

Bodoland Territorial Council

Rural Quality of Life Index 2023



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With the release of this report, I sincerely hope we have been able to live up to expectations. I am extremely proud of the small group of dedicated researchers from TRIF and Sambodhi who worked tirelessly to bring this idea into fruition. Ms. Manmeet Kaur and Mr. Saikat Ghosh should all feel rightfully proud of what they have helped to create.

We are truly grateful for the time and interest invested in this project by Shri Chintan Raj, Programme Lead, BTR Development Fellowship, for his enthusiastic support in getting us access to departmental data, without which this index computation would not have been possible.

I can proudly say that working on this assignment has been an enriching experience for all of us, and we at DIU feel privileged to have been a part of it.



Sandeep Ghosh
Team Lead, Development Intelligence Unit

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Abbreviations

BTC	Bodoland Territorial Council
MCLA	Member of Council Legislative Assembly
NDFB	National Democratic Front of Bodoland
BTR	Bodoland Territorial Region
DM	Disaster Management
SOPD	State Owned Priority Development
BTAD	Bodoland Territorial Area District
MDoNER	Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region
BTCLA	Bodoland Territorial Council Legislative Assembly
QoL	Quality of Life
DDC	District Development Council
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
DAY – NRLM	Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana–National Rural Livelihoods Mission
WRD	Whole of Rural Development
FY	Financial Year
CSR	Corporate Social responsibility
IICA	Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs
HDI	Human Development Index
FPO	Farmer Producer Organisation
PACS	Primary Agricultural Credit Society
ITI	Industrial Training Institute
RSETI	Rural Self Employment Training Institutes
DDU-GKY	Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
UDISE	Unified District Information System for Education
NEP	National Education Policy
SECC	Socio Economic and Caste Census
HSC	Health Sub-Centre
PHC	Primary Healthcare Centre
CHC	Community Health Centre
PMJAY	Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana
NFHS	National Family Health Survey
ODF	Open Defecation Free
PMGSY	Pradhan Mantri Grameen Sadak Yojana
NITI	National Institution for Transforming India
GVA	Gross Value Added
NMSA	National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture
PKVY	Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana
eNAM	National Agriculture Market
PPP	Public Private Partnership
Ha	Hectare
NPK	Nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
UEE	Universalization of Elementary Education
AISHE	All India Survey on Higher Education
HRQOL	Health-related quality of life
POSHAN	Prime Minister’s Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
AMRUT	Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation
PMAY-G	Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana–Grameen
JJM	Jal Jeevan Mission
SAUBHAGYA	Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana
APMC	Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee
ILO	International Labour Organisation
PDS	Public Distribution System
NFSA	National Food Security Act
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

Chapter 01

Profile of Bodoland Territorial Council

- 1.1 A profile in Brief
- 1.2 Constitution of Bodoland Territorial Council
- 1.3 Communities residing in the BTC area
- 1.4 Powers in respect of Subjects Transferred
- 1.5 Principles and procedures for Devolution of Funds
- 1.6 Formulation and Implementation of Schemes
- 1.7 Quantum of Funds for Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC)



Profile of Bodoland Territorial Council

1.1 A profile in Brief

Area

8970 sq.km.

Population

31,55,359.

District

4 (four) viz. Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri

Civil Sub-Division

6 (six)

Literacy rate

71.62%

Total number of villages

3079 nos.

Total Revenue Villages

2890 nos.

Tribal Belt & Block villages

2272 nos.

Villages outside of Tribal Belt and Block

618 nos.

Forest Village

189 nos.

