

THE PUBLIC PRODUCTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE HANDBOOK

A productive society is dependent upon high-performing government. This third edition of *The Public Performance and Productivity Handbook* includes chapters from leading scholars, consultants, and practitioners to explore all of the core elements of improvement. Completely revised and focused on best practice, the handbook comprehensively explores managing for high performance, measurement and analysis, costs and finances, human resources, and cutting-edge organizational tools. Its coverage of new and systematic management approaches and well-defined measurement systems provides guidance for organizations of all sizes to improve productivity and performance. The contributors discuss such topics as accountability, organizational effectiveness after budget cuts, the complementary roles of human capital and “big data,” and how to teach performance management in the classroom and in public organizations. The handbook is accompanied by an online companion volume providing examples of performance measurement and improvement manuals across a wide variety of public organizations. *The Public Performance and Productivity Handbook*, Third Edition, is required reading for all public administration practitioners, as well as for students and scholars interested in the state of the public performance and productivity field.

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THE PUBLIC PRODUCTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE HANDBOOK

THIRD EDITION

*Edited by
Marc Holzer and Andrew Ballard*

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APPLYING COMPETENCIES

State Capability Enhancement Project (SCEP)

*Sampath Kumar, Aroon P. Manoharan, and
Jayasharadha Chandrakalatharan*

Introduction—Why Capability Enhancement?

India is on the cusp of a governance transformation. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, and the institutions of local governance they have and will create, signify an emphatic recognition that the objective of democracy is more than securing the consent of its citizens. Democracy is both the tool for and the product of creative collaboration of citizens. Subsequent legislation and policies have in turn recognized this objective of expanding individual agency. There is a deliberate shift to the “Rights Approach” in public service delivery best exemplified by the Right to Education Act, the mainstreaming of transparency with proactive information exchange enshrined in the Right to Information Act, and the appetite for transformation through technology pervading the government through e-governance. From the colonial conception of a superstructure of order providing for a unidirectional flow of directives, governance has evolved to a process paradigm growing from up the root with the singular objective of sustainably expanding individual freedoms. The content of this postmodernist ideology has been provided by Amartya Sen’s capabilities approach whereby expanded freedoms essentially mean improved capabilities of the populace.

Although this shift in the approach to and objectives of governance is undeniably progressive, there has been a distinct lack of commensurate alterations in the structure and culture of the institutions of governance. Kafkaesque convolutions of procedure continue to plague implementation of development schemes. The elaborate network of bureaucracy meant to provide consistency and durability for development has become an avenue for resisting change and rationalizing the status quo. Job security in government instead of being a source of empowerment has become a cause for complacency, blurring individual purpose and disincentivizing initiative. However, this internal resistance to reforms and immunity to external pressure is merely systemic inertia. There does exist, across levels of government, an implicit acceptance regarding the need for real change in the existing implementation delivery system. So, the problem for India today is to transform government in order to transform governance. It is toward this central goal that Meghalaya’s State Capability Enhancement Project (SCEP) is directed.

State of Meghalaya, India

Meghalaya is a small tribal state in northeast India with a population of 3 million growing at an annual rate of 1.2% as of 2011. As per the 15th Finance Commission Report of 2019, 48% of the state’s budget goes toward meeting the “Salary and Pensions” of Government of Meghalaya

employees. This disproportionate share of expenditure is crowding out funds for development. The magnitude of the opportunity cost of such an imbalance needs to be understood in the context of Meghalaya's poor development indicators. It has an infant mortality rate of 39 (national average: 34) as of 2016, a per-capita income of INR60,013 (US\$820; against the national average: INR63,462 [US\$866]) as of 2011, and a literacy rate of 75.48% (national average: 74.04%) as of 2011. In short, Meghalaya has a serious need for development funding. The disproportionate representation of salaries in the state's expenditure is made worse by a persistent spending problem that further stunts development expenditures. The state's capital asset creation capabilities are equally poor, with its capital expenditure share at a paltry 2%. As articulated in *Building State Capability—Evidence, Analysis, Action* (Andrews, Pritchett, and Woolcock, 2017), governance in Meghalaya suffers from a “capability trap.” Despite a clear perception of development goals and consistent articulation of the three Ps—Policies, Programs, and Projects—there is still a systemic lack of implementation capacity which is the real determinant of performance. So, instead of “doubling down on orthodoxy,” SCEP aims at transforming the structure and culture of government to arm it with the necessary expertise, flexibility, and cohesion to meet its development goals.

