

Good Governance: A Review on Assam, India's Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD)

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ABSTRACT The present study is undertaken with a view to find out the Bodo and non-Bodo's perception towards accountability, transparency and inclusiveness of VCDC. VCDC is a local government body arranged in BTAD at the base. It was hypothesised that there is no significant difference between Bodo and non-Bodo's perception towards the three principles of good governance. For verification of these hypotheses, the data was collected from 120 respondents from two VCDC, namely, Borshijhora and Hogmabil under Dotma Development Block of Kokrajhar, BTAD, Assam. The statistical technique used were Measures of Central Tendency, Measures of Variability and 't' test. The findings of the present study revealed that statistically significant differences exist between Bodo and non-Bodo's perception towards accountability, transparency and inclusiveness of VCDC.

INTRODUCTION

“Good governance” is the word originally taken from the word “Kubernao” which is a Greek verb and it implies “to steer”. Direction of government is referred by good governance in a very means that it gave the essence that it is abuse and corruption, respecting the rule of law and the rights of people which need to be engaged in public affairs. A public policy wherever the core of the issue could be a downside of “governance” and become outline covertly like a tangle of “government”, with the repercussion that the headache for “fixing” it rests with government in an essential manner. Somewhat, it is considerations to governments and various social organisations that are reticular, however they transmit to voters, and thus the way selections of measures taken in a very composite world (Kelly 2010). Therefore, governance is an additional way whereby number of society or organisations build their necessary alternatives, regulate them they involve within the strategy and also render the account in a manner. As the way is tough to look at, governance's students the attention is focused on the system of the governance or structure upon that the strategy rests, that is, the one who get power is outlined by the agreement, procedure, convention or number of policies, how decisions

are taken and how accountability is accomplished. In recent years, the problem of good governance is looked at as the unity of the key elements for poverty reduction and sustainable development (Devi 2015).

The International Monetary Fund (IMF 2019) conjointly defines governance and corruption. It interprets the term governance, as all phenomenon, policies related to economy and regulative structures of a country are all ruled together. The corruption which in general is outlined as the end result of the faith for private profit or mistreatment of public authority. Corruption and governance are linked with each other in a close manner, because more scope for corruption is provided by the poorly governed administration. Number of causes of corruption have economic nature, and poor governance is clearly prejudiced to economic activity and welfare (Singh 2003).

The exercise of political, economic and administrative authority inside the management of the affair of the country at all levels is known as governance (UNDP 1997). The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) mentions that there are 8 qualities that refers a good governance that is, to participate, rule of law, transparent, to take responsibility, agreement oriented, impartiality and inclusive in nature, effective and efficient, and accountability (UNESCAP 2009).

Rural development is a vital mechanism for good governance, which insures the participation of rural masses. It can be argued that in spite of having conflicting views the development is concerned, an honest consensus is existed that individuals are at the middle of all the procedures of development (Okore and Onokerhoraye 1994). For the development to be same to have taken place, a positive and qualitative amendment should be there within the cultural, economic and socio-political lives of people. The rural development is outlined by the World Bank so as to improve the living standards of the masses residing in rural areas whose income is low. For this it emphasised to make the process of development a self-sustaining one. A method that winds up in a steady rate of increase within the capacity of the people of non urban areas to control their environment among a wide range of distribution of benefits resulting from such control in non urban development (World Bank 1975).

The notion of rural development had been presented in numerous methods by the scholars. Whatever the variations is in conceptualising the notion of rural development, the essence is principally alike, as a result of it is particularly concerning with economic condition alleviation and distributive justice certain economic transformation in rural areas. Its main objectives are to reinforce the living standards of rural population by fulfilling their basic necessities such as ration, home to live, clothes, job and education, so that the productivity in non urban areas is increased and the economic condition is improved, to involve the people of non urban areas in the process of development by promoting them to participate in higher cognitive process at regime bodies, and by ensuring distributive justice, the opportunities are levelled within the societies (Basumatary 2017).

