

Chapter 2

Participatory Planning and Inclusive Governance

2.1 STRUCTURE OF GOVERNANCE IN MEGHALAYA

2.1.1 Representation in Parliament

The state of Meghalaya is represented in the Parliament of India by two members, one each from the Shillong and Tura parliamentary constituencies. If voter turnout in elections is an indicator of the involvement of members of the community in the political process, then Meghalaya has done well, with a significant increase in voter turnout in the last decade from 56.16 per cent in 1999 to 64.38 per cent in 2009. Further, women's turnout rate in the last two general elections far exceeded the turnout rate for men. In fact, the last general election sent in not only the state's first woman parliamentarian, but also perhaps the youngest ever woman parliamentarian in the history of Indian parliamentary democracy.

2.1.2 The Legislative Assembly

There are 60 members in the Meghalaya legislative assembly. The state has had 23 state governments since its inception in 1972 with a median life span of less than 18 months. The state government lasted its full term only after almost 20 years since the first constituent assembly in 1972. Only three governments have survived more than three years. In particular, the life span of governments in the last three assemblies has fallen drastically, with only a few surviving beyond six months. Given that a stable government and political institutions play an important role in the economic and social development process, this pattern in the state polity *may have adversely affected the cohesion and synergy in programme formulation and implementation that are critical for development*. It must however be noted that despite such volatility, turnout of voters has improved over the years, the difference in the turnout rate of genders has narrowed, and government transitions within a constituent assembly have been relatively peaceful. These attributes of the people have contributed greatly to peace, order, and relative calm in Meghalaya.

2.1.3 The Autonomous District Councils (ADCs)

The entire state of Meghalaya is covered under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. Accordingly, there are three Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in the state:

- (i) The Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC) which covers the districts of East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills, and Ri Bhoi;
- (ii) The Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC) which covers the districts of East Garo Hills, West Garo Hills, and South Garo Hills; and
- (iii) The Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council (JHADC) which covers the Jaintia Hills.

Table 2.1: Basic Statistics Relating to ADCs

District Council	Area (km)	Population (2001) (lakh)	Tribal Population (lakh)
Khasi Hills ADC	10,443	11.5	10.73
Garo Hills ADC	3,819	2.9	2.87
Jaintia Hills ADC	8,167	8.7	6.31
Total	22,429	23.1	19.91

Source: Report of the Expert Committee on Planning for the Sixth Schedule Areas, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, September 2006, New Delhi.

The district council system of governance was created over the traditional institutions of governance in the north-eastern states by the British. In independent India, these were formalised in 1952 to govern the tribal areas in the composite state of Assam. They are vested with executive, financial, legislative, and judicial powers and functions under their jurisdiction. Each ADC consists of up to 30 members who form the legislature. A Chief Executive Member (CEM) is elected by the council members from among themselves by majority voting. The CEM then appoints (by selection) other members to the executive committee, up to a maximum of 10 members. The state legislature could include a minister in charge of the welfare of the autonomous districts.

The ADCs are given authority over the traditional institutions in matters related with the appointment and succession of chiefs and headmen, and other similar matters. The Sixth Schedule allows for the creation of autonomous regions if there are different scheduled tribes in an autonomous district. It provides for the constitution of district and regional councils for each autonomous district and region (*Tables 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4*).

There is also a provision to establish district (and regional) funds that are to be credited with collections from land revenue, taxes on land and buildings, tolls on residents, other taxes, and shares of royalties from licenses or leases for the extraction

of minerals (see Financial Powers in Table 2.3). The ADCs may further make regulations to control money lending and trading by non-tribals. Estimated receipts and expenditure pertaining to autonomous districts are shown separately in the annual financial statement.

