

TRIPURA



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Tripura is a small landlocked state located in the Eastern part of India. It shares its border with Bangladesh in the North, South and West & the Indian states – Mizoram & Assam on the East. The social composition of the population of Tripura is diverse with around one-third of the population belonging to the Scheduled Tribes. As per 2011 census the indigenous tribes of the state comprise of altogether 19 communities which constitutes 31.05% of the state's population. Agriculture¹ is the mainstay of Tripura. Due to the hilly terrain of the state, many tribal people are dependent on Jhum² cultivation. Industrial development in the state is limited to tourism, handicrafts and handloom. Some of the salient features of the state are as follows:

Tripura has a rich political history. The state was ruled by 185 kings before it merged with the Indian Union in October 1949 (Directorate of Information Technology, Tripura, 2020). It gained full statehood in January 1972, as per the North-East Reorganisation Act, 1971. With the elections for local bodies in 1978, decentralization of power found its way in the introduction of three-tier Panchayati Raj System in the state. In view of safeguarding the interest of the tribals in the state, a movement was launched by the tribal people for the Council Act, 1979, under which the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) was established.

Subsequently, in 1984, the special provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution were extended to the tribal areas in the state of Tripura. Thus, there exist two legal institutions – the three tier PRI and single tier Village Council (VCs) working towards enhancing local self-government. The table below gives details of the decentralisation set up in the state:

S.No.	Item	Detail
1.	Population (2011 Census)	36.74 lakh
2.	Density of population	350 per sq km
3.	No. of Districts	8- Dhalai, Gomati, Khowai, North Tripura, Sepahijala Tripura, South Tripura, Unakoti and West Tripura
4.	Area	10,486 Sq Km
5.	Literacy	87.22%

S.No.	Item	Detail
1.	Subdivisions	23
2.	Rural development blocks	58
3.	Gram Panchayats + VCs	591
4.	Jilla Parishads	8
5.	Nagar Panchayats	9
6.	Municipal Councils	10
7.	Municipal Corporation	1

Source: www.tripura.gov.in

64% of total employment in the state is engaged in Agriculture. A wide variety of Horticultural / Plantation Crops are produced in Tripura like Pineapple, Orange, Cashew nut, Jackfruit, Coconut, Tea, Rubber, Forest Plantations (www.tripura.gov.in)

It is a practice of cultivation where a piece of forest land is cleared and then the crop is cultivated. The clearing of land is done by burning the trees so that soil is rich in potash and other minerals to sustain the crop.



Though institutionalisation of PRIs has undergone several phases prior to 73rd Amendment Act, participation of women in these processes has been limited. The Act provides scope for their active participation (33% of reservation) and ensure equality, yet the real breakthrough in the power structure is seldom witnessed (Ghosh, 2008)³.

One of the ways strategized by Government of Tripura, to ensure women participation leading to their empowerment was to establish Tripura Rural Livelihood Mission (TRLM). The Mission aims to attain social and economic empowerment of rural poor women (Government of Tripura, 2020).

However, the activities undertaken did not promote any scope for perceptible impact. The qualitative shift in power relations leading to ultimate equal power sharing remained weak and slow. In our informal discussions with the local people in the initial days of field work revealed that most of the SHGs are confined to monotonous key activities of income generation. The regularity of SHG meetings were evident from the documentation about meetings, savings from each member, internal lending rotation,

recoveries of loan and maintenance of proper books of account. Apart from this usual routine they were not engaged in any activity concerned to village development. There was no new and challenging activity taken up by them. Furthermore women also lacked confidence in voicing out their opinions which was beyond the scope of their financial autonomy.

In the light of above, substantial efforts are being made by the state, to strengthen rural self-governance and livelihood base for the poor especially for women. To effectively address the issues of poverty alleviation, women empowerment and holistic rural development, there is a need to optimise efforts through inter-institutional functioning. The convergence of different community building organisations with PRIs will enable better planning and effective functioning of grassroots level institutions. This convergence will bring in synergies between different government programs and schemes. Set in this backdrop, the PRI-CBO convergence was conceived in Tripura and has been implemented in two blocks spread across three districts.

State	No. of Districts	No. of Blocks	No. of GPs/V DC/VC	No. of SHGs	No. of LRGs	No. of I-Mentors	Project Duration
Tripura	1	2	52 GP/VCs	899	228	100	Pilot Phase: Dec'16-August '18
	3	12	295 GP/VCs	7982	1404	87	Scale Up Phase 2: Oct' 18 to MoU in process

³ Ghosh, Bhola Nath. 2008. Women in governance in Tripura. Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi.