Ahammad said that the governance has become decentralised more and more over the years. On the other hand, the distance amid the maker of decision and the subject is still very large. Therefore, the very objective of the government is continuously distorted in both the regulatory and process of development at the level of grassroot by the means of fraud and lack of concern over the problems of the people. In on the whole incidents it is seen that when the poor

section of the society had some gains, the governance, in common move in such a way that it helps the powerful section of the society (Ahmed 1999). They has presupposed that for their benefits they will use all the organs of the state, at whatever the time it is completely allowed and it is against the poor section of the society at any time it has been required inside the 'procedure, number of guaranty are given to the poor' in both the Parts III and IV of the constitution of India which had start to obtain dichotomise. The complete varies of dialogue of classification and the letter interpretation and the strength of the theme of the constitution of things brings in the dichotomisation. As the result, the arguments are risen between the directive principles against the political rights and the development against the distribution (Bett and Tibbs 2017). The thesis that the power is begetted by the power is confirmed by the governing class, at large and is emotional for the powerful or drawn way by the powerful themselves. If the powerless people are not considered as the burden for the development, they are reduced in the society's mere member (Hargopal 1999). The control of the good governance is not facilitated by the unconditional interests because they think that due to this their authority will be shrinked.

The Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) was created on 10th February 2003 as per the availability of the Sixth Schedule within the Constitution of India. It is a political arrangement where Bodos being a minority, entertain more political share than majority of different communities. This political arrangement is being questioned by majority and decried over the problem of good governance. In the light of the above, the present study tried to find out the perspective of the people of BTAD towards the good governance

Rural Development Within Bodoland Territorial Area Districts

Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was created on 10th February in the year 2003 by the provision of 6th schedule in the Indian Constitution, it comprises of 4 districts of BTAB. Sixth Schedule's condition and Constitution's other relevant articles are applied to the BTC, *mutatis mutandis* in regards to this agreement. Forty-six

members are there in BTC in which 30 members were reserved for the Scheduled Tribe, 5 for the communities that are non-tribal, 5 open to all communities and the rest 6 were nominated by the Assam's Governor from the communities that are represented by no one from the BTAD, and among them there should be at least 2 women members. The members that are nominated had the same rights and privileges as the other members. They also have voting rights. If the demographic composition of BTAD is observed, it is found that approximately fifty-one percent people belong to Scheduled Tribes (ST). However, those fifty-one percent ST get seventy-five percent representation in Bodoland Territorial Council. The reserved constituencies are drawn in such a way that areas have minimum non-Bodo presence. The reservation was created with an endeavour that no one else can contest from there except the Bodos. On the other hand, the areas having Bodo majority are made open for also the non-Bodos, and have only a distant chance to be elected (Mahanta 2013). Thus, discontent among Bodo and non-Bodos had widened and led to the formation of political parties such as Sanmilitya Janaghostiya Aikyo Mancha and Anaboro Suraksha Samiti to push the interest of non-Bodos within BTC. Anaboro Suraksha Samiti has been demanding exclusion of non-Bodo villages from the BTAD, where in the administration can go past by an autonomous BTC (Business Standard 2013). In 2015, during the BTC Assembly election these two political parties had won five seats.

Bodos plays a dominant role even in open constituencies, which were kept in the BTC with a view to represent the non-Bodo people in the BTC (as shown in Table 1). Besides this, the provision of nomination of six members is also manipulated in an unscrupulous way for which the unrepresented community can hardly repre-

sent the community. The people that are supposed to close to the party that is ruling are selected for the nominations. However, in 2015 BTC election due to the intense mobilisation by Aboro Suraksha Samiti and Sanmilitya Janaghostiya Aikyo Mancha fielded candidates and poised some contest in those unreserved seats.