This chapter is intended to serve as the basis of design that guides the planning and implementation of SCEP. It seeks to answer the ‘why’s’ rather than the ‘how’s’. This document will be followed by a detailed program implementation plan (PIP) where the focus shifts from rationale to specifics. At every stage, there should be enough room to adapt to the changing realities on the ground, to seek solutions at the field level, and to aspire to higher levels of inclusion. “The State Capability Enhancement Project—An Overview” provides an overview of SCEP and introduces the five verticals. This is followed by a detailed description of each vertical showcasing the objectives and the anticipated deliverables in each category. The conclusion discusses the way forward and the partnerships required to develop a program implementation plan for SCEP.

The State Capability Enhancement Project—An Overview

The SCEP is meant to be a complete overhaul of governance. As the state's machinery of government becomes more able and responsive, a step change in effectiveness and efficiency will be introduced.

SCEP has five broad verticals:

- 1 Adaptive leadership building (ALB)
- 2 Granular performance monitoring (GPM)
- 3 Restructuring for responsiveness (RFR)
- 4 Artificial Intelligence and data-enabled decision-making (AIEDM)
- 5 Incubating innovation (II)

Adaptive leadership building is aimed at human resources. To elicit the optimum contribution from individuals across the organizational ladder, a three-pronged approach is planned.

First, individual capabilities will be directly expanded by providing tested tools for thinking. Here key personnel will be trained in the novel approaches found in academia, such as the Kennedy School's Problem Driven Iterative Adaption (PDIA), and Smart Policy Design and Implementation (SPDI). Individuals across the chain of command will be given decision-making tools through training programs. The point is to increase capacity so that every-day, isolated challenges can be effectively addressed.

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Second, ALB will decrease the inherent problems in the current chain of command. With hierarchical hurdles flattened, open communication channels should encourage meaningful participation at all levels. Useful practices that have the potential to solve problems can be shared. For instance, brainstorming with local-level functionaries regarding the barriers in the implementation of the government livelihood guarantee scheme, MGNREGA, helped identify a novel solution to the problem of building durable assets while adhering to the mandated cost split of 60% on wages and 40% on materials. The solution involved allowing local labor under MGNREGA to collect the sand and chips used in construction. There was a legitimate transfer of expenditures from materials to wages that did not compromise infrastructure quality. More meaningfully, the objective of providing a livelihood guarantee to the local population was met by implementing a solution suggested and implemented at the local level. Greater ownership of the process produced innovation at the ground level. Through exercises of collaborative decision-making, ALB's second approach aims to breakdown communication barriers and use the creative capacity of personnel at all levels. This elevates self-perception regarding individual responsibility, capability, and worth, thereby organically improving the efficiency of the system.

Last, ALB will be used to create a conducive process flow for effective decision-making. With a focus on evidence-based policymaking, ALB will institute an iterative approach to problem-solving that employs scientific decision-making via randomized controlled trials. This systemic approach provides opportunities for frequent interventions at the pilot stage, allowing the institution to develop tailored solutions to persistent problems.

Granular performance monitoring (GPM) is a framework designed to enhance accountability across the system by clearly identifying roles, responsibilities, and deliverables of every person. This is an extensive project that begins with a detailed process map covering the entire gamut of governance activities. Clearly, mapping the interplay of various stakeholders in a project execution allows us to create a hierarchy of key performance indicators (KPI) for the entire organization. KPIs will be fed into a new performance appraisal system (NPAS) that will serve as an outcome-based performance evaluation. Individual KPIs not only provide an objective evaluation framework but also improve initiative, efficiency, and accountability. Although the personnel-centric KPIs infuse the system with an ethos of accountability, the process-centric KPIs also provide a framework for objective and prompt evaluation of the project's effectiveness and efficiency.

Restructuring for responsiveness (RFR) is an initiative aimed at streamlining the organizational structure of government. The immediate benefits include clarifying roles and reducing redundancies. The ultimate objective of the restructuring is to create enough system flexibility so an iterative project implementation approach can be adopted. With faster feedback loops and well-defined chain of command, streamlining can improve the effectiveness of governance initiatives and eliminate convolutions in the decision-making process.

