

## 8. Decentralized Institutions and Human Development

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Decentralization in a broader sense is likely to influence the very nature of democratic political practice. To elaborate, decentralization may, in principle, create an autonomous administrative as well as political space, which in turn may foster (and simultaneously draw succor from) constructive engagement with the local society. In Tripura, there appears to prevail a condition congenial for relatively vibrant interactions among the local administration, the local party machinery and the local civil society. In short, the ‘politics of presence’ of these relatively assertive social groups at the local level shapes the form and everyday functioning of the local bodies in the state, creating at least a condition for institutional responsiveness to people’s aspirations. To focus on a specific aspect of decentralization in Tripura, the way in which the local bodies are structured in the state under the dual framework of panchayats and the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council itself holds some promising potentials that are not apparent in other comparable situations. In Tripura, spatially and socially these two types of local administration are much more inter-woven, according greater social contact and interface among the administration, the political actors and above all, the people living in these areas. In short, Tripura seems to have avoided, comparatively speaking, a situation in which people end up ‘living together separately’.

Ideally, and from a Human Development perspective, the Institutions and practices of local governments may be deemed to be promoting human empowerment, if a) they respect human rights and dignity and allow people to live with dignity; b) the people have a say in decisions taken by the institutions, especially those that affect their lives; c) the decision-makers in the institutions are accountable to the people; and d) people are free from discriminations based on ethnicity, class, gender or any other attribute. In what follows, we try to approach the issue of decentralization from the standpoint of human development goals of the state, though not exhaustively by any means. First, we describe the distinctive features of decentralized governance bodies in the state; and second, we try to examine the performance of local bodies with respect to functions such as provision of civic amenities like sanitation, healthcare, and drinking water. Third, we try to analyze the resources that they get (either on own or supra-local) and utilize (per capita) for facilitating the provision of these amenities.

## 8.1 Institutions of Local Government in Tripura

In Tripura, there exist two types of legal frame for local governance, namely, the Sixth Schedule Frame (Council areas that are governed by the provisions of the Sixth Schedule<sup>1</sup>) and the National Frame (Non-Council area, covered under Parts IX and IXA of the Constitution). In the State, two-third of the total geographical area and one-third of the population falls within the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule areas. As suggested above, the unique feature of the state is that all the revenue districts comprise areas under Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) as well as those outside it (i.e. included under PRI or Urban Local Bodies).

According to Census 2011, a population of 9.61 9.07 lakh constituting 26 (24.7) percent of the state's population reside in the urban areas, that is to say, in municipal towns, census towns and urban agglomerations. However, as per RD (Panchayat) Department, Government of Tripura, 24.7 per cent (9.07 lakh) of the population reside in urban areas, Around 37.03 percent (13,59,493) reside in the TTAADC areas, and the remaining, around 38.26 percent (14,04,593) reside in the rural local body areas.<sup>2</sup> The rural population of 27,12,464 constituting 74 percent of the population is more or less equally distributed between the Panchayat areas and the TTAADC (GoT, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Planning (Statistics) Department 2014). The districtwise distribution of local bodies is provided in table 8.1.

### 8.1.1 Panchayat Bodies

The princely state of Tripura had traditional village-level institutions based on tribal customs (Village Councils), which took important decisions relating to the tribal communities. These councils were headed by Sardars, who used to be regularly invited to the Royal Court of the state for ceremonial functions and consultations with the rulers. During the rule of Bir Bikram (1923-

<sup>1</sup>Autonomous District Council (ADC) is based on the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. The idea behind the setting up of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India is to provide the tribal people of North East India with a simple administrative set up which can safeguard their customs and ways of lives and to provide autonomy in the management of their affairs. ADCs not only give the hill people of North East India, training on local self-government but also try to bring faster economic development by associating people with the developmental works through their representatives in the Autonomous District Council. Presently NorthEast India has fifteen district Councils – two in Assam, three in Meghalaya, three in Mizoram, one in Tripura and six in Manipur.

<sup>2</sup> NO.F 3 (5-141)-GL/PR/1s / 8-TO . dated 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 of RD (Panchayat) Department, Government of Tripura

1947), an attempt was made to introduce a system of local administration in rural Tripura. An Act was passed in 1929 under which a number of contiguous villages were grouped together to form a Gramya Mandali to which members were nominated by the King.