The Memorandum of Settlement is laid down in accordance with Article 322 of the Indian Constitution, "Panchayati Raj system in the event ceases to be in force in the Council area and the powers of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in such matters shall be vested with the Council." Again, Paragraph 2 of Sixth Schedule constitution while enunciating the powers of the Governor to form the Constitution for District Councils and Regional Councils. The Panchayati Raj system is not applicable in BTAD, and in response to the need of local level's government to carry out development functions at the base, it founded two tier institutions in lieu of Panchayat, which functions within the line of Anchalik Panchayat and Village Panchayat called TCLCC and VCDC, respectively (Sarma 2016).

The VCDC at base has been functioning since 2006, three years after the inception of BTC. As per government records, Memo. No. BTC/RD (VCDC) dated 19/04/2006, guidelines issued for both VCDC and TCLCC under Panchayat and Rural Development Department, BTC, can be formally considered as the base year of their inception. Since then it has been functioning as an ad hoc local government institution in place of a Panchayat. However, due to lack of statutory provision for local or village level government BTC has met severe criticism. Meanwhile, to legitimatise VCDC as a statutory local government body, BTC had passed the legislation referred to as "Bodoland Council Village Bill" on 18th July 2012. At the moment, 415 VCDCs have been functioning among the 3,082 villages

Table 1: Open constituencies and the winning candidates of 2010 Election in BTC

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Name of the elected candidates</i>	<i>Constituency</i>	<i>Category</i>
1	Rahindra Brahma	Guma (U.R.)	Bodo
2	Khalilur Rahman	Thuribari (U.R.)	Muslim
3	Makhan Sargiary	Mothanguri (U.R.)	Bodo
4	Moon Sing Brahma	Dhiraj (U.R.)	Bodo
5	Jagadish Sarkar	Madwibari (U.R.)	Hindu Bengali

Source: BTC Secretariat

of BTC at an average of 7.43. However, in Assam there are 26,247 villages and 2,489 Gram Panchayats at an average of 10.55, which is sort of higher in comparison to BTC (Islary 2015).

Thus, VCDC is a body organised at the village level within BTAD consisting of 14 members in each VCDC (as shown in Fig. 1). The officially nominated members are assisted by the government employee designated as Member Secretary, whose designation is Junior Engineer (JE).

On the basis of the demand, when the planning for the Sixth Schedule areas are done by the expert committee, they recommend those representative bodies for the development of the village in such a manner that the named needed to be constituted through the legislation which is enacted by the council themselves. Though BTC makes a provision of decentralisation of power, mere decentralisation does not mean deepening democracy if the method involved in the decentralisation process is not democratic. The VCDC constitutes one Chairman and 13 members. The Chairman and the members are not elected by the people rather they are nominated by the ruling party. Since the VCDC is mostly involved and had all the responsibilities to implement the schemes for the development of the village that includes planning, selection of sites, implementation monitoring and beneficiary selection, therefore the ruling party members get maximum benefit. The village headman also informed (during the field survey) that he was not consulted during selection of beneficiaries of different development schemes. As BPF is the ruling party in BTC, so in most cases the benefit of the development

schemes goes to the BPF party cadre. Therefore, in BTC the ruling party tries to dominate the escalation of other parties by using manipulative ways in distribution of goods and offices.

The TCLCC also constitutes one President and a number of 13 members. All the members are nominated by the ruling party. Generally, the President of the TCLCC is the local MCLA. But if the MCLA does not represent the ruling party then the President is also nominated by the ruling party. Thus, in BTC, it can be said that in the name of decentralising power, the ruling party tries to unearth the other political party through these autocratic policies (The Assam Tribune 2015).

However, BTC fails to decentralise the power at the grassroot level, as it fails to establish democratic institution at the village level. Janaki Ballav Patnaik, the Governor of Assam once stated that there will be no power and administration decentralization in the Sixth Schedule areas. Panchayat and Parishad will not be there. District Council will be there that will elect some people who will enjoy the unbridled power. But this is the demand of the democracy that the concentration of the power should not be there in only some hands (Ministry Tribal Affairs India 2010-11). The second administrative reform commission also makes its assessment that, the tribal customs reign supreme in the North East areas of India when the arrangements of Sixth Schedule were formulated in these areas. There was no thought of the elections at the village or district level in the early years of the Constitution, and therefore, not paying attention to the democratic aspect of self-governance of village is not unusual in the Sixth Schedule.