Table 2.2: Organisational Arrangements in ADCs in Meghalaya

	KHADC	GHADC	JHADC
Date of Constitution	1952	1952	1964
Details of the Council	30 members (20 elected, 1 nominated)	30 members (26 elected, 4 nominated)	19 members (16 elected, 3 nominated)
	Only tribals and non-tribals who are permanent residents (12 years +) are eligible to vote		
	The Chairman and Deputy Chairman are elected by the Council		
	Five years tenure		
Details of the Executive Committee	Six executive members		
	Council elects CEM		
	Other EC members appointed with the CEM's advice		
	Performs all executive functions		
Administrative Structure	A secretariat headed by a chief executive officer and staff, including for line departments		
Village Councils	Elected village councils do not exist as legislation for this has not yet been brought into force		

Source: *Ibid*

Table 2.3: Powers of ADCs in Meghalaya

Legislative	Power to make laws related to allotment and use of land, management of forests, establishment and management of villages and towns, regulation of shifting cultivation, inheritance of property, and social customs, with the Governor's assent
Judicial	Powers to constitute village courts, with appellate powers with the Council
	Appeals from council courts lie with the High Court
	Village chiefs/headmen appointed chairmen of village courts
	Subordinate/additional district courts — EC appoints, with Governor's approval
	District council courts — one or more judicial officer(s) is designated; judges are appointed by the EC, with Governor's approval
	In Garo Hills, village courts consist of the Lasker of the village + two members elected by the village council
	In Jaintia Hills, village courts are headed by the traditionally elected village chief/headman and have 2–6 members
Executive	Appointment and succession of chiefs/headmen
	Establish and manage primary schools, dispensaries, markets, cattle pounds, fisheries, roads, waterways and road transport, and forests (excluding reserve forests)
Financial	Prepare and pass budgets, assess and collect revenue, impose taxes on trades and markets, collect tolls, manage licenses, and lease/share in royalties collected by the state government

Source: *Ibid*

The ADCs can also undertake several functions that are mandated to *panchayati raj institutions* (PRIs) elsewhere in the country (see Executive Powers in Table 2.3).

Table 2.4: Functions of ADCs in Meghalaya

1	Appointment/ succession of chiefs/headmen	2	Construction/mana gement of primary schools (withdrawn by state government)	3	Management of land and forests (excluding reserve forests)	4	Control of money lending and trading by non-tribals
5	Marriage and divorce	6	Inheritance of property	7	Ponds	8	Ferries
9	Roads	10	Road transport and waterways	11	Markets	12	Social customs
13	Levying and collection of taxes						

Recent Initiatives

As mentioned earlier, the ADCs were created in 1952 to assist the composite state of Assam in administration and governance. In fact, in their creation, the role of the traditional tribal institutions was overlooked. After the creation of the state of Meghalaya, the rationale for the continuation of these ADCs is limited, particularly as they do not have organic link with the traditional institutions and do not have much of an oversight role. Even in enacting laws, the track records of the ADCs are not strong. Over the years, while the Khasi Hills ADC has enacted some laws, the record of the Garo Hills ADC has been poor even in this regard. Synergising local governance is possible only when the ADCs work in harmony with the traditional tribal institutions of governance, and acquire sufficient capability to function well and contribute to the development and welfare of people.

There have been some recent initiatives: (i) to strengthen existing traditional grassroots institutions so as to qualify as PRIs; and (ii) to endow and diversify the functions of town committees to bring them at par with municipalities (presumably as envisaged in the 74th Amendment to the Constitution relating to urban local bodies). Six town committees have been formed to deal with civic amenities, sanitation, waste management, and other civic services in Nongstoin, Mawkyrwat, Mawlai, Nongpoh, Sohiong, and Mairang. The committees were formed under the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District (Establishment of Town Committee) Act 1960. The purpose and functions of the town committees are similar to that of a municipality. However, meagre resources of

the council and the absence of funds with committees have rendered the latter dysfunctional.