Table 8.1: Districtwise Distribution of Local Bodies in Tripura

Districts	Sub-Divisions	Blocks	Gram Panchayats*	Revenue Villages	TTAADC Villages	Agartala Municipal Corporation/Nagar Panchayats
West Tripura	3	<del>69</del>	<del>8770</del>	96	<del>8577</del>	2
Sepahijala	3	<del>57</del>	<del>111403</del>	119	<del>5852</del>	2
Khowai	2	<del>66</del>	<del>5549</del>	78	<del>6958</del>	2
Gomati	3	<del>78</del>	<del>7062</del>	134	<del>10395</del>	2
South Tripura	3	<del>86</del>	<del>9990</del>	138	70	3
Dhalai	4	<del>96</del>	<del>2134</del>	146	<del>11096</del>	2
Unokati	2	<del>43</del>	<del>5954</del>	78	<del>3228</del>	2
North Tripura	3	<del>86</del>	<del>6952</del>	89	<del>6054</del>	1
Tripura	23	<del>5845</del>	<del>591544</del>	878	<del>587527</del>	16

\* The Gram Panchayats have since been reorganized and the number of total Gram Panchayats has increased to 591 in 2014. The number of villages in TTAADC has also been raised to 587.

Source: GoT, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Planning (Statistics) Department 2014

The State merged with the Indian Union after independence on 15th October 1949, and became a Union Territory without a legislature with effect from November 1, 1956 and a popular ministry was installed in Tripura on July 1, 1963. Tripura became a State on 21st January, 1972. A separate Panchayat Department was created in 1959 in pursuance of the recommendations of the Balwanta Rai Mehata Committee. The state adopted the United Provinces Panchayat Raj Act 1947 with some modifications, and the Tripura Panchayat Raj Rules 1961 were framed under the provisions of this Act and the constitution of the Gaon Sabhas in the development blocks was taken up in a phased manner.

The first statutory Gaon Panchayat came into being in May 1962. Under the rules framed in the Act, which came into force in 1961, the Gaon Sabha was to be the basic unit of planning and development. Thereafter, The Tripura Panchayats Act, 1983, was brought into force in January

1984, replacing the United Provinces Panchayat Raj Act, 1947. This Act reduced the voting age from 21 to 18 years, and made special provisions for the representation of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) and set up a two-tier system.

Following the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitution Amendment Act of 1992, Tripura enacted the Tripura Panchayat Act, 1993, and introduced a three-tier structure. Elections to all three tiers of panchayats have been held on schedule in 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014. Since 1993, following the constitutional amendments in this regard, Tripura has had a three-tier structure of elected local bodies or Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), with elected representatives at the gram, block (Panchayat Samiti) and district (Zilla Parishad) levels.

There are at present 8-Zilla Parishads, 35-Panchayat Samities and 591-Gram Panchayats under the Tripura Panchayat Act, 1993 (GoT, Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Planning (Statistics) Department, 2014).

### **Functions of Panchayat Bodies**

The powers of a Gram Panchayat (GP) as enumerated in the Tripura Panchayat Act, 1993, include a) making reasonable provisions, so far as its funds may allow, for basic minimum civic amenities like sanitation, health care, drinking water, maintenance and repair of public streets and buildings vested in the Gram b) enforcing maintenance of private tanks and other water bodies by the owners, including recovery of expenses from them in case they fail to maintain them. The GP has to manage most of this work from its own resources, and arrange for street lights, tanks, horticultural gardens etc. as may be directed by the state government.

The Act authorizes the Panchayat Samitis to undertake schemes entrusted to them by the state government, take over any private property that may be required for public purpose, exercise general power of supervision over the Gram Panchayats, issue license for *haat* and markets, levy fees, tolls on vehicles and for making sanitary arrangements. The Panchayat Samiti is also responsible for consolidating the plans of the Gram Panchayats and submits a consolidated plan to the Zilla Parishad. The Act also lists a host of functions in conformity with the 11<sup>th</sup> schedule of the Constitution.

Government of Tripura had issued executive orders devolving specific activities related to subjects listed in the 11<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the constitution.<sup>3</sup> The assignments of activities in Tripura have followed the national pattern of activity map promoted by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj during the first decade of this century. Actual implementation of the schemes/projects are performed by the concerned departments, and the role of the Panchayats is mainly that of selection of beneficiaries and the sites of the project and also, to some extent, the supervision of the scheme.

Some of the functions that have a direct bearing on human development conditions include the following:

- Electricity connection in Village Committee
- Maintenance of drinking water sources
- Maintenance of school buildings.
- Construction and maintenance of ICDS centres
- Extension of power connectivity
- Construction of pucca kitchen sheds in Anganwadi Centres (AWCs)
- Solar power plant of 1 KW capacity with invertors
- Construction of girls' hostels
- Construction of ST boys' hostels
- Construction of roads and bridges
- Supply of classroom furniture for schools.
- Maintenance of solid waste management.
- Construction of pucca drains

Successive central Finance Commissions of the country have been trying to assess the performance and needs of the local bodies on the basis of requirement of funds for 'Core Services'<sup>4</sup>, focusing on issues of adequate fiscal autonomy for local governments, their

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<sup>3</sup> The detailed Activity Map covering about 21 departments of the state government are provided in the Appendix.

