APPENDIX - D

PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM IN ASSAM:
CURRENT STRUCTURE

Panchayati Raj Institutions: The grassroots units of self-government - have been proclaimed as the vehicles of socio-economic transformation in rural India. Effective and meaningful functioning of these bodies would depend on active involvement, contribution and participation of its citizens both male and female. Gandhiji's dream of every village being a republic and Panchayats having powers has been translated into reality with the introduction of the three-tier Panchayati Raj system to enlist people's participation in rural reconstruction. April 24, 1993 is a landmark day in the history of Panchayati Raj in India as on this day the constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 came into force to provide constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Evolution of Panchayati Raj System in Assam: The Rural Panchayat Act 1948. Under this system there were two tiers of Panchayats- Primary Panchayats at village level and Rural Panchayats at Mouza level.

Assam Panchayati Raj Act 1959: Under this act a three-tier system was intro-
duce they are Gaon Panchayat, Anchalik Panchayat and Mohokuma Parishad.

**Assam Panchayati Raj Act 1972**: Under this system again a two-tier system was introduced they are Gaon Panchayat and Mohokuma Parishad.

**Assam Panchayati Raj Act 1986**: Under this act again a three-tier system is introduced- Gaon Panchayat, Anchalik Panchayat & Mohokuma Parishad.

**Assam Panchayati Act 1994**: A three-tier system with Zilla parishad has been introduce- Gaon Panchayat, Anchalik Panchayat and Zilla Parishad.

**73rd Amendment Act, 1992 The Salient Features of the Act are**:

a) To provide 3-tier system of Panchayat Raj for all the States having population of over 20 Lakhs.

b) To hold Panchayat Elections regularly every 5 years.

c) To provide reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Women (not less than 33%)

d) To appoint State Finance Commission to make recommendations as regards the financial powers of the Panchayats.

e) To constitute District Planning Committee to prepare draft development plan for the district as a whole.

**Powers and Responsibilities**: According to the Constitution, Panchayats shall be given powers and authority to function as institutions of self-government. The following powers and responsibilities are to be delegated to Panchayats at the appropriate level:

a) Preparation of Plan for economic development and social justice.

b) Implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice in
relation to 29 subjects given in Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution.

c) To levy, collect and appropriate taxes, duties, tolls and fees.

Structure of the Panchayati Raj System in Assam:

**Gaon Panchayats:**

a) President- directly elected by people.

b) One Vice President- to be elected from among the members of Gaon Panchayat.

c) Ten members- directly elected by people.

**Anchalik Panchayats:**

a) President- to be elected by the elected members of the Anchalik Panchayats.

b) Vice President- to be elected by the elected members of the Anchalik Panchayats.

c) Members- One member from each Gaon Panchayat area to be directly elected by people. President of the Gaon Panchayats falling within the jurisdiction of the Anchalik Panchayat. Members of Parliament and Legislative Assembly.

**Zilla Parishad:**

a) President- elected from among the directly elected members of Zilla Parishad.

b) Vice President- elected from among the directly elected members of Zilla Parishad.

c) Members-

1. Members directly elected from the Zila Parishad constituencies of the district.

2. Presidents of the Anchalik Panchayats.
3. Members of House of people & membr of Legislative Assembly.

Functions of the Panchayati Raj Bodies: Gaon Panchayat:
1. Preparation of Annual Plans for the development of the Gaon Panchayat area.
2. Preparation Annual Budget of Gaon Panchayat.
5. Organizing voluntary labours and contribution for community works.
6. maintenance of essential statistics of villages.
7. Such other development works as may be entrusted.

Anchalik Panchayat:
a. Preparation of Annual Plan in respect of the schemes entrusted to it by virtue of the Act and those assigned to it by the Government or the Zilla Parishad and submission there of the Zilla Parishad within the prescribed time for integration with the District Plan;
b. Consideration and consolidation of the Annual Plans of all Gaon Panchayats under the Anchalik Panchayat and submission of consolidated plan to the Zilla Parishad;
c. Preparation of Annual Budget of the Anchalik Panchayat and submission to Zilla Parishad for approval within the prescribed time.
d. Performing such functions and executing such works as may be entrusted to it by government or the Zilla Parishad;
e. To assist the government in relief operation in natural calamities;
f. Such other development works as may be entrusted.

Zilla Parishad: It should be the function of a Zilla parishad to prepare plans for economic development and social justice of the district and ensure the co-ordinated
implementation of such plan.

**Standing committees Gaon Panchayat:** Three standing committees, they are

a. Development committee.
b. Social justice committee.
c. Social welfare committee.

