CHAPTER I

An Overview of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)

Chapter-I

An Overview of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)

1.1 Introduction

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) constitute the local form of self-governance in the State of West Bengal. While they had earlier been functioning under the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973[1], they were accorded constitutional status from 1992, by the Seventy-Third amendment of the Constitution, to provide the third stratum of Government (*i.e.*, after the Union and the States). The Act provides for establishment of three tier Panchayats: Gram Panchayat (GP) for a cluster of villages; Panchayat Samiti (PS) at Block level and Zilla Parishad (ZP) at District level. The new status mandated them to: (i) initiate plans and execute developmental activities, by involving people at the grassroots level and (ii) bring about economic development and social justice, by implementation of Central and State Government schemes catering to the 29 subjects listed in the Eleventh schedule of the Constitution. This report contains observations based on compliance audit of the three-tier PRI bodies, audited during the Financial Year 2020-21.

1.2 State Profile (Rural)

Based on the latest census data (2011), the basic demographic statistics, relating to the state, *vis-à-vis* its rural population, are as given in **Table 1.1**.

Table 1.1
Demographic Statistics of State *vis-à-vis* Rural Population

Particulars	State	Rural (*per cent* w.r.t. State)
Population	9,12,76,115	6,21,83,113 *(68.13)*
Male Population	4,68,09,027	3,18,44,945 *(68.04)*
Female Population	4,44,67,088	3,03,38,168 *(68.23)*
Sex Ratio (Female per 1,000 males)	950	953
Child Sex Ratio (0-6 years)	956	959
Literacy Rate (Average *per cent*)	76.26	72.13
Male Literacy (*per cent*)	81.69	78.44
Female Literacy (*per cent*)	70.54	65.51

(Source: Census data 2011)

[1] *Last amended vide the West Bengal Panchayat (Amendment) Act, 2017, notified on 16 October 2017.*

1.3 Powers, Functions and Organisational structure of PRIs

Article 243G of the Constitution of India authorizes the Legislature of a State to endow the PRIs with such powers and authority[2] as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government. The Act vests PRIs with the following powers and functions:

a. Preparation of development plan/annual action plan.
b. Implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice, as may be drawn up by or entrusted to it, in pursuance of the eleventh Schedule of the Constitution.

Besides, Article 243H of the Constitution of India empowers the Legislature of a State to authorize PRIs for:

c. Management or maintenance of any work of public utility.
d. Collection of revenue for utilization of such funds for developmental work.

Figure 1.1 shows the Constitutional set-up of duly formed PRIs, in the state.

1.4 Devolution of Functionaries and Functions

Article 243G of the Constitution provides for devolution of powers and responsibilities by the State Government, to the Panchayats, in the preparation and implementation of plans for economic development and social justice. This includes implementation of schemes relating to the 29 functions listed in the eleventh Schedule of the Constitution. Accordingly, the State Legislature had inserted Sections 207A (in 1992) and 207B (in 1994), in the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973, for:

a. **Placement of officers and employees at the disposal of PRIs:** Officials of line departments are devolved to different tiers of PRIs, by linking them with the concerned Standing Committees, known as *Sthayee Samitis*[3]. In ZPs and PSs, there are 10 *Sthayee Samitis*, whereas, in GPs, there are five *Upa Samitis*, having elected representatives and officials as members.

b. **Transfer of such powers, functions and duties as exercised, performed and discharged by the State Government to tiers of PRIs:** Transfer of 28[4] functions (out of the 29 listed in the Eleventh schedule of the Constitution) was completed through Activity Mapping[5], carried out between November 2005 and October 2007, followed by several executive orders issued by line departments. The Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, West Bengal, confirmed, in this regard, that activity mapping, for the remaining one subject, had not been carried out, as activities related to this subject were not linked to Panchayats in the State.