PRI-CBO CONVERGENCE PROJECT

Dumburnagar R.D. Block
Gandachara, Dhalai, Tripura

Supported By- KUDUMBASHREE NRC



SHG women participating in one of the capacity building activities

LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT

ON GROUND

HISTORY OF RURAL DECENTRALISATION

Tripura has a long tradition of local self-government. It existed in the form of Village institutions based on tribal customs, which took all important decisions of the community and also resolved the disputes among the community members. These institutions were socially legitimate but not truly democratic as women were not allowed to participate in these councils. However with time, there was a gradual decline in the role of traditional village councils and in 1929 the last king of Tripura Bir Bikram, initiated an Act, which made considerable departure from the traditional way of governance. Under the act, a number of contiguous villages were grouped together. With the merger of Tripura with India the process further developed. There was no effort made to revive the traditional way of governance. Rather the Government enacted the Tripura Panchayati Raj Act, 1959. With this act the age old village council was abolished. Following this, the entire structure of local self-government was changed (Chakraborty, 2018)⁴.

The political party in power had a deep influence in the functioning of PRIs. Despite several attempts made post independent era, to make planning, development and decision making democratic, Panchayats largely remained in statute books. However the year 1978, was a watershed in the history of rural governance in Tripura, as the Left Front government came into power. Territories of villages were reconstituted, elections were conducted through secret ballot, Tripura Block Panchayat Samitis Act was passed, separate Directorate of Panchayats was created and a training institute was established. The strong presence of Communist party in local self-government was evident from the such initiatives. In this regard Dr. Jayant, affirmatively stated the importance of decentralisation to local self-governance was given top priority during left rule.... "the emotions and sentiments of the tribal's are merely recognised by the governments every time but efforts to address are almost

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE AND DEVOLUTION OF POWER

In Tripura, village Panchayat is known as Gram Panchayat (GP) in the PRI areas and Village Council (VC) in the 6th Schedule areas. The existence of two parallel institutions in the governance of rural areas often leads to friction because of conflict of interests and power struggle between them and their presence in a geographical area. For instance, the hierarchical structure: Village council (VC) at Gram level is equivalent to Gram Panchayat (GP); Zonal office at block level is equivalent to Panchayat Samiti and Autonomous District Council (ADC) at District – an equivalent to the Zilla Parishad.

There are three bodies in governance structure to manage rural and urban local bodies:

- i) Gram level –Village Council (VCs)
- ii) Block level – Gram Panchayats (GPs)
- iii) Town level – Nagar Panchayats.

In this institutional set up, ADCs control all the three bodies. However, each of these bodies have their own demands and priorities when it comes to their development agenda. This in

non- existent”.

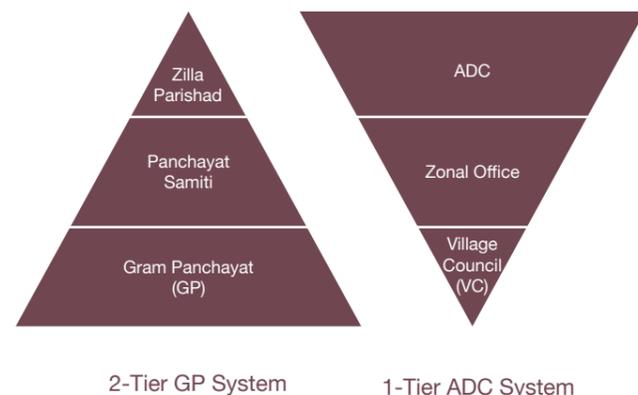
In the year 1988, under the Congress rule, there was major setback in the democratic decentralisation process where in block development officers were appointed to supervise the function of gram panchayat (Athreya).

In conformity with the purpose, substance and direction of the Constitution, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, the Tripura Panchayat Act, 1993 came into being. The goal of the Act is to bestow Panchayats with functions and powers which will enable them to function as vibrant institutions of local self-government with greater autonomy. However, progress made in this front has been slow and weak. For instance, the Gramodaya Mission which aims to recreate agro rural India through comprehensive economic rejuvenation and people's participation also encountered many challenges. The meticulously planned village transformation project was headed by the CM along with four ministers from rural development ministry and four external members from various line departments/ think-tanks working on the issues related to the state. These in turn created biases among the people involved as they belonged to different service departments holding different positions. Moreover this kind of an initiative got limited to the consolidation of the village issues at the block level. There were no serious discussion and deliberations on the issues of development from the ground level. The approach has remained top down with little effort made to initiate planning from the grassroots level. In this regard Dr. Jayanta Choudhury (Associate Professor - National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (NIRD & PR), North Eastern Regional Centre, Guwahati) said, "De-centralization is a tough word and no one wants to de-centralize once power comes in”.

turn leads to weakening of the newly created institutional set up. This has paved a way for creation of a new institution called District Planning Committee (DPC) headed by a Minister from Rural Development as the Chairman. Since the administrative arrangement of this committee is not as per the ADC act, its efficacy is at stake. Under this scenario, the State takes control over funds and makes all the vital decisions on behalf of the committee. This according to Dr. Jayant was a contradiction to the idea behind decentralization which emphasizes on autonomy of the grassroots institutions. Though the three tier system exists in the State, the actual functioning of the system (at every level) is questionable. Overarching control of the ADC has been a stumbling block in the independent functioning of the system.