Forest area

3234 sq.km

Revenue area

5736 sq.km

1.2 Constitution of Bodoland Territorial Council

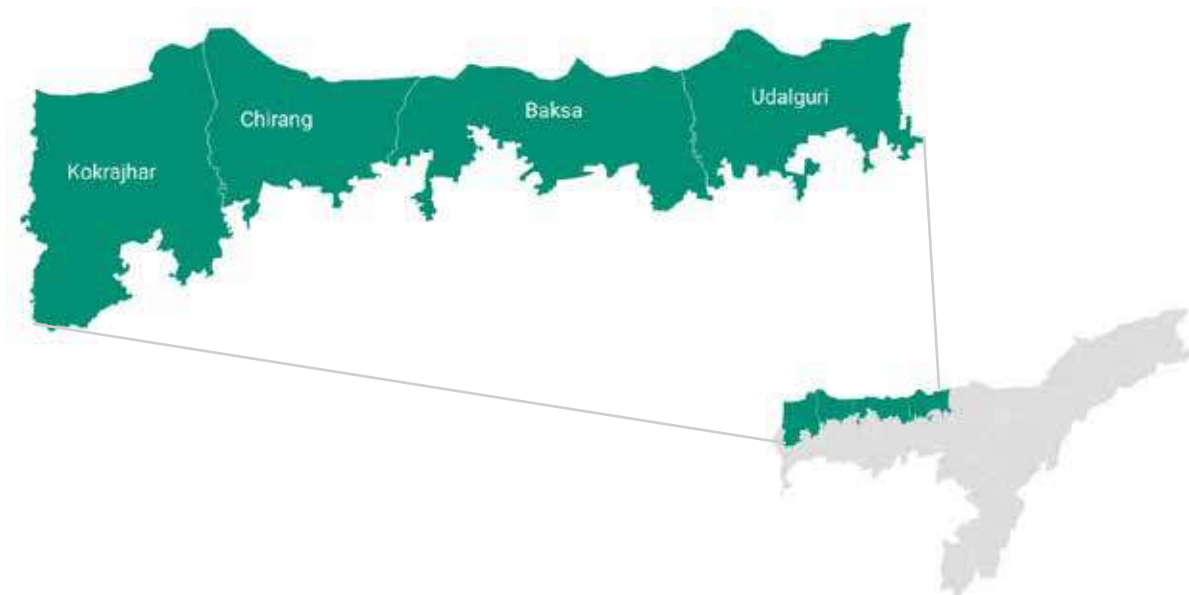


Figure 1: Location of study area

It is administered by an elected body known as the Bodoland Territorial Council which came into existence under the terms of a peace agreement signed in February 2003 and its autonomy was further extended by an agreement signed in January 2020. The region covers an area of over nine thousand square kilometres and is predominantly inhabited by the Bodo people and other indigenous communities of Assam.

Following an agreement in 1993, Bodoland became an autonomous administrative unit constituted under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India covering an area of 8,795 km² administered by the Bodoland Autonomous Council. Following a further peace agreement, the Bodoland Territorial Council was formed in 2003, with a mission to accomplish development in the area of economic growth, education, preservation of land right, linguistic aspiration, socio-culture and ethnic identity of Bodos, and above all to speed up the infrastructure development of communities in the Bodoland area. The actual functioning of the council was started on 7 December 2003 by constituting the 12 members of the Council provisionally. After the Council Election on 13 May 2005 and the subsequent bye-election in November 2005, the 40-member Legislative Council has been formed to look after the development works in the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts. The remaining six members are nominated by the Governor of Assam from the unrepresented Communities. Thus, there are altogether 46 members of the council, representing all communities of BTC Area known as Member of Council Legislative Assembly (MCLA).

A new peace agreement was signed on 27 January 2020 between the Government of India and the Government of Assam on one side and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland, (NDFB) the All Bodo Students' Union, and the United Bodo People's Organisation on the other. Under the terms of this agreement, a Bodoland Territorial Region was formed with enhanced executive and legislative powers. The Bodoland Territorial Council will have competency over almost all areas defined by the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India and its membership will be increased to 60. The boundary of BTR will be redrawn to make Boro speakers the majority within the region. This will be done by forming new districts and the boundary of the region will be adjusted to include contiguous Bodo inhabited areas from neighbouring districts and exclude the non-Bodo inhabited territories that are currently under the jurisdiction of the BTC. The agreement also makes the Bodo language with Devnagri script an associate official language of Assam.

1.3 Communities residing in the BTC area

The most prominent communities living in BTC are the Bodos, Assamese, Bengalis, Koch-Rajbongshis, Rabhas, Garos, Adivasis, Muslims, and Nepalis, etc. Bodos constitute the largest ethnic Tribe in the region numbering around 12 million (35%) followed by Bangla-speaking Miya people, who form the largest minority group as per the 2011 Census.