The Khasi Hills Autonomous District (Allotment, Occupation or Use of Setting Apart of Land) Regulation Bill 2005 was passed by the Council and is awaiting the assent of the Governor. All schemes or projects implemented by the KHADC are participatory in nature and people-centric. These projects are mostly implemented by people (or the community), and are owned and maintained by them. To increase the financial capability of the KHADC, a bill has been prepared — the Khasi Hills Autonomous District (Constitution and Administration of Community Development Organisation) Bill, 2006 — which is also awaiting the assent of the Governor. There are plans to provide all *elakas* with workable, modern offices. Plans are also afoot to set-up District Council Courts in Ri-Bhoi and West Khasi Hills districts, in addition to the one presently in East Khasi Hills. Further, measures would be adopted to include all council courts within the present e-project/scheme for an efficient justice delivery system.

The website of KHADC enlists 51 Acts and Rules that have received the Governor's assent or approval.⁴ Of these, 18 pertain to rules and regulations, while the remaining 33 are acts of law. Of the 33 Acts, 23 pertain to the nomination, appointment, election, selection, succession, administration, defection, and so on of headmen/*sirdars/syiems* or to (some form of) compensation of council functionaries, and 10 Acts are related to economic and social issues. This indicates that the KHADC has made some progress in notifying rules apparently upholding the traditional institutions, a natural first step towards formalising and activating the village level governance structure. This could serve as a role model for the other two ADCs. A cause for concern, however, is that these Acts do not foster democratisation of grassroots institutions and thus inclusive governance. In particular, they make no moves to address the exclusion of women, youth, and non-tribals from the processes of election and selection in these areas.

⁴ The website www.khadc.nic.in update downloaded on 9 November 2010 shows a list of 55 such Acts, Regulations, Rules, and Bills. In the previous update downloaded on 3 November 2009, the 51st entry was titled, 'The KHAD (Electors from the Twenty Three Clans of Raid San Shnong of Myllem Syiemship) (First Amendment) Act, 2007.' However, the 51st entry in the website update of 1 November 2010 downloaded on 9 November 2010, is titled 'The KHAD (Appointment and Succession of Syiem, Deputy Syiem and Electors of Myriaw Syiemship) Act, 2007. All the new Acts (since the last download) however, pertain to nomination, appointment, election, selection, succession, administration, defection, etc. of headmen/*sirdars* /*syiems* or to (some form of) compensation of council functionaries.

2.1.4 Governance at the Local Level

2.1.4.1 The Traditional Institutions

Historically, the Khasis, Jaintias, and Garos have had well developed political systems of their own, with extended power and authority. The Jaintias and Khasis had a fairly organised three-tier system of governance under a *Syiem*, which was the highest level in the hierarchy. The Garos had a two-tier governance system.

The Garo hills were divided into a number of *akings*, corresponding to a village, under a *nokma*. The *laskar* headed a group of villages. The *nokma* regulated all aspects of life of the villagers under him, and discharged his functions with the consent of the joint assembly of village elders, organised into a village council or *dorbar*.

Headed by a *syiem*, the Jaintia system was divided into *elakas* (consisting of villages) under a *doloi* (second level). The next and lowest level of territorial/geographic entity was a village represented by a *wahehchnong* selected from amongst the male adults. Each of these three levels had councils or *dorbars*. Each village was usually organised along clan lines, with a *wahehchnong* concerned with basic administration and justice.

The traditional system of governance of the Khasis also functioned at three different levels. The highest level was the *Syiem*. The administrative, military, judicial, and religious functions vested in him were discharged in consultation with *dorbar myntri* (consisting of members of the principal clans) and the *hima dorbar* (which elected the *Syiem*). The lowest level was the village with its own assembly or *dorbar* headed by a *rangbahshnong*, who is elected by the adult male population in the village. The *rangbahshnong* was responsible for village administration according to the rules and regulations, as legislated by the village *dorbar*. A unique feature of the Khasi political system was the democratic process followed in decision-making in *dorbars*⁵.

Thus, well-developed traditional institutions of local government existed in the Khasi, Jaintia, and Garo hills even before colonisation. Traditional institutions may be functioning and strong even today, but all of them are not on an equal footing in terms of their control, influence, contribution to people's welfare, and recognition as modern political institutions. Elected village level institutions do not exist at present (or scarcely exist, so we do not have information on them) as legislation for them has not yet been brought into force. However, for the implementation of the Backward Regions Grant Fund (BRGF) and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), some

⁵ Noted by the Constitution Review Commission, as cited in the *Ramachandran Committee Report*, pp. 45

institutional mechanism has been established at the village level in the districts/areas covered under these schemes.