Though the institutional structure of ADC is similar to that of three tier GP system the power remains centralized at district level and Chief Executive Member (CEM) continues to act as a Minister rather than being executive officer. Likewise, the devolution of functions is also similar to that of three tier GP system. In ADC hierarchical system rural secretary is equivalent to panchayat secretary. The financial powers have a similar hierarchy where VC is equivalent to GP.

However there exists a constant tussle between CEM, Minister and ADCs as there are confusion in the matters of decisions that are to be made.



The concentration of power with ADC has grown with time. As ADCs are present across all the districts, they continue to take charge of entire rural governance. It was only during the implementation of the MNREGA in the state, the hegemony of ADC's in all matters was highlighted by the communities. Prioritization of plans, schemes and fund flow was pre planned and implemented in villages. This was largely dependent on the priorities set by ADCs.

Dr. Jayanta choudhury has more than two decades of research experience and has spent considerable amount of time in understanding de-centralisation & LSG in Tripura.



Dr. Jayant Choudhury
Associate Professor
NIRD & PR-North Eastern
Regional Center, Guwahati

The complex nature of planning process is not free from the control of the Central Government and State Government. Though planning starts from the Village level institution, it has to pass through different levels before getting implemented. In addition to the already existing frictions and power struggle between the multiple institutions, the introduction of GPDP has added more complications. With no guideline to prepare development plans, each village has different approach to draft a plan. This in turn also has led to difference in the priorities given to plans at different level of bureaucratic set up. The problem is doubled in Tripura as the existence of special rules and acts for reserved areas in hilly regions restricts the uniform functioning of institutions across the state. Under this scenario the gap between the Gram level planning and the district level administration is bound to grow under the GPDP regime, unless there is bottom-up approach with clear specification of the functions to be performed at each level, which calls for an "Integration" between village-block-district-state- central in terms of pronouncing the de-centralization idea.

In the implementation phase though there are clear specifications on functions to be performed by each institution at every level, harmony between institutions is largely often disturbed. Any development agenda can only progress when the concerned institutions work in coordination and cooperation.

Additionally, the new government in Tripura post state assembly election in 2018, posed new challenges to the project. The elections were held in GP areas leading to the formation of Panchayat committees. The members of the committee were appointed majorly under the influence of the party in power. Thus, these committees had strong influence of the political parties in their functioning. Also, in many VCs, elections were yet to take place. On the other hand, the elections in GPs were over and they were geared up for the convergence project. For them the next step was to get the new office bearers to get acquainted and trained with the functioning of PRI-CBO Convergence project.

FUNDING

Insufficient funds, delay in transfer of money and low awareness level among people about the budget meant for village developmental activities has been one of the biggest hurdles in making the institutions efficient and effective. Centre, State and other development agencies provide fund to the institutions of local self-government in Tripura. However due to either delay in the transfer of funds or its non-utilisation due to lack of awareness about, development initiatives have been lagging behind. Dr. Jayant, mentioned, there was funding for GPDP from 14th Finance commission which was to be utilized by both VCs and GPs. However that fund has not been utilised. On contrary, some of the other states in the NE region where there are no established three tier system, funds are being pooled from various sources for the purpose of GPDP participation. Even, NIRD also has got funds for capacity building projects meant for GPDP. Such facts highlighted the need to make grassroots institutions more participative and informed in nature so that the funds are effectively utilised for the cause of development. In Tripura, 30% of the money from the budget is allotted to VCs as part of Village development fund, who are entrusted to prioritise plans and accordingly allocate fund for each work. In reality VCs often ran out of sufficient money leading to delay in implementation of developmental work. In this regard the BDO of Dhumburnagar, stressed that the flow of fund in VCs was minimum when compared to GPs. Also, that fund was insufficient to meet 40% material costs incurred under MGNREGA scheme. No funds were received from 14th Finance Commission (FC) but it is believed by the BDO that the funds will be received from the 15th FC as the deliberations are underway.