1.4 Powers in respect of Subjects Transferred

The Council has legislative powers in respect of subjects transferred to it as enumerated below. The BTC also has executive, administrative, and financial powers in respect of subjects transferred to it. Subjects transferred are:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) Agriculture, | 2) Soil Conservation, |
| 3) Animal Husbandry and Veterinary, | 4) Dairy Development, |
| 5) Fisheries, | 6) Forestry and Wild Life, |
| 7) Market and Fairs, | 8) Co-operation, |
| 9) Panchayat and Rural Development, | 10) Land Revenue and DM, |
| 11) WPT&BC, | 12) Irrigation, |
| 13) Water Resources, | 14) Small Scale Industries, |
| 15) Handloom and Textile, | 16) Sericulture, |
| 17) Roads and Bridges (PWD), | 18) Other Transport Services, |
| 19) Tribal Research Institute, | 20) Tourism, |
| 21) Economics and Statistics, | 22) Food and Civil Supplies, |
| 23) Legal Metrology, | 24) Education, |
| 25) Sports and Youth Welfare, | 26) Art and Culture (Cultural Activities), |
| 27) Lottery, | 28) Cinema/theatre , |
| 29) Library Services, | 30) Museum and Archaeology, |
| 31) Health and Family Welfare Services, | 32) Water Supply and Sanitation, |
| 33) Urban Development, | 34) Information and Public Relations, |
| 35) Labour and Employment including Industrial Training Institutes, | 36) Excise, |
| 37) Social Welfare and Nutrition, | 38) Printing and Stationary |
| 39) Registration of birth and death, | 40) Relief & Rehabilitation (not transferred yet) |

1.5 Principles and procedures for Devolution of Funds

The principles followed for the devolution of funds to Bodoland Territorial Council is that the State Government of Assam would give an amount to be decided every year on a population ratio basis, as grants-in-aid to the BTC for executing development works. The proportionate share for the BTC is calculated by the State Government on the basis of the plan fund/SOPD fund available after setting aside the funds required for earmarked sectors and the salary. Allocation for BTC thus determined is communicated to BTC for preparation of their budget and annual operational/action plan. After the State Budget is passed by the State Assembly and the budget is communicated by the State Govt, the fund is released to BTC in two equal instalments in a year as advance by book transfer.

1.6 Formulation and Implementation of Schemes

Schemes are formulated taking into account the various developmental needs of the area to do away with the backwardness that existed for a long in this area of the State and also to fulfil the peoples' aspiration of this region. There is BTC Planning and Development Board under the Chairmanship of the Chief of BTC to guide the development process in the BTC area.

On receiving the allocation from the State Govt., BTC prepares and communicates a department-wise allocation of funds to the entrusted departments. The entrusted departments prepare departmental annual operation/action plans and submit the same to BTC along with the budget proposal. After the budget is approved by the State Assembly, and on receiving the Budget Communication from the State Govt., executing departments start issuance of Administrative Approval to the projects/schemes, steps like tendering, work order, etc, follow. As soon as State Govt. releases funds to BTC, the same is released to the executing departments for implementation of projects/schemes by observing all relevant rules and procedures, etc.

At the district level, District Development Committee Meetings are held in the districts to assess the progress of implementation of the schemes under the designated Chairman of the DDC who are one of the Secretaries of BTC. There are District Vigilance and Monitoring Committees for each BTAD and these committees are headed by a Chairman nominated by the Chief, BTC from the general public. This Committee inspects the implementation of the schemes and suggests remedies for the removal of any impediments.

1.7 Quantum of Funds for Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC)

No Centrally Sponsored Scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER). However, during the last three years, funds amounting to Rs.1467.51 crore have been released under various Central Sector Schemes of MDoNER to the Government of Assam. MDoNER does not release funds to Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) directly. However, the Ministry provided funds to the State Government of Assam under Special Package for Bodoland Territorial Council for various developmental projects. Under this package of Rs.750.00 crore, 65 projects for Rs.749.63 crore have been sanctioned, against which Rs.714.24 crore have been released including Rs.3.85 crore during the last three years. So far 54 projects worth Rs.589.11 crore have been completed and remaining projects are at various stages of implementation.

As stated above, the Ministry does not release funds to the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) directly. Funds to the Government of Assam for the sanctioned projects are released as and when all the requisite documents including utilisation certificates, physical and financial progress etc. are received from the State Government, as per the Scheme guidelines.

