

In terms of open defecation free (ODF) status, all villages in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh within the study area were declared as the ODF villages. This was a huge step towards building a clean nation and national transformation on health and hygiene. In Mizoram, three villages like Mualkawi, Melbuk and Haulawng were declared as the ODF, which signified that those villages had met the requirement of eliminating openly defecation at all times. Whereas, the rest seven villages were declared as ODF+, that signified that those villages had met the requirement of individual household latrines (IHHLs) to every house of the village, as well as proper channel of liquid and solid waste disposal. In Arunachal Pradesh, three villages such as Sido, Borum and Rayo attained the status of ODF, while the rest of villages were all declared as ODF+.

4.6. Local Self-Governments on Environmental Protection

Environmental protection was one of the paramount objectives of state governments as well as Central Government. Environmental protection mainly deals with conservation and protection of the natural environment. The term denoted a wide range of function and practice such as reduction of pollution, safeguard of natural habitat for flora and fauna from exploitation, and maintaining sustainability for future generation. In India, the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 defined environment as “environment includes water, air and land and the inter-relationship which exists among and between air, water and land and human beings, other living

creatures, plants, micro-organism and property”.²⁶ Article 48 (A) of the Indian Constitution provided that “the state shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wild life of the country”.²⁷ Thus, it was the duty of state to implement such laws to preserve and protect the natural environment, while local self-governments at the local level were obliged with the same.

Uncontrolled destruction of forests, exploitation of forest fauna, advancement of technical expertise, and over exploitation of natural resources have resulted in environmental issues. Politicians and academics who regard development as a fundamental prerequisite for freedom, equality, and democracy have overlooked the fact that unregulated development had the capacity to contribute to catastrophe. There is a necessity to enhance the strength and democratic functioning of local self-government entities in order to ensure effective and coordinated growth.²⁸ The global environmental issue necessitates that not only the state government, or panchayats bear the duty, but every citizen needs to change their way of life with consciousness and awareness, in accordance with environmental conservation. Given these considerations, it was crucial to conduct a study on the function of local self-government in safeguarding the environment.

In Mizoram, many Village Councils from time to time allocated certain land area within their jurisdiction as *Rizap*²⁹ (literally ‘reserve area’). Any alteration or damages to the allocated land was strictly prohibited. Therefore, no activities in terms of grazing cattle, collection of fodder, gathering of firewood or procuring any forest products were entertained. The area was protected from exploitation with the active involvement of Village Council bodies in coordination with civil society organisations like the YMA. The same trend was evident in Arunachal Pradesh,

²⁶ Vardhan, P. P. (2014). Environment Protection under Constitutional Framework of India. *Press Information Bureau*. Government of India.

²⁷ Chakravarty, B. K. (2006). Environmentalism: Indian Constitution and Judiciary. *Journal of the Indian Law Institute*. 48(1).

²⁸ Soni, A. (2021). Panchayati Raj and Environmental Protection – A Study. *Revista Review Index Journal of Multidisciplinary*. 1(2).

²⁹ ‘Rizap’ means protected area under Village Council’s jurisdiction where all forms of damage or exploitation to the natural environment was prohibited.

where a large plot of land remained untouched and protected by the Gram Panchayat from all sorts of exploitation.

In addition to protection of allocated reserve area, local self-government bodies in both the states protected the natural environment in their area by prohibiting over-fishing, hunting of animals, and collection of timber on a large scale, among others. Not only this, some villages also engaged with afforestation measures with support from state government directives or with their own legislation.

In Nisapui (Kolasib District), the village from many years back had allocated a reserve forest area covering 15 sq. kilometres called Khawhlui Tlang. Village Council prohibited all sorts of exploitation of nature within this area. The Jhum cultivation was reduced to a great extent in the past decades, and many farmers practiced stationary cultivation of cash crops. The Village Council in cooperation with forest department protected forest within their jurisdiction. Procuring timber was authorised only for villagers on purpose of building new houses, and not for commercial purposes. Animals and fishes were also protected from hunting, fishing was permitted only with nets, usage of bomb and battery dynamo were strictly prohibited. In accordance with direction from the state government, the Village Council especially during March and April were vigilant to avoid any wildfire outbreak. It was necessary to be vigilant particularly because summer was the season where people burnt forests for cultivation. The Village Council also encourage afforestation by planting new trees every year along village roads.

In Kawnpui VC-3 (Kolasib District), the Village Council took certain measures to conserve riverine areas, 50 metres line along river and streams were strictly protected from cutting down of trees or cleared for cultivation. This was done to protect water sources from drying up. In terms of afforestation measures, roadside plantations of trees were done every year.

In Mualkawi (Champhai District), Hringlang Tlang was a reserved area where vegetation, animals, birds and fishes within the area were protected. During the burning season of shifting cultivation land, information was regularly given to

village population to avoid wildfires. In addition, cutting of woods for timber was authorised only after scrutinized by the Village Council. The Village Council only permitted those meant for building houses within the village. In Melbuk (Champhai District), the Village Council issued an order prohibiting hunting of wild animals and birds. Fishing was permitted only with the use of nets; usage of dynamo battery, any kind of poison and bombs were strictly prohibited. As part of afforestation measures, the Village Council annually held tree plantation programs with participation of total village population along village land areas. Mizoram State Animal, Serow (*Sathar* in Mizo) was protected by the Village Council, if anyone was found killing the animal, the person was given to the District Court.

In Chungtlang (Mamit District), the Village Council had strictly prohibited hunting of wild animals and birds, as well as fishes. Tree plantation was held every year, organised by the Village Council. After the introduction of cash crops such as rubber tree and palm oil, villagers gradually quit shifting cultivation, which contributed hugely to forest regeneration. Bualmual Tlang was a reserved area covering 8 sq. kilometres, collecting firewood or timber in the area was prohibited. West Lungdar was another village in Mamit District, Mizoram. The village had three reserved areas such as Bungkai, Pazela Kham and Dil Tlang. Any activity related with destruction or damage to the natural state of these reserved areas was strictly prohibited. The Village Council in coordination with Young Mizo Association in the village took steps to protect those areas. Tree plantation was done along riverine areas with an intention to increase water volume. Hunting of wild animals and birds were prohibited, if anyone was found violating the prohibition, guns were seized by the Village Council.

In Ramlaitui (Lunglei District), the Village Council in collaboration with the Forest Department prohibited cutting down of trees for timber without valid permission from the Village Council. Villagers however were permitted to take timber only for building houses. All forest areas within the jurisdiction of Ramlaitui were protected. Villagers have to avail permission from the Village Council if needed any use of village land either for cultivation, or any other businesses. Tree planation was held every year along village road, within village and within riverine areas.

Haulawng was another village in Lunglei District, Mizoram. The village maintained reserved area in two destinations, Melveng Tlang and Hrangchal Lung Mual. Cutting of trees for timber, firewood or any other activity was strictly prohibited in these areas. Moreover, hunting of animals and birds was also prohibited by the Village Council within Haulawng Village Council area.

In Seling (Aizawl District), in all areas along the river within Seling area, the Village Council of Seling bought land from individual land owners to protect vegetation and conserve them. Hunting of animals and birds either with guns or traps was strictly prohibited by the VC in cooperation with civil society organisations such as the YMA. Tree plantation program was held annually on different locations within village area. In Thingsul-Tlangnuam (Aizawl District), the village had reserve forest area in three destinations such as Bual Tui, Hmawng Mual and Rawchhep Kawn. Any encroachment for cutting of trees for timber, firewood or for commercial activities were into these areas was prohibited. Villagers were permitted to cut trees for timber only for building houses, or other domestic purposes, after attaining valid permission from the Village Council.

Table 4.11: Activities of Village Council in Mizoram during the year 2010 – 2020 for protection of natural environment.

| Sl. No | Village | Prohibition of hunting and over-fishing | Prohibition of collection of timber on a large scale | Afforestation measures |
|--------|--------------|---|--|------------------------------|
| 1. | Nisapui | Prohibited | Prohibited | Plantation of trees annually |
| 2. | Kawnpui VC-3 | N/A | Prohibited | Plantation of trees annually |
| 3. | Mualkawi | Prohibited | Prohibited | N/A |
| 4. | Melbuk | Prohibited | N/A | Plantation of trees annually |
| 5. | Chungtlang | Prohibited | N/A | Plantation of trees annually |
| 6. | West Lungdar | Prohibited | N/A | Plantation of trees |

| | | | | |
|-----|--------------------|------------|------------|------------------------------|
| 7. | Ramlaitui | N/A | Prohibited | Plantation of trees annually |
| 8. | Haulawng | Prohibited | Prohibited | N/A |
| 9. | Seling | Prohibited | N/A | Plantation of trees annually |
| 10. | Thingsul-Tlangnuam | N/A | Prohibited | N/A |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

In Bene (West Siang District), all village areas were protected from illegal cutting of forest trees for timber and firewood; permission was given only for local residents in need of building houses. There were no specific reserve areas. Darka was another village from West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh. In this village, the Gram Panchayat in cooperation with civil society groups such as Galo Welfare Society and All Galo Students' Association took steps to preserve and protect the Galo culture, encompassing variety of activities like protecting the natural environment where Galo people inhabited. Thus, forest, rivers and animals within Darka jurisdiction were protected.

In Korang (East Siang District), the village was surrounded by lush green forest. Vegetation in this area was protected as a result of initiatives by the Gram Panchayat with a sound coordination with local population. Tree plantation was held every year by the Gram Panchayat. Hunting of wild animals and birds were prohibited at all times, while fishing was permitted unless with the usage of harmful poison. In Sido (East Siang District), there were no specific orders from the Gram Panchayat on account of conservation of forest. However, the local population was aware of protection of forest within the village area. Hunting of animals and birds were banned, fishing was permitted without the usage of harmful poison or battery dynamo.

In Rupa (West Kameng District), plantation drives were held annually by the Gram Panchayat in collaboration with the Forest Division. Although forest areas throughout Rupa were under protection; Chir Pine and Blue Pine, as well as Oakwood trees were in particular protected. The Gram Panchayat also prohibited hunting of wild animals and birds; fishing was permitted with the usage of nets in

specific areas other than protected areas. In Jigaon (West Kameng District), the Gram Panchayat annually held tree plantation drives along village areas. In addition to this, the Gram Panchayat in collaboration with Zigang Debga, an organisation in the village, held plantation of cherry trees which were native to the place around the village each year. Students were taught on importance of protection of trees and natural environment by organising village-level awareness by the Gram Panchayat annually. Like other villages in the District, hunting of wild animals and birds were banned. Fishing was permitted. However, usage of harmful materials such as bleaching powder, bomb and generators were prohibited.

Borum was a village in Papum Pare District, Arunachal Pradesh. In this village, the Gram Panchayat prohibited fishing, hunting of animals and birds. Tree plantation was held at regular intervals of time especially during monsoon when the season was favourable for tree plantation. The Gram Panchayat also planted fruit-bearing trees such as orange; avocados and dragon fruit so that it would be benefitted by villagers. In Rayo (Papum Pare District), the Gram Panchayat banned timber production due to the decrease of forest reserve in the village area. The GP also issued an order that anyone found guilty in connection to illegal timber production would face charges upon the forest division. Hunting of wild animals and birds were banned, in connection to this, possession of air guns and guns were also banned.

In Lempia West (Lower Subansiri District), village forest area was protected from damage and over-usage of forest products. Awareness on fire prevention and wildfires prevention measures were organised by the Gram Panchayat. Hunting of animals and birds within Lempia West jurisdiction were banned. Fishing was permitted but without the usage of chemicals and generators. Tajang was another village from Lower Subansiri District, Arunachal Pradesh. In this village, the Gram Panchayat in collaboration with All Tajang Youth, a civil society organisation held tree plantation every year. Pine trees in particular were protected from exploitation because the numbers of these trees decrease year by year. The Pamu Yalang hill was within Tajang village jurisdiction, all trees and animals were protected.

Table 4.12: Activities of Gram Panchayat in Arunachal Pradesh during the year 2010 – 2020 for protection of natural environment.

| Sl. No | Village | Prohibition of hunting and over-fishing | Prohibition of collection of timber on a large scale | Afforestation measures |
|--------|-------------|---|--|------------------------------|
| 1. | Bene | N/A | Prohibited | N/A |
| 2. | Darka | Prohibited | Prohibited | N/A |
| 3. | Korang | Prohibited | Prohibited | Plantation of trees annually |
| 4. | Sido | Prohibited | N/A | N/A |
| 5. | Rupa | Prohibited | Prohibited | Plantation of trees annually |
| 6. | Jigaon | Prohibited | N/A | Plantation of trees annually |
| 7. | Borum | Prohibited | N/A | Plantation of trees annually |
| 8. | Rayo | Prohibited | Prohibited | N/A |
| 9. | Lempia West | Prohibited | Prohibited | N/A |
| 10. | Tajang | Prohibited | Prohibited | Plantation of trees annually |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

Thus, most villages in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh (16 out of 20) prohibited hunting of wild animals and birds, only four (4) villages did not make laws or statement on protection of animals and birds. Fishing was in most places permitted with the usage of nets. However, usage of harmful material such as bleaching powder, generator, calcium carbonate and bomb were banned. Many villages within the study area not only prohibited hunting of animals, but also banned possession of guns. In terms of conservation of forests, many villages were far and isolated from Environment & Forest Departments to have an impact on them. Thus, cutting of trees for timber were still very much prevalent in many villages. Out of 20 villages, 13 villages banned cutting forest woods for production of timber.

One of the biggest challenges before conservation of forest in Mizoram was the practice of Jhum cultivation³⁰. Many communities in villages still resort to this practice, costing hugely on trees and natural vegetation. The terrain of Mizoram was predominantly hilly where flat lands for paddy field were unavailable. Farmers have no option but to clear down vegetation every year. However, after the Central as well as State Government introduced and implemented other forms of cultivation to eliminate Jhum farming, many farmers resorted to modernised form of cultivation. In contrast, in the case of Arunachal Pradesh, most farmers practice stationary cultivation where the same plot of land was used permanently year after another.

Afforestation measures taken up by local self-governments greatly helped in regenerating forests both in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. Out of 20 villages, 12 villages within the study area organised tree plantation every year. Tree plantation usually involved the participation of Village Councils and Gram Panchayats, but also active participation of youths, civil society organisations, students, and local population.

In an effort to protect and preserve reserved forests, local self-governments in most villages in both in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh coordinated with civil society organisations. This trend showed that collective action was evident in their approach, which resulted in the successful implementation of such programs. However, the success of environment protection programs heavily relied upon the people. Local self-governments made awareness and implement strict laws, but it was with the support of local population that all these acts would be successful.

4.7. Local Self-Governments on Rural Poor

India is a vast country with diverse people. Although deemed as one of the fastest growing economies of the world, the rich-poor divide was still huge, particularly when observing at the rural areas. For many rural poor, the Government of India implemented multiple schemes related to housing, health, job, financial assistances in agriculture, among others. It is important for local self-government

³⁰ Jhum cultivation, also known as shifting cultivation was a practice that involves clearing fresh forest every year and burnt them to plant crops. This form of cultivation required cutting down trees and forest afresh every year on different places.

bodies such as Gram Panchayat and Village Council to actively engage in schemes for rural emancipation.

‘Rural housing’ was one of the utmost important undertakings of the Gram Panchayat, as it was inserted in one of the 29 Subjects of Gram Panchayat as provided in 11th Schedule of the Constitution of India.³¹ With the slogan ‘Housing for All,’ the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) is the most ambitious programme initiated by the Ministry of Rural Development of India in April 2016. Economically disadvantaged individuals receive the advantage of a reasonably priced residence together with the essential fundamental facilities through this program, which are necessary for leading a normal life in society. The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) in essence consists of two components: Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban (PMAY-U) and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G). The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban (PMAY-U) project offers affordable housing benefits to urban poor and needy individuals, while the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G) scheme caters to rural poor and needy individuals who are unable to afford a suitable permanent residence.³²

Earlier housing programme, the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) which was implemented by the Government of India for rural people did not achieve the anticipated level of recognition and success. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India identified several deficiencies during the audit process, including limited visibility in the selection of beneficiaries, substandard construction of houses and inadequate technical oversight, shortage of adequate lending facilities and convergence. In order to address these deficiencies and improve the conditions of impoverished rural populations, the Government of India reorganized the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) into the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G).³³

The selection and identification of beneficiaries are based on the criteria identified in the Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC) 2011 and confirmed by the

³¹ Hussain, S. (2016). People as Partners in Panchayati Raj & Development: An Analysis of Attitude and Awareness. *Indian Journal of Sustainable Development*. 2(2).

³² Das, B. & Parida, R. C. (2022). Social Progress Through Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G) Scheme in North Eastern States. *PDUAMT Business Review*. 4 (1).

³³ *Ibid.*

Gram Sabha. The monetary aid rose from Rs. 70,000 (IAY) to Rs. 1.20 lakh in low-lying regions and from Rs. 75,000 (IAY) to Rs. 1.30 lakh in hilly states and North Eastern states.³⁴

In Nisapui village (Kolasib District), under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G), three houses were constructed. The Village Council not only constructed those houses, they also catered timber and other housing materials themselves. Additionally, at the end of each calendar year, the Village Council selected certain poor families and provided them financial assistance. Kawnpui VC-3 was another village from Kolasib District, Mizoram. The Village Council under PMAY-G constructed two houses for the poor. Market shed was constructed in the locality with a fund from the Village Council, many poor families open shop at zero rental cost. This helped poor families to run business and obtain adequate income. Further, the Village Council establish 'Relief and Medical Assistance Fund' where the Village Council funding and donors can donate as well, the fund was used to help patients with serious illness that needed financial assistance.

In Mualkawi village (Champhai District), since the launch of PMAY-G scheme, fourteen houses were constructed and repaired. Other than these, many war refugees from Myanmar seek hospitality in Mualkawi village, the Village Council in coordination with other civil society groups constructed refugee camps for these refugees. Over thirty temporary shelters were constructed. The Village Council provided these temporary shelters with electricity and other basic necessity such as water and sanitary complexes as well. Melbuk was another village from Champhai District, Mizoram. Under the PMAY-G scheme, four houses were constructed. In this village, Melbuk Development Charitable Society was formed by the Village Council. The main donor for the society was drivers' union from the village, as more than 100 families out of 220 houses were dependent upon logistic services. The Society was responsible for helping financially disadvantaged families.