**Mr. ---, in his capacity as ---
-has delivered various Rural development programmes under both the ADC & 3 tier GP system**



Dr. Jayant Choudhury
Block Development Officer
(BDO)

NOMENCLATURE OF POLICIES & PROGRAMS – A CONFUSION

Policy intervention is a requisite to bring progressive and enduring change. It also provides stability to formal institutions to function both effectively and efficiently. However policies and programs are continuously revised, renamed and re-introduced by centrally sponsored schemes. This has led to lot of confusions among the people stated Dr. Jayant. For instance, the total sanitation campaign (TSC) of 2005, is now called Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM). The goal of both the programs are similar, however the expected outcome of both the programs are yet to be seen. A study conducted by few researchers brought into light that one of the blocks in the state, which was declared as ODF under TSC program continues to be affected by open defecation even now. Also, the concept of SHGs during left regime was active however with time; many of them have become dysfunctional. Likewise, the functioning of SHGs came under North East Rural Livelihood Project (NERLP) before and now it is under NRLM, which looks more enduring as it is convergence friendly. Despite these challenges, one aspect which has remained constant is governments in power have always been supportive of various programs under ADCs and other development initiatives undertaken by international development agencies.

The complex institutional set up coupled with the weak coordination between them while dispensing their responsibilities have been the biggest challenge in Tripura's local governance structure. Though the progressive reforms brought by Communist party contributed significantly in the earlier phases of decentralization, the notable impact of their initiatives became less over a period of time. This has been largely attributed to the changing political scenario both in the state and centre. The low awareness level among people especially the marginalised (women and tribes) has deepened the problem. With people having very little or no knowledge about the schemes, budget allocation and entitlements, the potentials of the institutions in local self-governance in Tripura are underutilised. This

has paved a way to strengthen these institutions through the implementation of convergence project which is dealt in the next section.

REALITIES FROM THE PROJECT LOCATIONS

Set in the backdrop of poorly working units of local self-governance the PRI-CBO Convergence project was implemented in the State of Tripura in the year 2017. In line with PRI-CBO Convergence project implemented in other states, SHGs are the core CBO. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between TRLM & KS NRO was signed in December 2016. Matarbari and Killa blocks of South Tripura district (50 nos. of GP+VC) were selected in the pilot phase of convergence project. ADCs and PRI came under the same block (13 GPs & 21 VCs) in these villages. A team of 12 Mentors from KS NRO went to Tripura in January 2017 to train the SHGs in these two blocks.

PILOT PHASE

In the initial days of the project, the Mentors dedicated adequate time in understanding the problems faced by SHGs in discharging the duties entrusted to them, prospects of taking initiatives for their development, ways to improve their leadership qualities. This phase of the project was the most crucial and challenging period for both the Mentors and the communities. For Mentors it meant building trust among SHGs members, expand their avenues of participation in decision making processes, make them skillful and infuse leadership qualities. This in turn would enable them to work independently and eventually work across other districts. This would also help in scaling up of the project in the later stages. For the communities especially for SHG members, it was paving a way for improvement in the knowledge about myriad of issues ranging from availing their entitlements, to recognizing their self-worth and potential and their ability to take decisions in crucial matters pertaining to public domain. The relentless and persistent work done by the Mentors encountered several challenges which are highlighted below.

No. of Districts	No. of Blocks	No. of Professionals	No. of Mentors
2	2	4	12

Pilot Profile

INITIAL BOTTLENECKS Geography

The hilly terrain of the project villages was one of the biggest challenges. The villages were scattered with limited transport facilities and were far from the Gram Panchayats. This in turn reduced people's motivation to commute to panchayat office or line departments to present their common problems. Despite prior planning by the Mentors to reach the villages, there was delay or postponement of the scheduled activities to be carried out in the project.

Socio-Cultural set up

The unique socio-cultural set up (different ethnic groups have their own custom and cultural practices) and challenging geography i.e., 67% of its land area comes under forest cover (they have different rules and special administrative powers) of Tripura poses big challenge to bring in holistic development at grassroots. The population in these villages belonged to different socio-cultural background⁵ which in turn led to conflict of interests among the people.

Ethnic composition and language constraints

Mentors had to be extra conscious and sensitive with the communities because of their unique socio-ethnic composition. The interactions between the communities were limited to

exchange of goods purely on monetary lines. Due to the absence of common language⁶ to be used while interactions, Mentors had to often use sign language to enact out the message. This consumed more time in capacity building activity. As the demands & entitlements of the ethnic groups differed from each other, Mentors had to ensure that there were no biases in addressing their demands in the planning phase.

Rapport Building

To establish a smooth and friendly relationship with women, time and place of meetings was arranged to their (women) convenience. The place of meeting was usually at home. In spite of all precautionary methods taken, some of the women became very conscious and spoke in a guarded manner. Only with time, they became free and frank in expressing their views to the Mentors. This rapport building activity took around 6 months.



One of the Mentors using an innovative way to communicate with the community

⁵ The GPs in the plain areas of the State consists of non-tribal populations with more nos. of Bengali speaking communities. The VCs in the ADC areas (tribal population in the hilly, forest areas) has typical customary practices

⁶ The communities spoke either Kak-Barak, Sabrum, Halam or Bangla which limited the scope of exchange of information or knowledge among the people.