---

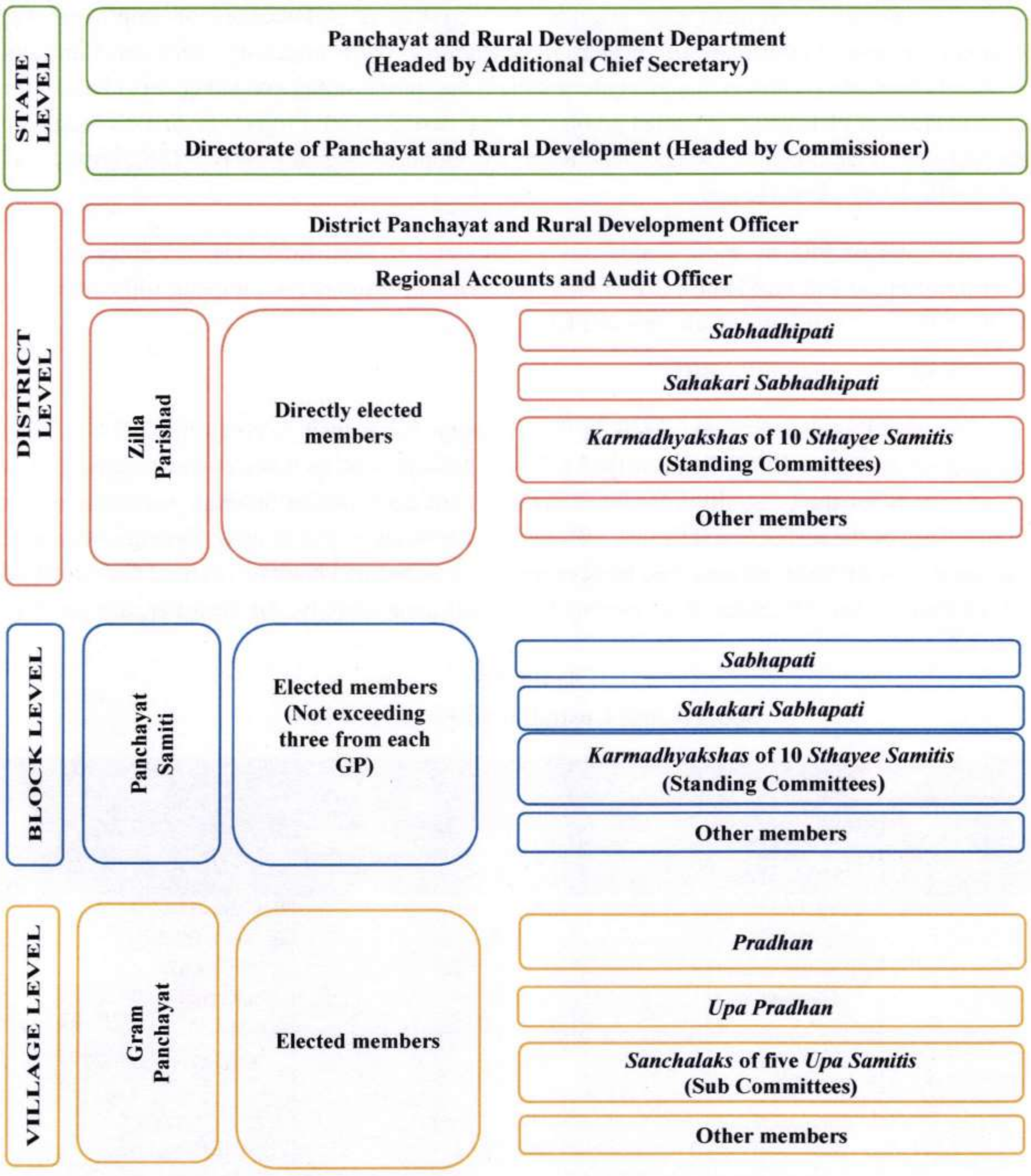
[2] *Ratified by the West Bengal State Legislature, under the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973, vide Sections 19 to 34,109 to 118 and 153 to 165, meant for GPs, PSs and ZPs, respectively.*