2.1.4.2 Institutional Arrangements for implementation of NREGA and BRGF

In Meghalaya, the South Garo Hills and West Garo Hills are covered under both NREGA and BRGF, and parts of Ri-Bhoi are covered under BRGF. In the NREGA districts, village employment councils (VECs) and area employment councils (AECs) have been set up to implement the provisions of the scheme. These institutions have been further supported and supplemented by participative bodies set up under the Natural Resource Management Project of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The VECs and AECs, along with the non-governmental bodies, are undertaking planning and implementation of the BRGF at the village level. For operationalisation of BRGF at the district level, it is proposed to set up a planning and implementation committee with the district collector as the chair-convener. The committee will include representatives from among the autonomous council and MLAs from the district. Funds will go to a separate bank account of the district committee, which shall be operated under the control and superintendence of the deputy commissioner, in his capacity as chairperson.

2.1.4.3 Distinctive Features of Institutions of Governance

Meghalaya is kept out of the purview of the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution. This is an explicit recognition of the strong semblance between provisions in this Amendment and the mandate of the special provisions (in Schedule VI). This is also supportive of intent to avoid disrupting existing structures, and also to initiate the traditional institutions' gradual evolution to assimilate greater democratic attributes, as in the PRIs.

Traditional institutions in the scheduled areas have juridical powers, while this is not so with the PRIs (*Table 2.5*). However, traditional institutions are often a consociation, unlike PRIs that are mandated to hold periodic elections for their office bearers. While there is a constitutional mandate for funds to be devolved to PRIs to perform their functions, they have no mandate to impose and collect taxes, although they are empowered to levy appropriate user charges for services to recover their operation and maintenance expenditures.

Table 2.5: Some Comparative Attributes of Institutions of Governance

Attribute	Traditional Institutions	Panchayati Raj Institutions	Autonomous District Councils	Legislative Assembly
Appointment/Choice of Members	Inherited, selected	Elected	Elected	Elected
Date of First Constitution			27 June 1952 (UKHADDC)	21 January 1972
Selectors/Electors	Permanent residents, males	Residents, all adults	Tribal residents and non-tribal permanent residents, adults (over 18 years)	Residents, all adults
Member Attributes	Males, clan affiliation, permanent residents	Residents, adults	As above, and adults (25 years)	Residents, adults (25 years)
Periodicity	Varies	5 years	5 years	5 years
Juridical Powers to Frame Laws and Rules	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Resources at Command	Member contributions	Service charges, devolved funds	Service charges, devolved funds	Own taxes, service charges, devolved funds
Codified Rules	No (except few)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Size			30 (KHADC) 24 (JHADDC) 30 (GHADC)	60
Electoral Apparatus	Rare		District Council Affairs Department	Election Commission

Source: Compiled by author

2.1.4.4 Study of a Traditional Institution: Hima Mawphlang

An analysis of relations in this *Hima* shows how social, economic, and political forces from within (such as demands for incorporating transparency and accountability in governance, and inclusion of women in decision-making) and from outside (from the evolving polity at the ADC and state level) are putting pressure on traditional institutions. Hima Mawphlang, located about 25 km southeast of Shillong, is a cluster of 16 villages which are multi-clan in character but mono-ethnic in composition, and with multiple religious persuasions. This is reportedly the only area in Meghalaya with a traditional institution that has codified customary beliefs and practices. Indiscriminate use of forests led to the codification of customary rules and regulations, with subsequent ratification by the council of the *Hima* in 1982, and by the KHADC the same

year. The codified rules and regulations stipulate conditions for access and use of community forests.

The two interesting messages of the case study appear to be: (i) traditional institutions are capable of providing an institutional link between ADCs and people at the village level; and (ii) the Khasi society is demanding that traditional institutions incorporate values of equity, transparency and accountability, and neutrality.