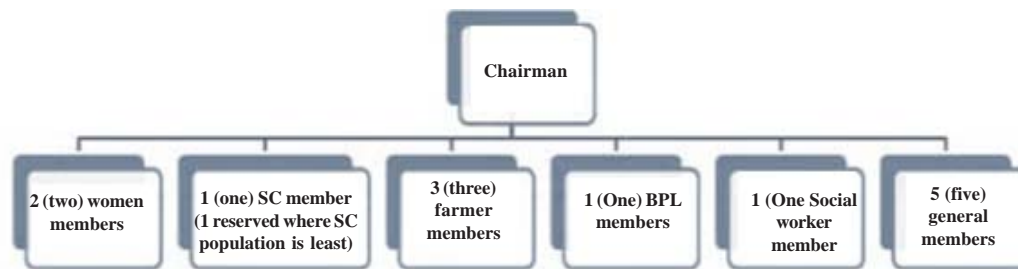


Fig. 1. Organisational Structure of the VCDC

Source: Author

People also criticise the development schemes of the BTC. It is decried by the leaders of the non-Bodo organisation that all the main institutions related to education including universities, schools, healthcare facilities, hospitals, offices, technical institutions, and Central and State governments department are invariably setup in the areas that are dominated by Bodo are the representation of the Bodos which is disproportionate in the sectors like employment and administration (Mahanta 2013). Hence, the democratic decentralisation process is seriously under question in Bodoland Territorial Council.

Objectives

The specific objectives of the present study are as follows:

1. To explore the peoples' perception towards accountability of VCDC.
2. To see the peoples' perception towards transparency of VCDC.
3. To find out the peoples' perception towards inclusiveness of VCDC.

Hypotheses

Three null hypotheses are proposed to test as follows:

- Ho1:** There is no significance difference between Bodo and non-Bodos' perception towards accountability of VCDC.
- Ho2:** There is no significance difference between Bodo and non-Bodos' perception towards transparency of VCDC.
- Ho3:** There is no significance difference between Bodo and non-Bodos' perception towards inclusiveness of VCDC.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study followed a descriptive method of research, which aimed to determine the peoples' perception towards accountability, transparency and inclusiveness of the VCDC, and was designed as qualitative case study. An Interview Schedule had to be completed by the respondents. The present study was undertaken in the district of Kokrajhar of BTAD, Assam.

The geographical boundary of BTAD lies between 26° 7' 12" N to 26° 47' 50" N Latitude and 89° 47' 40" E to 92° 18' 30" E Longitude and is in the north-western part of Assam. The sample comprised a total 120 respondents, 60 each from Borshijhora and Hogmabil VCDC. Both 30 Bodo and 30 non-Bodo respondents were included from each VCDC. An Interview Schedule was developed by the researcher and administered. Several statistical analyses were carried out namely, Measures of Central Tendency, Measures of Variability, Dispersion, and 't' test. Data analysis was performed using statistical software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the economic and financial performance of the institutions of the public sector expedites its accountability. The economic accountability is related to the effectiveness of the formulation of policy and its implementation and potency in the use of resource. However, economic accountability being questioned when BTC opened a new head of account called the "Chief's discretionary expenditure" and spend INR 180.33 crore throughout from 2010-2011 to 2013-2014. There are instances when the amount spent under the head was more than the revenue collected. Moreover, there are discrepancies within the utilisation of the funds under different head (Choudhury 2017).

In 2016, an audit report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) reveals that the BTC spend excess INR 1.47 crore in procurement of biscuits for Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) Services. INR 3.45 crore was released by the joint secretary of BTC's social welfare department for procurement of 4,31,71,300 pieces of Britannia Marie Gold biscuits at 80 paisa per piece from 37 NGOs and self-help groups in October 2013. However, it was revealed by an independent market survey during the audit in September 2015 that the prevailing MRP of a 300gm packet of Britannia Marie Gold biscuit was INR 27 and it contained a maximum of 57 biscuits (Karmakar 2017).