[3] *Vide Sections 171, 124 and 32A of West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973.*

[4] *Except for Technical training & Vocational Education (Sl. No. 18 in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution), as activities related to this subject were not linked to Panchayats, in the State.*

[5] *'Activity Mapping' means assigning activities to each tier of the Panchayats, so that any activity, which may be performed at a lower tier, is attributed to that tier only, without giving any scope for overlapping of responsibilities with the upper tier or tiers of the Panchayat.*

Figure 1.1: Constitutional Set-up of the Panchayati Raj System in West Bengal



1.5 Devolution of Funds to PRIs

PRIs receive grants from the Central and State Governments, for implementation of assigned schemes. Central funds are released to the PRIs, either directly or through the State budget. The State Government also provides for: (i) Pay & Allowances of employees (ii) Remuneration and Allowances of elected representatives (iii) matching share of Centrally Sponsored Programs (iv) Share against entertainment tax, professional tax and cess (v) Grants for backward areas of PRIs and (vi) Untied grants, under External Aided Projects (EAPs), through the State budget and *via* the West Bengal State Rural Development Agency (WBSRDA), an agency[6] under the P&RDD, West Bengal.

All tiers of PRI in West Bengal are empowered to earn their own revenues through collection of tax (Land and House tax, if GPs) and non-tax sources (*i.e.*, levying tolls, rates and fees, by making of bye-laws, in all tiers of PRI).

1.6 Fund management in PRIs

ZPs and PSs deposit State funds in the Treasury, in Deposit Account head '8448-Local Fund Deposit Account, 109-Panchayat Bodies', which is operated as a non-interest-bearing bank account. Funds for the Centrally Sponsored Schemes are deposited in Savings Accounts, as per the guidelines of the respective schemes. GPs keep these funds in one or more Savings Accounts, maintained with a nearby nationalized bank or any other scheduled bank or licensed Co-operative Bank or Post Office. The sources of various funds and their custody, for each tier, are given in **Table 1.2**.

Table 1.2
Sources and Custodian of Funds in PRIs

Nature of Fund	Zilla Parishads		Panchayat Samitis		Gram Panchayats	
	Source of fund	Custodian of fund	Source of fund	Custodian of fund	Source of fund	Custodian of fund
Own Source Revenue (OSR)	Revenue (non-tax) collected from the ZPs' jurisdiction	Executive Officer of the ZP	Revenue (non-tax) collected from the PSs jurisdiction	Executive Officer of the PS	Revenue (tax and non-tax) collected from the GPs jurisdiction	*Pradhan* of the GP
State Non-Plan (Salary & allowance)	State Govt.		State Govt.		State Govt.	
State Plan (Schematic programmes)	State Govt.		State Govt.		State Govt.	

[6] *Registered under WB Societies Registration Act, 1961, to implement the activity of construction of rural roads under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY) and Asian Development Banks' Assistance Packages, along with other rural development and social sector schemes, sponsored either by GoI or by the Government of West Bengal.*

Nature of Fund	Zilla Parishads		Panchayat Samitis		Gram Panchayats	
	Source of fund	Custodian of fund	Source of fund	Custodian of fund	Source of fund	Custodian of fund
State Finance Commission Grant(untied)	State Govt.		State Govt.		State Govt.	
Centrally Sponsored Schemes	GoI/State Govt. (through the State budget/ other agencies/ Direct Benefit Transfer)		GoI/State Govt. (through the State budget/ other agencies/ Direct Benefit Transfer)		GoI/State Govt. (through the State budget/ other agencies/ Direct Benefit Transfer)	
Central Finance Commission Grant (untied)	GoI/State Govt. (through the State budget)		GoI/State Govt. (through the State budget)		GoI/State Govt. (through the State budget)	

(Source: Sections 179, 132 and 45 of the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973)

1.7 Accounting procedure of PRIs

PRIs in West Bengal maintain their accounts on the cash basis double entry system, in conformity with the formats prescribed in the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973 and the Rules[7] framed thereunder.