Box 2.1a : Identity, Authority, and Power Structure in Hima Mawphlang

Khasi are a matrilineal society, with property handed down through women and people taking the clan name of their mother. Without the clan identity, both male and female members, in a real or abstract sense, are persona non-grata in society. Another part of clan identity comes from the place of residence of the domestic group (iing). According to customary practice, only permanent residents of Hima are allowed to use the community forests. Non-permanent residents of the Hima constitute those employed in government offices, non-Khasis (locally referred to as Dkhar), or those working as daily wage labourers, and do not enjoy equal rights in the use of community forests. This group of people are accepted in the Hima if they perform a particular task or job, but the customs and law of the state clearly do not give them with the right to buy land, and their permanent residence in Hima is not accepted. They can live temporarily to complete a job or task and are then compelled to leave.

The Authority and Power Structure

Customary beliefs and practices legitimise the twelve clans' political positions and their status as distinct from other clans. At the Hima level, the political organisation is divided into (i) the chief and the council of ministers, who are the political administrators; and (ii) the council of the Hima, comprising the 16 village headmen, representative adult males, the chief, and the ministers. The council of the Hima is the highest authority. Participation of women, young people, and non-permanent residents in the council of Hima is not permitted. The everyday political administration of the Hima lies with the chief and the council of ministers. They oversee and are responsible for the maintenance of law and order, organising the annual festival, settling intra-village boundary disputes, interacting with government departments, implementing government schemes, and organising annual council meetings. Additionally, they submit an annual report that includes an audited statement of accounts, and the status of management and control of community lands and forests. However, they are required to report to the council of the Hima and seek its approval in matters concerning land, forests, and other important issues. The role of the Hima has become increasingly important as all issues concerning land and forests are under its authority. The process of decision-making is governed and guided by the 1982 codification of customary beliefs and practices, but in most cases the opinions of the chief and the council of ministers count for more than the views and opinions of members of the council. This is dependent, however, on whether their opinions are within the codified rules and regulations. The Chief and the council of ministers seek, deliberate, and make decisions. However, the council of the Hima has the power and authority to veto decisions and can impeach the chief and the council of ministers when they misuse or exercise their authority beyond what is defined in the rules and regulations.

Source: A Kyrham Nongkynrih (2005)

Box 2.1b: Challenges Faced by Traditional Institutions

In the last two decades, Khasi society has faced a number of challenges, which has led to serious public debates about traditional institutions. The debates are not only political in nature but are also rooted in the issue of equity. Traditional institutions face four main challenges:

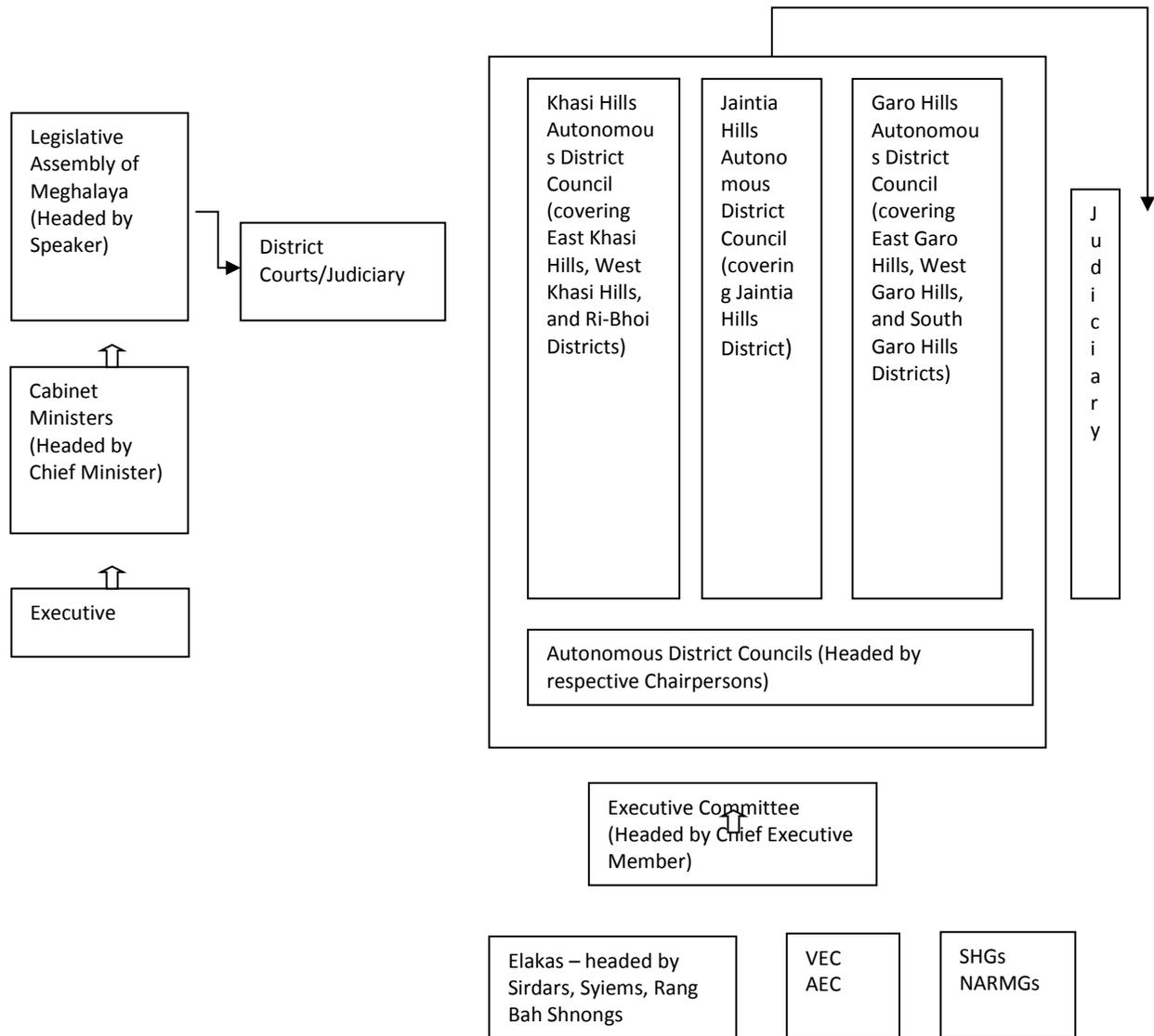
(i) The succession to the political office of chieftainship is a major source of conflict among groups belonging to the same clan. The clan council selects an adult male from among themselves as Chief. Due to internal conflicts, there is often more than one claimant to the position, and the ADCs are not able to confirm anyone. The political vacuum at the top has led to confusion in the administration at the local level. In such situations, the ADC usually appoints an acting chief, not necessarily from the particular clan. However, there have been serious allegations about acting chiefs misusing authority by permitting timber contractors to cut trees from community forests, and selling off community lands with rich mineral resources. This has resulted in conflicts between traditional institutions and ADCs on the succession and confirmation of chiefs, headmen and royalty rights.

(ii) Second, there are cases where chiefs of Hima, in collusion with politicians and timber merchants, have converted large tracts of community forests into private property without the consent of the people of the Hima. These forestlands are registered in the revenue department of the state government, which legitimises the conversion into private ownership. Further, personal benefits received by those who hold power in the traditional authority pose a threat to the equity of community forestry.

(iii) Third, parliamentary politics and development schemes of the state are changing political behaviour. Traditional institutions are based on customs and the decision making process is based on consensus. The party-based politics of electing MLAs and ADCs is creating divisions and political factionalism in traditional institutions. MLAs have power over development programmes, and ADCs have control over traditional institutions. Both bodies are legal authorities and have tremendous influence over people in general and traditional institutions in particular. People feel that the leaders of traditional institutions have been politicised and their decisions are no longer fair. In the process, the poor are increasingly becoming marginalised. It is also causing unscrupulous use of natural resources by new emerging elites from the community.