Artificial Intelligence-enabled decision-making (AIEDM) is the culmination of data-driven governance. Disaggregated data are collected and collated in real time and then fed into decision support systems to augment solution validity. This is an evolute of the process mapping done in the GPM stage that allows an algorithmic view of the processes. For instance, a GIS-based decision support system infused with detailed geographic, environmental, and socioeconomic information at a granular level allows the local state to base decisions regarding afforestation, water storage infrastructure, and so on on reliable data. Moreover, this helps in clear baseline identification to effectively track changes and tailor responses accordingly.

Incubating innovation (II) is the last vertical of SCEP. It is envisioned as an array of pilot programs in the fields of education, healthcare, and livelihoods. These fields represent the three most significant avenues of expanding the individual agency of citizens. II builds on the capability

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enhancements achieved through the first four verticals and develops innovative solutions to local problems. Two programs in each field are planned at the initial stage of SCEP implementation. However, over the course of SCEP, three additional programs under each field are to be planned and implemented. To limit the scope of SCEP, at first, the focus will be on small-scale implementation. The programs will be implemented as a single block (sub-district) and later scaled up to cover one district. Their state-wide implementation will depend on the lessons learned in the pilot ventures but will be outside the purview of SCEP.

In line with the objectives of developing an able and responsive government, the implementation of SCEP is also envisioned as an iterative process. Following the methodology of PDIA, each vertical of SCEP will be deconstructed into multiple problem statements with an emphasis on stakeholders, control variables, and performance indicators. The solved scenario will be clearly visualized, and an iterative plan to achieve the solution will be developed for each problem statement. Since ALB focuses on eliciting apt solutions not only from external best practices and existing practices but also from latent local practices and positive deviance, ample room will be provided for dynamic changes in the solution space.

Adaptive Leadership Building

Through SCEP, we seek to enhance the capability of government by optimizing the resources and processes that determine governance. As evidenced by the fact that 48% of state expenditures in Meghalaya go toward salaries and pensions, the primary resource of Meghalaya government is its people. The primary objective of SCEP is to actualize and elevate the intrinsic potential of government functionaries through capability building at different levels. Agents of government need a sense of purpose, technical prowess to fulfil their individual responsibilities, and the freedom to innovate. These are made meaningful through a strong sense of work ethic and an overarching ethos of accountability.

Building Multi-agent Leadership

The first phase of ALB seeks to achieve these objectives through wide training in augmenting leadership and problem-solving skills. Over 20,000 personnel work for the State Government of Meghalaya. They will be divided into five groups: upper bureaucracy, HQ officials, district officials, block officials, and village officials. Different training packages will be created for each based on the required skill set for their position. For instance, the upper bureaucracy will begin with a leadership training exercise on strategic decision-making. Not only will this improve individual decision-making abilities, it will also aid in building the much-needed top-level consensus for implementing SCEP. Ideally, this training will be conducted in partnership with leaders of development sector academia from reputed institutions such as Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. Approaches that are currently confined to academia should be incorporated into governance. A particular focus of SCEP will be Lant Pritchett and Matt Andrew's problem-driven iterative adaptation (PDIA). PDIA emphasizes developing mechanisms to identify problems, to construct and deconstruct those problems, to refine each problem based on emerging experience, and to ensure that the problem provides some aspirational goal for action and plausible entry points to start executing change. HKS's Evidence for Policy Design (EPoD) which promotes the six steps of smart policy design and implementation is another area of emerging research that can transform governance.

The upper bureaucracy constitutes the policymaking infrastructure. But the HQ-level functionaries at Shillong form the vanguard of the implementation infrastructure. Since there tends to be a gap between these employees and the upper bureaucracy, the first training sessions will

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focus on disrupting hierarchical barriers that constrain decision-making. The improvement of the communication and feedback skills of the HQ-level employees will be supplemented by an emphasis on coaching skills for the upper bureaucracy. For the second tranche of training, these officials should be further divided based on the work departments. Here the objective is to expand officials' problem-solving skills by teaching them best practices from across the country. With the help of national-level think tanks such as NITI Aayog, this training will involve extensive field visits. For instance, to learn from the renowned Telangana model of social welfare and tribal residential schools, officials from the education department should interact and learn from their counterparts in Telangana. Similarly, the organic farming techniques practiced in the state of Sikkim, India's first fully organic state, could greatly enhance the sustainable problem-solving abilities of Meghalaya's agriculture department. In the PIP, matching partnerships for each department should be detailed.