To standardize the accounting system of the PRIs and make account keeping easy, transparent and comfortable to users, the P&RDD has developed two application softwares for preparation of accounts, namely the Integrated Fund Monitoring and Accounting System (IFMAS) for ZPs and PSs and the Gram Panchayat Management System (GPMS) for GPs. In addition to generation of statutory reports, the GPMS also helps the Gram Panchayats in rendering several citizen-centric services.

1.8 Status of Adoption of Model Accounting System (MAS)

The Thirteenth Finance Commission, on review of the recommendations of earlier Finance Commissions, had proposed, *inter-alia,* that PRIs should adopt the Model Accounting System (MAS) for Panchayats, which had been prescribed by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India and Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR), Government of India and was proposed to be implemented *w.e.f.* 01 April 2010.

In this regard, NIC[8] developed (in 2003) the Panchayati Raj Institutions Accounting Software (PRIA*Soft*), a web-based software, with framework support from MoPR, for use by PRIs in:

---

[7] *Rule 6 of the West Bengal (Gram Panchayats) Accounts, Audit and Budget Rules, 2007 and Rules 21, 24 & 209 of the West Bengal ZP & PS Accounts and Financial Rules, 2003.*

[8] *National Informatics Centre, under the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, GoI.*

a) Capturing the four-tier[9] accounting structure

b) Proper booking of receipt and expenditure to the appropriate account heads, for generation of the Model Accounting Formats, as prescribed by the C&AG and

c) Making accounting information/data available online, on a centralized system, to bring about transparency, accountability and to facilitate better financial management.

The Examiner of Local Accounts (ELA), West Bengal, sought for the present status of adoption of MAS through PRIA*Soft*. The P&RDD communicated (April 2021) that: (i) accounting data could not be ported to PRIA*Soft* from GPMS and (ii) for IFMAS, no data is available, due to non-existence of the PRIA*Soft* web portal (*accountingonline.gov.in*) as of yet. In previous communications related to this issue, the Department had reflected that, in practice, no data could be uploaded in PRIA*Soft* since the financial year 2017-18, due to limitations in uploading vouchers in bulk in PRIA*Soft*, at a given point of time. Further, in December 2021, the P&RDD intimated that accounting system is not being maintained in PRIA*Soft* since the entire accounting is being maintained by *e-GramSwaraj*.

In its recommendations for empowering rural local bodies, the Fifteenth Finance Commission held (Para-7.16) that availability of accounts in the public domain, on a timely basis, would be an entry-level condition, for qualifying for any grant. Consequent to this, MoPR provided the PRIA*Soft*-PFMS (Public Financial Management System) interface, integrated into the *e-Gramswaraj* portal *(https://egramswaraj.gov.in/)*, for effective monitoring and fostering increased accountability in PRIs.

Launched on April 24, 2020, *e-Gramswaraj* is a portal to unify the planning, accounting, and monitoring functions of Gram Panchayats. Its combination with the Area Profiler application[10], Local Government Directory (LGD) and the Public Financial Management System (PFMS), is expected to render real-time reporting and tracking of the activities of GPs, by geo-tagging of projects. It has been designed to provide a single window for capturing Panchayat information, along with the complete profiles of the Panchayats, details of Panchayat finances, asset details, activities taken up through the Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs), Panchayat information from other Ministries/ Departments such as Census 2011, Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC) data, Mission Antyodaya[11] survey report *etc.*

The Examiner of Local Accounts (ELA), West Bengal, sought for the present status of adoption of MAS through *e-Gramswaraj*. The P&RDD, in December 2021, confirmed the following: a) MAS is being implemented directly through the *e-Gramswaraj* portal b) entry of

---

[9] *Accounting classification consisting of Major Heads, Minor Heads, Sub-Heads and Object Heads. The Central/State schemes are to be mapped at the Sub-Head Level, to provide accounting under the schemes.*