In Chungtlang village (Mamit District), the Village Council under PMAY-G scheme constructed seven houses as of 2022. The Village Council in cooperation

³⁴ *Ibid.*

with the YMA cut timbers for construction of those houses. Individuals from poor economic background were given preferences when the Village Council worked on developmental activities that needed manual labour, so that poor families were able to earn daily wages. The Village Council with financial assistance from Mizoram Rural Bank constructed market shed where poor families open shop without the need to pay rental fee. In West Lungdar village (Mamit District), construction of houses under PMAY-G was completed for four families. The Village Council also provided the needed timber by cutting trees from village forest land. In any developmental work inside the village where manual labourers were needed, the Village Council selected labourers from poor economic background that did not have regular sources of income.

Ramlaitui was a village from Lunglei District, Mizoram. In this village, sixteen houses were constructed under PMAY-G scheme. Village Council also assisted in procuring timber and other necessary hardware for construction of these houses. The Village Council also avail financial assistance from Social Welfare Department of the State Government for poor families. Haulawng was another village from Lunglei District, Mizoram. The Village Council from PMAY-G constructed twenty-one houses so far as of 2022 and five more were in process of construction. The micro-entrepreneurship program was also launched under the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana 2.0 (PMKSY 2.0) that helped rural poor to start business in tailoring, puncture woks, automobile repair, hair cutting, and blacksmith work, among others. Individuals under this scheme can avail up to Rs. 30,000 as incentive. Further, in case of unforeseen calamities, financial assistance was provided to families from the Village Council President Relief Fund, other donors of the fund were churches and other civil society organisations. Individual family was paid within a range of Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 20,000, depending on the severity of the problem.

In Seling village (Aizawl District), ten houses were constructed under the PMAY-G scheme by the Village Council. Other than PMAY-G, the Village Council also repaired houses that had not availed the scheme. Market shed constructed by the Village Council did accommodate more than 15 vegetable and small shops, hair

cutting salon and tailoring shop. Preference of seats in this market shed was made as per villagers' economic condition. No fees were collected as rent from the market shed in order to relieve the poor families. Thingsul-Tlangnuam was another village from Aizawl District, Mizoram. Under the PMAY-G scheme, over twelve family houses were constructed by the Village Council as of 2022. The Village Council also constructed market shed on the basement of Village Council Office, over 15 individuals from poor families were given seats in the market shed, no fees for rent were charged. Each year, the Village Council rendered financial assistance to poor families as Christmas gift, the number of families changed from year to year.

Table 4.13: Construction of houses in 10 selected villages in Mizoram under PMAY-G scheme during 2010-2020.

| Sl. No. | Village | No. of sanctions made | No. of houses completed |
|---------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. | Nisapui | 3 | 3 |
| 2. | Kawnpui VC-3 | 4 | 2 |
| 3. | Mualkawi | 18 | 14 |
| 4. | Melbuk | 4 | 4 |
| 5. | Chungtlang | 9 | 7 |
| 6. | West Lungdar | 6 | 4 |
| 7. | Ramlaitui | 20 | 16 |
| 8. | Haulawng | 26 | 21 |
| 9. | Seling | 12 | 10 |
| 10. | Thingsul-Tlangnuam | 12 | 12 |

Source: Primary data from field work.

In Bene (West Siang District), five houses were constructed by the Gram Panchayat under the PMAY-G. In developmental works that required labour, the Gram Panchayat gave preferences to poor families that needed daily job to earn wages. Darka was another village from West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh. In this village, constructions of over eighteen houses were completed under the PMAY-G. The Gram Panchayat also helped in catering necessary building materials for

construction of those houses. Further, the Gram Panchayat Fund was also used for providing financial aid to children from poor economic condition to continue their studies. In this manner, the Gram Panchayat extended help to approximately ten students each year.

Korang was a village in East Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh. In this village, the Gram Panchayat constructed three houses under the PMAY-G. The Gram Panchayat supported students from low economic background to pursue their education in higher education. An incentive of Rs. 3,000 was provided to approximately 10 students each year. Further, the Gram Panchayat also provided financial aid to students from the village that prepared for public service exams. In Sido village (East Siang District), there was no record of construction of house under the PMAY-G. Most families in this village engaged in farming and cattle rearing, the Gram Panchayat assisted those farmers in providing training for better yield, as well as provided them with subsidized fertilizers.

In Rupa village (West Kameng District), there was no record of constructed house under the PMAY-G. However, with initiative from the Gram Panchayat, subsidized Agriculture and Horticulture loan was provided for the weaker sections of society. Free medical check-up were held by the Gram Panchayat in collaboration with the Border Security Forces (BSF) approximately twice a year. Community market shed was constructed by the Gram Panchayat where poor families were given preference, those people open shop with no necessity of paying rent. Jigaon was another village from West Kameng District, Arunachal Pradesh. In this village, the Gram Panchayat constructed six houses under the PMAY-G. In order to ensure equal distribution of resources, fair price shops was implemented and checked regularly by the Gram Panchayat. The Gram Panchayat in collaboration with Border Security Force provided free medical check-up to poor families in the village from time to time.

In Borum village (Papum Pare District), the Gram Panchayat constructed nine houses under the PMAY-G scheme. Poor families from the community were rendered help by the Gram Panchayat in any possible manner. Market shed was

constructed by the Gram Panchayat in the locality where poor families open shop with free cost of rent. Additionally, preference was given to individuals from low economic background with no necessity of payment of rental fee. In Rayo village (Papum Pare District), over twenty-six houses had been completed under the PMAY-G scheme. Many poor families from the village got daily employment from the village Gram Panchayat such as construction work and collection of garbage. In this village, the Gram Panchayat also financed students from poor families by providing incentives of Rs. 1500 to at least 10 students each year.

In Lempia West village (Lower Subansiri District), there were three beneficiaries of the PMAY-G. The Gram Panchayat in this village gave fertilizers and manures to poor farmers in low subsidized-rates. Further, free medical check-up for cattle were held every year for cattle herders because many families depended upon cattle rearing. Tajang was another village from Lower Subansiri District, Arunachal Pradesh. In this village, the Gram Panchayat constructed four houses with the PMAY-G scheme. Poor farmers in the village were provided with free training courses organised by collaborative network of Gram Panchayat and Agriculture Department of the State. The farmers were further provided manures and fertilizers, as well as farming tools in subsidized rates. In developmental works such as construction of drainage and maintenance of roads by the Gram Panchayat, individual from low economic condition were given preferences so that daily wage could be earned.

Table 4.14: Construction of houses in 10 selected villages in Arunachal Pradesh under PMAY-G scheme during 2010-2020.

| Sl. No. | Village | No. of sanctions made | No. of houses completed |
|---------|---------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. | Bene | 5 | 5 |
| 2. | Darka | 25 | 18 |
| 3. | Korang | 3 | 3 |
| 4. | Sido | 0 | 0 |
| 5. | Rupa | 0 | 0 |

| | | | |
|-----|-------------|----|----|
| 6. | Jigaon | 7 | 6 |
| 7. | Borum | 15 | 9 |
| 8. | Rayo | 33 | 26 |
| 9. | Lempia West | 6 | 3 |
| 10. | Tajang | 4 | 4 |

Source: Primary data from field work.

Table 4.13 and table 4.14 showed the number of houses constructed under the PMAY-G scheme in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh in 20 selected villages. It was evident that rural communities benefitted greatly from the scheme. Only two villages had not implemented the housing scheme.

In Mizoram, the total number of sanctions made under the scheme was 114, with an average of 11.4 houses in each village in 10 selected villages. While in Arunachal Pradesh, the total number of sanctions made under the scheme was 98, with an average of 9.8 houses in each village in 10 selected villages. In Mizoram, the total number of houses constructed under the scheme was 93, with an average of 9.3 houses in each village in 10 selected villages. While in Arunachal Pradesh, the total number of houses constructed under the scheme was 74, with an average of 7.4 houses in each village in 10 selected villages. Therefore, in 10 selected villages in both the states, the percentage of completion of houses from sanctions made was 81.57% in Mizoram and 75.51% in Arunachal Pradesh.

In comparison of both states, the total number of sanctions made for construction of houses as of 14th May 2022 under the PMAY-G was 13,532 in Mizoram and 34,522 in Arunachal Pradesh. The number of completion of construction of houses as of 14th May 2022 under PMAY-G in Mizoram was 5,514 and 4,245 in Arunachal Pradesh.³⁵ Thus, the percentage of completion of houses from sanctions made was 40.74% in Mizoram and 12.29% in Arunachal Pradesh.

Other than on rural housing schemes, local self-government bodies in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh contributed hugely for poor rural families.

³⁵ *Op. Cit.* Das, B. & Parida, R. C. (2022).

Provision of financial assistance to students from low economic condition, provision of training for farmers and cattle herders, and provision of daily wage jobs were common, among others. In events of calamities and unforeseen events occur in villages, Village Council and Gram Panchayat as government body of the locality, performed rehabilitative actions and financial aid.

4.8. Local Self-Governments on Youth Affairs

In order to ensure comprehensive development, it was imperative for local self-government entities to effectively tackle the concerns of young people. Youths primarily relate to young persons who have ambitions for the future in their careers. Facilitating the attainment of career objectives for young people was a crucial responsibility of local self-government. For local self-government to effectively guide young people towards the correct path, a sound mental state is essential. To promote the mental well-being of young people, it is crucial to provide them recreational and sports amenities, as a healthy physical condition directly contributes to a healthy state of mind.

Youth affairs encompass an assortment of multifaceted aspects. Local Self-Governments possess multiple areas of responsibility, including educating young people about their future pursuits, offering skill development training to empower them to start their own businesses, providing sports facilities to promote mental well-being, and facilitating their pursuit of professional careers in sports so that they could earn livelihood, among other functions. Consequently, the local self-government organizations in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh effectively managed and advanced youth issues to support the development of young people.

In Nisapui village (Kolasib District), during 2010-2020, the Village Council established football playground and volleyball ground from MP and MLA-LAD related funds. Futsal ground was also in construction as of 2022 under MLA-LAD fund. In Kawnpui VC-3 village (Kolasib District), the Village Council repaired and constructed pavilion for the community sports complex where volleyball court and basketball court was located. Skill development training on handloom was held by

the Village Council in 2018, where many youths participated and learn handloom work.

In Mualkawi village (Champhai District), Village Council constructed Futsal ground for youth recreation. Football tournament was organised by the Village Council every year on the Independence Day to encourage youths to pursue career in sports. Melbuk was another village from Champhai District, Mizoram. In this village, the Village Council took many steps to develop sports, especially football. Melbuk Village Council Open League, an annual football competition was held every year, the season runs from October to March. Village Council sponsored those teams for their financial internal management. As a result, the village had 8 professional footballers who played football in professional clubs across India.

In Chungtlang village (Mamit District), the Village Council constructed volleyball court for youth to pursue their career in sports. Volleyball tournament was held each year, as a result, many youth from the village entered into professional clubs in Aizawl in volleyball. West Lungdar was another village in Mamit District, Mizoram. The Village Council organised Village Council League, a football league where many football teams within the village participated since 2015 and continued till date. In this way, many youths could develop their football skills and enable themselves to pursue their professional career in the game. Additionally, the Village Council also sponsored youths from the locality to enrol in construction work training organised by the Central YMA where stone masonry and house-building construction training were undertaken. As a result, many youths from the village had regular job in construction work not only in the village but also in different places in Mizoram.

In Ramlaitui village (Lunglei District), the Village Council financially assisted Ramlaitui Football Team when they participated for tournaments such as Zonal Championship and HPC-Cup Championship. Haulawng was another village in Lunglei District, Mizoram. The Village Council financially assisted those youths applying for military recruitment and public service exams. Course on Computer

Concepts (CCC) diploma was opened for free by the Village Council so that youths could get diploma without paying fees.

In Seling village (Aizawl District), the Village Council organised football tournament every year on specific dates to encourage youth to pursue their career on sports. In Thingsul-Tlangnuam village (Aizawl District), the Village Council organised local football tournament every year and sponsored those teams for financial management. The Village Council also constructed badminton court in 2013 which was beneficially utilised by village population and youths in particular.

In Bene village (West Siang District), the Gram Panchayat established Sports Complex where Futsal and Volleyball courts were available. For the unemployed youths in the village, the Gram Panchayat organised skill development training for youths in wood crafting in 2019. In Darka village (West Siang District), preference was given to unemployed youths on hired manual labour works undertaken by the Gram Panchayat.

In Korang village (East Siang District), the Gram Panchayat organised football tournament each year, all prizes and honorarium were sponsored by the Gram Panchayat. In Sido village (East Siang District), skill development training was organised by the Gram Panchayat on agriculture and farming where crucial farming knowledge were imparted on the youths.

In Rupa village (West Kameng District), subsidized schemes were provided to unemployed youths to start their business. Training was given to youths for employment in different sectors such as tourism and food processing. Sports facilities like football field and indoor complexes were repaired and maintained to develop youth to pursue sports career. Jigaon was another village from West Kameng District. Under the schemes such as the Aatma Nirbhan Bhagwani Yojana and the Aatma Nirbhar Krishni Yojana, youths from the village were able to attain loans to certain crops and fruits cultivation, the Gram Panchayat locate and help those youths to get access to those kinds of loans.

In Borum village (Papum Pare District), the Gram Panchayat organised *Eleven But One Borum* Panchayat Football Tournament each year, all sponsors and

honorarium for teams were provided by the Gram Panchayat. In Rayo village (Papum Pare District), skill development training on handloom was undertaken with the initiatives of Gram Panchayat. Many rural youths have benefitted from the training and were able to establish their business on handloom industry.

Lempia West was a village in Lower Subansiri District, Arunachal Pradesh. The Gram Panchayat repaired community sports complex where football ground and basketball ground was located. Tajang was another village in Lower Subansiri District, Arunachal Pradesh. In this village, the Gram Panchayat constructed football field in the village. Additionally, skill development training in handloom and tourism was provided by the Gram Panchayat.

Thus, local self-government's contribution towards youth affairs differ from village to village, and a difference in trend was evident between Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. In Mizoram, most activities were related to sports infrastructure and facilities development, along with few skill developments training for youths. In the case of Arunachal Pradesh, most Gram Panchayat focuses on providing skill development training to younger generation as part of youth affairs.

4.9. Local Self-Governments on Drugs Abuse Prevention

Many local self-government launched campaign against drugs and other substances abuse. According to a report by National Survey on Extent and Pattern of Substance Use in India, which was conducted by Department of Justice & Social Empowerment, alcohol was the most widely-used substance for abuse, followed by cannabis and opium products.³⁶ The Government of India had also taken initiative and implement National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR). Under this action plan, state governments and UTs were granted financial assistance to launch a campaign in their respective jurisdiction in the form of awareness campaign, educating children, skill development, and livelihood support of ex-drug addicts, among others.

³⁶ Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment. (2023). *Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA) - MoU Signed Between Department of Social Justice & Empowerment and the All World Gayatri Pariwar*. Government of India.

Village Councils and Gram Panchayat also worked extensively to prevent drug and substance abuse. They also adopted certain preventive mechanisms to reduce them.

Table 4.15: Campaign on Alcohol and Drugs Prevention in Mizoram.

| Sl. No. | Villages In Mizoram | Establishment of Committee | Actions taken |
|---------|---------------------|----------------------------|---|
| 1. | Nisapui | JAC | Prohibited selling of alcohol and abuse-able drugs-related items, providing awareness on drugs prevention. |
| 2. | Kawnpui VC-3 | VDP | Prohibited selling of alcohol and abuse able drugs-related items, providing awareness on drugs prevention. |
| 3. | Mualkawi | VDP | Prohibited selling of alcohol and abuse able drugs-related items. |
| 4. | Melbuk | - | Prohibited selling of abuse able drugs-related items. |
| 5. | Chungtlang | VDP | Prohibited selling of alcohol and abuse able drugs-related items. |
| 6. | West Lungdar | VDP | Prohibited selling of alcohol and abuse able drugs-related items, providing awareness on drugs prevention. |
| 7. | Ramlaitui | JAC | Prohibited selling of alcohol and abuse able drugs-related items. |
| 8. | Haulawng | JAC | Prohibited selling of abuse able drugs-related items, providing awareness on drugs prevention. |
| 9. | Seling | VDP | Prohibited selling of alcohol and abuse able drugs-related items. |
| 10. | Thingsul-Tlangnuam | - | Prohibited selling of alcohol and abuse able drugs-related items, organising Gospel Camping for drugs abusers, financial assistance to Pisgah Addict Centre in their village. |

Source: Primary data from field work.

Mizoram was a dry state, which means selling and use of liquor products was prohibited by the state government. Thus, most villages under the study area in Mizoram prohibited the sell and use of alcohol in their respective villages. Committees such as Joint Action Committee (JAC) and Village Defence Party (VDP) were established in most villages. The composition of such committee was none other than Village Council, leaders of civil society organisations such as the YMA,

MHIP, MUP, and so on. In some villages, leaders of student organisations were also members of such committees. Therefore, it was obvious that collective action of the community further strengthened preventive mechanisms of alcohol and drugs-related items. Many villages in Mizoram banned the sell and use of alcohol, and other abuse-able drug items. Awareness was also provided to villagers during community gatherings. However, even after much campaign against these practices, drugs abuse was still prevalent in the state.

Table 4.15: Campaign on Drugs Prevention in Arunachal Pradesh.

| Sl. No. | Villages In Arunachal Pradesh | Actions taken by Gram Panchayat |
|---------|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. | Bene | Prohibited selling of abuse able drugs-related items, providing awareness on drugs prevention. |
| 2. | Darka | - |
| 3. | Korang | Providing awareness on drugs prevention. |
| 4. | Sido | Providing awareness on drugs prevention. |
| 5. | Rupa | - |
| 6. | Jigaon | - |
| 7. | Borum | Prohibited selling of abuse able drugs-related items. |
| 8. | Rayo | Prohibited selling of abuse able drugs-related items, providing awareness on drugs prevention. |
| 9. | Lempia West | - |
| 10. | Tajang | Prohibited selling of abuse able drugs-related items. |

Source: Primary data from field work.