Districts form the principal unit of implementation in development schemes. Funds are often allocated to the district governments that then distributes them through the villages and down to the blocks. Due to its central position in the implementation architecture, the district and its administrative head, the district commissioner (DC), play a central role in leading field-level implementing officials. Often viewed as a colonial relic, the DC position can sometimes lead to over-centralization, thus stifling ground-level innovation and acting as a barrier to participatory governance. To counter this tendency and reduce administrative bottlenecks, the training of district-level officials should focus on role transition, transforming their office from the apex of a pyramidal decision-making structure into the aggregating hub of empowered grassroots institutions. The training of district-level functionaries will emphasize coaching so that they can empower the block- and village-level officials to serve as implementers instead of distributive agents. Another aspect of their training will be to bolster accountability, transparency, and responsiveness. Since the routing of funds and feedback through the district machinery gives a certain level of opacity at the district level, these traits are of utmost importance to ensure effective and efficient service delivery. Equally important is bridging the gulf between the DC and her subordinates. Instead of a 'hero orthodoxy', the cumulative and concerted efforts of a networked team (rather than any one leader) is the key to an improved delivery mechanism. Last, district-level officials should be trained in PDIA so that they can identify best practices and latent practices (wisdom of the crowds within the organization that hasn't been heard) in addition to pushing problem-driven positive deviance that allows for the creation of an environment that encourages experimentation.

As India transitions into a participative democracy, block- and village-level officials will be the ultimate drivers of change. A 'good' problem, in PDIA, is one that is locally driven, where local actors define, debate, and refine the problem statement through shared consensus. So, constructing local problems is the beginning of the search for solutions to drive change. Identifying these 'good' problems and calibrating the extant development architecture to address requires empowered ground-level leadership. To achieve this, ALB will focus on wide and oft-conducted trainings for local officials.

The capability-building exercise done as part of the MGNREGA overhaul in Meghalaya provides valuable lessons for designing trainings for block- and village-level leadership. The gap analysis reveals that there was, at the block level, a serious lack of leadership, ownership, and motivation to coordinate and guide the activities of the nascent Village Employment Councils. In response, wide training campaigns were undertaken to empower block leadership and give them effective coordination skills. Several adaptive leadership modules were designed in partnership with academia, and 46 BDOs and their key personnel were trained and motivated in a systematic way. The Institute of Rural Management (IRMA), Anand, Gujarat, was a key partner in this stage. The idea of innovation as co-creation through knowledge and idea exchange both between blocks and within a block was reinforced. WhatsApp groups were created at various levels to

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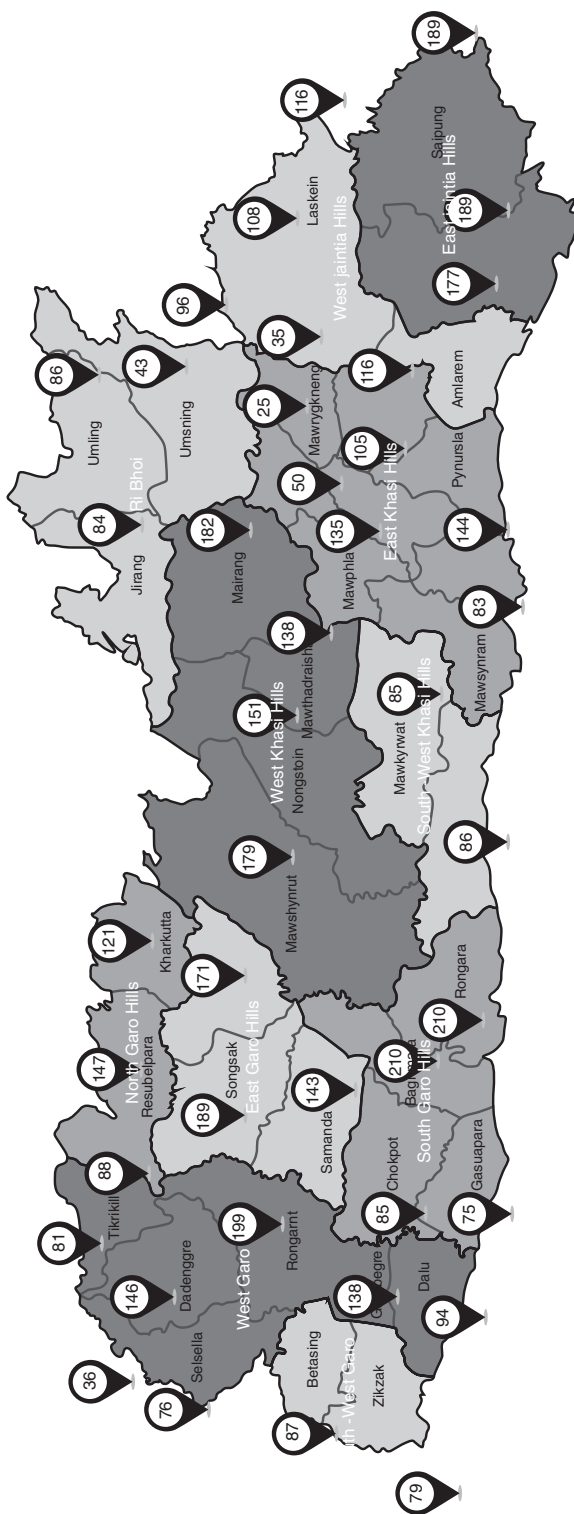