A new Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) has been signed amongst Government of India, Government of Assam and Bodo Groups (ABSU and NDFB factions) on 27.01.2020. This MoS, inter alia, states that the Government of Assam may earmark a sum of Rs.250.00 crore per annum for a period of three years for special development of the area under BTC. Further, the Government of India may contribute an additional amount of Rs.250.00 crore per annum for the same period.

The house of the Bodoland Territorial Council Legislative Assembly has passed Rs 2121.8490 crore with surplus amount of Rs 11.58 crore during the budget session of the Bodoland Territorial Council Legislative Assembly (BTCLA) for the financial year 2023-24.

Chapter 02

Introduction to Rural Quality of Life

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Utility of the Index
- 2.3 Quality of Life in the Rural Context
- 2.4 Conceptualising the QoL Index



Introduction to Rural Quality of Life

2.1 Introduction

As per the 2011 population census, the rural population of BTC stood at 30.1 lakhs, comprising roughly 95.6% of the entire population of the Council. Despite rapid strides over the last decade in empowering this vast rural population, the well-being of rural people continues to be a major area for policy and development intervention. Yet, they continue to be poorly understood with limited and disjointed availability of data on their well-being. With the intent of filling data gaps on rural populations but at the same time creating a planning and monitoring tool, Development Intelligence Unit, a collaborative venture between Transform Rural India Foundation and Sambodhi Research and Communications Private Limited, has developed a Rural Quality-of-Life (QOL) Index for the government of the Bodoland Territorial Council. The Rural QOL Index got BTC will serve as a holistic measure of rural well-being, covering several development pillars and a wide array of indicators.

2.2 Utility of the Index

The expectation is that this index will have four distinct utilities. Each has been discussed at length subsequently.

(i) Enable the BTC and its four constituent districts to plan for efficient allocation of finances for better social and human infrastructure development insuring higher quality of liveability

In BTC, schemes are formulated using the expertise of the entrusted departments, and elected representatives/ Executive Members are involved in selecting the schemes. The guidelines issued by the Govt governing the formulation and implementation of the schemes are also observed while preparing a scheme. There is BTC Planning and Development Board under the Chairmanship of the Chief of BTC to guide the development process in the BTC area.

At the district level, there are District Development Committee and meetings are held in the districts to assess the progress of implementation of the schemes under the designated Chairman of the DDC who are one of the Secretaries of BTC. Shortcomings if any found in the progress of implementation of schemes, these are removed accordingly to achieve targets fixed.

In the overall hierarchy, the prime function of a District Planning Committee (as existing in most other states) is to consolidate the plans prepared by panchayats and municipalities in the district and to prepare a draft development plan for the district as a whole. However, the government's own assessment is that in most states, district plans are not being prepared even though some of them allocate funds to the district level. What is mostly happening is that the DPC simply consolidates the gram panchayat plans and the block plan and sends it across to the state. In absence of a well-functioning district planning machinery or sufficiently disaggregated sectoral data, taking decisions regarding the priorities of a district is often left to officials and elected representatives. Thus, more often than not, resource allocations become an annual affair and a political decision as perspective planning takes a backburner. Even though in case of BTC the DDC plays more of a monitoring entity, yet, the district remains a very important level for development planning. What this index will do is provide the necessary inputs required by states and districts to make informed choices when it comes to district level allocations and provide the basis of developing roadmaps for the development of rural areas of districts that improves quality of life for the citizenry.

(ii) Correct subregional deficits and ensure fruits of development reaches all sections,

India is on a high growth trajectory that is expected to lift millions out of poverty. However, presently the quality of life of many of its citizens is not consistent with this growth story, a fact reflected in UNDP's 2020 Human Development

Index wherein India is ranked 131 out of 189 countries. A closer look at the data reveals high heterogeneity in the living standards in India. There are significant inter-state and inter-district variations. By uplifting the districts which have shown relatively lesser progress in achieving key social outcome, India can move ahead in the human development index.

Government of India has tried to address these regional disparities by launching the 'Transformation of Aspirational Districts' initiative in January 2018, which aims to remove this heterogeneity through a mass movement to quickly and effectively transform these districts. In more recent times, the Union government has identified that scaling up structural social development efforts under DAY – NRLM through community institutions is immensely important, as is bringing awareness and access to services related to nutrition, health, sanitation, and gender issues under focus, and to ensure quality of life for the SHGs as these are important for curtailing expenditures on health. The Ministry of Rural Development has now adopted the Whole of Rural Development (WRD) approach to target supporting additional livelihood activities. This integrated approach would entail a seamless matching and supply of livelihood schemes and programs from the government – the centre and in the states – skills, infrastructure, assets, services, financial inclusion, and resources available with the demands of the community.