Figure 2.1 presents a pictorial depiction of the structure of governance in Meghalaya.

Figure 2.1: Structure of Governance in Meghalaya



2.2 THE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING STRUCTURE IN MEGHALAYA

In Meghalaya, the present planning structure consists of a State Planning Board (SPB) at the apex level, and District Planning and Development Council (DPDC) at the district level. In addition, there are two Regional Planning and Development Councils (RPDCs). The SPB consists of a chairman, 4 co-chairmen, 2 deputy chairmen, 6 official members, and 9 non-official members. Its main functions are to advise the state government on the formulation of annual plans and five-year plans, monitor and review development plans, and conduct special studies. RPDCs are an additional layer of planning between the SPB and the DPDC, but are reported to have had only a small role so far. The main function of the DPDC is drawing up of plans based on the need and potential of the district, coordinating and monitoring development programmes and projects, undertaking special studies, and providing advice to the state government on developmental issues. The members of the DPDC comprise all the MLAs from the district, the District Collector (DC), and the CEM. Thus, in this existing planning structure, there is no mechanism for the participation of the people at the grassroots level. Therefore, there is an urgent need to put such a mechanism in place.

2.3.1 THE WAY AHEAD: GOVERNANCE REFORMS FOR GRASSROOTS PLANNING AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Maximising self-governance is critical to empowering people, which will require strengthening of the institutions of governance, and planning at the village level. For this to happen, the traditional systems of governance in Meghalaya need to be included in development planning and service delivery, and given specific roles and responsibilities. In fact, given the relatively low population density and hilly terrain in the state, an intermediary tier may be placed between the ADCs and the village level institutions. It is important to mention that these suggestions have been made to generate a public debate and elicit public response, and do not necessarily represent the final views or recommendations of this report.

2.3.1 Democratic and Representative Village Level Institutions

The challenge in designing local planning approaches in Meghalaya lies in harmonising the functions and rights of traditional tribal self-governing village institutions with constitutionally approved institutional mechanisms designed for modern development and service delivery. Appropriate changes should be weaved in to make the traditional institutions forward looking, and give them the capacity to address the needs of today's development. This would mean activating and strengthening these

institutions through clarity in functional assignments, matching the assignment of functions with commensurate devolution of funds and functionaries, and building capacity to undertake planning. In addition, it is important to create systems and institutions for planning and delivery of public services, including the creation of information systems, and for monitoring, evaluation, and ensuring accountability.

For district planning to be both inclusive and representative, institutions at the village level, and in many cases at an intermediate level between the village and the DC, will need to be established. How this challenge can be met has been addressed by the Ramachandran Committee Report (2007). Suggestions made in this chapter are in agreement with the recommendations of this Committee in terms of the basic premise that the provisions contained in the Sixth Schedule be followed in both letter and spirit.

Our recommendation is to work directly with the traditional institutions instead of creating new institutions at the village level and then trying to look for ways to find a connect between the traditional institutions and the new institutions. Wherever a mechanism for decentralised planning at the village level has been institutionalised under special projects or programmes such as the NREGA, BRGF, or IFAD, these should be used as good practices for demonstration and training of traditional institutions in participatory development planning and service delivery at the grassroots level. The ultimate aim of this exercise/process would be harmonisation of traditional institutions with these village level institutions.

Where no such institutions/bodies have been set up, the ADCs concerned may be persuaded by central and state governments and the Governor's office to initiate the process of setting up of village level bodies with powers in line with provisions in the Sixth Schedule. The new village level bodies (elected) need not replace the village *dorbar*, etc., but the conditions and environment should be created such that the members and functionaries of the village *dorbar* and any other such institutions participate in the setting up of new village level bodies.