[10] *Area profiler application is a feature of e-gramswaraj portal which describes the profile of the PRIs. Four types of reports can be generated, i.e., Panchayat Summary Reports, Panchayat Profile Details, Committee & committee member details and Service Delivery in Panchayat Report.*

[11] *Mission Antyodaya is a convergence and accountability framework aiming to bring optimum use and management of resources allocated by 26 Ministries / Department of the Government of India under various programmes for the development of rural areas. It is envisaged as state-led initiative with Gram Panchayats as focal points of convergence efforts. It was adopted in Union Budget 2017-18.*

master data of all PRI bodies has been completed c) all the PRIs are entering financial data in the *e-Gramswaraj* portal, d) all PRIs are performing period end procedures and e) statutory reports are generated in all tiers of PRIs.

On closer scrutiny, it was found that the entries in the *e-Gramswaraj* portal, by the PRIs of West Bengal, was limited only to the Central Finance Commission Grants and not to the full range of accounts of the PRIs. Further, contrary to the claim of the P&RDD, no statutory reports were being generated through the *e-Gramswaraj* portal, in regard to the PRIs of West Bengal. Thus, the claim of the P&RDD, about adoption of MAS, through *e-Gramswaraj* portal, was not in conformity with the position observed in audit.

1.9 Central Finance Commission Grants

The Union or Central Finance Commission is a Constitutional body, mandated under Article 280 of the Constitution of India, constituted every five years, by the President of India, to *inter-alia*: a) review the state of finances of the Union and the States and suggest measures for maintaining a stable and sustainable fiscal environment and b) make recommendations regarding the devolution of taxes between the Centre and the States from the divisible pool[12].

1.9.1 Fourteenth Finance Commission (FoFC) Grants

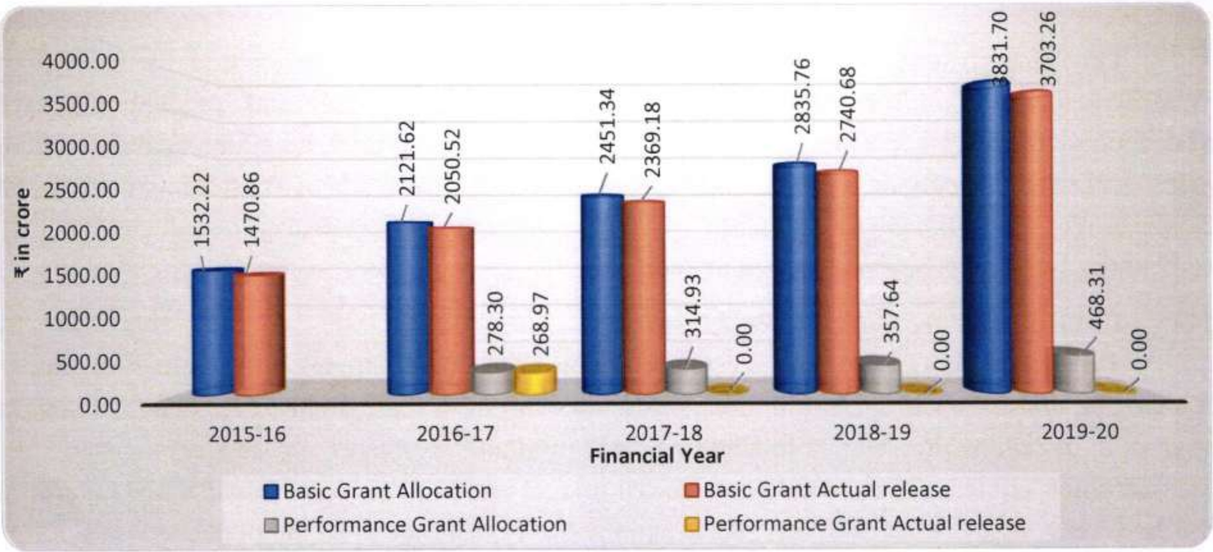
The President of India had constituted (January 2013) the Fourteen Finance Commission (FFC), under the provisions of Article 280 of the Constitution of India, to make recommendations on specified aspects of Centre-State fiscal relations, for the period from FY 2015-20 to FY 2019-20. Government of India (GoI) had accepted (February 2015) the recommendations made by the FFC about Local Bodies.