**Members:** Each committee shall consist of not less than three of more than four members elected from among the elected members of the Gaon Panchayats.

**Functions:** The standing committee shall perform the functions relating to the development of the rural areas and its people to the extent powers are delegated from the Gaon Panchayat.

**Anchalik Panchayat:** Three committees, they are

a. General standing committee.
b. Finance, Audit and Planning committee.
c. Social justice committee.

**Members:** Each standing committee shall consists of such number of members not exceeding six including the Chairman, as may be specified by the Anchalik Panchayat and chosen by the Anchalik panchayat from amongst its members.

**Functions:** The standing committee shall perform the functions relating to the development of the rural areas and its people to the extent powers are delegated from the Anchalik Panchayat.

**Zilla Parishhad:** Four committees, they are

a. General standing committee.
b. Finance and Audit committee.
c. Social justice committee.
d. Planning and development committee.

**Members** : Each standing committee shall consist of such number of members not exceeding five including the Chairman as specified by the Zilla Parishad from amongst its members whose terms will be one year at a time.

**Functions** : Standing committees shall perform functions to the extent, powers are delegated to them by the Zilla parishad.

**Gram Sabha** : "Gram Sabha' means a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within the area of "Gaon Panchayat". The Gram Sabha has been designed to be the place where villagers will discuss development issues, plan accordingly, initiate development programmes and select beneficiaries for the schemes. Functions of Gram Sabha under Assam Panchayat Act. 1994 : Gram Sabha Shall consider the following matters and may make recommendations and suggestions to the Gaon Panchayats.

1. The report in respect of development programme of the Gaon Panchayat relating to the preceding year and development programme proposed to be undertaken during the current year;

2. The promotion of unity and harmony among all sections of society in the villages;

3. Such other matters as may be prescribed. Functions :

4. Mobilizing voluntary labour and contribution in kind and cash for the community welfare programmes.

5. Identification of beneficiaries for the implementation of development schemes
pertaining to the villages.

6. Gram Sabha shall meet from time but a period of three months shall not intervene any two meetings. Sources of income for Panchayats:

a) Share in land revenue.
b) Local rates.
c) Revenue earned from the settlement of hatt, fisheries, etc.
d) House taxes & other taxes as specified in Assam Panchayatai Raj Act.
e) Fees for providing amenities, cess & tolls.
f) Contribution & grants.
g) Fine and penalties.

Rural people has got a noble duty to ensure that the Panchayati Raj dodies can mobilize resources from the above sources so that these bodies can work for the socio economic development of the areas.

**Reservations for Women** : 73rd Amendment of the Constitution in the year 1992 reserved 33% seats for women in Panchayats. Accordingly, the provision has been incorporated under Assam Panchayati Raj Act. This provision is a major move towards strengthening the position of rural women. The introduction of women in sizable numbers into the new Panchayati Raj Institutions is expected to bring qualitative change in the matters relating to health nutrition, children welfare, family care, drinking water etc.

**Reservation for SC/ST** : There is a mandatory provision for reservation of seats for SC/ST in every tier of Panchayati Raj System. The reservation for SC/ST is another significant aspect for development of disadvantaged groups in the rural areas.

**Role of Panchayats is Human Resource Development** :

a. Panchayati Raj Institution should ensure development of human resources by providing weak and under privileged opportunities like education, training, basic health

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services necessary for their growth and development.

b. Panchayati Raj Institutes should ensure that all the sections of the society particularly weaker section including women and girl child get adequate opportunity for developing human resource potential.

c. Panchayat can play a major role in development of human resource for weaker section by disseminating information of special development programmes for them.

d. Voluntary groups and local agencies should be encouraged by PRIs in effective implementation of human resource development programmes.

**Role of Panchayats in Social Mobilization and Participation for Development**

Panchayati Raj system has provided avenues for facilitating people's participation at the grass-root level in the following ways:

a. Gram Sabha will provide an open forum for discussion on various village level development activities thereby ensuring peoples participation.

b. Representation of weaker sections in the decision making process.

c. Empowering rural women through an induction of 1/3 reservation in the Panchayati Raj Bodies.

**Panchayati Raj System and Micro Level Planning**

Planned development being an essential feature of Indian economy, Panchayati Raj Institutions have to play an effective role in the preparation of planning for socio economic development of the rural areas. Each tier has got responsibilities to plan for the socio economic development of the rural people as per their felt need.

*Source: Panchayat and Rural Development Department, Government of Assam.*