In Arunachal Pradesh, sell and use of liquor was legal. Thus, prohibition was enforced upon drug-related items only. Unlike in Mizoram, no separate committees were convened by Gram Panchayat in cooperation with other civil society organisations or groups. Substance or drugs abuse was comparatively low as compared to Mizoram. Many villages were free from drugs items, and no records of drugs abusers were found in many villages.

4.10. Conclusion

The Village Council and the Gram Panchayat, as local government institutions, carried out numerous activities and responsibilities. Their efforts encompass a wide range of activities, including provision of community assets, development of local education, the management of water resources, assurance of sanitation and hygiene, protection of the environment and natural vegetation, management of youth affairs and their future pursuits, and provision of rural housing from central schemes, among other responsibilities. Operating at the village level, they played a crucial role in identifying and redirecting government initiatives towards the appropriate recipients. At times, they served as representatives of both the state and central governments. In this regard, it is necessary to undertake comprehensive research of the village in order to comprehend the shortcomings and challenges within the community. With a clear and precise grasp of the need, developmental programs have the capacity to achieve the desired goal.

Generally, local self-government entities in most tribal communities in the North East India had a positive relationship with civil society organizations. In Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, civil society groups provided comprehensive support and actively engaged in the activities of Village Council and Gram Panchayat in most villages. In addition to their respective organisations' mandate, youth groups, pensioner groups, and students groups were actively involved in rural development activities in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

It was crucial to acknowledge that the responsibility for developing robust local self-government mostly rested with the people. Indeed, it was the voters' choice that ultimately determined the individuals who govern on behalf of people. If individuals choose a candidate who espouses corruption and nepotism, the process of development would fail to achieve its intended goal, resulting in widespread suffering among the people. A robust and competent local self-government, on the other hand, ensures efficiency, accountability, and transparency in the job.

Furthermore, it was crucial for the general population to understand that their involvement in local self-government extended beyond electoral participation.

Instead, they continue to provide both assistance and vigilance simultaneously. When the populace rallied and voiced their concerns about any inconsistencies or issues occurring in villages, they not only exerted pressure but also imposed obligations on the local self-government entities to promptly take relevant action. Thus, the general population and those in positions of authority mutually urged one other to foster a democratic system that encompassed all individuals.

CHAPTER 5

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN MIZORAM AND ARUNACHAL PRADESH

5.1. Introduction

Local Self-Government bodies, both in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh had performed both their duty and functions. Their performance in terms of development, administrative and social aspects were commendable to some extent. However, there are certain issues in relation to matter of transparency and trust towards local self-governments. Lack of autonomy of Local Self-Government and decreasing participation in Gram Sabha were some major challenges in both the states.

5.2. Issue of Transparency and Openness

In modern society, the principles of transparency and openness in the operations of local self-government entities are ever more acknowledged as crucial for enabling effective communication between citizens and authorities. Transparency and openness are much advocated by several national and international organisations as essential components of effective government. Indeed, a stipulated degree of openness is considered an essential prerequisite for economic collaboration, financial backing, or affiliation with particular institutions.¹ The UN Development Programme in 1997 defined the notion of good governance as consisting of nine principles: participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, and strategic vision.² By evaluating the degree of openness and accountability, international organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have evaluated the effectiveness of governance, trust in the leadership, and the quality of regulatory or managerial competence.

¹ Addink, H. (2019). *Good Governance: Concept and Context*. Oxford University Press.

² Kettani, D. & Moulin, B. (2014). *E-Government for Good Governance in Developing Countries: Empirical Evidence from the eFez Project*. Anthem Press.

Transparency was necessary to address knowledge lacunae and empower the general public to scrutinise and comprehend the activities of the government.³ Implementing transparency as a policy enables the general public to evaluate and enhance confidence in the administration of the local government. Moreover, the attribute of transparency can also enhance the process of gathering additional information within the organisation. Hence, transparency has the potential to exert influence on stakeholders by providing them with information regarding accomplishments, objectives, or performance of local self-government bodies.⁴ An empowered public in terms of administrative transparency was likely to support the activity of the local government and play a positive role.

There was a positive co-relation between transparency and government performance. Furthermore, transparency extends beyond the mere provision of information. Conversely, transparency is a crucial system of control, particularly in the government process of planning, executing, and overseeing program activities to accomplish the specified objectives.⁵ Based on these principles, transparency has a beneficial effect on the performance of village administration.

In relation to transparency of local self-government bodies in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, respondents of various stakeholders were interviewed in 20 villages. Selection of respondents in a village was held as – two members of civil society organisation, two prominent citizens, two school teachers and two students. From the perspectives of those respondents, the degree of transparency and openness of Village Council in Mizoram and Gram Panchayat in Arunachal Pradesh was gathered.

The first question deals with whether the respondents had observed an established transparent government in their local Village Council/Gram Panchayat in the past ten years, i.e., 2010 – 2020. Secondly, question was asked whether the local Village Council/Gram Panchayat were approachable for the general public. The next

³ Matheus, R. & Janssen, M. (2020). A Systematic Literature Study to Unravel Transparency Enabled by Open Government Data: The Window Theory. *Public Performance & Management Review*. 43(3).

⁴ Husni, M. Damayanti, R. A. & Indrijawati, A. (2023). The Role of Village government Performance and Transparency in Influencing Village Public Trust. *Journal of Accounting and Investment*. 24(2).

⁵ Hansen, D. R. & Mowen, M. M. (2021). *Cost Management*. Cengage Learning.

question deals with whether their local Village Council/Gram Panchayat has taken into account the opinions and ideas of people during Gram Sabha meeting. Fourthly, respondents were asked whether their local Village Council/Gram Panchayat engaged in nepotism and partisanship. Fifthly, the last question deals with whether the local Village Council/Gram Panchayat has forbid announcing matters of public importance like beneficiary schemes for public with the idea to handle on their own accord.

Table 5.1: Respondents' view on transparency and openness of Village Councils in Mizoram.

| Sl. No | Question | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total |
|--------|--|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------|
| 1. | Transparent government | 16 (20%) | 19 (23.75%) | 3 (3.75%) | 20 (25%) | 22 (27.5%) | 80 (100%) |
| 2. | Approachable for the general public | 32 (40%) | 25 (31.25%) | 2 (2.5%) | 13 (16.25%) | 8 (10%) | 80 (100%) |
| 3. | Opinions and ideas of people taken in Gram Sabha | 14 (17.5%) | 27 (33.75%) | 13 (16.25%) | 15 (18.75%) | 11 (13.75%) | 80 (100%) |
| 4. | Nepotism and partisanship | 7 (8.75%) | 25 (31.25%) | 26 (32.5%) | 19 (23.75%) | 3 (3.75%) | 80 (100%) |
| 5. | Forbid announcing matters of public importance | 23 (28.75%) | 14 (17.5%) | 18 (22.5%) | 4 (5%) | 21 (26.25%) | 80 (100%) |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

In Mizoram, majority of respondents (27.5%) strongly disagreed with the notion that transparency in local self-government was ensured. Another 25% also disagreed with the notion. 20% of respondents strongly agreed that transparent

government was ensured; another 23.75% also held the same view and agreed that they observed transparency in Village Council.

In terms of approachability of the Village Council towards public, over 40% strongly agreed and another 31.25% also agreed that Village Council were very approachable for people. This showed that the Village Council firmly took importance to people they represented.

Majority of respondents (33.75%) agreed that opinions and ideas of people were taken in Gram Sabha, another 17.5% also strongly agreed with it. While 18.75% of respondents disagree with it, and another 13.75% strongly reject the idea that opinions and ideas of people were taken in Gram Sabha.

8.75% of respondents were strongly of the opinion that nepotism and partisan manner were evident in Village Council, another 31.25% also held the same view. Over 23.75% of respondents disagree with this notion, and another 3.75% strongly disagree that nepotism and partisanship exists in the functioning of Village Council. Remarkably, majority of respondents, i.e., 32.5% held neutral ground.

In terms of forbidding to announce matters of public importance, 28.75% strongly held that Village Council forbid announcing matters of public importance, another 17.5% also held the same view. On the other hand, 26.25% of respondents were strongly in rejection to this allegation; another 5% also rejected the notion.

Table 5.2: Respondents' view on transparency and openness of Gram Panchayats in Arunachal Pradesh.

| Sl. No | Question | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total |
|--------|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------|------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|
| 1. | Transparent government | 20 (25%) | 12 (15%) | 26 (32.5%) | 5 (6.25%) | 17 (21.25%) | 80 (100%) |
| 2. | Approachable for the general public | 27 (33.75%) | 28 (35%) | 14 (17.5%) | 8 (10%) | 3 (3.75%) | 80 (100%) |

| | | | | | | | |
|----|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|
| 3. | Opinions and ideas of people taken in Gram Sabha | 9 (11.25%) | 29 (36.25%) | 17 (21.25%) | 18 (22.5%) | 7 (8.75%) | 80 (100%) |
| 4. | Nepotism and partisanship | 21 (26.25%) | 34 (42.5%) | 9 (11.25%) | 2 (2.5%) | 14 (17.5%) | 80 (100%) |
| 5. | Forbid announcing matters of public importance | 10 (12.5%) | 8 (10%) | 21 (26.25%) | 24 (30%) | 17 (21.25%) | 80 (100%) |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

In Arunachal Pradesh, majority of respondents 32.5% were on neutral ground on whether transparency of Gram Panchayat was ensured. 25% of respondents strongly agreed that transparency in local governance was evident; another 15% also held the same view. While on the other hand, 21.25% of respondents strongly disagree with it, another 6.25% also disagree with the idea that Gram Panchayat in Arunachal Pradesh was transparent.

In terms of approachability of the Gram Panchayat towards public, over 35% strongly agreed and another 33.75% also agreed that Gram Panchayat were very approachable for people. This showed that the Gram Panchayat firmly took importance to people they represented.

Majority of respondents (36.25%) held that Gram Panchayat had taken into account opinions and ideas of people in Gram Sabha, another 11.25% of respondents strongly held the same view. While on the other hand, 22.5% of respondents disagreed, and another 8.75% strongly disagreed with the notion. The rest 21.25% remained neutral.

Majority of respondents, i.e., 42.5% held that nepotism and partisanship was evident in the functioning of Gram Panchayat, another 26.25% also strongly held that nepotism and partisan manner exists. While 17.5% of respondents strongly disagreed with this notion, another 2.5% also held the same view.

In terms of forbidding to announce matters of public importance, 12.5% strongly held that Gram Panchayat forbid announcing matters of public importance, another 10% also held the same view. On the other hand, 21.25% of respondents were strongly in rejection to this allegation; and majority of respondents, i.e., 30% also rejected the notion. The rest 26.25% remained neutral.

5.2.1. Analysis of Transparency and Openness of Local Self-Governments in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh

Both in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, it was evident that transparency was a concern as well as an issue. Many LSGs (local self-governments) lacked transparency in their working, especially on development and financial related matters. In both the states in general, the leaders of local self-government bodies were approachable and accountable to the public.

Opinions and ideas of people were taken considerably in Gram Sabha in both Village Council and Gram Panchayat. But what the Village Council as well as Gram Panchayat leaders concerned more was the declining number of Gram Panchayat in the past few years. On the other hand, many stakeholders held that the Village Council or Gram Panchayat had compromised many decisions of the Gram Sabha in their own accords.

Nepotism and partisanship hugely affected distribution of resources or beneficiary schemes in both states. Family ties and inter-clan distinctions affected election to LSG bodies, and the party or leaders who took power in return also had profound manifestation of partisan manner. Accordingly, it was also evident from respondents' argument that there were certain significant information that LSG forbid to announce to public, but not to a great extent.

5.3. Lack of Autonomy of Local Self-Government Bodies

Success of democracy depends greatly on empowering Local Self-Government entities. A study conducted by Yerkebulan Zhumashov emphasizes the significance of local self-government in society. This significance arises from its function in giving priority to local concerns and requirements, protecting citizens from central authority, and promoting democratization and participation in decision-

making processes.⁶ Numerous studies have shown that local authorities frequently lacked the requisite autonomy to function within established norms, since superior authorities exert control and influence over subordinate authorities using various methods.⁷ Thus, in a way, they deemed powerless with regard to administrative functions.

With the enactment of the 73rd and 74th Amendments, the Constitution of India provides rural and urban local governments a distinct position within the constitutional framework of India. On a global scale, local self-governments rarely obtain their authority directly from national constitutions and typically employ authorities that had been assigned to them by other tiers of government. Therefore, implementation of these changes becomes a significant constitutional event in India that warranted rigorous scrutiny. While the state holds only legislative power over local governments in India, constitutional amendments have mandated that the state government must uphold the specific responsibilities granted to them by the Constitution.⁸ Despite the commendable declarations in the Constitution, rural local administrations in India still lack the authority to address fundamental rural issues. The 73rd Amendment provided for the establishment of several entities for the purpose of governance and planning. It also included the 11th Schedule into the constitution, which enumerates 29 subjects that the states are required to transfer to the local governments. Still, these institutions have not been fully established and many of the essential functions outlined in the Schedule remain beyond the jurisdiction of the local government.⁹ Hence, despite obligation of the Constitution, the actual authority possessed by rural local government in India was limited to some extent.

The Constitution of India, as adopted in 1950, did not explicitly define the function of local governments. The primary opponents of the centralised federal

⁶ Zhumashov, Y. (2022). An Exploration of Vertical and Social Accountability in the Elected Tier of Local Government: Evidence from Kazakhstan. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*. 14(2).

⁷ Erlingsson, G. O. & Ódalen, J. (2013). A Normative Theory of Local Government: Connecting Individual Autonomy and Local Self-Determination with Democracy. *American Political Science Association 2013 Annual Meeting*.

⁸ Idiculla, M. (2020). Unpacking Local Self-Government: The Uncertain Power of Cities in the Indian Constitution. *Law & Politics in Africa, Asia & Latin America*. 53(1).

⁹ *Ibid.*

system that was finally implemented in the Constituent Assembly were the adherents of Mahatma Gandhi, who advocated for the decentralisation of authority and the establishment of the village as the fundamental unit of state administration.¹⁰ Gandhi emphasised the need of local self-governance within villages and even proposed the implementation of a system of ‘village republics’ in India.¹¹ Dr B.R. Ambedkar, the chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly, strongly criticized the idealistic perspective of ‘village swaraj’ and famously said: “What is the village but a repository of local pride, a stronghold of ignorance, narrow-mindedness, and communal sentiments. It is commendable that the Draft Constitution rejected the village and embraced the individual as its fundamental element.”

Therefore, in spite of the objections raised by the Gandhians in the Constituent Assembly, Indian Constitution implemented a federal system that systematically strengthened the central government, so allowing little room for local governments. At last, in order to appease the Gandhian idea, the Constitution included village panchayats into the Directive Principles of State Policy, which, although not legally binding, were an essential component of the Indian Constitution. The adoption of this clause in the Constitution at a later stage can be interpreted as an example of using constitutional directives to explicitly satisfy ideological opponents of the constitution-making process and provide them with optimism for future political discussions.¹² Upon its implementation on 26th January, 1950, the Constitution of India incorporated Article 40, which explicitly declared: “The State shall undertake measures to establish village panchayats and grant them the requisite powers and authority to enable them to operate as units of self-governments”. Many commentators on the matter – whether LSGs in rural India enjoyed autonomy as mandated in 11th Schedule held that state governments ought to devolve certain powers assigned to them.

¹⁰ Granville, A. (1979). *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation*. Clarendon Press.

¹¹ Jodhka, S. S. (2002). Nation and Village: Images of Rural India in Gandhi, Nehru and Ambedkar. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 37(32).

¹² Khaitan, T. (2018). Directive Principles and the Expressive Accommodation of Ideological Dissenters. *International Journal of Constitutional Law*. 16(2).

The village councils of Mizoram possessed significant authority in village government, encompassing judicial affairs. Nonetheless, the circumstances altered significantly with the establishment of Union Territory status for Mizoram in 1972, followed by its attainment of statehood in 1987, and the dissolution of the Mizo District Council. The VCs operate directly under the State Government via the Local Administration Department as its primary agency. Bureaucrats, as representatives of the state, appear to exercise considerable autonomy in the operational dynamics of the village councils. Immediately following statehood, other functional and line departments began to encroach upon the operations of the VCs. The autonomy of village councils has gradually diminished, resulting in an uncertain and conflicted functional role.¹³

The village councils in Mizoram are quite unique. It differs from Panchayati Raj institutions in other regions of India and constitutes village councils as stipulated under the Sixth Schedule requirements. It started losing its own autonomy and viability without the intermediary route of the District Council. If Panchayati Raj institutions are regarded as agencies of the State Government, particularly concerning regulatory functions, then village councils in Mizoram serve as agents of the State Government primarily in developmental functions and, to a lesser extent, in regulatory functions. The powers and authority of panchayats concerning social service operations are virtually non-existent in village councils. Nevertheless, the judicial authority of village councils, according to customary social norms and conventions, is conspicuously lacking in the context of the Panchayati Raj system.¹⁴

5.4. Issue of Low Attendance of Gram Sabha

The Gram Sabha play constructive role in Panchayati Raj Institution as well as in Village Council in 21st century. Gram Sabha is the general assembly of all villagers. Ministry of Panchayat Raj has issued specific guidelines for the formation of effective platform Gram Sabha for planned economic and social development of the villages in a transparent way. These guidelines are a part of the proceedings to

¹³ Government of Mizoram. (2015). Report of the First State Finance Commission Mizoram (2015-20).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

observe the year 2009 - 2010 as year of Gram Sabha and relate to the social audit for the effective implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005. The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) also known as Prime Minister Village Road Scheme was also a 100% centrally sponsored scheme and subjected to discussion in the Gram Sabha.¹⁵

According to the guidelines, the Gram Sabha is a key to self-governance and it is through the Gram Sabha that the elected representative made accountable to the electorate. At the same time, Gram Sabha had to meet periodically with maximum participation of village people. In Gram Sabha, decision is made on the basis of local priorities through discussion and debate of proposals based on local problems.