Under the FoFC recommendations, grants were allocated to the duly[13] constituted Gram Panchayats, with 90 *per cent* share of the grant being the 'Basic Grant' and 10 *per cent* share being the 'Performance Grant'. The Performance Grant, as applicable from FY 2016-17 onwards, was stipulated to serve the purpose of ensuring reliable audited accounts, with data of receipt and expenditure and improvement in 'Own Source' revenues. Year-wise allocations and actual releases, under the FoFC, for PRIs of West Bengal, were as shown in **Figure 1.2**:

[12] *The divisible pool is that portion of gross tax revenue that consists of all taxes, except surcharges and cess levied for specific purposes, net of collection charges, which is to be distributed between the Centre and the States.*

[13] *A duly constituted Panchayat means a Panchayat where elections have been held and an elected body is in place, as provided in Part-IX of the Constitution.*

Figure: 1.2
Release of FoFC grants for onward disbursal to PRIs



(Source: data furnished by the P&RDD).

For implementation of the recommendations of the FoFC, the Department of Expenditure, under Ministry of Finance, Government of India (GoI), had issued (08 October 2015) guidelines, followed by the recommendations (Para: 9.72) of the FoFC, wherein it was stated that grant released by GoI should be distributed among GPs only, the tier directly responsible for delivery of basic services, and there should be no share of allocation for other tiers of PRIs.

However, from the Receipts & Payments Accounts (Summary) statement[14], it was seen that collective grant balances lay blocked in several ZPs/MP, during the recommended period of release. An amount of ₹2.81 crore, had not been sub-allotted to GPs, till the end of March 2021, as detailed in ***Appendix-I***.

1.9.2 Fifteenth Finance Commission Grants (XVFC)

The President of India had subsequently constituted (November 2017) the Fifteenth Finance Commission (XVFC), under the provision of Article 280 of the Constitution of India. Subsequently, the Commission had been mandated to submit two reports, one for the financial year 2020-21 and the final report for the financial years 2021-22 to 2025-26. The Commission submitted its interim report for the financial year 2020-21 and the GoI accepted the recommendations of the XVFC, in respect of Local Bodies.

---

[14] *As available in the IFMS SARAL web portal (http://wbprd.gov.in/HtmlPage/ViewSaralReport.aspx), being developed, maintained, and updated by the Panchayat & Rural Development Department, Govt. of West Bengal.*

Under the XVFC, Grants-in-aid are to be allocated to all the tiers of PRIs, of the State, on the basis of accepted recommendations of the latest State Finance Commission (SFC) of the State, in two parts, namely: (i) Basic Grant (50 *per cent* share), which is to be untied in nature and can be utilized for location-specific felt needs, except for salary or other establishment expenditure and (ii) Tied Grant (50 *per cent* share), which is to be utilized primarily for basic services in respect of (a) sanitation and maintenance of open-defecation free (ODF) status and (b) supply of drinking water, rain water harvesting and water recycling.

Releases under the XVFC, as provided by the P&RDD, Govt. of West Bengal, are detailed under **Table 1.3**:

Table: 1.3

Release of XVFC grant for onward disbursal to PRIs

(₹ in Crore)

Financial Year	No. and nature of installments	Allocation as per the FFC recommendation	Actual release by GoI	Penal interest released by State Govt. for delay in release of grant
2020-21	First-Untied	2,206.00	1,103.00	-
	First-Tied		1,103.00	16.37
	Second-Untied	2,206.00	1,103.00	15.08
	Second-Tied		1,103.00	9.32
Total		**4,412.00**	**4,412.00**	**40.77**

(Source: data furnished by P&RDD)