Figure 29.1 Training Programme by SRES for VEC Functionaries

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exchange ideas and to facilitate the snowballing of knowledge. Enthusiastic block-level field officers were given a greater sense of purpose and mission. The impact can be seen in the increased pace of program implementation and the improved quality and scale of works undertaken. For instance, several BDOs have successfully mobilized groups of villages to take up projects impacting multiple villages like large roads or bridges. Such iconic projects have also been finished at a much lower cost than the standard departmental estimates.

The MGNREGA exercise also included wide training of village-level officials (VECs) as shown in the map below. A massive campaign was launched to train office bearers of VECs, particularly on the protocols and procedures to improve the pace of program implementation. To reinforce social capital, the concept of social agreement was introduced. All the VEC members committed, in writing, to implement the program in the right spirit and to use the program money most judiciously toward creation of sustainable community assets. As a result, the number of active VECs increased by about 200% between 2015 and 2016. This resulted in 300% growth in the funds spent under this program, which led to a 50% growth in employment generation (Figure 29.1).

Using the experience of the MGNREGS overhaul in Meghalaya, ALB will include training of local leaders to understand their role as key participants in the larger development process, to mobilize public opinion and leverage the sociocultural wisdom of the society to arrive at innovative solutions, and to shape policies by registering their demands.

Disrupting Hierarchy

The second phase of ALB will focus on dismantling the existing hierarchical architecture to facilitate effective communication between different levels. This will bring efficiency to operations by streamlining the flow of information, optimizing authorization pathways, and creating a culture of collaboration. The first phase relies heavily on the content of the training modules, but the second phase focuses on methods. Pilot trainings have included simple exercises like addressing senior officials by name for the duration of a brainstorming session. Even this small change brought about a step change in the ease with which junior staff were able to communicate their ideas. Role playing is another form of training that will benefit this phase of ALB. These trainings should be conducted in two groups. The first grouping will include upper bureaucracy, HQ-level employees, and district officials. The second grouping will involve district-, block-, and village-level officials. As a part of this program, annual award functions recognizing the contribution of field-level employees will be instituted.

Putting PDIA into practice requires authorization. Agents, in the current ecosystem, are not allowed to do that. An organization's authorizing mechanisms and structure to authorize a reform, to incubate it, and then to get it moving, must be changed. However, successful change only comes through multi-agent leadership, not just one person who sits at the topmost tier.

Building Tight Feedback Loops

Once individual capability is augmented and the debilitating aspects of hierarchy are removed, the next step in building a responsive, agile, and efficient administrative machinery requires building tight feedback loops. This is a fundamental pillar of PDIA. It relies on iterative implementation to ensure effectiveness at every stage. At the ground level, social audits are an effective feedback mechanism that ensure the effectiveness of implemented solutions. The resounding success of social audits in elevating the quality and pace of MGNREGS implementation has prodded Meghalaya to become the first state in the entire country to pass the Social Audit Legislation. This Act allows social audits to be used as a mandatory monitoring mechanism in implementing most state and central government schemes.