Gram Sabha approve plans, programmes and projects for social and economic development before they are taken up for implementation by the Village Council or Gram Panchayat at the village level and responsible for the identification of beneficiaries under the property alleviation and other programmes. For that, active functioning of the Gram Sabha is the primary unit of participatory democracy with transparency, accountability and thus, it is the voice of democracy. When Gram Sabhas are vigilant and sensitive to their own problems, the Local Self-Government institutions become successful. So, Village Council or Gram Panchayat must consult with the Gram Sabha to determine the policy at the grassroots level.

However, the participation or attendance of people in Gram Sabha was unsatisfactory in almost every village. Villagers kept importance to Gram Sabha meeting on the basis of financial matters, or on the basis of government schemes directly related to them. Attendance was commendable on important occasion such as planning and formulation of GPDP, discussions on MGNREGS, among others.

While on the other hand, lack of participation in Gram Sabha from the viewpoints of public can be attributed to many reasons. Reasons such as lack of awareness about meeting schedule, lack of trust in the local self-government entity,

¹⁵ Mandal, S. (2020). Gandhian Ideas of Grassroots Development and Indian Development Policy in 21st Century (Special Reference of Panchayat Raj Institutions). *International Journal of Research-Granthaalayah*. 8(11).

or inadequate interest in the matter of discussion. Many respondents also held that discussions in the Gram Sabha had little influence on the policy outcome, because local leaders at times compromised the Gram Sabha discussion outcomes in suitable to their own will.

Table 5.3: Approximate Gram Sabha attendees in Mizoram during 2010 - 2020 (Calculated from total number of job cards).

| Sl. No. | Villages in Mizoram | Percentage of GS attendees | Percentage of GS attendees who actually speak out their opinion and ideas |
|---------|---------------------|----------------------------|---|
| 1. | Nisapui | 25% | 5% |
| 2. | Kawnpui VC-3 | 65% | 12% |
| 3. | Mualkawi | 55% | 8% |
| 4. | Melbuk | 52% | 4% |
| 5. | Chungtlang | 66% | 10% |
| 6. | West Lungdar | 62% | 23% |
| 7. | Ramlaitui | 26% | 15% |
| 8. | Haulawng | 15% | 4% |
| 9. | Seling | 32% | 9% |
| 10. | Thingsul-Tlangnuam | 26% | 12% |
| Average | | 42.4% | 10.2% |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

In Mizoram, the percentage of Gram Sabha attendees was 42.4% per every job card holder in village. The percentage of Gram Sabha attendees who expressed their opinion and idea was only 10.2% taken from the total attendees of Gram Sabha.

Table 5.4: Approximate Gram Sabha attendees in Arunachal Pradesh during 2010 - 2020 (Calculated from total number of job cards).

| Sl. No. | Villages in Arunachal Pradesh | Percentage of GS attendees | Percentage of GS attendees who actually speak out their opinion and ideas |
|---------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| 1. | Bene | 40% | 5% |
| 2. | Darka | 30% | 4% |
| 3. | Korang | 45% | 8% |
| 4. | Sido | 54% | 8% |
| 5. | Rupa | 43% | 16% |
| 6. | Jigaon | 37% | 7% |
| 7. | Borum | 26% | 6% |
| 8. | Rayo | 33% | 9% |

| | | | |
|---------|-------------|-------|------|
| 9. | Lempia West | 62% | 23% |
| 10. | Tajang | 51% | 11% |
| Average | | 41.6% | 9.7% |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

In Arunachal Pradesh, the percentage of Gram Sabha attendees was 41.6% per every job card holder in village. The percentage of Gram Sabha attendees who expressed their opinion and idea was only 9.7% taken from the total attendees of Gram Sabha.

Thus, the number of Gram Sabha attendees in Mizoram (42.4%) was slightly better than in Arunachal Pradesh (41.6%). The number of Gram Sabha attendees who exerted their opinion and ideas during Gram Sabha meeting was also slightly better in Mizoram (10.2%) than in Arunachal Pradesh (9.7%). Both these trends showed negligence or ignorance to the importance of Gram Sabha as a manifestation of local democracy.

5.5. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a Trend in Local Self-Government

Local Self-Government bodies evolved and changed gradually as society changes. The use of smartphone and internet are increasingly popular. As a result, citizens were not only mere spectators in governance and governance processes, but also participants and instigators of many trends and movements in governance. An enlightened public was less prone to mistreatment and violations by those in power.

In a way, citizens were increasingly engaged in activities of Village Council and Gram Panchayat by means of communication technologies. For instance, dissemination of information by local governments with oral announcement by village crier had been replaced by announcement through electronic information microphone. Further, usage of smartphone and associated mobile applications facilitated dissemination of information to general public in recent years.

The world has entered into era of digitalization and information technology. Usage of mobile applications has increased as a result, mobile applications such as

WhatsApp, Facebook and other platforms provide efficient and easy access to information and data.

India is home to a vast population that lacked the means of meeting even their fundamental requirements. Under such conditions, to consider the potential use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) or the implementation of electronic services with different goals for such a population was a challenge. Nevertheless, it is illogical to believe that ICT and e-governance cannot be beneficial for a country when a significant population lacks access to fundamental necessities for their survival. Information and Communication Technology encompasses the management of information in a digital format, as well as its electronic preservation, access, and distribution. The material may include current events, notifications, reports, educational resources, content for entertainment, as well as application forms, among others. It can be accessed by numerous individuals.¹⁶

Information and Communication Technology has the potential to promptly and inexpensively disseminate any information to thousands of individuals. Considering the present age of globalization, marketization, and growing innovation, it is imperative that every individual possess the ability to effectively manage their own livelihood businesses. For the objective of acquiring solutions, citizens must establish connections with Local Self-Government entities regardless of their geographical location using electronic means. Furthermore, it can accelerate agricultural development and provide opportunities in the management of banking services where there are no banking institutions. The internet enables citizens to connect with government agencies, pursue commercial activities, interact with other people, develop new ideas, and embrace standards of excellence in everyday life.¹⁷ In addition, the availability to ICT facilitates the development of viable financial partnerships and effective economies. Furthermore, it is also beneficial in eliminating inequality and enhancing wellness.¹⁸

¹⁶ Singh, N. (2006). *ICTs and Rural Development in India*. University of California.

¹⁷ Garai, A. & Shadrach, B. (2006). *Taking ICT to Every Indian Village: Opportunities and Challenges*. One World South Asia.

¹⁸ Parikh, T. S. (2009). Engineering Rural Development. *Communications of the ACM*. 52(1).

Many countries worldwide are striving to revitalize their government institutions by enhancing its responsiveness, accountability, emphasis on service, and accountability. This evolution necessitates the deployment of modern technology in governance. Therefore, ICT may assume a tremendously essential role in the progress of the government domain and its operations. Implementing ICT in governance enhances communication and enhances interaction among administrators or representatives elected at various levels of government.¹⁹ Under the present circumstances, a mere 40% of the inhabitants of rural areas have access to government services. Hence, it is imperative to enhance their empowerment.²⁰ The existing three-tier democratic framework for rural regions aims to involve elected representatives in the process of policy formulation. ICT facilitates the expansion of the engagement of PRIs in governance and decision-making processes by providing avenues for communication between the government and citizens. Furthermore, it bestows openness and accountability upon the system.²¹

Establishing efficient communication remains a formidable task in several villages and remote regions. Integrating technology into the communication of a Gram Sabha meeting in locality provides a highly efficient method to guarantee the success of such sessions. Traditionally, the conventional approach to announce a Gram Sabha meeting has been through a public address system broadcast from prominent locations such as the marketplace, temple, or mosque. This information is subsequently disseminated through advertisements in local newspapers or by using an automobile. A viable alternative mode of communication is networking facilitated by mobile phones. Communication of meeting information to Gram Sabha members can be facilitated using SMS (short messaging service), which serves as a personal and dependable means of communication to guarantee attendance at meetings.²² Moreover, frequent reminders sent via the SMS platform can facilitate the

¹⁹ Datar, M. *et al.* (2008). Emerging Trends in E-Government. In J. Bhattacharya (Ed.) *Critical Thinking in E-Governance*. International Congress of E-Government.

²⁰ Nagarajan, P. & Jiji, G. W. (2010). Empowering Rural People to Use Information Technology Services. *Engineering and Technology in India*. 1(2).

²¹ Singh, K. M. & Meena, M. (2012). *ICT for Agricultural Development under Changing Climate*. Narendra Publishing House.

²² Ghosh, J. (2014). Relevance and Use of ICT in Grassroots' Participation in Panchayats. *Global Media Journal – Indian Edition*. 5(1).

mobilisation of participants in Gram Sabha sessions. Mobile communication enables the transmission of information from a key member of a family to the other members of the Gram Sabha within that family.

In order to understand the ground reality of the implications of ICT, interview was conducted among members of Village Council in Mizoram and members of Gram Panchayat in Arunachal Pradesh. In each village, two members of local self-government entity were interviewed. A total of 40 members of LSG participated in the interview (20 members each from Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh). Firstly, members of local self-government were asked their knowledge about e-Governance. Secondly, they were asked how members of LSG interacted with Local Administration Department and Rural Development Block (in Mizoram) and Panchayati Raj Department (in Arunachal Pradesh). Thirdly, members of local self-government were asked on which communication platform they share information among themselves. Fourthly, members of local self-government were asked on how LSG share information to the general public.

Table 5.5: LSG members' knowledge about e-Governance.

| Sl. No. | LSG | Yes | No | Total |
|-------------|------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| 1. | VC members | 12(60%) | 8(40%) | 20(100%) |
| 2. | GP members | 15(75%) | 5(25%) | 20(100%) |
| Grand Total | | 27(67.5%) | 13(32.5%) | 40(100%) |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

Data revealed that majority of Village Council and Gram Panchayat members were aware of e-Governance and its related activities.

Table 5.6: Communication platform between LSGs and Local Administration Department and Rural Development Block (in Mizoram) and Panchayati Raj Department (in Arunachal Pradesh)

(Respondents can have multiple answers from options provided).

| Sl. No. | LSG | Official letter | Phone call | WhatsApp message | Total |
|-------------|------------|-----------------|-------------|------------------|-----------|
| 1. | VC members | 17 (39.53%) | 6 (13.95%) | 20 (46.51%) | 43 (100%) |
| 2. | GP members | 15 (31.25%) | 13 (27.08%) | 20 (41.66%) | 48 (100%) |
| Grand Total | | 32 (35.16%) | 19 (20.87%) | 40 (43.95%) | 91 (100%) |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

It was evident that in every LSG bodies, WhatsApp application was the most widely used form of communication between LSG and their counterparts in the upper tier of government (43.95%). It was closely followed by communication through official letter (35.16%), and phone call as a means of communication stood in the last with 20.87%.

Table 5.7: Communication platform in which LSG members share information among themselves.

(Respondents can have multiple answers from options provided).

| Sl. No. | LSG | Official letter | Phone call | WhatsApp message | Total |
|-------------|------------|-----------------|-------------|------------------|-----------|
| 1. | VC members | 7 (14.89%) | 20 (42.55%) | 20 (42.55%) | 47 (100%) |
| 2. | GP members | 9 (18.36%) | 20 (40.81%) | 20 (40.81%) | 49 (100%) |
| Grand Total | | 16 (16.66%) | 40 (41.66%) | 40 (41.66%) | 96 (100%) |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

Among LSG members in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, WhatsApp message was widely used for sharing information in the form of message or for sending documents. Usage of telephone call was also widespread among every members of LSG. 15.62% of total LSG members used official letter for inter-communication among members.

Table 5.8: Means of communication through which LSG share information to the general public.

(Respondents can have multiple answers from options provided).

| Sl. No. | LSG | Official notice | Phone call | WhatsApp message | Electronic microphone | Total |
|-------------|------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| 1. | VC members | 15 (26.31%) | 4 (7.01%) | 20 (35.08%) | 18 (31.57%) | 57 (100%) |
| 2. | GP members | 13 (22.41%) | 9 (15.51%) | 20 (34.48%) | 16 (27.58%) | 58 (100%) |
| Grand Total | | 28 (24.34%) | 13 (11.30%) | 40 (34.78%) | 34 (29.56%) | 115 (100%) |

Source: Primary data collected from field work.

Again, WhatsApp was the most commonly used means of information between LSG and general public (34.78%). It was closely followed by electronic microphone or public announcements (29.56%). Another form of communication between LSG and general public were official notification (24.34%) and phone call (11.30%). Thus, it was apparent that introduction of ICT and associated digital platforms largely facilitate communication network of LSGs on various venues. WhatsApp mobile application was enormously useful; it was compatible in all sorts of communication. However, official notification was also still relevant.

5.6. Conclusion

The Local Self-Government bodies in both Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh have carried out their obligations and executed their respective duties. Their performance in development, administration, and social sectors was commendable to a certain degree. Nevertheless, there exist specific concerns about the question of openness and trust regarding local self-governments. The subject to consider encompassed the limitation of autonomy of local self-government and the declining participation in Gram Sabha.

Transparency was essential to close gaps in knowledge and enable the general public to examine and understand the actions of government critically. Introduction of transparency as a strategy allows the general public to critically evaluate and

strengthen confidence in the management of the local government. The quality of transparency might therefore improve the process of acquiring supplementary information within the organisation. Both Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh clearly showed a notable lack of transparency. A significant number of local self-governments are characterised by a lack of openness in their operations, particularly in areas of development and finance.

Political partiality and favouritism significantly influenced the allocation of resources or beneficiary programs in both states. Family connections and distinctions between clans influenced the election of individuals to LSG bodies, and the party or leaders who assumed power also exhibited significant partisan behaviour.

It was imperative to educate masses about the significance of Gram Sabha in contemporary society. Individuals should be aware of their entitlements, obligations, and position as empowered citizens capable of making authoritative decisions. Finally, in order to methodically enhance the authority of local self-government entities, state governments can decrease specific limitations placed on them regarding financial or developmental processes.

As the world enter into era of globalization, advances in technology reached every nook and corner of the world. ICT and associated activities gained momentum even in the remotest of villages in North East India. Local Self-Governments have increasingly relied on ICT services such as mobile applications, electronic devices and internet connections to facilitate the functioning of their respective LSGs.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Primary responsibility of the local self-government bodies was community development. They were given the role of organizing, formulating, and implementing development programs in the community, with the aim of advancing the nation towards modernity. Local self-government occupies the third level of government structure and serves as the primary channel for citizens to participate in politics, especially in rural regions. India did not simply adopt Western practices when it came to local self-administration. This is because the assembly of chieftainship was already operating during the Janapadas period. During the Post-Mauryan period, a system of decision-making by a group of officials known as Shabhas was present. Additionally, the Chola dynasty adopted the practice of collecting revenue and taxes in villages.

The establishment of Village Councils in Mizoram as a means of local self-governance occurred in 1954, following the deposition of chiefs who previously had administrative authority in the villages. In the case of Arunachal Pradesh, the Gram Panchayat, or Panchayati Raj Institution, was established as a result of a political development. This occurred when the Government of India passed an Act in 1969, which compelled the creation of such a body under the NEFA Panchayati Raj Regulation. Both these entities experience evolution and revisions through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992, as well as other amendments and ordinances pertaining to their implementation.

Local self-government is an institution of grassroots democracy in which citizens participate in politics and power is given to locally elected representatives who work for the well-being of people. Local self-government in India serves as a system of governance that fostered grassroots democracy and rural development by empowering residents to participate in local decision-making processes. The Panchayati Raj System in India was granted constitutional status in 1992, establishing the foundation for present system of local self-governance. In rural areas, the Panchayati Raj system and Village Council system endeavour to build

elected local self-governing institutions in order to bring governance directly to the grassroots level, hence decentralizing governance. The Gram Panchayat operates at the village level, the Panchayat Samiti at the block or mandal level, and the Zila Parishad at the district level. Corporations and municipalities embrace local autonomy in urban areas.

Extensive literature reviews revealed a significant abundance of publications on the topic of Panchayati Raj Institution. But there is a scarcity of works specifically focused on the states of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. Nevertheless, every book and journal article examined in this study possessed distinct significance and pertinence. And furthermore, they made valuable contributions to the comprehension of the local self-government institution in India as a whole, and North-East India in particular. This study focused on a detailed examination of 20 villages in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, analysing the functioning and achievements of these villages from 2010 to 2020.

One of the key characteristics of democratic governance in India was the decentralization of power. All three levels of government have utilized certain powers granted within their respective jurisdictions. The Union List, the State List, and Concurrent List in India represent the relationship between the federal government and the state governments, indicating the distribution of power or decentralization.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment conferred constitutional status for rural administration, to be managed by local bodies. Nevertheless, Article 243 M of the Constitution explicitly declares that the provisions of Part - IX, which refers to Panchayats, did not apply to the state of Mizoram. As a result of this provision, Mizoram successfully established the village council system as a means of local self-governance. This system developed from the era of District Councils under Assam and was further enhanced and reorganized through the enactment of Village Council Acts by the state government. The Arunachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1997 superseded the Northeast Frontier Agency Panchayat Raj Regulation, 1967. The Act was expanded to encompass the entire territory of Arunachal Pradesh, thereby

mandating the implementation of a grassroots democracy founded on the Panchayat Raj system in all villages of Arunachal Pradesh.

Mahatma Gandhi supported the strengthening of Panchayats as a way to promote economic development in rural areas. Nehru emphasized the importance of Panchayati Raj for achieving socio-economic self-sufficiency. Ambedkar also recognized that Panchayati Raj had the ability to ensure the involvement of all members of society, regardless of caste, gender, or other differences, through its decentralized administrative structure.