The ADCs in Meghalaya are, in principle, in agreement with the need for a new paradigm for grassroots planning. They have also made some progress by drafting bills in this regard, which are at various stages of being considered and approved. However, the ADCs are at different levels in regard to restructuring traditional institutions. The differences are mainly in their willingness for the representation of women and youth, and democratisation of the process of setting up village level institutions. Since this is asking for a big change in the tribal society, there is need for caution and patience as opposed to imposing changes in a rush, as the latter would not be in the spirit of the provisions of the Sixth Schedule, and may even be counterproductive. If the impetus of change is from within, there will be ownership for this change and less conflict. This has

been well demonstrated by NGO-supported interventions such as IFAD. At the same time, we need not be overwhelmed by NGO interventions and refrain from using them as cover for inaction in mobilising, strengthening, and restructuring traditional institutions. Therefore, the need is to spread awareness among people about the benefits of democratic and representative political institutions at the village level, which will not just retain the power and functions of the traditional institutions but will have more powers, functions, and functionaries for fulfilling their role in the development process.

Once the process of setting up modern political institutions at the village level has set in, the next step would be to bring in role separation at various levels of governance. This can be done through the process of dialogue through the appointment of a well-represented committee or commission. Having streamlined the demarcation of the jurisdiction of functions and functionaries, the flow of funds (how, and how much) constitutes the next set of issues that will demand attention. And lastly, but most important, there would be an immediate need to take action on serious and sustained training of functionaries for capacity building in office procedures, maintenance of accounts and records, preparation of budgets, and professionalism. Capacity building will be equally required for executives and other functionaries of ADCs and state governments, not only in general administration and financial management, but also on the entire system and structure of governance, including demarcation of the jurisdiction of functions, functionaries, powers, and the system of flow of funds.

The concept of regular elections may not be in sync with traditional practices that are geared for stability and not for change. It is likely that introduction of modern political institutional structures (say, of regular elections) may exacerbate factionalism in the interim (or at best, do little to mitigate factionalism). Note that this in some way is perhaps manifest at the Assembly level, with frequent reconstitution of the government. But this does not mean that traditional institutions may be in conflict with non-traditional ones, when it is most likely a simple case of resistance to seemingly large changes.

As far as Constitutional provisions are concerned, however, there is scarcely any contradiction between the intent in the Sixth Schedule and in the PRI system. In comparison to formal provisions in the Constitution for relatively modern PRIs with a well-defined structure, traditional institutions have an amorphous appearance. This attribute allows them to permeate into the social fabric, often making them indistinguishable from observed social customs. Often, these are quite effective in inculcating certain morals and ethics while keeping incidences of infringement to a minimum, and causing speedy conclusion of trials.

Thus, the challenge lies in convincing people that such a hermetic existence in the modern world has been rendered near impossible. There is thus a need to inculcate a notion that this routine exercise need not be destabilising. On the contrary, this regular exercise may reaffirm the mandate to quell unrest and strengthen governance. Similarly, the contemporary development paradigm demands that every individual's aspirations be taken into account in development planning. The idea of decentralisation must be blended with proper democratisation of institutions and individual aspirations for inclusive economic and social development.

2.3.2 Governance Reforms at the ADC Level

The vision built from the grassroots level should be coordinated and compiled at the block and district levels to draw up district level visions. Each ADC in the state should coordinate and compile visions prepared by the districts, and build a vision based thereon for the region under its jurisdiction. This, in turn, should feed into the development vision for the state.

Some issues faced by ADCs constitute their marginalisation by the state government, lack of capacity, inefficiency and mismanagement, and lack of transparency in transfer of funds to them. Demarcation of functions and responsibilities between the ADCs and state governments should be guided by constitutional provisions and not by perceptions of state governments about their capacity. Any lack of capacity at the ADC level should be regarded as an opportunity for training and strengthening the ADCs.

The state government should set up a state finance commission to recommend devolution of grants to the ADCs. The central government and Governor should take the necessary initiatives in this regard. The Constitution provides for specific roles for the Governor of the state of Meghalaya (*Annexure Table 2.1*), and provides powers to fulfil these roles. The Sixth Schedule has entrusted several key powers to the Governor of the state concerned in respect of District and Regional Councils. These powers are classified and briefly described in *Annexure Table 2.1*.