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The legitimacy provided to continuous public scrutiny through this Act should be leveraged by SCEP. Village-level officials should be trained as mobilizing agents, expanding the participation of their communities in the audits. Block-level officials should be trained to be effective participants in a social audit. District officials should be trained to effectively capture, communicate, and address the concerns raised in social audits. Feedback loops at higher levels should be instituted as part of ALB in the form of annual 360-degree appraisals for the upper bureaucracy, monthly review meetings between district administration and HQ-level officials, quarterly brainstorming with ground-level officials regarding possible avenues for innovation and optimization, and a bi-annual stocktaking exercises for each development scheme to identify inefficiencies. In achieving this aspect of ALB, the second vertical of SCEP, granular performance monitoring (GPM), will be of great significance.

One of the fundamental obstacles to governance is a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities. This compromises accountability, stunts the individual's sense of purpose, and reduces efficiency. This is the lacuna that GPM seeks to address. ALB is the optimization of resources through direct capacity building, and GPM is the optimization of process in order to foster the increased productivity of individual agents. It also serves as a robust monitoring mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of government agents, government processes, and SCEP itself. This section elaborates the variable aspects of GPM and their deliverables.

Process Mapping and Optimization

The first step of GPM is to develop a detailed process map. A process map is a planning and management tool that visually describes the flow of work. It requires the breakdown of a process into discrete activities, identifying the responsible personnel for each activity, and capturing the various decision points and the approving authorities. The value of a process map is in its granularity and clarity. For complex processes such as executing a development scheme, there might be a requirement for nested process maps. Here, at the highest level, the process is represented as a flow of activities performed at different levels such as HQ, district, and village. A look into the activity at each level then provides another process map where the activity is further broken down to its constituent activities with the final ownership of each task belonging to individual personnel. GPM recognizes the existing consensus of the utility of process mapping to undertake quality management. For instance, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) issued ISO 9001: 2015 which encourages a process approach to quality management.

The major steps of process improvement by using process mapping are:

- 1 Process identification—identify objectives, scope, players, and work areas.
- 2 Information gathering—gather process facts (what, who, where, when) from the people who do the work.
- 3 Process mapping—convert facts into a process map.
- 4 Analysis—work through the map, challenging each step (what-why?, who-why?, where-why?, when-why?, how-why?)
- 5 Develop/install new methods—eliminate unnecessary work, combine steps, rearrange steps, add new steps where necessary
- 6 Manage process—maintain process map in library, review routinely, and monitor process for changes

Given its usefulness, developing a process map will be the first step, not only of GPM, but also of SCEP. The public service delivery system should be segregated into the schemes and programs

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carried out by different departments. Each of these service delivery processes should be captured and converted into a process map. Appropriate levels of nesting should be used for different processes. The process should be captured based on existing procedural rules and regulations in addition to discussions with stakeholders across all levels of implementation, ensuring the reality on the ground is reflected in the map. Along with a step-by-step breakdown, the maps should also showcase the expected timeline of the process. Once the baseline is developed by capturing the extant processes, an iterative optimization exercise should be undertaken. The different tranches of ALB should be utilized in this process so as to engage all stakeholders at different levels to provide their suggestions for restructuring the process. Care must be taken to eliminate redundancies, simplify authorization flows, clarify the chain of command, and streamline fund flow. One round of iteration should also be done after the third vertical of SCEP, restructuring for responsiveness, is finished. After the necessary rounds of iteration are conducted and each individual task is assigned to a specific job position, the optimized process flow should be uploaded to a central database that is accessible by all officials. There should be a mechanism to review and refine the process maps at regular intervals. Once the process maps are optimized for efficiency, they should be used to meet the objective of accountability.

Key Performance Indicators

The process maps create a unique opportunity to assign individual tasks across different processes to specific job positions. With them, it is possible to create a detailed task-oriented job description for each position. Communicating their specific job description to each employee as part of ALB at once clarifies their responsibilities and explains their role in the elaborate network of public service delivery. The task list of each employee should be supplemented with a commensurate set of KPIs or key performance indicators upon which the employee is to be evaluated. A **key performance indicator** is a measurable value that demonstrates how effectively the person is achieving the **key** business objectives assigned to them. These KPIs are the personnel KPIs that will bring greater clarity, accountability, and objectivity to human resource management.

Another type is the process KPI; it monitors process efficiency. Numerical indicators record process milestones. For example, time taken to complete a particular task in a fiscal year can shed light on avenues for optimization for faster delivery. Another example is to measure the quantum of work/money sanctioned under different processes. These KPIs act as the objective indicators upon which the annual updating of the process maps will be carried out. They also create a data bank that can be used in the fourth vertical of SCEP, AI-enabled decision-making.