It is in this context, this Rural QOL Index will serve as a tool or a ready reckoner manual for the identification of laggard, aspirational, and developed districts, clearly identify sectors and sub-sector that are causing such deviations and develop corrective measures through focused funding and interventions.

(iii) Guide BTC on the additional funding available under the 15th Finance Commission and Budget 2022 (permission to borrow) and budget 2023 (concessional loan for capital expenditure) for insuring “no citizen is left behind”.

Budget FY23 is all about leaving no citizen behind. It has a strategic focus on micro welfare, ensuring ease of living and foundational infrastructure in rural India. The budget focuses on strengthening rural economy and providing livelihoods. The budget assures access to livelihoods, basic infrastructure, and climate resilience, with a focus on housing, agriculture, healthcare, multimodal connectivity, and an expansion of road and digital infoway in rural areas.

In the Union Budget 2022-23, Finance Minister has provided Rs. 1 lakh crore in loans to state governments to enable them to increase their capital expenditure. These are to be interest-free, payable after 50 years in a one-shot bullet payment. On top of that are the grants. Sector-specific grants of Rs.1.3 lakh crores for eight sectors, viz. i) health, ii) school education, iii) higher education, iv) implementation of agriculture reforms, v) maintenance of PMGSY roads, vi) judiciary, vii) statistics, and viii) aspirational districts and blocks. Then there are state-specific grants to the tune of nearly 50,000 crores.

The Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) annual budget for the year 2022-23 has an estimated expenditure of Rs. 3271.48 crore with deficit amount of Rs 113.65 crore. The council has received Rs. 722.84 crore from the SOPD fund (State Owned Priority Development), Rs 193.65 crore from the 6th Assam State Finance Commission, Rs 150 crore for assistance to BTC for infrastructure development as per the BTR accord, Rs. 106.14 crore from Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana, and Rs 393.77 crore from the 15th Finance Commission.

The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi first used the term “Amrit Kaal” in 2021 during the 75th Independence Day festivities, when he revealed a unique roadmap for the country for the next 25 years. The objective of Amrit Kaal is to enhance the lives of the nationals of India, reduce the divide in development between villages and cities, lessen the government’s interference in people’s lives and embrace the latest technology. In line with this vision, the Budget has laid an ambitious foundation for India @100 by making unprecedented allocations for the development of the rural areas. Through this index, we hope to contribute to this endeavour by making curated data available to policy makers to make informed decisions regarding the allocation and spending of these funds.

iv) Help guide CSR spending to align itself with SDG goals and medium and long terms spatial development and sectoral priorities of the government

India Inc’s Corporate Social responsibility (CSR) spend for FY 2018-19 was 20,150.27 crore and 24,688.66 crore in FY 2019-20 (it had come down to less than Rs.9000 crore in 20-21 because of the pandemic). The total CSR funding for the state of Assam in 2020-21 was Rs 167.21 crore.

Under the Act, the government does not issue any specific direction to the companies to spend in any particular activity or area. However, a 2019 study by the Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), a government think tank that provides holistic advice on issues related to corporate affairs, shows 55 percent of the CSR funds in the country are spent on human development and social welfare and hardly anything on, say the environment. The reason for

this, say experts, is the nature of these sectors. Traditionally, sectors such as health and education have a clear blueprint and are easy to undertake. Moreover, these activities are easily quantifiable which gives companies ready numbers.

The IICA study further observes that maximum expenditure was in industrialised areas, while the least-developed states received the least funds. The phrase “local area preference” in the Act may have been interpreted as mandatory and not directory, the report stated. State-wise analysis of expenditure reveals a low concentration of CSR activities in poor states. Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and Delhi, which accounted for only 11 percent of the aspirational districts, received 40 percent of the total expenditure. CSR activities are similarly scarce in the Northeast. What’s more, five years after the Act was enforced, 70 percent of the companies still do not have a strategy to implement CSR activities.