Local Self-Government entities are situated at the lowest level of government administration. They provide as a conduit for direct interaction between the government and the population. By incorporating rural local bodies within the administration, residents are afforded the opportunity to directly engage and participate in the government. However, achieving this goal can only be accomplished through the decentralization of power, granting rural local organizations the authority to control government administration and functions as authorized by state governments.

An extensive analysis of 20 villages in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh demonstrated that National Parties such as the Indian National Congress and the Bhartiya Janata Party have exerted significant influence in local politics in Arunachal Pradesh over the years. In contrast, the Indian National Congress and state parties like the Mizo National Front have been the primary contenders in local politics in Mizoram. Local self-government bodies served as a means for rural people to directly engage in political activity. It is crucial to emphasize that local politics did not necessarily have an impact on state politics.

Thus, the institution of Village Council and Panchayati Raj are established differently as Village Council was constituted by an Act of State Legislature, while the latter was established as a result of Constitutional provision under which the State took measures for the development of the body. Both the bodies reflected the federal structure and nature of India, as well as division of powers even in the lowest strata of governance.

The Village Council and Gram Panchayat were both the units of administration that enjoyed certain powers to execute what the State Government or Rural Block (Anchali Samiti in PRI) directed them to undertake. They perform a variety of functions so that decentralisation of power in the real sense could be fulfilled, nurtured and put to action so that distributions of resources in a society could be equal. They implemented various schemes and projects, programmes and directives from the government for elevating rural population of India.

The Village Council possessed powers and responsibilities in accordance with Section 8A of the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2014. The village council was granted the authority to devise a development plan for the village and oversee the implementation of those initiatives. The village council possesses the authority to levy taxes on property in compliance with regulations set by the state government.

The Panchayat Raj system is authorised by Part IX of the Indian Constitution. Panchayati Raj institutions carry out the specific activities related to Panchayati Raj as defined in state laws, usually known as Panchayati Raj system functions. The Panchayat Raj system functions can be classified into two categories: mandatory and optional. The Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) is a comprehensive strategy established by Gram Panchayats throughout India to foster social justice and economic growth in their particular regions. Both the Village Council and Gram Panchayat were associated with creating plans based on the GPDP.

Village Council and Gram Panchayat, as local government institutions, carried out numerous activities and responsibilities. Their efforts encompass a wide range of activities, including the provision of community assets, the development of local education, the management of water resources, the assurance of sanitation and hygiene, the protection of the environment and natural vegetation, the management of youth affairs and their future pursuits, and the provision of rural housing from central schemes, among other responsibilities. Operating at the village level, they played a crucial role in identifying and redirecting government initiatives towards the

appropriate recipients. At times, they served as representatives of both the state and central governments. In this regard, it is necessary to undertake comprehensive research of the village in order to comprehend the shortcomings and challenges within the community. And with a clear and precise grasp of the need, developmental programs have the capacity to achieve the desired goal.

Generally, local self-government entities in most tribal communities in North East India had a positive relationship with civil society organizations. In Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, civil society groups provided comprehensive support and actively engaged in the activities of Village Council and Gram Panchayat in most villages. In addition to their respective organisations' mandate, youth groups, pensioner groups, and students groups were actively involved in rural development activities in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

It was crucial to acknowledge that the responsibility for developing robust local self-government mostly rested with the people. Indeed, it was the voters' choice that ultimately determined the individuals who govern on behalf of the people. If individuals choose a candidate who espouses corruption and nepotism, the process of development would fail to achieve its intended goal, resulting in widespread suffering among the people. A robust and competent local self-government, on the other hand, ensures efficiency, accountability, and transparency in the job.

Furthermore, it was crucial for the general population to understand that their involvement in local self-government extended beyond electoral participation. Instead, they should continue to provide both assistance and vigilance simultaneously. When the populace rallied and voiced their concerns about any inconsistencies or issues occurring in villages, they not only exerted pressure but also imposed obligations on the local self-government entities to promptly take relevant action. Thus, the general population and those in positions of authority mutually urged one other to foster a democratic system that encompasses all individuals.

The Local Self-Government entities in both Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh have carried out their obligations and executed their respective duties. Their performance in development, administration, and social sectors was commendable to

a certain degree. Nevertheless, there exist specific concerns about the question of openness and trust regarding local self-governments. The subject to consider encompassed the limitation of autonomy of local self-government and the declining participation in Gram Sabha.

Transparency was essential to close gaps in knowledge and enable the general public to examine and understand the actions of the government critically. Introduction of transparency as a strategy allows the general public to critically evaluate and strengthen confidence in the management of the local government. The quality of transparency might therefore improve the process of acquiring supplementary information within the organisation. Both Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh clearly showed a notable lack of transparency. A significant number of local self-governments are characterised by a lack of openness in their operations, particularly in areas of development and finance.

Political partiality and favouritism significantly influenced the allocation of resources or beneficiary programs in both states. Family connections and distinctions between clans influenced the election of individuals to LSG bodies, and the party or leaders who assumed power also exhibited significant partisan behaviour.

It was imperative to educate masses about the significance of Gram Sabha in contemporary society. Individuals should be aware of their entitlements, obligations, and position as empowered citizens capable of making authoritative decisions. Finally, in order to methodically enhance the authority of local self-government entities, state governments must decrease specific limitations placed on them regarding financial or developmental processes.

As the world enter into era of globalization, advances in technology reached every nook and corner of the world. ICT and associated activities gained momentum even in the remotest of villages in North East India. Local Self-Governments have increasingly relied on ICT services such as mobile applications, electronic devices and internet connections to facilitate the functioning of their respective LSGs.

Major Findings of the Research

There were numerous findings of the research, both from secondary data and primary data. However, in order to fill research gap, findings from primary data after as a result of assessment across 20 villages in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh were regarded as major findings.

1. Membership strength of LSGs

From the field work data, the village that had the highest number of members of Local-Self Government was Rayo with 8 members, followed by Haulawng and Seling with 7 members; while Nisapui, Kawnpui VC-3, West Lungdar and Thingsul-Tlangnuam has 5 members each. Rupa, Borum and Lempia West have 4 members each; majority of the villages like Mualkawi, Melbuk, Chungtlang, Ramlaitui, Bene, Darka, Korang, Sido and Tajang has 3 members each. The village that had the least number of members was Jigaon with only 2 members.

The strength of membership did not ultimately determine the quality of development processes in the village, or the quality of administration. It is the quality of each individual in the village administration as well as the support of the people that helps in achieving development and fluency of administration. However, what was certain was that in villages where there were large numbers of Gram Panchayat or Village Council members, the decision-making outcome of those members tends to be going in line according to public consent.

2. Political Party Affiliation of LSG members

Political party affiliation of members of Village Council and Gram Panchayat differs tremendously between villages, between districts as well as between states. It was highly crucial for political parties to establish stronghold in rural areas where many voters were illiterate. Political parties, with their competent units in villages, seek for notable and prominent candidate to run for election in local bodies. Having a respectable and prominent individual for contestant was significant for political parties not only for the sake of winning in local self-government election, but also for

wider spectrum of earning peoples' trust for their party. It was evident that independent candidates also had a chance of survival in local politics.

The Indian National Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party, which were the dominant political parties in Indian politics, remained the two belligerents in local politics in Arunachal Pradesh. While in the case of Mizoram, the Indian National Congress and Mizo National Front Party were the two major contenders, with a healthy portion of ZNP and ZPM affiliated candidates also secure positions in local elections. Interestingly, the BJP with its huge waves in National politics since 2014 was unable to make any significant mark in the Local Self-Government bodies in Mizoram. It is important to note that independent candidates stand a chance to win election in Local Self-Government in Arunachal Pradesh, notably in Korang and Sido village from East Siang District.

3. Assessment of Gram Sabha in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh

It is observed that attendance in Gram Sabha in selected area in both Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh for a period 2010 to 2020 was unsatisfactory, especially when taking into consideration the importance and significance of the meeting.

In Mizoram, Chungtlang village topped the division with 66% of attendees, followed by Kawnpui VC-3 with 65%, which was closely followed by West Lungdar with 62%. Mualkawi has 55%, Melbuk with 52%, Seling has 32%, Ramlaitui and Thingsul-Tlangnuam has 26% of attendees; while Nisapui and Haulawng have the least number of attendees with 25% and 15% respectively.

In Arunachal Pradesh, Lempia West village had the highest percentage of attendees with 62%, closely followed by Sido with 54% and Tajang with 51%. Rupa has 43%, both Bene and Korang had 40% each, Jigaon had 37%, followed by Rayo with 33%; Darka and Borum have the least number of attendees with 30% and 26% respectively.

The cumulative average of attendees in Mizoram was 42.4%, while Arunachal has an average of 41.6% attendees. Thus, it was evident that rural

communities hardly gave importance to Gram Sabha meeting. When interviewed with Village Council members and Gram Panchayat members on whether people were willing to speak out their opinion and ideas during Gram Sabha meeting, of course some people exerted their views and opinions; but the generality of members of Gram Sabha remain silent. As observed from selected villages, the percentage of individuals who actually speak out their opinion ranges from 4% to 23% in Gram Sabha meeting, with the total number of job cards taken as 100.

It is also observed that people tended to give importance to Gram Sabha in various matters like planning of GPDP, which was held within 2nd October to 31st December in a year; discussions of matters related to MGNREGA wages – when to credit the amount to beneficiaries (job card holders).

4. LSG on Community Development

In terms of community development, major works of LSGs include - development and maintenance of agricultural link roads; Plain Cement Concrete (PCC) flooring inside villages; construction of community halls, retaining walls, flood protection walls, public toilets; construction of bazar sheds, among others.

Despite certain drawbacks and limitations faced by local self-government entities in promoting constructive change and development in villages, there has been significant progress. Nevertheless, several impediments such as corruption, delayed allocation of funds for projects, insufficient study on community need, and ineptitude of implementing organizations impede the progress of development. A significant number of members in the local self-government bodies in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh lack education and do not have access to modern technologies, as indicated by the responses from beneficiaries during interviews. This factor contributes to the slow pace of development, which contradicts the aspirations and expectations of the citizens.

5. LSG on Education

In terms of education, major works of LSGs include – maintenance and repair of school buildings in their area, organising career guidance and counselling for

students, providing awareness to parents on importance of educating their children, commemorating students excelled in examinations. Other than this, LSGs also raised donation and hired school teachers to fill insufficiency in government schools in many villages. There were also instances where LSG in collaboration with donations from public establish schools as a result of the need of village. LSGs also acted as instigator of demands by articulating necessity such as inadequacy of school teachers, or other school facilities to state government.

6. LSG on Water Management

One of LSGs primary concern was to provide water abundantly in villages. Under the JJM scheme, 13 villages in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh implemented the program. Most villages in Mizoram under the study area implemented JJM scheme to provide water connection inside their village because water scarcity was a concern in many villages in Mizoram, with the only exception to Thingsul-Tlangnuam village that has an established water connection prior to JJM. In villages in Arunachal Pradesh, only four villages, viz., Korang, Jigaon, Borum and Lempia West had implemented the JJM scheme; all other villages had an established reliable water connection and functional household tap connections (FHTC) prior to JJM. Furthermore, all villages in Arunachal Pradesh had abundance of water throughout all seasons.

The JJM scheme was implemented in the form of drawing water from rivers either by solar water pump or through gravity. The scheme also comes with installation of functional household tap connections (FHTC) in every household.

7. LSG on Sanitation

In terms of sanitation, most villages in Mizoram establish Water and Sanitation Committee (Watsan) for their respective villages. Watsan was usually chaired by President of Village Council; other members include members of Village Council and leaders of CSOs such as YMA and MHIP.

The Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin was implemented in all villages within the study area. Major works under SBM-G include construction of Individual

Household Latrines (IHHL) to poor families, construction of Community Sanitary Complexes (CSC), and establishment of Solid & Liquid Waste Management (SLWM) centres for proper discharge of wastes. Other than activities under SBM-G, LSGs also contributed in construction of drainage channels within villages, maintenance of watershed inside villages, among others.

In terms of open defecation free (ODF) status, all villages in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh within the study area were declared as ODF villages, which was a huge step towards building a clean nation and national transformation on health and hygiene. In Mizoram, three villages like Mualkawi, Melbuk and Haulawng were declared as ODF, that signified that those villages had met the requirement of eliminating openly defecation at all times; while the rest seven villages were declared as ODF+, that signified that those villages had met the requirement of individual household latrines (IHHLs) to every houses of the village, as well as proper channel of liquid and solid waste disposal. In Arunachal Pradesh, three villages such as Sido, Borum and Rayo attained the status of ODF, while the rest of villages were all declared as ODF+.

8. LSG on Environmental Protection

Major activities of LSGs on environmental protection include prohibition of hunting of wild animals and birds, prohibition of possession of guns and traps. In most villages, fishing was permitted but without the use of poison, bombs, battery generator and other harmful substances that caused detrimental consequences on all marine life.

Most villages under the study area had protected land area called reserve forests. An encroachment or any form of damage to the existing flora and fauna was prohibited. Many villages banned cutting of forest trees for timber for commercial purposes, only local individuals with intention of utilising timber for domestic purpose were permitted by village LSGs. 12 villages out of 20 in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh adopted afforestation measures such as tree plantation program. Active involvement and cooperation of LSGs with CSOs and student bodies facilitated environmental protection and afforestation processes.

One of the biggest challenge before conservation of forest in Mizoram was the practice of Jhum cultivation. Many communities in villages still resort to this practice, costing hugely on trees and natural vegetation. The terrain of Mizoram was predominantly hilly where flat lands for paddy field were unavailable. Farmers have no option but to clear down vegetation every year. However, after the Central as well as State Government introduced and implemented other forms of cultivation to eliminate Jhum farming, many farmers resorted to modernised form of cultivation. In contrast, in the case of Arunachal Pradesh, most farmers practice stationary cultivation where the same plot of land was used permanently year after another.

9. LSG on Rural Poor

One of the most notable contributions of LSG on rendering help to rural poor was implementation of PMAY-G scheme. Under this scheme, many poor families from villages attained an incentive to build their own houses. During the study time period, i.e., 2010 – 2020, in Mizoram, the total number of sanctions made under the scheme was 114, with an average of 11.4 houses in each village in 10 selected villages. While in Arunachal Pradesh, the total number of sanctions made under the scheme was 98, with an average of 9.8 houses in each village in 10 selected villages.

In Mizoram, the total number of houses constructed under the scheme was 93, with an average of 9.3 houses in each village in 10 selected villages. While in Arunachal Pradesh, the total number of houses constructed under the scheme was 74, with an average of 7.4 houses in each village in 10 selected villages. Therefore, in 10 selected villages in both the states, the percentage of completion of houses from sanctions made was 81.57% in Mizoram and 75.51% in Arunachal Pradesh.

Other than on rural housing schemes, local self-government bodies in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh contributed hugely for poor rural families. Provision of financial assistance to students from low economic condition, provision of training for farmers and cattle herders, and provision of daily wage jobs were common, among others. In events of calamities and unforeseen events occur in villages, Village Council and Gram Panchayat as government body of the locality, performed rehabilitee actions and financial aid.

10. LSG on Youth Affairs

LSGs contribution towards youth affairs differ from village to village, and a difference in trend was evident between Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. In Mizoram, most activities were related to sports infrastructure and facilities development, along with few skill developments training for youths. In the case of Arunachal Pradesh, most Gram Panchayat focused on providing skill development training to younger generation as part of youth affairs.

11. Status of Transparency and Openness in LSGs

Both in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, it was evident that transparency was a concern as well as an issue. Many LSGs (local self-governments) lacked transparency in their working, especially on development and financial related matters. In both the states in general, the leaders of local self-government bodies were approachable and accountable to the public.

Opinions and ideas of people were taken considerably in Gram Sabha in both Village Council and Gram Panchayat. But what the Village Council as well as Gram Panchayat leaders concerned more was the declining number of Gram Panchayat in the past few years. On the other hand, many stakeholders held that the Village Council or Gram Panchayat had compromised many decisions of the Gram Sabha in their own accords.

Nepotism and partisanship hugely affected distribution of resources or beneficiary schemes in both states. Family ties and inter-clan distinctions affected election to LSG bodies, and the party or leaders who took power in return also had profound manifestation of partisan manner. Accordingly, it was also evident from respondents' argument that there was certain significant information that LSG forbid to announce to public, but not to a great extent.

12. Low Attendance in Gram Sabha

Participation or attendance of people in Gram Sabha was unsatisfactory in almost every village. Villagers kept importance to Gram Sabha meeting on the basis of financial matters, or on the basis of government schemes directly related to them.

Attendance was commendable on important occasions such as planning and formulation of GPDP, discussions on MGNREGS, among others. While on the other hand, lack of participation in Gram Sabha from the viewpoints of public can be attributed to many reasons. Reasons such as lack of awareness about meeting schedule, lack of trust in the local self-government entity, or inadequate interest in the matter of discussion. Many respondents also held that discussions in the Gram Sabha had little influence on the policy outcome, because local leaders at times compromised Gram Sabha discussion outcomes in suitable to their own will.

In Mizoram, the percentage of Gram Sabha attendees was 42.4% per every job card holder in village. The percentage of Gram Sabha attendees who expressed their opinion and idea was only 10.2% taken from the total attendees of Gram Sabha. In Arunachal Pradesh, the percentage of Gram Sabha attendees was 41.6% per every job card holder in village. The percentage of Gram Sabha attendees who expressed their opinion and idea was only 9.7% taken from the total attendees of Gram Sabha. Both these trend showed negligence or ignorance to the importance of Gram Sabha as a manifestation of local democracy.

13. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a Trend in Local Self-Government

Majority of Village Councils and Gram Panchayat members were aware of e-Governance and its related activities. In every LSG body, WhatsApp application was the most widely used form of communication between LSG and their counterparts in the upper tier of government (43.95%). It was closely followed by communication through official letter (35.16%), and phone call as a means of communication stood in the last with 20.87%.

Among LSG members in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, WhatsApp message was widely used for sharing information in the form of message or for sending documents. Usage of telephone call was also widespread among every members of LSG. LSG members also used official letter for inter-communication among members. Again, WhatsApp was the most commonly used means of information between LSG and general public (34.78%). It was closely followed by

electronic microphone or public announcements (29.56%). Another form of communication between LSG and general public were official notification (24.34%) and phone call (11.30%).