United People's Party, Liberal (UPPL) had moved the Assam Governor over a scam in BTAD that took place during 2008-2014. The party had the allegations that a section of bureaucrats along with political leaders were also

involved in the scam (The Sentinel 2017). On June 17, 2018, the police apprehended the BPF youth wing's Dotma block president Andrai Jwhlao Hazowary alias Taimur on charges of misappropriating development funds during his tenure as chairman of Habrubari VCDC in Kokrajhar (The Telegraph 2018). Thus, in at different times the economic accountability of VCDC at the village level is also under the scanner.

Meanwhile, Table 2 shows the community wise distribution of perception towards the accountability of VCDC. The overall result depicts that fifteen percent peoples' perception is excellent towards accountability followed by thirty-five percent moderate and fifteen percent low. Thus, it was observed that among Bodos, approximately 61.67 percent respondents have shown excellent levels of perception towards the accountability of VCDC, followed by 21.67 percent moderate and 16.67 percent low. In case of non-Bodos, 48.33 percent have shown moderate level of perception followed by 38.33 percent excellent, and 13.33 percent low on the accountability of VCDC (Table 2).

The corruption among the public officials is inhabited and the uncertainty is also reduced when there is a transparency in the decision-making and public policy of government and their implementations. To this end, simple, straightforward and easily applicable rules and

procedures preferred in comparison to those that provide discretionary powers to officials of government or that are inclined to different interpretations. However well-intentioned the latter type of rule might be in theory, the practice can vitiate its purpose through error or otherwise (Borah 2013).

As far as transparency of VCDC is concerned, the distribution in Table 3 yielded the peoples' perception towards the transparency of VCDC. The overall result in Table 3 showed that 53.33 percent of the total respondents felt that the VCDC maintained transparency in governance, followed by 37.5 percent moderate, and 9.17 percent low. Out of 60 non-Bodo respondents, approximately fifty-two percent have shown excellent level of perception towards the transparency of VCDC followed by 38.33 percent moderate and ten percent low. Besides, out of 60 Bodo respondents, total fifty-five percent claimed it was excellent, 36.67 percent moderate, and 8.33 percent low level of perception towards the transparency of VCDC. This result shows the differences of perception between Bodos and non-Bodos.

The well being of the society is ensured when all its members feels that they have a chance in it and they don't have the feeling that they are excluded from the society's mainstream. All the groups require this but especially it is required

Table 2: Community wise perception towards the accountability of VCDC

Community	Perception towards Accountability			Grand total
	Low	Moderate	Excellent	
Bodo	10 (16.67)	13 (21.67)	37 (61.67)	60 (50.00)
Non-Bodo	8 (13.33)	29 (48.33)	23 (38.33)	60 (50.00)
Total	18 (15.00)	42 (35.00)	60 (50.00)	120

Percentages are in Parentheses

Table 3: Community wise perception towards the transparency of VCDC

Community	Perception towards transparency			Grand total
	Low	Moderate	Excellent	
Bodo	5 (8.33)	22(36.67)	33(55.00)	60 (50.00)
Non-Bodo	6 (10.00)	23(38.33)	31(51.67)	60 (50.00)
Total	11 (9.17)	45(37.50)	64(53.33)	120

Percentages are in Parentheses

Table 4: Community wise perception towards the inclusiveness of VCDC

Community	Perception towards inclusiveness			Grand total
	Low	Moderate	Excellent	
Bodo	3 (5.00)	20 (33.33)	37 (61.67)	60 (50.00)
Non-Bodo	7(11.67)	25 (41.67)	28 (46.67)	60 (50.00)
Total	10 (8.33)	45 (37.5)	65 (54.17)	120