Both of these KPIs should be integrated onto a tech platform to ensure greatest visibility and ease of use.

Action Dashboard

Using the process KPIs, an action dashboard should be created to provide greater visibility at the district, HQ, and upper bureaucracy levels, as to the pace of progress and efficiency of implementation. This is one of the two key deliverables of GPM. The tech platform that tracks the progress of processes is modelled after a similar platform created by India's national think tank, NITI Aayog, to track the progress of different ministries. The collation of data should be nested like the process maps with increasing granularity appropriate to each level of bureaucracy. Most important is the cross-integration between the action dashboard and the personnel KPIs. Sources of delay can be accurately identified and corrected by appropriate training or capability development activity.

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New Performance Appraisal System

The second deliverable of GPM is a new objective performance appraisal system called NPAS. It will supplement and eventually replace the current performance monitoring infrastructure. Unlike the opacity and subjectivity of the current method of registering individual performance, the annual confidential report, NPAS instead promises to create a transparent merit-based evaluation framework that will infuse greater legitimacy into human resource management in government. Through this, the archaic notion of bureaucracy as beyond the purview of merit can be broken. And, the cocoon of comfort provided by erstwhile ‘job-safety’ can be replaced by an invigorating environment of recognition and reward based on individual performance. This is possible through the personnel KPIs created through GPM process. An initial, extensive training program will familiarize personnel across all levels with their KPIs as well as those of positions that are under them. Only after job roles are clarified can NPAS be legitimately rolled out. Since the third vertical of SCEP involves restructuring government architecture to be more pliant and responsive, NPAS development should be an iterative process that reflects the most recent organization of personnel in the Meghalaya government.

Restructuring for Responsiveness

Another significant area of improvement envisioned under SCEP is the optimization of the prevailing public service delivery infrastructure to streamline operations, reduce redundancies, and increase efficiency. This is done in the third vertical called restructuring for responsiveness (RfR). The overarching philosophy that guides this vertical is “responsiveness.” Here a system that is not only responsive to real grassroots demands but also the continuous feedback of officials at all levels is envisioned. The baseline process map created in GPM is the first step in identifying the gaps in the existing arrangement. From there, the more visible convolutions in the chain of command, authorization pathways, and fund flows will be straightened out. Like GPM, RfR relies heavily on the ALB sessions to gather and incorporate optimization ideas from all stakeholders.

Beyond the initial optimizations, RfR also includes wider use of learning from two specific case studies in streamlining government functions. First, the Odisha model of “Removing Layers” presents the case of joining the secretariat with the directorates to reduce the levels of bureaucracy. In doing so, the Government of Odisha was thereby able to remove at least one layer of administration, resulting in quicker movement of files and quicker sanctioning of funds. A similar realignment of government is planned in Meghalaya under SCEP. But, instead of blindly mimicking the Odisha model, SCEP will conduct a detailed analysis of the appropriate avenues of integration between directorates and secretariats. For instance, while secretariats are headed by policymaking officials generally belonging to All India Services or State Civil Services, directorates are headed by field experts. Keeping them as two separate levels of authorization often puts excessive administrative burden on the experts in the directorates who end up spending more time dealing with bureaucratic issues than solving technical problems. However, any integration of the directorate and secretariat levels should still provide autonomy for the directorate heads to weigh in with their specific expertise. Such a system is best developed after accounting for the concerns of officials at both levels. Since both these levels belong to the first group of officers to be trained under ALB, the upper bureaucracy, optimization can be done in parallel to the first phase of ALB. SCEP should also consider similar opportunities to reduce layers in other levels.

The second pathway that could quicken processes and result in efficient delivery is that of creating special purpose vehicles instead of top-heavy functionaries (e.g., the secretariat and directorates). This is based on the lessons learned through the successful implementation of MGNREGS through the State Rural Employment Society (SRES). Meghalaya is unique in using this “society

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model”; all other states implemented MGNREGA under the bureaucratic architecture of the Department of Rural Development. This model has the benefit of allowing greater flexibility in terms of resource management and tighter feedback loops to ensure efficient implementation of the program. SRES gave unprecedented autonomy in the selection and training of personnel that was unavailable in the department model that relied on arduous procedures for personnel management. Given that a society does not offer the same comfort of permanency offered by most departmental postings, where procedure for hiring and terminating employees are convoluted and time-consuming, there was an opportunity to provide the team with real incentives and accountability. Transposing the lessons learned through SRES and similar society model implementations such as State the Rural Livelihood Society (SRLS) that implements National Rural Livelihood Mission in Meghalaya, SCEP will identify more opportunities to convert existing scheme implementation infrastructure into autonomous societies. This transition must also be undertaken with great care so that the objectivity, accountability, and incentives available under the traditional model are not lost in the societies.