IMPROVEMENT IN WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

Major Success from Pilot Phase

The convergence project brought a positive change in attitude with respect to women's role in society. There is no longer any strong objection to their ability to come out of domestic boundaries and take part in decision making processes. They also found themselves comfortable in interacting with the PRI officials. In an interview with Kallol Roy⁷ (Block Mission Coordinator, TRLM, Kila block) said, 'Initially the focus of SHG women was on financial security but the PRI-CBO convergence Project had opened up the possibility of linkages to line departments in their minds'. Women spoke about their problems in Panchayats and SHGs. In another instance Tamal Badiya Upa-pradhan (Panchayat Vice President) East Pilak, one of the villages in Matarbari block expressed how women who were initially hesitant to go to gram sabhas were now more confident and shares an improved rapport with the PRI officials. They are able to make effective conversations. Their awareness is turning to useful and ward wise development needs are getting integrated in to the GPDP.

Eventually women became active participants in planning the processes such as PAE & EAP and worked towards reforming public service delivery. This progressive change was possible with time, continuous support and handholding through various capacity building programmes from the Mentors. The table below provides information on the outcome of capacity building activity carried out in the project.

The capacity building activity saw increased involvement of women. They started participating in the VO discussions, demanding their entitlements & schemes as identified in PAE & EAP exercise. They were also willing to interact with line departments such as education, health. For instance, in one of the villages the number of VOs increased from 33 to 58. Mothers Committees⁸ were created as an outcome of awareness created by LRG members among the mothers of SHGs. These were some of the significant outcomes of the project initiatives. Thus, direct participation of women increased the coordination among themselves and between the authorities thereby making the process more transparent, effective and flexible for modification when required.

State	No of Local Cadre Trained	No of Internal Mentors Trained	No of VO Members Trained	No of PRI Members Oriented
Tripura	1404	87	344	556



⁸ Mothers of children registered in Anganwadi Centres together form a group known as Mothers Committee (MC) that helps in management and supervision of ICDS scheme, mobilization of beneficiaries and counselling. MC is one of the CBOs by itself. Anganwadi Centres: Anganwadi is a rural child care centre and it is part of ICDS in order to manage the child hunger & malnutrition ICDS: It is a government programme which provides food, preschool education, primary healthcare, immunization, health check-up and referral services to children under 6 years of age and their mothers

⁷ Works with TRLM for past three years and has been involved in the project since its inception.

SCALE-UP PHASE

The bottom-up approach for holistic development of villages has been the central idea behind the convergence project. This essentially meant local people especially women participate in decision making about strategy and selection of priorities in their local areas. The convergence project immensely contributed in the expansion of the sphere in which women participated. In this regard Kallol stated that SHGs now focus on personal development, upliftment of the family, supporting the neighborhood as well as to contribute for the community development. He further said

“.....if it continues for some more time in this state, the outreach would enable many more didis to get in to this system which would add more vigor to this on-going movement..... TRLM can bank on this premise further to add-on the livelihood intervention by bringing more line departments and will provide more training in both farming & non-farming areas.....”

The support extended by SRLM officials throughout the convergence project played an instrumental role in the Scale-up phase. Regular updates about the project activities and its remarkable impact were regularly shared to the BDOs and other rural development officials by SRLM team. In a way, it has motivated the BDOs to implement the project in other areas too as the work done by the Mentors was bringing in outcomes which were otherwise not showing.

Kallol Roy works with TRLM as a Block Mission Coordinator and is closely involved with PRI-CBO convergence project right from the beginning



Kallol Roy
Block Mission Coordinator -
TSRLM
Killa block

9 The process of selection of I-Mentors undergoes a strict screening under which a thorough examination is done to ensure that they possess dedication, sincerity and strong leadership qualities.

Based on the positive outcomes in terms of women's participation at grassroots level, it then was decided to implement the project in new areas. This happened towards the end of the pilot phase where by a quick screening was done to select the districts where the project could be extended. Following this, 10 blocks spread across three districts - Dhalai, Gomati and South Tripura were selected. These areas covered a total of 167 GPs and 128 VCs. For a smooth implementation of the project, KS NRO decided to form a new cadre of I-Mentors⁹, who in turn will identify and train LRGs. The active LRGs were identified from the pilot phase areas.

No. of Districts	No. of Blocks	No. of Professionals	No. of Mentors
3	12	4	12

Scale-up Profile

Of the 100 LRG members identified in the pilot phase of the project, 88 of them voluntarily continued to actively work under the PRI-CBO Convergence project in the scale up areas. These LRGs in-turn became Internal Mentors whose responsibility was to now manage 2-4 blocks in the same district in the newly introduced project areas¹⁰. While doing this, the Mentors from Kerala, gradually withdrew from their responsibilities. This was a strategy applied by the Mentors to build the capacity of local women groups to independently work in the project initiatives.