Thus, it was apparent that introduction of ICT and associated digital platforms largely facilitate communication network of LSGs on various venues. WhatsApp mobile application was enormously useful; it was compatible in all sorts of communication. However, official notification was also still relevant.

To sum up, Village Councils and Gram Panchayats as local self-government bodies in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh were established as administrative machinery in villages. They were assigned to perform administrative regulations entailed with the proper and equal distribution of resources, so that development could reach desired beneficiaries.

Gram Panchayat as local self-government body derived their 29 Subjects as functions from Schedule XI in the Constitution of India. However, Village Councils of Mizoram derived their functions from Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2014, with eleven main functions. The latter lacked constitutional provision in terms of mandated functions. However, Local Administration Department under the State Government assumed responsibility for the administration of Village Councils and its related issues. The Department's principal objective is to empower the Village Councils while providing them with a strong support structure in order to ensure their efficient operation. In Panchayati Raj system in Arunachal Pradesh, Panchayati Raj Department was responsible for administration of Gram Panchayats.

Major activities of local self-government bodies in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh were management and establishment of community assets, rural housing, and administration of MGNREGA scheme. Other areas of engagement include protection of environment and forests, maintenance of sanitation and hygiene, management of youth affairs, among others. These local self-government bodies also faced certain challenges such as transparency, accountability and efficacy in their functions. Lack of autonomy to address fundamental rural issues hamper the pace of

development in their own accord. And the institution of Gram Sabha, which was envisaged to perform discussion platform for social mobility and economic development has observed low attendance in recent years.

As a recent trend, the utilisation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) had significant contribution in the activities of local self-government. By providing a platform for communication network in the functioning of local self-government bodies, ICT has the potential to revolutionised administration in villages.

Appendix – I

Executive Composition of Village Council

1. The Village Council's President and Vice-President will be selected by a majority vote of the members of the Village Council from among themselves.
2. The executive body of the village council shall recommend the appointment or removal of the secretary of the village council to the State Government.
3. Neither the President nor the Vice-President of the Village Council is eligible to serve as Secretary of the Village Council. The Secretary is not permitted to be a member of the Village Council.
4. The President may submit his resignation to the State Government at any time by writing it beneath his hand, and he is required to stay in that position until the State Government accepts it.
5. The Vice-President may submit his resignation to the President at any time in writing and under his own signature; the President will then promptly forward it to the State Government or to a representative designated by it in this regard for approval. Until the resignation gets authorization, the Vice-President remains eligible to serve in that capacity. Normally, any resignation ought to be accepted. When the letter of resignation is accepted, the Village Council members will select an alternate Vice-President.
6. Every Member, save the President and the Vice-President, has the right to leave the office at any time by providing a letter of resignation to the President or, in the President's absence, to the Vice-President. He will promptly submit it for acceptance to the State Government or to an officer authorised by it in this regard, and he will continue to serve in that position until the resignation is accepted. Normally, any resignation would be accepted.
7. The President or Vice-President, if appropriate, shall immediately inform the State Government of any vacancy in the Village council, irrespective of the circumstances. The position in question has to be declared vacant by the State Government.

8. If the position of President becomes vacant for any reason, the State Government must take immediate action to fill the position. The Vice-President will be responsible for executing the President's duties in the meantime. Members of the Village Councils, including the President and Vice-President, are entitled to the remuneration and benefits that the State Government may from time to time determine.
9. In accordance with section 21 of the Indian Penal Code, a Village Council's President, Vice-President, member, and Secretary are considered to be public servants.
10. If the President or Vice-President of a Village Council, as the case may be, has lost the support of the majority of members but refuses to tender resignation or is too inefficient or corrupt to carry on the village administration or acting in a manner that is detrimental to the interests of the State, the Government may remove them.
11. The officer designated by the State Government shall call a meeting of Village Council to elect a new President if the President fails to win the confidence of the majority of the council members and if the State Government receives a report in writing to that extent. The State Government must receive a copy of the notice that was delivered by the officer the State Government appointed, which must include the meeting's date, time, and location. Any officials chosen by the State Government will preside over this gathering. The State Government has to obtain the report on the new President's election as promptly as possible.
12. The same procedure outlined in sub-section (11) of section 7 must be implemented if a majority of members request a reorganization of the Village Council's executive body and if the State Government received such a report in writing.

Appendix – II

Issues on Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP)

- 1) Insufficient involvement of individuals in the planning process and Gram Sabha.
- 2) Excessive focus on investing in infrastructure.
- 3) Insufficient provision of public services.
- 4) Broadening the range of Own Source Revenue.
- 5) Enhanced involvement of PRIs in developing concerns.
- 6) Issues in enabling Panchayats with digital technology.
- 7) Integration of funding, plans, and efforts.
- 8) Seeking to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of governmental spending.
- 9) Establishing and managing a comprehensive physical and financial database in General Practitioner (GP) settings.
- 10) The necessity of combining spatial and sectoral planning.
- 11) Obtaining human resources and technical assistance for planning.
- 12) The necessity for improved institutional capabilities of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and the competence of elected representatives (ERs) and officials.
- 13) The necessity for cohesive strategies at the block and district levels.
- 14) Implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at a local level.
- 15) Tackling climate change and other environmental concerns.
- 16) Significance of natural resource management.
- 17) Focus on social development.
- 18) Increased opportunities for utilizing social capital through the convergence of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) and Self-Help Groups (SHGs).
- 19) Incorporating gender, child concerns, the elderly, and Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).
- 20) Malnutrition prevention.

Appendix – III

Demands under Village Poverty Reduction Plan (VPRP)

- a) Social inclusion: It involves strategy to integrate disadvantaged individuals/households into Self-Help Groups (SHGs) as part of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM).
- b) Entitlement: Include the request for several programs such as MGNREGS, PMAY, Ujjwala, Ration card, and so on.
- c) Livelihoods: There is a special need to improve people's means of making a living by focusing on activities such as agriculture, animal husbandry, production and service businesses, as well as providing training for skilled employment.
- d) Progressive infrastructure: Demand for essential public goods and services which include the need for fundamental infrastructure, the improvement of existing infrastructure, and the enhancement of service delivery.
- e) Resource Development: It stressed on the need for safeguarding and enhancing natural resources such as land, water, forests, and other locally accessible resources.
- f) Social Development: Plans are designed to tackle particular social development concerns of a community within the low-cost, no-cost segment of the GPDP.

Appendix – IV

Interview Question to Members of Village Council/Gram Panchayat

Name of the Village : _____
Name of respondent : _____
Contact number : _____
Date of interview : _____

1. Number of Village Council / Gram Panchayat members in your village? / आपके गाँव में ग्राम पंचायत सदस्यों की संख्या कितनी है?
2. Matters related to Gram Sabha / ग्राम सभा से संबंधित मामले
 - a. Do you think that people in your village regarded Gram Sabha as an important meeting? / क्या आपको लगता है कि आपके गांव के लोग ग्राम सभा को एक महत्वपूर्ण बैठक मानते हैं?
 - b. Do they attend well? If yes, approximate percentage of Gram Sabha attendees? / क्या वे अच्छी तरह से उपस्थित होते हैं? यदि हाँ, तो ग्राम सभा में उपस्थित लोगों का अनुमानित प्रतिशत क्या है?
 - c. Did the people raise their voice in the Gram Sabha openly or are they unwilling to speak? / क्या लोगों ने ग्राम सभा में खुलकर अपनी आवाज उठाई या वे बोलने को तैयार नहीं हैं?
3. Now let us discuss about the steps taken by your Village Council / Gram Panchayat for development during the year 2010-2024: / अब आइए वर्ष **2010-2024** के दौरान आपके गांव की ग्राम पंचायत द्वारा विकास के लिए उठाए गए कदमों के बारे में चर्चा करें:
 - a. Community development / सामुदायिक विकास
 - b. Education / शिक्षा
 - c. Water and Sanitation (SBM-G/IHHLs/SLWM) / पानी और सफाई व्यवस्था
 - d. Environment protection and conservation / पर्यावरण सुरक्षा और संरक्षण

- e. Youth Affairs / युवाओं के लिए रोजगार
 - f. Economically poor section of society (PMAY-G) / आर्थिक रूप से कमजोर वर्ग
 - g. Drugs abuse prevention / नशीली दवाओं के दुरुपयोग की रोकथाम
4. Works under MGNREGS scheme / मनरेगा योजना के तहत कार्य
 5. Works under Gram Panchayat Fund (only in Gram Panchayat) / ग्राम पंचायत निधि के अंतर्गत कार्य
 6. Works under MLA-LAD (Member of Legislative Assembly – Local Area Development) Fund / विधानसभा सदस्य – स्थानीय क्षेत्र विकास निधि के अंतर्गत कार्य
 7. What is your vision for your village development in the coming 5 years? / आगामी 5 वर्षों में अपने गांव के विकास के लिए आपका क्या दृष्टिकोण है?
 8. What is the party affiliation of those that in power over the past ten year? / पिछले दस वर्षों में सत्ता में रहने वालों की पार्टी संबद्धता क्या है?
 9. ICT in Local Self-Government / स्थानीय स्वशासन में आईसीटी
 - a) What is your knowledge on e-Governance? / ई-गवर्नेंस पर आपका क्या ज्ञान है?
 - b) How do LSG interacted with Local Administration Department and Rural Development Block (in Mizoram) and Panchayati Raj Department (in Arunachal Pradesh)? / एलएसजी अरुणाचल प्रदेश में पंचायती राज विभाग के साथ कैसे बातचीत करता है?
 - c) What were the communication platform in which you share information among other members? / वह कौन सा संचार मंच था जिसमें आप अन्य सदस्यों के बीच जानकारी साझा करते हैं?
 - d) How do you share information to the general public? / आप आम जनता के साथ जानकारी कैसे साझा करते हैं?

Appendix – V

Common Interview Question to Beneficiaries

Name : _____

VILLAGE : _____

| Please tick your affiliation | | | | | |
|------------------------------|--|----------------|--|-------------------|--|
| Civil Society | | School Teacher | | Prominent Citizen | |
| | | | | Student | |

ADMINISTRATION (प्रशासन)

1. Do you think your Village Council / Gram Panchayat is doing well in terms of village administration? If Yes or No, please state your reasons.

क्या आपको लगता है कि आपके गांव की ग्राम पंचायत ग्राम प्रशासन के मामले में अच्छा काम कर रही है? हाँ या नहीं, कृपया अपने कारण बताएं

2. Do you think your Village Council / Gram Panchayat has brought your village to new heights, or stayed in a status quo?

क्या आपको लगता है कि आपके गांव की ग्राम पंचायत ने आपके गांव को नई ऊंचाइयों पर पहुंचाया है या फिर यथास्थिति बनाए रखी है?

3. Do you think your Village Council / Gram Panchayat has establish a government for every citizen? Or are they establishing a government for party workers and few relatives?

क्या आपको लगता है कि आपके गांव की ग्राम पंचायत ने हर नागरिक के लिए सरकार बनाई है? या फिर वे पार्टी कार्यकर्ताओं और कुछ रिश्तेदारों के लिए सरकार बना रहे हैं?

TRANSPARENCY (पारदर्शिता)

4. Do you think your Village Council / Gram Panchayat has establish a transparent government during 2010-2024? If Yes or No, please state your reasons.

क्या आपको लगता है कि आपके गांव की ग्राम पंचायत ने 2010-2024 के दौरान पारदर्शी सरकार स्थापित की है? यदि हाँ या नहीं, तो कृपया अपने कारण बताएं।

5. Is your Village Council / Gram Panchayat approachable for the general public? क्या आपकी ग्राम पंचायत आम जनता के लिए सुलभ है?
6. Do you think the Village Council / Gram Panchayat has taken into account the opinions and ideas of people during Gram Sabha meeting? क्या आपको लगता है कि ग्राम पंचायत ने ग्राम सभा की बैठक के दौरान लोगों की राय और विचारों को ध्यान में रखा है?
7. Do you think your Village Council / Gram Panchayat engaged in nepotism and partisanship? क्या आपको लगता है कि आपकी ग्राम पंचायत भाई-भतीजावाद और पक्षपात में लगी हुई है?
8. Do you think there is something your Village Council / Gram Panchayat has forbid to announce to the public which is important? क्या आपको लगता है कि आपके गांव की ग्राम पंचायत ने कोई ऐसी बात सार्वजनिक करने से मना किया है जो महत्वपूर्ण है?

TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT (विकास की ओर)

9. Are you satisfied with how the Village Council / Gram Panchayat worked for your village during 2010-2024?
क्या आप 2010-2024 के दौरान अपने गांव के लिए ग्राम पंचायत के काम से संतुष्ट हैं?
10. What are the areas where the Village Council / Gram Panchayat has to put focus on to help improve your village?
आपके गांव को बेहतर बनाने के लिए ग्राम पंचायत को किन क्षेत्रों पर ध्यान केंद्रित करना होगा?
11. Are you actively involved in the community development of your village?
क्या आप अपने गांव के सामुदायिक विकास में सक्रिय रूप से शामिल हैं?

COOPERATION (सहयोग)

12. As a school teacher, how is your cooperation with your Village Council / Gram Panchayat in terms of improving education in your village? (only for school teacher)
- एक स्कूल शिक्षक के रूप में, अपने गांव में शिक्षा में सुधार के लिए आप अपनी ग्राम पंचायत के साथ कैसा सहयोग करते हैं?
13. As a school teacher, are you satisfied with what the Village Council / Gram Panchayat contributed in education sector in your village during the year 2010 – 2020? (only for school teacher) एक स्कूल शिक्षक के रूप में, क्या आप वर्ष 2010 – 2020 के दौरान आपके गांव में शिक्षा क्षेत्र में ग्राम पंचायत के योगदान से संतुष्ट हैं?
14. As a member of civil society, how is your cooperation with your Village Council / Gram Panchayat in your village? (only for member of civil society)
- एक समाज के सदस्य के रूप में, आपके गांव में ग्राम पंचायत के साथ आपका सहयोग कैसा है?
15. What were the areas where you worked together with your Village Council / Gram Panchayat? (only for school teacher and member of civil society) /
- वे कौन से क्षेत्र थे जहां आपने अपनी ग्राम पंचायत के साथ मिलकर काम किया?
16. What do you think is important to build cooperation with Village Council / Gram Panchayat? आपके अनुसार ग्राम पंचायत के साथ सहयोग स्थापित करने के लिए क्या महत्वपूर्ण है?

Appendix – VI

(Photo Gallery) Interview Respondents in Mizoram



Ramlaitui



Nisapui



Kawnpui



Mualkawi



Haulawng



Mualkawi (VC House)

Appendix – VII

(Photo Gallery) Interview Respondents in Arunachal Pradesh



Sido



Rupa



Jigaon



Korang



Rayo



Borum

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Journal Publications

1. Samuel Lalruatfela & Prof. K.V. Reddy. (2022). Role of Students' Organisation in Border Disputes: The Implication of Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) in Assam-Mizoram Border. *Contemporary Social Scientist. (A National Refereed Journal – UGC Approved)*.
2. Samuel Lalruatfela, Fiona Lalmalsawmi, Esther Lalruatpuii, Prof. K. V. Reddy, H. Lalzuithangi, & Prof. R.K. Ngurtinkhuma. (2022). Convergence of Local Governance Administration (Village Council) with Self-Help Group (SHG) under Mizoram State Rural Livelihood Mission. . *Contemporary Social Scientist. (A National Refereed Journal – UGC Approved)*. 91–101.
3. Samuel Lalruatfela & Prof. K.V. Reddy. (2023). African Swine Fever in Aizawl: The Detrimental Consequence on Livestock Market. *Mizoram University Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences (A Refereed Bi-Annual Journal)*.
4. Samuel Lalruatfela & Prof. K.V. Reddy. (2023). Role of Local Actors in enhancing 'Green Development' as part of G20 Global Agenda. *Contemporary Social Scientist. (A National Refereed Journal – UGC Approved)*.
5. Dr. Lalhruaitluangi Sailo, Samuel Lalruatfela & Prof. K.V. Reddy. (2024). Governance and Development in Mizoram: A Study of Challenges and Prospects. *International Journal of Current Research*.
6. Samuel Lalruatfela & Prof. K.V. Reddy. (2024). Grassroots Democracy in Post-Colonial Mizoram: An Evolutionary Overview. *International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research*.
7. Samuel Lalruatfela & Prof. K.V. Reddy. (2024). A Vision for Cosmopolitan Education Based on 'Optimal Learning Environments' and Supports through National Education Policy 2020. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*.
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1. Samuel Lalruatfela & Prof. K.V. Reddy. (2019). The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in Mizoram. *Governance and Development in Northeast India: A Mizoram Reader*. (pp. 237-243). Kandena Publications, Hyderabad
2. Samuel Lalruatfela & Prof. K.V. Reddy. (2023). National Education Policy 2020: A Vision for Cosmopolitan Education Based on ‘Optimal Learning Environments’ and Supports. In Pravakar Rath, Amit Kumar, & Manendra Kumar Singh (Eds.), *National Education Policy 2020: A Forward-Looking Vision for LIS Education and Services* (pp. 177-183). Today and Tomorrow’s Printers and Publishers.

Papers presented in International and National Conference/ Seminar

1. Samuel Lalruatfela. *Right Wing Politics on the Rise in Mizoram*. Presented in the National Seminar on ‘Issues and Trends in Mizoram Legislative Assembly Elections, 2018’ organized by Mizoram Political Science Association (MIPSA) and ICFAI University, Mizoram on 22nd February, 2019.
2. Samuel Lalruatfela. *Governance and Development in Mizoram: Working of MGNREGS*. Presented in the National Seminar on ‘Governance and Development in Mizoram: Role of Multiple Stakeholders and Public Policies’ organized by Department of Political Science, Mizoram University, Mizoram during 9th -10th May, 2019.
3. Samuel Lalruatfela. *Civil Society and Governance in Mizoram: The Implication of Mizo Zirlai Pawl in Border Issues*. Presented in the National Seminar on ‘Good Governance in Practice in the 21st Century’ organized by Department of Public Administration, Pachhunga University College, Mizoram on 12th February, 2020.