<sup>4</sup> The 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission had defined core services as those pertaining to water supply, sanitation, solid waste management and drainage, roads, streetlights and community assets.

administrative and technical expertise and access to information and bargaining power vis-à-vis service producers they procure from (GoI, MoF, Fourteenth Finance Commission, 2015).

A study undertaken by the Centre for Policy Research on behalf of the 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission has found that Tripura, along with Assam, West Bengal, Karnataka, Manipur, Kerala, and Punjab, appears to have the most robust combination of legislative structure and activity mapping, when it comes to the assignment of core functions to the Panchayats.

Like other states, Tripura too has opted for a higher degree of assignment of core functions to the Village Panchayats as compared to Intermediate Panchayats, and have also favored District Panchayats over Intermediate Panchayats. However, there seems to be a high degree of concurrency in the assignment of functions to different Panchayat levels as the following table indicates. The difference in assignment score among the different tiers of PRIs in Tripura is less than the national average testifying to the concurrency of assignment. (See Tables A.8.2 and A.8.3 in Appendix respectively).

### ***Finances of Panchayat Bodies***

To get an idea of the financial resources at the disposal of the local panchayat bodies, let us look at the recommendations of the third State Finance Commission (SFC). The third SFC seems to have recommended allotment in absolute figures rather than as a percentage of state's own revenue. The recommended amounts are as follows.

Table 8.2: Recommendation for Devolution of Fund from share of State taxes

Items	Rs(in Crores)				
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
For PRIs only	26.8	29.25	31.95	35	38.3
For RLBs of Sixth schedule area	19.6	21.52	23.86	26.03	28.52

Source: GoT, State Finance Commission 2009

The report prepared by the Centre for Policy research (CPR) based on the figures reported by the state to the 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission indicate that the Panchayat bodies of Tripura are highly dependent on transfer from the state and the centre. Their own resource base is quite low. While

the per capita transfer from the state is substantially below the national average (see Appendix Table A.8.4) as reported by CPR, the per capita central transfer to village Panchayats is, however, substantially higher than that in most other states, if not all other states (see Appendix Table A.8.5). The ratio of own revenue to total revenue is quite low (see Appendix Table A.8.6). Collection of immovable property tax and other taxes is also very low. Same holds true for collection of user charges (see Appendix Table A.8.7). The Panchayats are therefore highly dependent on the higher tiers of Government for their functioning. The 3<sup>rd</sup> State Finance Commission of Tripura had made an assessment of the amount of own revenue that PRI bodies should be able to generate from 2010 to 2013. The Panchayat bodies, however, have not been able to reach this figure.

Table 8.3: Assessment of the amount of Revenue that may be collected by Panchayat bodies of Tripura

Year	Amount of Revenue (in Rs Lakh)
2010-11	120
2010-12	140
2012-13	160
2013-14	180
2014-15	200

Source: GoT, State Finance Commission 2009

On the other hand, encouragingly from a human development perspective, when it comes to spending on the core functions pertaining to water supply, sanitation, solid waste management and drainage, roads, streetlights and community assets, the Panchayat bodies of Tripura have the highest per capita spending at Rs 1048 in the country (the lowest is Uttar Pradesh at Rs 8.77)(Centre for Policy Research 2014). This is summarized in Table 8.4 below.

Table 8.4: Per Capita Total Expenditure on Core Functions

States	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Average per capita
Tripura	565.72	603.77	910.12	976.03	1381.38	1851.74	1048.13
All States	309.2	364.2	540.7	541.7	562.5	631.2	491.6

Source: Centre for Policy Research 2014

### 8.1.2 Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council

The Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) ~~was a product of the joint struggle of tribal and non-tribal democratic movements to protect the identity and rights of the tribals and was established as an independent council administering the tribal areas within Tripura. The Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council Bill, 1979 was passed by the Tripura Legislative Assembly on March 23, 1979. The Autonomous District Council was constituted through vote by secret ballot in January 15, 1982, under the 7<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Constitution came into being on January 18, 1982 in terms of Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council Act 1979, which is a major landmark in the history of the tribal people of Tripura.~~

Subsequently, with the objective of entrusting more responsibility and to give more power to the TTAADC, provisions of the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule to the Constitution of India were extended to Tripura from 1st April, 1985 by the 49<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Constitution.

**The TTAADC is unique as its jurisdiction is not contiguous with Revenue district boundaries. It straddles eight revenue districts.** The TTAADC covers an area of approximately 7133 sq. km (extending to all eight revenue districts of the state), which is about 68 percent of the state's total area; though only 34 percent (approximate) of the state's population resides in the TTAADC area. The population of TTAADC area as per Census 2011 is 12,65,838. About 84 percent of the tribal population of the State lives in the TTAADC area and Scheduled Castes and other communities have 5 and 11 percent share respectively (TTAADC, no date).

There are 5845 Rural Development Blocks in the State. 23 RD blocks are fully within the Sixth Schedule area and eighteen mixed RD blocks are within jurisdiction of both Sixth Schedule and PRI areas. Following the patterns of the Panchayats, the village councils are elected local bodies.