Developing I-Mentors in to Foot Soldiers of the community

10 This was a major progress in the entire scale up phase of the project as the women who were once hesitant to step out in the public sphere had now got empowered to actively participate in development processes. This also led to building a robust social capital among the I-Mentors and LRGs.

BOTTLENECK DURING THE SCALE-UP

In-effectiveness of the institutions have also delayed in actual functioning of three tier system. For instance, most of the GPs in the state have been dysfunctional, post state assembly elections in 2018. Under such a scenario the elections for VCs are scheduled to take place in March 2020. In one of our interviews, the BDO of Dhumburnagar stated, “There is a mandate for development review meeting with VC chairman and Block Advisory Committee meeting to be conducted every month at the block level as per the guideline enshrined in Block Advisory Committee. However, due to the absence of the VC Chairman or Officer-in-charge, these meetings are expected to happen only after the elections in March 2020. In addition to this, there is heavy political influence on the Panchayat committees.” Hence, Dr. Jayant stated that, “the first and major task post elections will be to impart training for GPs, PRI officials and VC chairman. This in turn will consume time and resources for a continuous capacity building.” The new government at state is still evolving and following which, the mode of convergence at grass-roots level and its effective functioning will take place.

An innovative exercise where in all the newly elected PRI officials and key representatives of line departments were invited, inducted and appraised about the progress of the PRI-CBO Project by the VOs, in all the project locations. This welcoming event was a huge success and timely one post elections that helped build the rapport among all the stakeholders. Besides the initial exercise, a true sense of community participation was created through the strategy of continuous trainings of the OBs of VOs at the very initial stage itself. This has been witnessed in the newly expanded areas in the Scale-up phase. The Mentors were also optimistic about participation of cadre of women from SHGs in the up-coming VC elections in the May 2020.

PARTICIPATION IN DIVERSE ACTIVITIES

The diverse domains in which women's participation grew with time and continuous capacity building was evident when SHGs in GPs/VCs developed a comprehensive demand list as part of VPRP¹¹. The consolidation of demands for livelihood, entitlement, resource, basic infrastructure development and plans to address social development issues were part of VPRP. Gathering information on these aspects required continuous interactions, discussions and exchange of information among the SHG members, which weakened their inhibitions about the convergence project and also towards the intentions of the Mentors. This was one of the most powerful outcomes of the entire project as it managed to empower SHG members. The Mentors focused on skill building and trained the SHGs to develop VPRP plan in a systematic manner. The table below provides details of the no. of people trained for this activity.



State	No. of Internal mentors trained	No. of LRGs trained	No. of VOs oriented	No. of Local Government Institutions Oriented
Tripura	84	1194	443	173 GP 122 VC

Capacity building

The demands (in form of schemes and entitlements) were listed under Village Poverty Reduction Plan, categorized in the following manner:

Entitlement Plan	Livelihood Plan	Basic Infrastructure & Resource Development	Social Development
153	61	228	30

VPRP Demands



Presenting the VPRP to Pradhan by VO Head

The signs of enhanced participation were evident when SHGs were mobilized to participate in Gram Sabha meetings held between October & December. This mobilization was possible only because of the willingness and interest expressed by them during the initial phase of capacity building activities. This was a remarkable achievement in the entire project as it broke the erstwhile practice of limiting women's participation to domestic terrain. Furthermore, the ability to express their views in a public sphere instilled a great sense of confidence in women. The demands specifically pertaining to women found their way in plans formulated. The identity crisis of women slowly got eroded and the power of collective action found its way in the project areas. The VPRP was submitted to the Village Pradhans in GPs and Chairmen in the VCs in the Gram Sabha meetings. Later this list was consolidated and integrated with GPDP and were finally uploaded in the national portal under the MoPR & MoRD. Under the convergence project (in its scale phase) there are a total of 295 GPs, VCs and VDCs, of which 162 of these had uploaded their plans in the portal in January 2020.

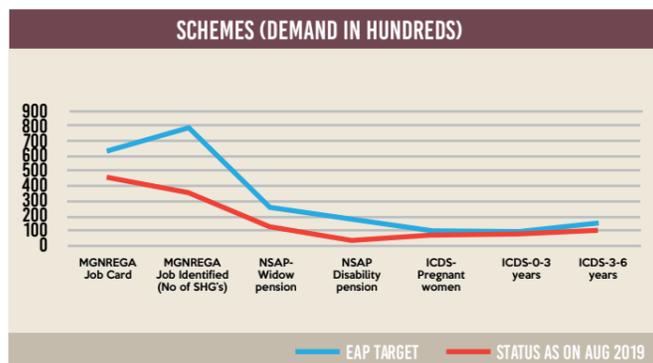
Convergence of GP/VC/VDCs	Plans Uploaded in Plan Plus*
295	162

GPDP status

11 This was introduced in the year 2017 (pilot phase). During this period initiatives were made to integrate it with GP2RP. It was only in 2018, when GPDP was introduced by the central government, VPRP was to be integrated with GPDP.

