

RECOMMENDATIONS OF WORKING GROUP NO.4
(RURAL DEVELOPMENT INCLUDING RURAL LIVELIHOODS AND
SUSTAINABLE ISSUES, FOREST AND ENVIRONMENT)

The Meghalaya State Planning Board Working Group No. 4 covering Rural Development including Rural Livelihoods and Sustainable issues, Forest and Environment met at 3.00 PM on Saturday 4th October 2008, in Hotel Pinewood, Shillong. The following members were present:

1. Shri Toki Blah - Member, Meghalaya State Planning Board
2. Smti. Veena Nayyar - Honorary Member, Meghalaya State Planning Board
3. Rev. P.B.M. Basaiawmoit - Member, Meghalaya State Planning Board
4. Kum. Agatha K. Sangma - Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha)
5. Shri P.B.O.Warjri - Principal Secretary, Planning
6. Shri C.D. Kynjing - Commissioner and Secretary, C&RD
7. Shri V.K. Nautiyal - Principal Chief Conservator of Forests
8. Shri F.S. Kharlyngdoh - Director, C&RD
9. Smti. R.C. Sohkhlet - Deputy Secretary, C&RD
10. Shri J.E. Massar - Deputy Director, C&RD
11. Shri B. Rumnong - Senior Faculty Member, SIRD
12. Shri Sunil Kumar - Chief Conservator of Forests
13. Shri C.B. Budnah - Chief Conservator of Forests
14. Shri Robin Shullai - Conservator of Forests
15. Shri G.F. Shullai - Conservator of Forests
16. Shri Andrew Lyngdoh - Conservator of Forests
17. Shri H.C. Chaudhary - Planning Officer, Forest Department

Background

The second meeting of the reconstituted State Planning Board under the Chairmanship of Shri P.A. Sangma met at Hotel Pinewood on the 3rd and 4th Oct 2008 and a detailed review and evaluation of the performance of major developmental departments of the State was carried out. Prior to presentations by individual Heads of Departments, both

the Chief Minister, Dr. Donkumar Roy and the Chairman, Meghalaya State Planning Board, Shri P.A. Sangma addressed the meet. The gist of both addresses are highlighted -

Chief Minister – Dr. Donkumar Roy

1. Need to take stock of performance towards achievement of Government's goals which are basically to improve quality of life, remove poverty and enhance economic opportunities.
2. To carry forward the Common Minimum Programme of the Government through a participatory manner.
3. To built on the strengths of the State and to redress areas of weakness.
4. Priorities of the Government will be on :-
 - a) Agriculture and allied sectors.
 - b) Enhanced income generation for women.
 - c) Decentralization of planning and involvement of the people in the planning process.
 - d) Emphasis on social services such as education, health, water supply and nutrition.
 - e) Poverty alleviation and employment generation in rural areas through rural development programmes.

Chairman State Planning Board – Shri P.A. Sangma

1. Need for an all encompassing development policy frame work for the State of Meghalaya.
2. Core areas of concern which need immediate attention are – building institutions of the people, enhancing the capacity of such institutions to make them relevant in a participatory mode of development, encouraging and promoting research and introducing a sustainable paradigm of development for Meghalaya.
3. Preparation of a developmental road map for the next three years under 11th Plan to reflect the MPA Government's Common Minimum Programme.
4. To enable the State to eventually come up with a focused vision that will enable Meghalaya to develop, progress and compete with the rest of the country on an even footing.

5. Constitute working groups whose mandate is to come up with effective working paradigms for the departments under their charge so as to enable these departments to meet with the expectations highlighted above.

As per TOR No i & ii of the Working Group No 4 vide Notification No. PB.57/2008/4 dated Shillong, 16th Sept 2008 and as directed by the Chairman of the State Planning Board , the Working Group on Rural Development sector including Rural Livelihoods and Sustainable Issues , Forest and Environment met on the afternoon of the 4th October, 2008 and after an in depth and detailed discussion on general performance, expectations and requirements of the two concerned departments i.e. Forest and Environment and Community & Rural Development for effective implementation of their respective programmes of work within the parameters set by the issues flagged above, the working group came up with the report highlighted below.

1. The working group met and from the very outset took note of the fact that almost all of the core issues flagged by both the Chief Minister and the Chairman Planning Board fell within the ambit and sphere of consideration set up for this working group.
2. It was also recognized that both departments mentioned had a major role to play in the development and growth of the rural economy an economy which affects not less than 80 % of the State's population.
3. Field activities of both departments are closely related with the day-to-day lives of rural Meghalaya. Rural priorities such as agriculture and its allied activities, livelihoods, poverty alleviation, land issues, biodiversity preservation, rural health and education, natural resource and watershed management, rural tourism and even culture are always in the forefront of all interventions undertaken by both departments.
4. These departmental activities mentioned above urgently call for the emergence of a working paradigm that will ensure an effective and sustainable development delivery mechanism based on transparent participatory stakeholder involvement, all of which are aimed towards the accelerated development of the rural constituencies of the State.

5. For such a mechanism to emerge there is need, as emphasized by both the Chief Minister and the Chairman, State Planning Board and as reflected in the Common Minimum Programme of the Government, to bring rural communities as participative stakeholders on all future development efforts of the State.
6. There was also a candid admission to the effect that, in the absence of an overarching comprehensive development policy that is participative and Meghalaya specific in nature, both departments are totally dependent on central schemes to push developmental interventions in the field. Such interventions, since they are top-down in approach may not always be relevant to prevailing ground realities and do not promote the feeling of community involvement & ownership over development.
7. The best way in which both departments as well as other departments connected with rural development, can meet their obligations to the people and the Government is to seek recourse from the enabling provisions of the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution of India (Part IX of the Constitution) which in turn looks at sustainable development through viable means of devolution and decentralization of governance.
8. In view of Art 243ZC read with Art 243 (d) and Art 243C (1), Meghalaya is constitutionally authorized to legislate on laws that will enable the establishment of a community institution at the community, block and district level that shall be bottom-up and participatory in character and that shall greatly enhance the development delivery mechanism in a manner that shall be accountable, transparent, gender sensitive, effective and sustainable, through empowering technologies, specifically designed to bring in community ownership over all future developmental interventions to be undertaken by the State.
9. It is therefore the recommendation of this working group on Rural Development sector including Rural Livelihoods and Sustainable Issues, Forest and Environment to move the Government of Meghalaya to legislate on the matter and to come up with an Act to establish a paradigm of rural development that shall be bottom-up and participatory as mentioned above. The approach strategy shall be sustainable development through stakeholders in which institution

building and capacity building will be priority issues. It is further recommended that this strategy be launched through pilot schemes in parts of the State before it is finally implemented in the entire State.

10. To kick start and to facilitate the above on a priority basis, legislation in the form of a Draft Bill on Active Community Participation in Rural Development, is enclosed as Schedule I of this Report.

The WG Meeting ended with a vote-of-thanks from the Chair.

Toki Blah

Chairman, Working Group No. 4

Meghalaya State Planning Board