Once again, we see this report as a guidance tool that can be used by the BTC to reach out to philanthropies and encourage them to focus CSR initiatives towards sector gaps identified across backward and less developed districts.

2.3 Quality of Life in the Rural Context

People need many things to live fulfilling lives. Sustenance and security, freedom and community, wealth and health, etc. all contribute to the quality of human life. By focusing on quality of life, the intention is to take a broad and holistic view of rural India’s development, while we anticipate that a Quality of Life perspective will help our leaders develop policies that reflect the aspirations of their constituents.

Income is a powerful indicator of quality of life that people enjoy and has become a dominant measure of well-being. Across the rural segment of any developing economy, any income focus is typically associated with improving agricultural productivity, the expectation being rising agricultural outputs will promote higher rural incomes, which in turn will automatically lead to higher quality of life.

Recent thinking and related evidence, however, suggest that there is more to quality of life than income alone. Health, education, livelihoods, political freedom, participation in civil society, housing, sustainability, and status of women (among others)¹ are all important components of quality of life and a multi-indicator approach is a more holistic and now dominant measure in understanding rural communities. These factors or indicators are bound to income in a complex network of two-way relationships This composite index will serve as a non-partisan ranking exercise at the district and state level based on the quality of life of rural citizens. The goal is to equip and enable policymakers with relevant and rapid, objective data using both primary and administrative data to support evidence-based planning and decision-making.

2.4 Conceptualising the QoL Index

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¹ Oecdbetterlifeindex.org

2.4 Conceptualising the QoL Index

Two distinct methods of measurement can be identified based on either objective or subjective measures. Objective QoL measures can be formed from one or more descriptive indicators that can be reasonable proxies for what economists refer to as 'utility'. They are well suited for describing the main features of social change and the development process².

Objective measurements do have their drawbacks. First of all, accurate data is not always available and secondly, redundancy can set in if there are methodological changes in the construct. Subjective measures try to circumvent this problem by measuring perceptions of well-being directly rather than through proxies. But this then will require primary data to be generated. Secondly, since perception-based indicators are mostly outcome-based, that leaves very little scope for constructing a composite index with components that can be used for planning purposes by, say, a District Planning Committee whose mandate is to make a 5-year perspective plan. But more importantly, running a representative survey covering people from all walks of life across districts will always be a laborious task requiring huge investment of time and resources – which cannot be feasible if this has to be an annual or biennial affair. And the longitudinal nature of this index is its most useful utility to the planning community.

Given the above argument, we have chosen to construct this index using objective measures. We have used only government published data which is assumed to be curated. This is the first round of index construction. Going forward, in subsequent rounds even if a few indicators are added or dropped from the list of 66 indicators currently used, the basic methodology of the index construction will not change. More importantly, it is important to acknowledge that this is not a mere ranking exercise, it is a planning and prioritisation tool designed to strengthen the intervention at district and sub-district levels through informed allocation of resources.

The present construct contains different types of indicators. It has outcome indicators like illiteracy among women or status of anaemia among pregnant women. However, there is a classical liberal view that equalising outcomes actually diminishes quality of life. In response to this, policy makers in India are shifting focus from policies that encourage social welfare to action to combat social inclusion. Indicators are therefore needed likely future outcomes, i.e., input indicators that would lead to a given or desired outcome. The final set of indicators that have been included reflect on agency, justice, political participation and freedom, level of trust and social capital, they all reflect the individual's relationship with the wider community (Fukuyama, 1999). In line with the same, we have included an exclusive pillar on gender, wherein participation in the political process, both as a voter as well as a candidate, and participation on the thrift and credit movement which paves the way towards some extent of economic independence of women, and safety from directed crime against women have been covered through proxy indicators.

In a different perspective, our choice of indicators can be categorised into two sets, cumulative indicators, which help focus public attention on a set of issues, and managerial indicators, which help target inputs and measure outcomes. In simple terms, the former must aim for public resonance while the latter must be robust. The use of communicative indicator (like UNDP's HDI) is to send signals to government, business, civil society, and the general public (for instance our indicators on malnutrition, or the status of groundwater reserves). Our index, which consists of a large number of input indicators especially focussed on infrastructure, is skewed in favour of managerial indicators (which is necessary for a planning tool) while the index as a whole is a communicative indicator.

² The Quality of Life in Rural Asia - Asian Development Bank