It was out of a similar GPDP in the 2018 that some of the demands got prioritized and funds were sanctioned. One such plan that got implemented was renovation of Anganwadi centres and also construction of new compound wall and kitchen in the same centre. This was done to monitor the kitchen for hygiene, sanitation and its overall environment. This led to the identification of actual needs of Anaganwadis (through Need Assessment). This example has showcased effective convergence of the line departments and the CBOs in meeting the expected demand. It also instilled confidence among the people in the power of

collective participation to identify, demand, implement and monitor the public service delivery. In the above-mentioned case, it was the coming together of panchayat, education department & ICDS which was witnessed. Kallol in this regard stated that the awareness on entitlements & schemes has increased a lot and the PRI officials including 'Pradhan' are now very conscious while dealing with the demands of CBOs. This has been possible because of the technical assistance provided by KS NRO. Status of some other plans conceived in 2018 vis-à-vis August 2019.



Status of some other plans conceived in 2018 vis-à-vis August 2019

PROJECT IMPACT ON CAMPAIGNING & MOBILIZATION

Major Success from Scale Up Phase

In addition to the improved and enhanced participation of women in the governance mechanism, the convergence project built a robust social network (Social Capital) among them. The coming together of different SHG groups widened the social circle of women who could now confidently travel to new villages to involve more members in the project. This also broke the social differences and prejudices they had in the initial phase of the project. An SHG member said, "We don't worry too about our accommodation and food when we travel across the village because we are now familiar with members of SHGs in neighboring villages, we stay with them when it is required".

the 'Upa-pradhan' has witnessed the PRI-CBO convergence through various lenses. In an interview with him he said, " I have been an individual in the village -then a ward member - and today being a PRI- official, I had the opportunity to see the entire transformation and the way this PRI-CBO Convergence project improved the confidence of women and improved the Institutional delivery. This is phenomenal..... I am the luckiest person since I got to become the 'Upa-pradhan' when more women are participating in the village development and so our efforts are recognized in most of the households in this GP. Thanks to the PRI-CBO Convergence project."

S.No	Name of Districts	No of GP/Vcs	No of GP/Vcs where GS took Place	Total Attendance in Gram Sabha	Total Women Participation	Total SHG Participation	% SHG Participation
1	Gomati	88	56	6098	4863	4863	79.3%
2	Dhalai	82	77	6913	5315	5231	75.66%
3	South Tripura	100	96	14993	12133	11543	76.98%

Status of Gram Sabha Participation



Active women participation in the Gram Sabha meeting

The positive changes brought through this convergence project were appreciated by beneficiaries too. For instance, Tamal Baidya from being a normal resident to a Ward member and then

A striking example of people's participation in a truly democratic and participative way was witnessed in Maa Durga Village Organization (VO) of Muhuripur RF GP in Jolaibari block. The Vulnerability Reduction Plan (VRP) initiative of TRLM was already underway in the village. The Mentors of KS-NRO worked with them to come up with a robust VRP. Under the guidance of Mentors, a village mapping process through which VO collected, collated and presented the primary information of the vulnerable group. This systematic exercise helped them to not only identify the 11 most vulnerable families in the village but also come up with a list of their needs which had to be addressed in the final plan of action. Following these two days of rigorous activity, a feasible plan was drawn out which included the most urgent and important needs of the vulnerable families. The plan also highlighted the need for gram sabha and functions to be performed by each VO. Based on this, the budget matters were discussed and a total amount of 59,000 rupees was allocated for the 11 vulnerable families.

Though progressive changes are happening at the grassroots level, complete convergence with line departments is the next activity planned if the duration is extended. Initiatives are underway to bridge this gap. In addition to the anganwadi works for which the health & education department convergence happened, there are also other instances like the convergence between ASHA workers, education department and PRI officials for adolescent issue awareness and campaigns.