There are 5827 ADC villages which are run by an elected Village Committee headed by a Chairperson/ Vice-Chairpersons for a five year term. These Committees derive their authority from the TTAADC (Establishment of Village Committee) Act, 1994, and discharge their functions according to the provisions of TTAADC Village (Administration) Rules, 2005. There are 45974293 elected members; 50 percent of seats of the Members or Chairpersons/Vice -

Chairperson are reserved for women. The powers and responsibilities of the Village Committees are equivalent to those of the Gram Panchayat of PRI. About 73 percent geographical area of ADC is forest land, which cannot be diverted for commercial plantation as per existing Forest Conservation Act.

### ***Functions of Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council***

The Council has Powers to frame laws in matters related to allotment, occupation, and use of land other than reserved forests; management of forests outside reserved forest area; use of canal and *cherra* (stream) water for agriculture; jhum cultivation; public health and sanitation; Village Committee or council etc., and other issues such as inheritance of property of schedule tribes, marriage and divorce, where any party belongs to a Schedule Tribe, and social customs of Schedule Tribes, with the approval of the Governor.

The council is also authorized to establish or manage primary schools, dispensaries, markets, cattle pounds, fisheries, ferries, roads, road transport, and waterways. Besides these, the State Government may entrust functions relating to the following matters to the Council: agriculture, animal resource development, community projects, co-operative societies; social welfare, village planning, fisheries, plantations, and any other matter to which the executive power of the state extends.

In pursuance of these decisions the Government of Tripura has transferred several offices/institutions along with employees/functionaries to the TTAADC. The council controls and manages 1494 (One Thousand four hundred ninety four) primary schools, 221 (Two hundred twenty one) upper primary schools, 4 (four) offices of the Assistant Director of Animal Resource Development Department (ARDD), 4 (four) veterinary hospitals and 19 ~~15~~(Nineteen) veterinary dispensaries along with 123 (One hundred twenty three) stock sub-centers etc, 6 (six) agricultural sub-divisions and 2 (two) horticulture sub-divisions, 4 (four) fishery sub-divisions, six ICDS projects with 1250 AWCs, 1414 forest ranges along with 5439 forest beat offices, 4 (four ~~six~~) Sub-divisional ~~information cultural~~ and ~~cultural information~~ offices, two Block Information and Cultural Offices—with 17 information centers, 2 hospitals (at Khumulwang and Twikarmo) 1 (one) ~~45~~ health sub-centres (at Shikaribari), and 18 (Eighteen) LAMPS located in Sixth Schedule area.

### *Finance of Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council*

The Council is entitled to a share of forest royalties and royalties from licensing or lease for the extraction of minerals granted by the state government. The Council also has powers to levy and collect the taxes from the items a) for maintenance of schools, dispensaries or roads, b) on entry of goods into markets and tolls on passengers and goods carried in ferries, c) on animals, vehicles and boats and d) on professional trades, callings and employments. Presently, TTAADC receives share of taxes at the following ratios – (a) Forest Revenue– 75 percent (b) Agricultural Income Tax 50 percent (c) Land Revenue Tax – 40 percent (d) Professional Tax – 25 percent (e) Motor Vehicle Tax – 25 percent (f) Royalty from Natural Gas – 30 percent.

Moreover, different departments of the State Government place funds to the field functionaries of the Council for execution within the District Council areas.

Table 8.5: Funds flow to TTAADC from 2007-08 to 2012-13 (Rs in crores)

Year	Own revenue	Annual plan grants	Share of Taxes	Other receipts	Transfer Fund	Total
2007-08	.0046	45.00	20.00	<del>62.82</del> 19.94	42.88	<del>170.70</del> 127.82
2008-09	.0032	55.00	22.50	<del>66.32</del> 22.67	43.65	<del>187.47</del> 143.82
2009-10	.0088	<del>60.50</del> 64.72	<del>25.00</del> 23.58	<del>147.31</del> 75.26	69.25	<del>302.07</del> 232.81
2010-11	2.56	70.00	35.00	<del>106.51</del> 34.54	<del>71.65</del> 71.97	<del>285.72</del> 214.07
2011-12	1.37	85.00	35.00	<del>67.59</del> 68.67	88.76	<del>277.72</del> 278.80
2012-13	1.86	90.00	35.00	<del>175.42</del> 25.82	<del>70.16</del> 15.424	<del>372.44</del> 307.84

Source: ~~Memorandum of TTAADC to the 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission TTAADC, no date.~~

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### 8.1.3 Urban Local Bodies

The State Government had enacted the Tripura Municipal Act in 1994 in conformity with the provisions of the 74th Constitution Amendment in 1992, to strengthen the functioning of the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in Tripura. Elections to the ULBs, under the 1994 Act, were held in 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015.