Percentages are in Parentheses

Table 5: Analysis of mean differences along with descriptive statistics

Factors	N	Mean	S.D.	T-value	df	Sig.
<i>Accountability</i>	<i>Significance of the Mean Difference on Accountability</i>					
Bodo	60	6.98	3.442	2.064	118	.041P<.05
Non-Bodo	60	8.20	3.002			
<i>Transparency</i>	<i>Significance of the Mean Difference on Transparency</i>					
Bodo	60	6.98	3.442	2.025	118	.045P<.05
Non-Bodo	60	8.27	3.498			
<i>Inclusiveness</i>	<i>Significance of the Mean Difference on Inclusiveness</i>					
Bodo	60	6.98	3.442	2.271	118	.025P<.05
Non-Bodo	60	8.32	3.972			

by the most helpless group, they have the opportunity to improve and maintain their well being. However, in BTC non-Bodos feel excluded from all plan and policies. The fact and figures also showed the exclusion of other communities. All policies undertaken to keep an eye on the Bodos. It seems that BTC has been violating the principle of inclusive development. Even, the faculties of educational institutions get appointed on the basis of locality, in addition to the primary eligibility criteria that the candidate must be a Bodo. Apart from that the candidate must have a good link with the ruling party. The sense of kinness had overshadowed the principle "rule of law", which is also a principle of good governance. From government job to contract in every aspect preferences were given to kin, to party worker, or to any Bodo of locality. These are the reasons due to which others felt excluded and the sense of oneness is never come to the communities who are residing in the BTC.

Table 4 shows the community wise distribution of the respondents by their level of perception on inclusiveness issues. The overall result in Table 4 depicts that 54.17 percent respondents have shown excellent level of perception followed by 37.5 percent moderate and 8.33 percent low. Among Bodos, 61.67 percent have

shown excellent level of perception followed by 33.33 percent moderate and 5.0 percent low. Looking at the non-Bodo respondents, 46.67 percent have shown an excellent level of perception towards the inclusiveness in VCDC.

Further, Table 5 exhibits the summary scores of both the categories of non-Bodos and Bodo perception scores towards accountability, transparency and inclusiveness of the VCDC. To test the hypotheses, Mean and S.D. were calculated. A *t-test* was used to see the significance of mean differences of two groups. The results in Table 5 show that both the categories of non-Bodo and Bodo perceptions towards accountability, transparency and inclusiveness of the VCDC are significantly differed at 0.01 level of significance. Thus, the null hypotheses Ho1 ('t' value = 2.064, df=118 and p<.05), Ho2 ('t' value = 2.026, df=118 and P<.05) and Ho3 ('t' value = 2.271, df=118 and P<.05) were rejected. It indicates that statistically difference exists between both the categories non-Bodo and Bodo perceptions towards the three factors related to VCDC.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the perception of Bodos and non-Bodos towards VCDC and its role

in promoting the principles like accountability, transparency and inclusiveness. Based on the research conducted, all three null hypotheses (Ho1, Ho2 and Ho3) were rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that statistically significant difference exists between both the categories of Bodo and non-Bodo's perception towards accountability, transparency and inclusiveness in the VCDC. There is no doubt that VCDC has been devoting for decentralisation of power and support to promote good governance in the society. However, to raise the perception in regards to all dimensions related to VCDC, the BTC authority has to transform the governance. These findings could be useful for developing democratic culture in the BTC region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since its formation, the BTAD authority has been facing several challenges. The intense power struggle within the Bodo leaders led to many political violences. Besides, these intra- and inter-ethnic conflict and corruption allegations on the ruling party are the usual happening scene within the BTAD. The principal of good governance seems to be kept aside by the ruling party. Though there are many corruption allegations that were covered by the media, yet inquiries for such accusations were rarely done by any authority.

LIMITATIONS

Though the idea of good governance encompasses eight factors, in the present study only three factors were deliberately selected. These three factors were selected, as it was observed that among the other factors, these good governance factors have contemporary value to study. Besides this, the sample size along with the statistical analysis also suffered from some limitations.

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