4. Samuel Lalruatfela. *Role of Students' Organisation in Border Disputes: The Implication of Mizo zirlai Pawl (MZP) in Assam – Mizoram Border*. Presented in the National Seminar on 'Interrogating the Inter-State Border Disputes in Contemporary North-East India' organized by Sankardev College, Shillong, Meghalaya during 24th – 25th February, 2022.
5. Samuel Lalruatfela. *Convergence of Local Governance Administration (VC) with SHG under Mizoram State Rural Livelihood Mission*. Presented in the National Seminar on 'Local Governance & Management in Northeast India' organized by Department of Management, Mizoram University, Mizoram during 26th – 27th May, 2022.
6. Samuel Lalruatfela. *National Education Policy 2020: A Vision for Cosmopolitan Education Based on 'Optimal Learning Environments' and Supports*. Presented in the National Seminar on "National Education Policy 2020: A Forward-Looking Vision for LIS Education and Services" organized by Department of Library and Information Science, Mizoram University during 1st – 3rd March, 2023.
7. Samuel Lalruatfela. *African Swine Fever and its Undesirable Consequence on Livestock Market in Aizawl*. Presented in the National Seminar on "Agriculture and Livestock Farming in NE India: A Climate Resilient Approach" organized by ICFAI University Mizoram, Durtlang North, Aizawl during 21st – 22nd March, 2023.
8. Samuel Lalruatfela. *ICT Services in Local Self-Governance: A Study on 'Digitalisation' of Village Council Administration*. Presented in the National Seminar on "Revamping Libraries and Librarianship in Digital Environment" organized by Central Library, Mizoram University during 11th – 12th May, 2023.
9. Samuel Lalruatfela & Esther Lalruatpuii. *Liquor Policy and its Repercussions on Tourism Development in Mizoram*. Presented in the International Conference on Redefining Tourism Through G20's Key Priority Areas (KPAs) organized by the Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Mizoram University, Aizawl during 18th & 19th May, 2023.

10. Samuel Lalruatfela. *Role of Local actors in Enhancing 'Green Development' as part of G20 Global Agenda*. Presented in the National Seminar on “India and G20: Setting A Global Agenda” organized by Department of Political Science, Mizoram University during 8th – 9th June, 2023.
11. Samuel Lalruatfela. *Grassroots Democracy in Post-Colonial Mizoram: An Overview*. Presented in the 1st Annual Conference on Social Sciences in the Contemporary World: The Way Forward organized by School of Social Sciences, Mizoram University during 8th – 10th November, 2023.
12. Samuel Lalruatfela. *Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) in India*. Presented in the State-Level Seminar on “Elections and Electoral Politics in Mizoram” organized by Department of Political Science, Govt. J. Buana College & District Election Officer, Lunglei District on 26th March, 2024.

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ABSTRACT
LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS IN RURAL AREAS:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MIZORAM AND
ARUNACHAL PRADESH

AN ABSTRACT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
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OCTOBER 2024

**LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS IN RURAL AREAS: A COMPARATIVE
STUDY OF MIZORAM AND ARUNACHAL PRADESH**

BY

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Department of Political Science

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**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in Political Science of
Mizoram University, Aizawl**

1. Introduction

India is a democratic country wherein the power of administration is in the hands of people through elected representatives at various levels of government. With decentralization of administration, a system of decentralisation is also followed in planning and implementation of social and economic development. Democratic decentralisation became a necessity in order to ensure a capable and efficient economical administration. It allows a better penetration of the policies and programmes that had to be implemented from the central government, by handing over certain tasks to a local level administrator.¹ A system of Community Development Programme and the Panchayati Raj Institutions were important steps to foster rural economy in India.² India with its vast population and diversity is quite successful in bringing about a democratic government.

Local administration reflected the level of public awareness on politics, and gave an insight into the degree of political behaviour of the region. People involve more in politics when the need arose, or when the domestic activities are interlinked with schemes and programmes from the authorities.³ The local community possesses its version of legal and customary rights, along with established organisations that would help in rendering its own affairs. The significance of local self-government in contemporary states lies in its ability to alleviate the burden on state and national governments. Local self-governance is vital for the prosperity of democracy. These institutions educate the population on how to effectively rule. Furthermore, democracy is effectively manifested through local self-governance.

De Tocqueville observes that the local assemblies of citizens were the cornerstone of Free states.⁴ 'Local assemblies' referred to an organised group of individuals in a locality, which aimed at nurturing efficacy in local administration.

¹ Goel, S. L., & Rajneesh, S. (2009). *Panchayati Raj in India: Theory and Practice*. Deep & Deep Publications Pvt. Ltd.

² Sinha, H. (2012). *Bureaucracy and Rural Development in Mizoram*. Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd.

³ Dutil, P. (2021). What Do People Want from Politics? Rediscovering and Repurposing the "Maslow Hierarchy" to Teach Political Needs. *Journal of Political Science Education*. 18(1).

⁴ Gannett, R. T. (2009). Tocqueville and Local Government: Distinguishing Democracy's Second Track. *The Review of Politics*. 67(4).

Town meetings are akin to primary schools in their role in promoting liberty. They make freedom accessible to the people and educate individuals on how to utilize and appreciate it.

Local administration in India is generally called the local self-government. India has the Panchayati Raj system as per the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992, and Village Council which function under the Block administration under the Local Administration Department in the state of Mizoram; and Municipality as per the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992.⁵ Panchayati Raj systems and Village Council are meant for administration of rural areas whereas Municipality is meant for the administration of town local units.

The term 'local self-government' is synonymous with grass-root democracy and democratic decentralisation. All these terms denote a governance system that was applied to a specific locality pertaining to its internal administration and affairs.

Local Self-Government is basically the third tier of government after the State Government and the Central Government. It is the level in which village or local administration is exercised, where the citizens of a country enjoy their freedom of speech, freedom of thoughts and their preferential expressions.⁶ The idea of democracy is justified with local administrative body ushering in the deliberations of local population.

An important feature of local self-government is that it operated only in a well-defined area in which demarcation for its jurisdiction had been fixed by the state government.⁷ With the exception of specific territory it governs, such as a city, town, or village, a single local government lacks the power to oversee any other locations within a state. The elected members from the local community possessed the power of authority.

⁵ Lallianchhunga. (2018). A Comparative Study of Village Councils in Mizoram and Panchayati Raj Institutions: A Critical Appraisal. *Senhri Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*. Vol 3(2).

⁶ Das, B. (2021). Role of Panchayati Raj System in Transforming Rural India. *Webology*. 18(6).

⁷ *Ibid*.

Local Self-Governments in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh

Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh are two of the twenty-eight states in India. The two states are situated in the North East region of India, and are included among the eight states which are generally called the 'North East' by mainstream media and writings. North East India has territorial boundaries with foreign countries, over ninety-eight per cent of its border was shared with foreign countries like China, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh. The rest with only two per cent of its boundary was shared with mainland India. The entire North East is predominantly a rural area. Over 84 per cent of people live in rural areas. But in the case of Mizoram, almost half the population lived in towns. Of the total 635 tribal groups in India, over 200 of these groups reside and inhabit in North East alone.⁸ The region is known as 'ethnic cauldron'. Because, within the North East, diverse and distinctive social, cultural and ethnically different people lived.

Village Councils in Mizoram

Mizoram is one of the few states in the country where Village Council as a form of local self-government had been an accepted policy for a long time.⁹ In most of the states of India, the Panchayati Raj Institutions served as agents of democratic decentralisation. As per the Article 243 (M) of the Constitution, state of Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sixth Schedule Areas and hill areas of Manipur are exempted from application of Part IX of the Constitution.¹⁰

After India got independence, Lushai Hills was upgraded to Lushai Hills District Council. This District Council then passed an Act for the establishment of local government system which came to be known as the Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act, 1953.¹¹ However, this Act was not simultaneously implemented due to the reign of chiefs not yet over across Lushai villages. This Lushai Hills District Council again made an Act in 1954, which was named, the

⁸ Datta, P. K. & Sen, P. (2020). Governance in the Sixth Schedule Areas in India's North-East: Context, Content and Challenges. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*. Vol. 66(2).

⁹ Prasad, R. N. (1991). Administration of Justice in Mizoram. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*. 37(1).

¹⁰ Press Information Bureau (2011). *Three Tier Panchayati Raj System*. (2011). Government of India.

¹¹ Nunthara, C. (1996). *Mizoram: Society and Polity*. Indus Publishing.

Assam Lushai Hills District (Acquisition of Chiefs' Rights) Act, 1954, which led to the dethronation of 259 Lusei chiefs and 50 Pawi-Lakher chiefs. Chieftainship in Mizoram was then abolished on 14th April, 1956.¹²

The Village Council Act of 1954, which was passed by the then Lushai Hills District Council has had some constitutional features with reference to paragraph 3, Sub.-para (1), Clauses (e) & (f) of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India.¹³ Mizoram adopted village council system as a form of local self-government and has been in function till date. Mizoram was exempted from the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 that gave constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj Institutions to establish Gram Panchayat at village-level administration. Because Mizoram already had a local self-government institution called Village Council.

Gram Panchayats in Arunachal Pradesh

The Panchayati Raj institution was first launched in Arunachal Pradesh in 1969. It was launched with an intention to foster community development programme inside Arunachal Pradesh like the rest of states. But the introduction of Panchayati Raj system in Arunachal Pradesh had another objective, i.e., “to establish uniform political practice throughout the state”¹⁴ in the erstwhile North Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA) with PRI as the instrument.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 has some implications on the local self-government of Arunachal Pradesh. In order to meet the requirement of the Act, the government of Arunachal Pradesh issued an ordinance called ‘The Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Ordinance, 1994’ that replaced the NEFA Panchayati Raj Regulation of 1967.¹⁵ The Ordinances’ main impact was introduction of elections at regular intervals in all levels of Panchayat. The State level Finance, Election Commissions and reservation of seats for women were also added. Thus, the

¹² Lallianchhunga. (2018). A Comparative Study of Village Councils in Mizoram and Panchayati Raj Institutions: A Critical Appraisal. *Senhri Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*. Vol 3(2).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Gyati, A. (2011). Panchayat Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh: A Historical Perspective. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 72(4).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 refined and improved the PRIs in Arunachal Pradesh.

2. Review of Literature

Different books and Journals related to the study were reviewed as part of review of literature. Books about Panchayati Raj Institution were found in huge number, while books relating to a specific region, namely Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh are hardly available. Documents pertaining to village council in Mizoram were even rare. In total, 11 books and 19 journal articles were reviewed as part of review of literature. These books and journals provided important insights in to the matter of subject.

3. Research Gap

All books and journal articles reviewed in this study had their specific importance and relevance, and also had contributed to the understanding of local self-government institution in India in general and North-East India in particular. Although there were plenty of literatures about the system of PRI and its implications, there was hardly any specific book or journal article that dealt with PRI in Arunachal Pradesh. And, literature about the Village Council system in Mizoram was even more insufficient, and literally rare.

The unavailability of literatures in this regard constitutes as a research gap that led the scholar to have this comprehensive research. Furthermore, systematic comparative analysis of local self-government bodies – Village Council system and Panchayati Raj system between Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh had not been made. Therefore, the study is a new area in the field of local self-government study in comparison bwtween Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

4. Statement of the Problem

India is a vast country with diverse demographic features along with different people, language, religion, ethnicity, social relations and other features. Due to its huge diversity, there has always been a problem of ensuring effective and widespread

participation of citizens in public affairs. There is a lack of extensive devolution of functions, functionaries and funds, and because of this most local self-government operated poor.

The progress and developments India observed over the past few years have not been significantly bringing the same level of nourishment for the North Eastern states, particularly Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. Achievement in industrialization and urbanization, though considerable, has not significantly affected the agricultural and rural character of North Eastern society. Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, having shared almost the same similarities in terms of state building and constitutional development, also suffered from inadequacy of development.

In order to bring about a positive change in the democratic structure and functioning of Indian political system, strengthening the local self-government was a necessity. And the study of that particular subject constituted an important centre of attention. The urban as well as the rural population contributes to the economy of India.

For this research, the scholar studied the Local Self-Government system in North East India to understand their structure, role and functions. A comparative study analysing the functions, role, as well as similarities and differences between Village Councils in Mizoram and Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh have been made.

5. Objectives of the Study

1. To study the nature and scope of local self-government in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.
2. To examine the powers and functions of both the rural institutions in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.
3. To analyse the working of Village Councils in Mizoram and Gram Panchayats in Arunachal Pradesh.
4. To explore the issues and challenges before the Local Self-Government in the two states.

5. To examine the emerging trends in Local Self-Government in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

6. Research Questions

1. What is the nature and scope of Local Self-Government in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh?
2. How are the powers and functions of these Local Self-Governments different in both the states?
3. What are the main activities of Village Council and Gram Panchayat in the two states?
4. What are the main challenges before the Local Self-Government in Mizoram and Gram Panchayat in Arunachal Pradesh?
5. What are the emerging trends in Local Self-Government in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh?

7. Research Methodology

The research methodology involved in this study was both qualitative and quantitative. A comparative analysis was made between two local self-government institutions, viz., Village Council and Gram Panchayat in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. The needed resources and data were gathered through the use of primary and secondary sources.

The universe of this research is not confined only to a single state, but involves inter-state study that covered the local self-government systems in North East India. An in-depth study was carried out in two states, namely Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram, to understand the local self-government that performed grass-root democracy functions. This study was carried out by tracing the local self-government from the state government department, to the district administration, to the rural block development division, and then finally at the rural units of administration. For this, unstructured interviews were carried out to collect first-hand information from the competent authorities. Besides interviewing, other forms of data collection of primary source include official government gazettes, annual

reports, and departmental files. Secondary source data require literatures generated from books, journal articles, articles from newspapers and magazines.

The total number of villages in Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram is 5616 and 853 respectively. Thus the ‘universe’ or the ‘population’ of the study is 5616 in Arunachal Pradesh and 853 in Mizoram. As the universe of the study is huge in number, the field of inquiry is also similarly large, the only viable option is to adopt sampling technique in order to select some items from a finite universe.

For sample design, a representative basis was followed in which non-probability sampling technique was adopted, villages were selected with convenience sampling. Thus, the entire region of Mizoram was divided into - North, South, East, West and Central. Two (2) villages from each of these five (5) different regions, namely North, South, East, West and Central were selected in order to represent the entire state of Mizoram. And then the number of villages studied in Mizoram was $2 \times 5 = 10$. The same pattern was followed in the case of Arunachal Pradesh. Thus, the number of villages studied for this research is $10+10 = 20$ villages in total.

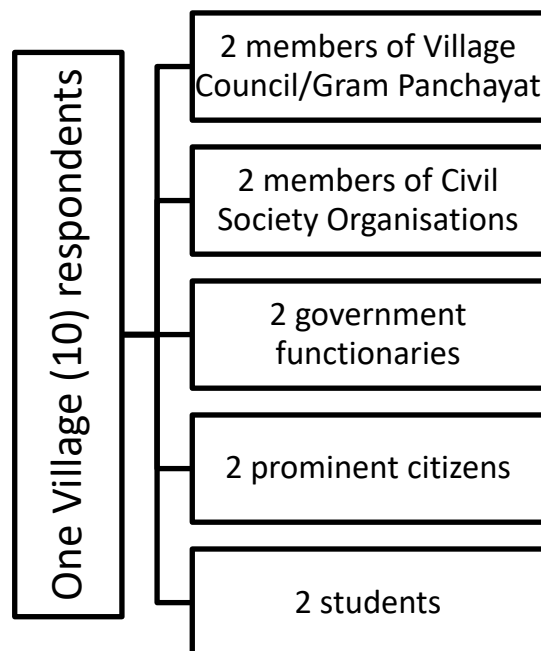
Table : Selection of villages in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

| Sl. No. | Villages in Mizoram (with District) | | Sl. No. | Villages in Arunachal Pradesh (with District) | |
|---------|-------------------------------------|----------|---------|---|-----------------|
| 1. | Nisapui | Kolasib | 1. | Bene | West Siang |
| 2. | Kawnpui VC-3 | | 2. | Darka | |
| 3. | Mualkawi | Champhai | 3. | Korang | East Siang |
| 4. | Melbuk | | 4. | Sido | |
| 5. | Chungtlang | Mamit | 5. | Rupa | West Kameng |
| 6. | West Lungdar | | 6. | Jigaon | |
| 7. | Ramlaitui | Lunglei | 7. | Borum | Papum Pare |
| 8. | Haulawng | | 8. | Rayo | |
| 9. | Seling | Aizawl | 9. | Lempia West | Lower Subansiri |
| 10. | Thingsul-Tlangnuam | | 10. | Tajang | |

Source: Primary data from field work.

All important stakeholders of the Local Self-Governments in rural areas of both the states were approached. For data collection method, an unstructured interview was carried out, as there may be a need for flexibility in the approach of questioning an informant. In each of the villages, interview respondents were selected as - two political representatives (members of Village Council or Gram Panchayat), two government functionaries, and two members of civil society organizations, two prominent citizens and two students. Thus, the number of interview respondents in a single village was 10.

Figure : Selection of interview respondents in a village..



Source: Primary data from field work.

Therefore, the total number of interview respondents in Mizoram were 10 (villages) x 10 (respondents) = 100. And also, the total number of interview respondents in Arunachal Pradesh were also 10 x 10 = 100. Hence, 200 interview respondents from both the states were approached in total, 100 respondents from Mizoram, and another 100 respondents from Arunachal Pradesh.

Data Analysis

Data gathered from secondary sources were apparently analysed using descriptive analysis. On the other hand, primary data from 20 villages, and interview respondents' answers were analysed with (i) descriptive analysis – to provide descriptive connotation from data, and (ii) quantitative analysis – to establish set of information by displaying certain quantitative data with tables and graphical figures using Microsoft Excel. All quantitative data displayed in tables and figures were also followed by description.