Tripura has of late restructured its local bodies. On 21st January 2014, Agartala Municipal Council had been upgraded to Agartala Municipal Corporation and 10\_N\_agar Panchayats at Dharmanagar, Kailashahar, Ambassa, Khowai, Teliamura, Mohanpur, Bishalgarh, Melagar, Udaipur and Belonia had been upgraded as Municipal Council.

So, at present, there is one Municipal Corporation, ten Municipal Councils and nine Nagar Panchayats (Panisagar, Kumarghat, Kamalpur, Jirania, Ranirbazar, Sonamura, Amarpur, Santirbazar and Sabroom).<sup>5</sup>

#### *Functions of Urban Local Bodies*

The Tripura Municipal Act of 1994 incorporates, under Schedule II, all the items of the 12<sup>th</sup> schedule of the Constitution (74th Amendment) Act. Tripura has also transferred all 18 items in the 12<sup>th</sup> schedule to the Municipalities, a distinction that Tripura shares with Kerala and Karnataka. The state government has also assigned some supervisory and monitoring powers to the urban local bodies in respect of various works carried out by line departments of the government.

Table 8.6: Status of access to services in urban local body areas in Tripura in 2011

Water Supply	Benchmark	National	Tripura
Coverage connections	100%	53.6	27.9
Per capita supply	135 lpcd	76.6	71.3
Metering of connections	100%	43.0	0.0
Non-revenue water (NRW)	20%	34.1	72.7

<sup>5</sup> The number of urban Local bodies have since increased. At present there are 1 (One) Municipal Corporation VIZ Agartala Municipal Corporation, 13 (thirteen) Municipal councils (Dharmanagar, Kailashahar, Kumarghat, Ambassa, khowai, Teliamura, Ranirbazar, Mohanpur, Bishalgarh, santirbazar, Udaipur, Melaghar and Belonia); and 6 (Six) Nagar Panchayat - Jirania, Amarpur, Sonamura, Panisagar, Kamalpur and Sabroom. Two new Municipal councils, VIZ RanirbaZar and Kumarghat have been created vide notification dated 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2015. The present distribiton of urban local bodies is summarised at Table A.8.9 of the Appendix.

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Continuity of supply	24 Hours	3.1	2.5
Quality & Treatment	100%	88.9	71.5
Redressal of customer complaints	80%	77.4	64.8
Cost recovery	100%	40.5	12.6
Efficiency in collection charges	90%	63.5	75.4
<b>Sewerage</b>			
Coverage of toilets	100%	71.1	62.4
Coverage of sewage network	100%	49.5	0.00
Services			
Collection efficiency of the sewage network	100%	55.6	0.00
Adequacy of sewage treatment capacity	100%	58.4	0.00
Reuse and recycling	20%	52.2	0.00
Quality of sewage treatment	100%	50.5	0.00
Efficiency in redressal of customer complaints	80%	64.9	0.00
Cost recovery	100%	45.7	0.00
Efficiency in collection of charges	90%	63.5	0.00
<b>Solid Waste Management</b>			
Household level coverage	100%	57.2	52.8
Efficiency of collection of MSW	100%	77.2	80.7
Extent of segregation	100%	38.5	0.00
Extent of MSW recovered	80%	48.2	15.9
Extent of scientific disposal	100%	48.9	0.0
Efficiency in redressal of customer complaints	80%	68.4	100.0
Cost recovery	100%	26.2	38.2
Efficiency in collection of charges	90%	47.6	76.4
<b>Storm Water Drainage</b>			
Coverage	100%	52.9	60.5
Incidence of water logging/ flooding	0	9.5	28.0

Source: Urban Governance Area, ASCI 2014

Urbanization is a relatively recent phenomenon in Tripura and the civic services are yet to catch up with the national averages in a number of areas. A report prepared by the ASCI based on figures submitted by the states to the 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission and focused on four service sectors viz., water supply, sanitation, sewerage, and storm water drains, records considerable improvement in delivery of urban services during the last few years. Tripura had notified the

municipal services related benchmarks and targets in 2011. The status of the services as notified by the state is summarized in Table 8.6 as above.

In their report before the 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission, Tripura has confirmed that 98 percent of the households now have access to safe water and are being supplied at the rate of 135 ltr per day.

The quality of access to services, however, varies across different urban bodies. ASCI has independently assessed the status of service delivery in sample urban bodies<sup>6</sup> in respect of water supply, safe latrine, piped water system, and closed drainage, and has reported their finding as follows. In the light of the ASCI figures, it appears that there are some major challenges that the urban local bodies in Tripura need to address.