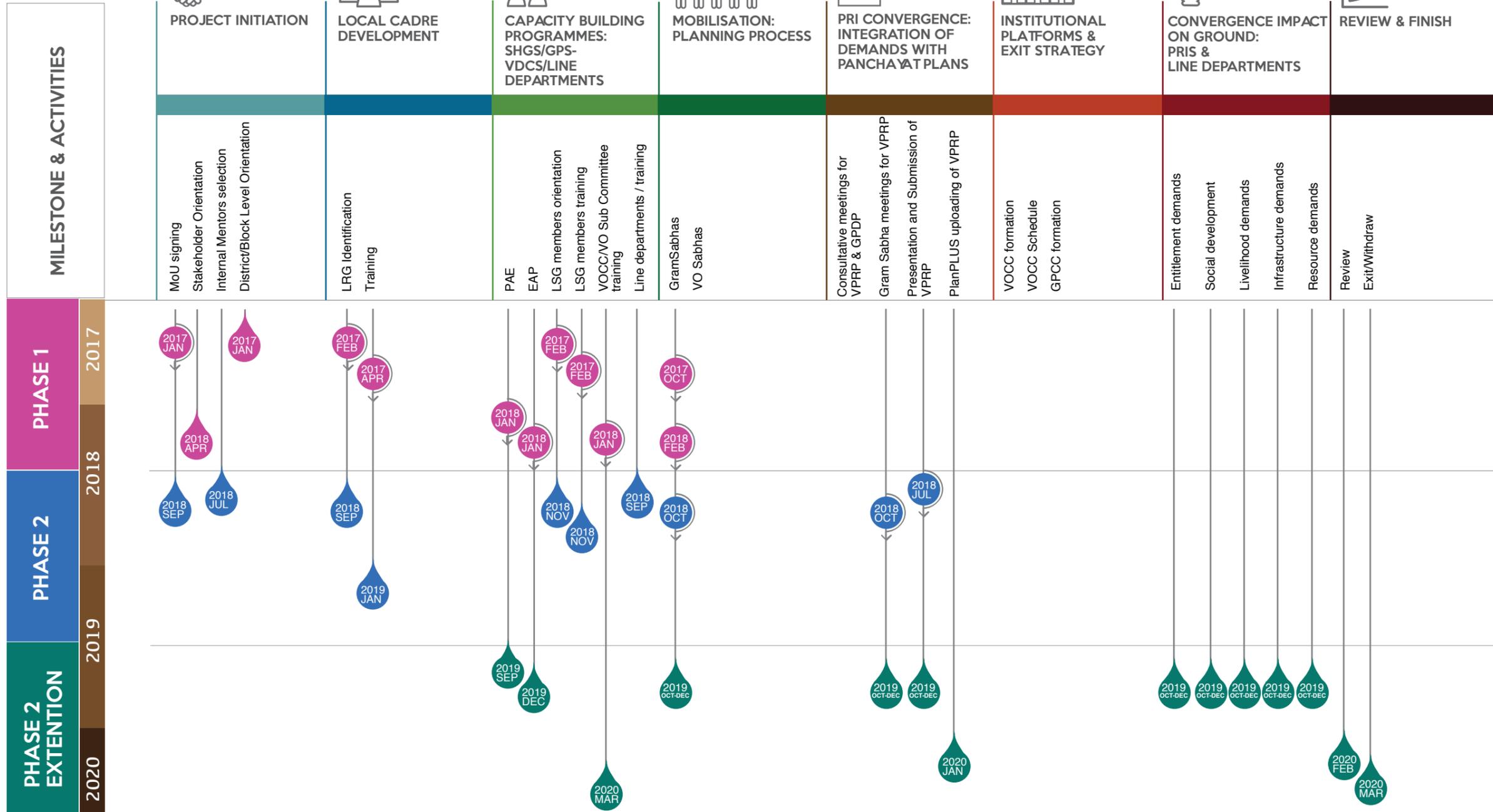


Tamaal Baidya
Up-Pradhan
East Pilak village

Tamaal Baidya has been part of SHGs & VOs before he became the Up-pradhan / vice president of the village panchayat.

On a whole PRI-CBO Convergence project has succeeded to empower women in the project villages. However such progresses are often posed with the question of their sustainability post project completion. It was to this challenge that I-Mentors were identified and carefully trained from the beginning of the project cycle. With the prior experience and knowledge about the project goals, they were able to work with ease and confidence. In the last phase (January- March 2020) of the project, training was given to build capacities of the women

in organizing and functioning of I- Mentors and LRGS. This included - working with VOs in convening meetings, training programs, PAE exercises, minutes recording, panchayat & line department coordination, monitoring the demand status of GPDP and entitlement targets. This is a conscious exit strategy so that the cadre of LRGS and I-Mentors of these blocks will function on their own, once the resources of KS NRO which include Mentors and Field professionals are withdrawn from April 2020.



IMPACT MERITS

	PHASE 1	PHASE 2		PHASE 1	PHASE 2
PAE	780 SHGs	7835 SHGs	Social development		30 Plans
EAP	57 VOs	411 VOs	Livelihood demands		61 Plans
Gram Sabhas		76% SHG WOMEN	Infrastructure demands		7138 Demands
Entitlement demands		153 GP/VCs	Resource demands		374 Plans