As per the information provided by the Department, out of total allocation of ₹4,412.00 crore, ₹2,206.00 crore (first installment of both tied and untied grant) had been released during the financial year 2020-21. The second instalment pertaining to FY 2020-21 had been released to the PRIs during FY 2021-22. Out of total penal interest of ₹40.77 crore, an amount of ₹16.37 crore (penal interest for delayed release of first instalment of Tied grant) had been released during FY 2020-21. Thus, total amount released during FY 2020-21 was ₹2,222.37 crore. However, as per the data available in the *e-Gramswaraj* portal, the total amount released during FY 2020-21 was ₹2,353.43 crore[15]. Thus, there was a difference of ₹131.06 crore between the two sets of figures.

[15] *Untied: Rs.1,236.63 crore and Tied: Rs.1,116.80 crore*

1.10 Fourth State Finance Commission (FSFC)

In terms of Article 243I, sub clause (4) of the Constitution of India, the State Government had constituted the Fourth State Finance Commission *vide* notification no. 121-FB dated 30 April 2013. The Commission had framed its recommendations in February 2016.

Information/data for the award period, action taken report, period of implementation and actual release of grant against the SFC recommendations, were sought for, from the Panchayat and Rural Development Department. The Department forwarded information only in respect of actual release of SFC grants, which have been compared against the allocation recommended by SFC, in **Table 1.4**:

Table 1.4

Allocation and Release of Fourth SFC Grant to PRIs

(₹ in crore)

Financial Year	Devolution (as recommended by SFC)	Total Receipt from Finance Dept.[16]	Total Disbursal[17]	No. of units received the fund	Devolution (as recommended by SFC)	Devolution (as recommended by SFC)	Total Receipt from Finance Dept.	Total Disbursal	No. of units received the fund
	GP				PS	ZP	PS+ZP		
2015-16	153.00	0	0	0	253.5	224.81	Could not be traced	0	
2016-17	175.95	0	0	0	291.53	258.53		0	
2017-18	202.34	315.80	248.94	2,037	335.25	297.31		0	
2018-19	232.69	245.00	245.39	2178	385.54	341.91		0	
2019-20	267.60	232.69	203.73	2,361	443.37	393.19		146.46	334 PS+21 ZP
2020-21	0	133.8	0	0	0	0		0	
2021-22	0	133.8	233.66	2,568	0	0		0	
2022-23	0	59.00	0	0	0	0		0	
Total	**1,031.58**	**1,120.09**	**931.72**		**1,709.19**	**1,515.75**		**146.46**	
Total Devolution (GP+PS+ZP)									**4,256.52**
Total Disbursal (GP+PS+ZP)									**1,078.18**
Short Disbursal									**3,178.34**

(Source: data furnished by the P&RDD, Fourth SFC Report)

[16] *This is the total fund released by the Finance Department, Govt. of West Bengal, to the Panchayat and Rural Development Department, Govt. of West Bengal, the administrative department of PRIs.*

[17] *This denotes the fund released by the P&RDD, to different tiers (GP/PS/ZP) of PRIs*

It is clear from the Table that the State govt didn't release the fund for the first two years of the recommended period *i.e.*, 2015-16 and 2016-17 to any tier of PRIs. Fund was released only from the year 2017-18. It further revealed that the receipt of funds was not commensurate with the SFC recommendation. There was a shortfall in disbursement in comparison to both recommended devolution and the receipt from the Finance department. The total shortfall from the recommendation is ₹ 3,178.34 crore (from FY 2015-16 to FY 2022-23). Fifth SFC was to be constituted for the period of five years from 2020-21, however, State Govt continued to release the funds of Fourth SFC even after its recommended period.

As per the 4th SFC recommendation, the PRIs were to spend the SFC Grant based on the local felt need pertaining to civic services. However, due to short release of the fund which is only 25.33 *per cent* of the recommended allocation, the civic services to the localities were hindered and the local people of the PRIs were deprived from the local development.