8. Scope of the Study

The study covers two states of North East India, namely Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. The Local Self-Governments in both states were studied and made a comparison between them. The study mostly covered the administration, development processes undertaken, local self-government link with civil society organisations in villages and, peoples' participation. The study covered 20 villages in total, both in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. The time frame for the study is 2010 – 2020, so the performances of both LSG for a period of ten years were studied.

9. Chapterization

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

The first chapter covers introductory words of the research, the origin, meaning and definitions of the research topic. Besides, it also comprised of the review of literature containing books and journals; statement of the problem; objectives of the research; research questions; research methodology; scope of the study and the chapterization of the research. Review of literature reflected a comprehensive dimension of local self-government in India.

CHAPTER 2: Local Self-Government in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

The second chapter deals with the nature and scope of the local bodies in both Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. This chapter traces the theoretical foundation of Panchayati Raj in India by drawing ideas from Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru,

and BR Ambedkar. This chapter highlighted how local self-government was an institution of decentralization by looking deep into their role in grassroots administration in rural India. This chapter also encompasses decentralization in village council and in Panchayati Raj institution; to present a comprehensible nature of decentralization in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1954 and Arunachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1997 were thoroughly studied. Qualification, election procedure, tenure of the local self-government body, tenure of membership and executive composition of each of these local bodies were also studied. This chapter also identify the research area where primary data were collected, in addition to the number of village council or gram panchayat members in each village. Political party affiliation of members of village council or gram panchayat was also highlighted in this chapter.

CHAPTER 3: Powers and Functions of Village Council in Mizoram and Gram Panchayat in Arunachal Pradesh.

Third chapter dealt with the powers enjoyed by the two local rural bodies, the decision-making powers within their respective area of confinement, and also the executive functions that had been played. Rural local self-government bodies were entrusted to perform 29 essential sectors consisted of variety of task such as health, education, housing schemes, poverty eradication, and encouragement and promotion of small-scale production industries in villages, among many. The chapter envisaged powers and functions of village council in Mizoram, the powers of gram sabha under village council, and the procedure of village council meeting. It also provided the responsibility of village council president, vice president and secretary. The powers and functions of Panchayati Raj institution was also highlighted in this chapter. It stated that Panchayati Raj institution was divided into three layers – Gram Panchayat, which operated at the village level, Anchal Samiti, operated at block level, and Zilla Parishad that operated at district level. The Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) is a comprehensive strategy devised by Gram Panchayats across India to promote social justice and economic development in their respective areas. These plans are formed via the active involvement of all stakeholders,

resulting in a logical plan that was tailored to the needs and financial capabilities of people.

CHAPTER 4: Working of Village Councils of Mizoram and Gram Panchayat in Arunachal Pradesh.

Chapter four highlight the major works of Village Councils of Mizoram and Gram Panchayat in Arunachal Pradesh by looking deep into their present status and achievements. The degree of community development rendered by LSGs of both states were analysed; in addition to their contribution in education, water management, sanitation, environmental protection, relieving rural poor, youth affairs, among others. Detailed analysis was made from LSG bodies in every 20 villages.

CHAPTER 5: Issues and Challenges of Local Self-Government in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

Chapter five dealt with major issues and challenges in local self-governments in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, in addition to certain emerging trends such as implication of ICT. Transparency and openness as an issue was thoroughly discussed, assessment of LSGs in both states on matter of transparency was also presented. This chapter also highlighted the issue of lack of autonomy in LSG entities and issue of low attendance in Gram Sabha. On the positive side, the implication of ICT in LSG was also discussed with certain primary information from 20 selected villages in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion.

The final chapter deals with the concluding part of the research, summary and findings of the research.

10. Major Findings of the Research

There were numerous findings of the research, both from secondary data and primary data. However, in order to fill research gap, findings from primary data after as a result of assessment across 20 villages in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh were regarded as major findings.

a) Membership strength of LSGs

From the field work data, the village that had the highest number of members of Local-Self Government was Rayo with 8 members, followed by Haulawng and Seling with 7 members; while Nisapui, Kawnpui VC-3, West Lungdar and Thingsul-Tlangnuam has 5 members each. Rupa, Borum and Lempia West have 4 members each; majority of the villages like Mualkawi, Melbuk, Chungtlang, Ramlaitui, Bene, Darka, Korang, Sido and Tajang has 3 members each. The village that had the least number of members was Jigaon with only 2 members.

The strength of membership did not ultimately determine the quality of development processes in the village, or the quality of administration. It is the quality of each individual in the village administration as well as the support of the people that helps in achieving development and fluency of administration. However, what was certain was that in villages where there were large numbers of Gram Panchayat or Village Council members, the decision-making outcome of those members tends to be going in line according to public consent.

b) Political Party Affiliation of LSG members

Political party affiliation of members of Village Council and Gram Panchayat differs tremendously between villages, between districts as well as between states. It was highly crucial for political parties to establish stronghold in rural areas where many voters were illiterate. Political parties, with their competent units in villages, seek for notable and prominent candidate to run for election in local bodies. Having a respectable and prominent individual for contestant was significant for political parties not only for the sake of winning in local self-government election, but also for wider spectrum of earning peoples' trust for their party. It was evident that independent candidates also had a chance of survival in local politics.

The Indian National Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party, which were the dominant political parties in Indian politics, remained the two belligerents in local politics in Arunachal Pradesh. While in the case of Mizoram, the Indian National Congress and Mizo National Front Party were the two major contenders, with a

healthy portion of ZNP and ZPM affiliated candidates also secure positions in local elections. Interestingly, the BJP with its huge waves in National politics since 2014 was unable to make any significant mark in the Local Self-Government bodies in Mizoram. It is important to note that independent candidates stand a chance to win election in Local Self-Government in Arunachal Pradesh, notably in Korang and Sido village from East Siang District.

c) Assessment of Gram Sabha in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh

It is observed that attendance in Gram Sabha in selected area in both Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh for a period 2010 to 2020 was unsatisfactory, especially when taking into consideration the importance and significance of the meeting.

In Mizoram, Chungtlang village topped the division with 66% of attendees, followed by Kawnpui VC-3 with 65%, which was closely followed by West Lungdar with 62%. Mualkawi has 55%, Melbuk with 52%, Seling has 32%, Ramlaitui and Thingsul-Tlangnuam has 26% of attendees; while Nisapui and Haulawng have the least number of attendees with 25% and 15% respectively.

In Arunachal Pradesh, Lempia West village had the highest percentage of attendees with 62%, closely followed by Sido with 54% and Tajang with 51%. Rupa has 43%, both Bene and Korang had 40% each, Jigaon had 37%, followed by Rayo with 33%; Darka and Borum have the least number of attendees with 30% and 26% respectively.

The cumulative average of attendees in Mizoram was 42.4%, while Arunachal has an average of 41.6% attendees. Thus, it was evident that rural communities hardly gave importance to Gram Sabha meeting. When interviewed with Village Council members and Gram Panchayat members on whether people were willing to speak out their opinion and ideas during Gram Sabha meeting, of course some people exerted their views and opinions; but the generality of members of Gram Sabha remain silent. As observed from selected villages, the percentage of

individuals who actually speak out their opinion ranges from 4% to 23% in Gram Sabha meeting, with the total number of job cards taken as 100.

It is also observed that people tended to give importance to Gram Sabha in various matters like planning of GPDP, which was held within 2nd October to 31st December in a year; discussions of matters related to MGNREGA wages – when to credit the amount to beneficiaries (job card holders).

d) LSG on Community Development

In terms of community development, major works of LSGs include - development and maintenance of agricultural link roads; Plain Cement Concrete (PCC) flooring inside villages; construction of community halls, retaining walls, flood protection walls, public toilets; construction of bazar sheds, among others.

Despite certain drawbacks and limitations faced by local self-government entities in promoting constructive change and development in villages, there has been significant progress. Nevertheless, several impediments such as corruption, delayed allocation of funds for projects, insufficient study on community need, and ineptitude of implementing organizations impede the progress of development. A significant number of members in the local self-government bodies in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh lack education and do not have access to modern technologies, as indicated by the responses from beneficiaries during interviews. This factor contributes to the slow pace of development, which contradicts the aspirations and expectations of the citizens.

e) LSG on Education

In terms of education, major works of LSGs include – maintenance and repair of school buildings in their area, organising career guidance and counselling for students, providing awareness to parents on importance of educating their children, commemorating students excelled in examinations. Other than this, LSGs also raised donation and hired school teachers to fill insufficiency in government schools in many villages. There were also instances where LSG in collaboration with donations from public establish schools as a result of the need of village. LSGs also acted as

instigator of demands by articulating necessity such as inadequacy of school teachers, or other school facilities to state government.

f) LSG on Water Management

One of LSGs primary concern was to provide water abundantly in villages. Under the JJM scheme, 13 villages in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh implemented the program. Most villages in Mizoram under the study area implemented JJM scheme to provide water connection inside their village because water scarcity was a concern in many villages in Mizoram, with the only exception to Thingsul-Tlangnuam village that has an established water connection prior to JJM. In villages in Arunachal Pradesh, only four villages, viz., Korang, Jigaon, Borum and Lempia West had implemented the JJM scheme; all other villages had an established reliable water connection and functional household tap connections (FHTC) prior to JJM. Furthermore, all villages in Arunachal Pradesh had abundance of water throughout all seasons.

The JJM scheme was implemented in the form of drawing water from rivers either by solar water pump or through gravity. The scheme also comes with installation of functional household tap connections (FHTC) in every household.

g) LSG on Sanitation

In terms of sanitation, most villages in Mizoram establish Water and Sanitation Committee (Watsan) for their respective villages. Watsan was usually chaired by President of Village Council; other members include members of Village Council and leaders of CSOs such as YMA and MHIP.

The Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin was implemented in all villages within the study area. Major works under SBM-G include construction of Individual Household Latrines (IHHL) to poor families, construction of Community Sanitary Complexes (CSC), and establishment of Solid & Liquid Waste Management (SLWM) centres for proper discharge of wastes. Other than activities under SBM-G, LSGs also contributed in construction of drainage channels within villages, maintenance of watershed inside villages, among others.

In terms of open defecation free (ODF) status, all villages in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh within the study area were declared as ODF villages, which was a huge step towards building a clean nation and national transformation on health and hygiene. In Mizoram, three villages like Mualkawi, Melbuk and Haulawng were declared as ODF, that signified that those villages had met the requirement of eliminating openly defecation at all times; while the rest seven villages were declared as ODF+, that signified that those villages had met the requirement of individual household latrines (IHHLs) to every houses of the village, as well as proper channel of liquid and solid waste disposal. In Arunachal Pradesh, three villages such as Sido, Borum and Rayo attained the status of ODF, while the rest of villages were all declared as ODF+.

h) LSG on Environmental Protection

Major activities of LSGs on environmental protection include prohibition of hunting of wild animals and birds, prohibition of possession of guns and traps. In most villages, fishing was permitted but without the use of poison, bombs, battery generator and other harmful substances that caused detrimental consequences on all marine life.

Most villages under the study area had protected land area called reserve forests. An encroachment or any form of damage to the existing flora and fauna was prohibited. Many villages banned cutting of forest trees for timber for commercial purposes, only local individuals with intention of utilising timber for domestic purpose were permitted by village LSGs. 12 villages out of 20 in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh adopted afforestation measures such as tree plantation program. Active involvement and cooperation of LSGs with CSOs and student bodies facilitated environmental protection and afforestation processes.

One of the biggest challenge before conservation of forest in Mizoram was the practice of Jhum cultivation. Many communities in villages still resort to this practice, costing hugely on trees and natural vegetation. The terrain of Mizoram was predominantly hilly where flat lands for paddy field were unavailable. Farmers have no option but to clear down vegetation every year. However, after the Central as well

as State Government introduced and implemented other forms of cultivation to eliminate jhum farming, many farmers resorted to modernised form of cultivation. In contrast, in the case of Arunachal Pradesh, most farmers practice stationary cultivation where the same plot of land was used permanently year after another.

i) LSG on Rural Poor

One of the most notable contributions of LSG on rendering help to rural poor was implementation of PMAY-G scheme. Under this scheme, many poor families from villages attained an incentive to build their own houses. During the study time period, i.e., 2010 – 2020, in Mizoram, the total number of sanctions made under the scheme was 114, with an average of 11.4 houses in each village in 10 selected villages. While in Arunachal Pradesh, the total number of sanctions made under the scheme was 98, with an average of 9.8 houses in each village in 10 selected villages.

In Mizoram, the total number of houses constructed under the scheme was 93, with an average of 9.3 houses in each village in 10 selected villages. While in Arunachal Pradesh, the total number of houses constructed under the scheme was 74, with an average of 7.4 houses in each village in 10 selected villages. Therefore, in 10 selected villages in both the states, the percentage of completion of houses from sanctions made was 81.57% in Mizoram and 75.51% in Arunachal Pradesh.

Other than on rural housing schemes, local self-government bodies in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh contributed hugely for poor rural families. Provision of financial assistance to students from low economic condition, provision of training for farmers and cattle herders, and provision of daily wage jobs were common, among others. In events of calamities and unforeseen events occur in villages, Village Council and Gram Panchayat as government body of the locality, performed rehabilitative actions and financial aid.

j) LSG on Youth Affairs

LSGs contribution towards youth affairs differ from village to village, and a difference in trend was evident between Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. In Mizoram, most activities were related to sports infrastructure and facilities

development, along with few skill developments training for youths. In the case of Arunachal Pradesh, most Gram Panchayat focused on providing skill development training to younger generation as part of youth affairs.

k) Status of Transparency and Openness in LSGs

Both in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, it was evident that transparency was a concern as well as an issue. Many LSGs (local self-governments) lacked transparency in their working, especially on development and financial related matters. In both the states in general, the leaders of local self-government bodies were approachable and accountable to the public.

Opinions and ideas of people were taken considerably in Gram Sabha in both Village Council and Gram Panchayat. But what the Village Council as well as Gram Panchayat leaders concerned more was the declining number of Gram Panchayat in the past few years. On the other hand, many stakeholders held that the Village Council or Gram Panchayat had compromised many decisions of the Gram Sabha in their own accords.

Nepotism and partisanship hugely affected distribution of resources or beneficiary schemes in both states. Family ties and inter-clan distinctions affected election to LSG bodies, and the party or leaders who took power in return also had profound manifestation of partisan manner. Accordingly, it was also evident from respondents' argument that there was certain significant information that LSG forbid to announce to public, but not to a great extent.

l) Low Attendance in Gram Sabha

Participation or attendance of people in Gram Sabha was unsatisfactory in almost every village. Villagers kept importance to Gram Sabha meeting on the basis of financial matters, or on the basis of government schemes directly related to them. Attendance was commendable on important occasions such as planning and formulation of GPDP, discussions on MGNREGS, among others. While on the other hand, lack of participation in Gram Sabha from the viewpoints of public can be attributed to many reasons. Reasons such as lack of awareness about meeting schedule, lack of trust in the local self-government entity, or inadequate interest in the matter of discussion. Many respondents also held that discussions in the Gram

Sabha had little influence on the policy outcome, because local leaders at times compromised Gram Sabha discussion outcomes in suitable to their own will.

In Mizoram, the percentage of Gram Sabha attendees was 42.4% per every job card holder in village. The percentage of Gram Sabha attendees who expressed their opinion and idea was only 10.2% taken from the total attendees of Gram Sabha. In Arunachal Pradesh, the percentage of Gram Sabha attendees was 41.6% per every job card holder in village. The percentage of Gram Sabha attendees who expressed their opinion and idea was only 9.7% taken from the total attendees of Gram Sabha. Both these trend showed negligence or ignorance to the importance of Gram Sabha as a manifestation of local democracy.

m) Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a Trend in Local Self-Government

Majority of Village Councils and Gram Panchayat members were aware of e-Governance and its related activities. In every LSG body, WhatsApp application was the most widely used form of communication between LSG and their counterparts in the upper tier of government (43.95%). It was closely followed by communication through official letter (35.16%), and phone call as a means of communication stood in the last with 20.87%.

Among LSG members in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, WhatsApp message was widely used for sharing information in the form of message or for sending documents. Usage of telephone call was also widespread among every members of LSG. LSG members also used official letter for inter-communication among members. Again, WhatsApp was the most commonly used means of information between LSG and general public (34.78%). It was closely followed by electronic microphone or public announcements (29.56%). Another form of communication between LSG and general public were official notification (24.34%) and phone call (11.30%).

Thus, it was apparent that introduction of ICT and associated digital platforms largely facilitate communication network of LSGs on various venues.

WhatsApp mobile application was enormously useful; it was compatible in all sorts of communication. However, official notification was also still relevant.

11. Conclusion

To sum up, village councils and gram panchayats as local self-government bodies in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh were established as administrative machinery in villages. They were assigned to perform administrative regulations entailed with the proper and equal distribution of resources, so that development could reach desired beneficiaries.

Gram Panchayat as local self-government body derived their 29 Subjects as functions from Schedule XI in the Constitution of India. However, Village Councils of Mizoram derived their functions from Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2014, with eleven main functions. The latter lacked constitutional provision in terms of mandated functions. However, Local Administration Department under the State Government assumed responsibility for the administration of Village Councils and its related issues. The Department's principal objective is to empower the Village Councils while providing them with a strong support structure in order to ensure their efficient operation. In Panchayati Raj system in Arunachal Pradesh, Panchayati Raj Department was responsible for administration of Gram Panchayats.

Major activities of local self-government bodies in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh were management and establishment of community assets, rural housing, and administration of MGNREGA scheme. Other areas of engagement include protection of environment and forests, maintenance of sanitation and hygiene, management of youth affairs, among others. These local self-government bodies also faced certain challenges such as transparency, accountability and efficacy in their functions. Lack of autonomy to address fundamental rural issues hamper the pace of development in their own accord. And the institution of Gram Sabha, which was envisaged to perform discussion platform for social mobility and economic development has observed low attendance in recent years.

As a recent trend, the utilisation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) had significant contribution in the activities of local self-government. By providing a platform for communication network in the functioning of local self-government bodies, ICT has the potential to revolutionised administration in villages.