Table 8.7: Access to Services to Households in Sample Cities/Towns in Tripura by Tier

State / Town	Category	Total HHs	Population	Percentage households with access to			
				Water Supply	Safe Latrine	Piped Sewer System	Closed Drainage
Agartala	Class - I	99,352	400,004	27.90	62.40	-	2.22
Udaipur	SMT	8,450	32,758	75.69	93.57	5.25	7.04
Kailasahar	SMT	5,680	22,405	22.38	83.86	7.75	3.15
Khowai	SMT	4,598	18,526	30.73	78.14	3.59	6.37
Ranirbazar	SMT	3,312	13,104	4.56	77.69	7.16	16.21
Kamalpur	SMT	2,895	10,872	34.89	89.74	5.08	3.01
Amarpur	SMT	2,895	10,838	41.93	79.55	3.97	1.24

Source: Urban Governance Area, ASCI 2014

Table 8.8: Access to Services to Slum Households of Sample Cities/Towns in Tripura by Tier

State/	Category	Slum	Percentage households with access to
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<sup>6</sup>Samples included the only Tier-II body, Agartala and two Nagar Panchayats from each of the four districts. See, Urban Governance Area, ASCI 2014.

			Water Supply	Safe Latrine	Piped Sewer System	Closed Drainage
Agartala	Municipality	11083	18.49	67.77	2.90	3.35
Udaipur	Nagar Panchayat	3109	61.11	89.58	4.89	8.49
Kailasahar	Nagar Panchayat	2379	25.43	68.81	6.85	1.60
Khowai	Nagar Panchayat	955	10.26	77.70	5.03	5.13
Ranirbazar	Nagar Panchayat	1406	7.4	63.73	4.48	8.68
Kamalpur	Nagar Panchayat	407	12.29	78.87	0.49	0.00
Amarpur	Nagar Panchayat	1344	25.15	76.79	1.64	0.74

Source: Urban Governance Area, ASCI 2014

Table 8.9: Access to Services to Slum Households in Sample Cities/Towns in Tripura

Type of service	Category of local body	All state Average	Tripura
% of HHs - Water Supply	M.Corp	53.88	-
	M	34.96	18.49
	NP	29.09	32.24
	Total	51.13	24.87
% HHs - Safe Latrine	M.Corp	85.57	-
	M	72.79	67.77
	NP	55.98	77.22
	Total	83.38	72.16
% HHs - Piped Sewer system	M.Corp	36.72	-
	M	16.04	2.90
	NP	9.35	4.69
	Total	33.71	3.73
% of HHs - Closed Drainage	M.Corp	54.17	-
	M	20.17	3.35
	NP	14.58	5.03
	Total	49.37	4.13

Source: Urban Governance Area, ASCI 2014

One important indicator of the role played by local government bodies in human development of the state is the extent to which the marginalized and the excluded are able to access the various

services. The state level benchmarks published by the state do not post information related to the poor households separately. The ASCI report, however, has obtained this information from the census 2011 data and reported the status of services to slum households, as in Table 8.8.

The study has also attempted to work out the all-state average of access of slum households to the basic services of water supply, safe latrine, piped water system and closed drainage. Most of the urban bodies of Tripura used to be Nagar Panchayats when the report was prepared and we find that these were considerably better than the all-state average of Nagar Panchayats elsewhere in access to these services (Tables 8.9 and 8.10).

Table 8.10: Access to Services to Slum Households in Sample Cities/Towns – State wise – Size Class wise

Type of service	Category of local body	All state Average	Tripura
Percentage of HHs - Water Supply	Metro	58.54	-
	Class-I	41.07	18.49
	SMT	28.31	32.24
	Total	51.13	24.87
Percentage of HHs - Safe Latrine	Metro	89.05	-
	Class-I	76.72	67.77
	SMT	60.11	77.22
	Total	83.38	72.16
Percentage of HHs - Piped Sewer system	Metro	43.74	-
	Class-I	19.06	2.9
	SMT	8.48	4.69
	Total	33.71	3.73
Percentage of HHs - Closed Drainage	Metro	64.08	-
	Class-I	27.23	3.35
	SMT	15.77	5.03
	Total	49.37	4.13

Source: Urban Governance Area, ASCI 2014

According to the report submitted by the state to 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission in 2012-13 on access to core services, Tripura appears to be in need of covering huge ground as far as sewerage

system is concerned. Only 1.2 percent households are connected. The closed drainage connectivity was also the lowest in Tripura with about 3 percent households connected to drainage network. (In respect of closed drainage the access of the slum households in Haryana was over 61 percent and the lowest was in Tripura with little over 3 percent).

The sample survey undertaken for the study, however, noted that Tripura has a very low incidence of open defecation, as compared to many other states. “In municipalities, 66.38% households in Bagala (Bihar) resort to open defecation whereas in Nainadevi, (Himachal Pradesh) there is no open defecation. In Nagar Panchayats, the highest is in Majhauri (Madhya Pradesh) with 79.16% whereas only 0.12% of households in Udaipur (Tripura) resort to this practice.” (Urban Governance Area, ASCI 2014, p-59)

Coming to the question of the financial health of the urban bodies, during 2013-14, total revised plan allocation for all the urban local bodies was Rs262.15 crore and non-plan allocation was Rs73.44 crore in the state. It may be mentioned that total revenue collected by different ULBs in the State during 2013-14 was Rs34.87 crore. Making an all-India comparison, the ASCI study found that among the Nagar Panchayats of the country, Punjab generated the highest revenue (Rs1,110 per capita), followed by Tripura.