1.11 Audit mandate for PRIs

The Examiner of Local Accounts (ELA), West Bengal, had been appointed (since September 1980 for ZPs and PSs and for GPs since March 2003) as Auditor, by the Government of West Bengal, under Section 186 of the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973, to examine and audit all accounts of funds of ZPs, PSs and GPs.

1.12 Audit Coverage

As of April 2020, the State had[18]: (i) 3229 Gram Panchayats (GPs) at the village level (ii) 334 Panchayat Samitis (PSs) at the Block level, between the district and the village (iii) 20 Zilla Parishads (ZPs) and (iv) one Mahakuma Parishad[19] (MP) at the district level, which were under the audit purview.

As the year was adversely affected with Covid-19, the accounts of 18 ZPs (including one Mahakuma Parishad), 61 PSs and 24 GPs only, could be audited, during FY 2020-21 (as detailed in ***Appendix-II***). The audit findings have been discussed in the successive Chapters. The State had last held Panchayat elections (eighth) in 2018.

1.13 Response to Audit Reports

In terms of Section 191(A) of the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973, the Report of the ELA on PRIs, shall be laid before the State Legislature. Matters relating to scrutinizing the Report of the ELA on PRIs have been entrusted to the Standing Committee on Panchayats and Rural

---

[18]*Excluding eight PSs and 112 GPs, which are under control of the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA), the accounts of which have not been audited since 2003-04, as the audit of these PRIs were not entrusted by the State Government after constitution of GTA in 2012 under GTA Act, 2011.*

[19]*As per Section 185(b) (1) of the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973, a sub-division of Siliguri, in the district of Darjeeling, the State Government shall constitute a Mahakuma Parishad, bearing the name of the sub-division.*

Development, Land & Land Reforms and Sundarban Development, of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly (WBLA).

Accordingly, Reports of the ELA, for the financial year 2003-04 to 2016-17, were laid before the State Legislature and Reports of the ELA for the financial year 2003-04 to 2014-15, were considered by the Standing Committee. Fifty-three recommendations were made in these reports. However, no action taken report had been received from the State Government (till March 2021). A Committee on Local Fund Accounts was constituted by West Bengal Legislative Assembly, to come into operation with effect from 03 August 2018, for consideration of Reports of the ELA.

1.14 Pending Audit Observations on Inspection Reports

Section 191(1) of the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973, stipulates that, within two months from the receipt of the Inspection Report (IR), the GP, PS or ZP concerned, shall at a meeting, set right any defect or irregularity pointed out in the IR, under intimation to the auditor. **Table 1.5** indicates the position of IRs and paragraphs pending for settlement, as of 31 March 2021:

Table 1.5
Pending IRs and paras waiting for settlement

Category of PRIs	IRs pending for settlement		No. of paras contained in the IRs awaiting settlement		Money value (₹ in crore)	
	More than five years	Less than five years	More than five years	Less than five years	More than five years	Less than five years
ZPs	113	77	581	629	517.95	1,262.96
PSs	884	274	4,131	1,864	500.99	585.16
GPs	23,381	3,122	1,42,986	4,774	Not available	

(Source: objection book of ELA)

Out of 18 ZPs audited during 2020-21, 17 ZPs (except Uttar Dinajpur ZP) had not responded to audit observations, involving an overall amount ₹898.16 crore **(*Appendix-III*)**.

No Audit Committee meeting had been held at the departmental level, to settle the outstanding IRs and paragraphs, during FY 2020-21 (the last having been held in January 2013), despite repeated reminders by the ELA (last correspondence having been made on 21 February 2020), contrary to the provisions of Rules 218 and 219 of the West Bengal Panchayat (Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samiti) Accounts and Financial Rules, 2003 and Rule 28 of the West Bengal Panchayat (Gram Panchayat Accounts, Audit and Budget) Rules, 2007. The above was indicative of the lack of responsiveness of the State Government, as well as PRIs, to the outcome of statutory audit.