Table 8.11: Tripura SFC Devolutions – Actual Transfer (Rs. in Crore)

Municipalities				Nagar Panchayats				Total			
2007-08	2013-14	CAGR (%)	Per Capita	2007-08	2013-14	CAGR (%)	Per Capita	2007-08	2013-14	CAGR (%)	Per Capita
11	23	11.0	574	2	246	175.9	9080	13	269	77.7	4009

Source: Urban Governance Area, ASCI 2014

The State Government in Tripura appears to be committed towards strengthening the urban local bodies. SFC devolution to urban Local bodies as reported to the 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission records the per capita devolution to be Rs4,009, which was higher than most other states. The

SFC devolutions to NPs were the highest in Tripura (Rs 9,080) in comparison with other Nagar Panchayats of the country.

Information obtained from the sampled ULBs revealed that the per capita grants-in-aid of Rs1,374 from the Government of Tripura (Annex 5.32) was very high and next only to Gujarat that allotted a per capita grant of Rs2,611. The per capita grants-in-aid in Tripura is also way ahead of the average of all sample ULBs taken together.

Table 8.12: Municipal Revenue in Sample Cities -Grant-in-Aid from State Government

State	Municipalities				Nagar Panchayats				Total			
	2009-10		2012-13		2009-10		2012-13		2009-10		2012-13	
	Amount in Rs Cr	Per Capita in Rs	Amount in Rs Cr	Per Capita in Rs	Amount in Rs Cr	Per Capita in Rs	Amount in Rs Cr	Per Capita in Rs	Amount in Rs Cr	Per Capita in Rs	Amount in Rs Cr	Per Capita in Rs
Tripura	11	277	49	1224	14	1275	21	1925	25	490	70	1374
Average of all sample states		444		593		727		753		560		796

Source: Urban Governance Area, ASCI 2014

So far as generation of own revenue was concerned, the NPs of Tripura fared quite well. The collection of taxes other than property tax was found to be the highest in Punjab with Rs1,110, followed by Tripura with Rs690.

On the other hand, per-capita income from property tax was found to be very low in Tripura (Rs65) along with some other states such as Jharkhand (Rs41), Rajasthan(Rs42) (Urban Governance Area, ASCI 2014).

## **8.2 Integrating Parallel Bodies**

Parallel bodies are structures set up under programme guidelines of different centrally sponsored schemes reportedly for speedy implementation of CSS and greater accountability of the implementing agencies. These parallel bodies include District Rural Development Authority (DRDA), District Watershed Agency, District Water and Sanitation Mission, district level societies under SSA and NRHM, etc. Quite often it has been observed that these Bodies bypass mainstream institutions, create disconnect, duality, and alienation between the existing and the new structures and functions and is often considered by experts to pose a serious threat to the full emergence of Panchayats as institutions of local government. Their legality to exist is also open to question, particularly in the light of Article 243ZD of the Constitution. Very often states are helpless to do away with these structures as these constituted inextricable parts of the design of the programme. However, states that consider decentralization seriously generally try to bring the parallel bodies into a formal relationship with local bodies through the Standing Committee system.

In Tripura, the DRDA continues as a separate independent agency and is not merged with Zilla Parishads. The Sabhadhipati of the Zilla Parishad is the Chairperson of DRDA. Apart from making the Zilla Parishad Sabhadhipati the Chairperson of the DRDA, there have been no efforts to harmonize the functioning of DRDAs with Zilla Parishads. DRDA accounts are not captured in the accounts of Zilla Parishads. The DRDAs implement the programmes of the Ministry of Rural Development and various Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS). All the schemes of DRDA are implemented after approval of Gram Panchayats. Gram Panchayats help DRDAs in identification of beneficiaries and site selection through Gram Sabha meetings. The other structures and/or delivery systems that have been integrated with the local bodies have been listed in Table 8.13 below.

Table 8.13: Parallel Bodies at Gram Panchayat level

Scheme	Committee	GP	PRI Involvement
National Rural Health Mission	Rogi Kalyan Samiti's	Yes	Funds under this Committee are sent to joint account in the name of Medical Officers in-Charge and Chairman of Panchayat Samiti
National Rural Employment Gurantee Scheme(NREGS)	Vigilance and Monitoring Committee	Yes	The Vigilance and Monitoring Committee in all the PRI level are yet to be constituted.
Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)	Mother Teacher Association Committee	Yes	Pradhan of Gram Panchayat is the Chairperson of the committee and performs monitoring activity
	Village Education Development Committee	Yes	Pradhan of Gram Panchayat is the Chairperson committee and are involved in the monitoring
Fair Price Shop	Vigilance Committees	YES	Chairmanship of Pradhan of Gram Panchayats which supervises the supply of food and essential commodities
Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC)	Village Water and Sanitation Committee (VWSC)	YES	The Committee reviews the TSC activities, chalks out different action plans for implementation of TSC, monitoring and inspects TSC works in different GP/ villages.
Backward Region Grants Fund (BRGF)		NO	There areno other parallel bodies created for this purpose.
RKVY		NO	There is no other parallel body created for RKVY.
PMGSY		NO	There is no other parallel bodies for PMGSY
IWMP	Watershed Committees	Yes	Total members 10-15, with appropriate representation from ST, SC.OBC, Minority & Women as elected by the Gram Sabha.

Note: Analysis based on information culled from various sources.

### 8.3 Concluding remarks

Measuring whether decentralization has had any impact on pro-poor growth, social equality, or improving the quality of life and life chances of the poor, in short, on human development in general, is fraught with enormous difficulty. The measure usually used – using local level expenditure as a proportion of state level expenditure– is flawed as an indicator of the character

and functioning of the decentralized institutions. The causal links between changes in the quality of life of the citizens and functioning, and otherwise of the decentralized institutions are hard to establish. Our observations on the local bodies of Tripura are subject to these limitations.

The first state Human Development Report of Tripura had amply listed the strengths of the decentralization process in the state which still holds good. Taking the discussion beyond the numbers detailed in the preceding paragraphs, we had a series of discussions with functionaries of all kinds of local bodies to get an impression of what and how of their 'day – to – day' role in shaping the development agenda of the state. The local bodies seem to have a strong presence in rural areas and play an active oversight-cum-supportive role in the implementation of most development programmes of the state. The Local bodies ensure that Anganwadi centers, Health sub-centres, schools, and other local institutions are functional. They try to make up for the shortage of financial resources of these institutions like that of AWC by supplementing their fund from their own limited resources, ensure that raw materials for programmes like ICDS or Mid-day meal are procured carefully, and keep track of diverse issues ranging from the incidence of malaria to the distribution of ration cards. The local bodies have also responded overwhelmingly to local demands for small-scale infrastructure projects and employment and social amenities, as evinced by the level of seriousness with which MGNREGS is being implemented in Tripura (Chapter 6).

One major factor for worry in an otherwise comforting picture of efficient local bodies is the inability of the rural local bodies to generate their own resources. It is possible that the resource base is not uniformly strong all over the state and some parts of the state do have higher incidence of poverty; but it is also a fact that while the Nagar Panchayats in Tripura have done quite well in generating their own revenue, the Panchayat bodies have not taken up this aspect of their institutional functions seriously. This has led the rural local bodies to be totally dependent on the transferred resources that may not augur well for their autonomous functioning now or in future.

The second feature that is cause for concern is a somewhat surprising data gap at the state level. The HDR study team proposed to assess the 'institutional responsiveness', defined as the achievement of congruence between community preference and public policies of the local bodies by accessing the data on participation at institutional forums such as Gram Sansads. The

data on the number of people who participated in these deliberations and the social scope of discussion are indirect measures of level of interest and perceived relevance of the institutions. Apparently, this information was not readily available at the state level, either for the Panchayats or the TTAADC institutes. The Tata Institute of Social Sciences had, in the course of carrying out a study on the Status of Devolution in States 2014-15, on behalf of the Ministry of Panchayats, also observed that Tripura, along with Assam and Uttarakhand, has not been able to furnish the required data at the state level.

The non-availability of data projects an image of the state which does not do full justice to its achievement in effective decentralization. In the same study by TISS, Tripura has ranked 17<sup>th</sup> among 25 states in the aggregate indices of Devolution in Policy, but occupied the 9<sup>th</sup> position in the aggregate indices of Devolution in Practice. This indicates that decentralization in the state has a much deeper root than what is evident from the policy documents at the state level (GoI, MoPR, and TISS 2015). This encouraging feature about the practice of decentralization in the state makes it all the more vital to prepare an evidentiary base for the same.

On a broader register of democratic and political decentralization, the ideas and practices of the local government institutions in Tripura shed light on the distinctive elements of democratic politics, governmentality and development in the state. Drawing on the traditional tribal institutions on the one hand and the centrally designed Panchayati Raj system on the other, the local government institutions in Tripura have evolved as two notionally distinct but spatially and socially interconnected institutional streams, which have the elements of both complementarity and tension. While the politically steered negotiation of social diversities and conflicts appear to have contributed much to the restoration of peace and furthering of development in the state, there seems to be a good deal of work left to be done to expand the institutions both conceptually and practically, by drawing on the traditions of the peoples as well as democratic politics and by also going beyond these to achieve fuller autonomy of the people.