Although RfR is concerned with institutional realignment, the third phase of ALB focuses on creating tight feedback loops between personnel at different stages, it is the cultural realignment that is directed toward the same end of “responsiveness.” Social audit is another important aspect of building institutional responsiveness. SCEP capitalizes on the fact that Meghalaya is at the beginning of its implementation journey vis-à-vis the new Social Audit Act. RfR uses this by forming tight integration between the local implementation institution; district-, block-, and village-level officials; and the social audit framework. Another important attribute of RfR is “responsiveness by design.” This will be ensured by conducting a training for the upper bureaucracy to develop a policy design approach that is rooted in responsiveness. This is best achieved by use of the PDIA model of policymaking and a deeper adoption of EPoD. Thus, along with ALB and GPM, RfR will allow for an institutional transformation of government architecture to be more pliant, responsive, and efficient.

Artificial Intelligence–Enabled Decision-Making (AIEDM)

The role of technology in infusing efficiency and transparency in governance is unparalleled. SCEP intends to leverage emergent innovations in technology to better equip agents of the government to take informed decisions. Through AI-enabled decision-making, SCEP will focus on building tech-integrated platforms appropriate to every level. The algorithmic view of public service delivery developed through process mapping is the cornerstone of AIEDM. The action board provides the opportunity to incorporate task-specific checklists that give greater clarity and uniformity in implementation. By tracking the process performance in the action board, a realistic timeframe for service delivery can be developed and continuously calibrated. Although efficiency and timeline tracking are the low hanging fruit with respect to AIEDM, SCEP intends to reap the benefits of the deeper process optimization avenues that it opens. For instance, continuous comparative analyses of district-wide spending efficiencies can throw light on extant capability deficits. This can be corrected through a culture of collaboration, competition, and greater dissemination of best practices. A similar setup will allow for comparison of different development schemes to better attenuate the spending patterns of the state.

Although these initiatives emulate the principles of data-driven governance, to actually transition to AI-enabled decision-making requires deeper, program-specific technology integrations. For instance, if the geographic variables such as soil type, ground water level, existing forest cover, rainfall pattern, and so on are captured, the decision-making of the agriculture department or forest department in choosing location-specific plantation crops can be automated. If there is a continuous, in-built calibration of new data collected about these variables, then a deeper level of

automation can help improve human decision-making. Similarly, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Telangana have had huge success in improving their public distribution systems and associated inventory management practices using technology. These lessons can be studied and adapted to the Meghalayan ecosystem as part of AIEDM. Given these interventions are to be department and program specific, the first, two-year phase of SCEP should be spent exploring appropriate partnerships between the different departments and technology players in the market and identifying issue-specific optimization platforms.

Another aspect of AIEDM stems from the lessons learned from Meghalaya's South-West Garo Hills District pilot initiative to reduce the maternal mortality rate by incentivizing institutional delivery. In July 2019, the Centre for Digital Financial Inclusion (CDFI) at the Institute for Financial Management and Research (IFMR) based in New Delhi submitted a report on a data-driven governance model to the deputy commissioner of South-West Garo Hills. The goal was to create a model wherein institutional delivery will be tracked in light of process mapping. An app was created and given to the government extensions through which health workers could track every pregnant woman. The project followed the following execution sequence: stating the objectives and listing the key performance indicators, extensive on-field data collection, rigorous data analysis, visualizing the data using 'actionable' dashboards, and targeted action to improve the in-the-field situation. A district data manager was appointed moderator between the raw data and the data enumerators and handled surveyors to ensure the availability of data. For data collection, SANGRAH, an Android-based mobile application was used. Field enumerators and supervisors used digital, offline questionnaires deployed in SANGRAH. The initial qualitative indicators of this pilot initiative have shown promising results with regard to improving institutional delivery and reducing the district's maternal mortality rate. By building on this pilot initiative as part of SCEP's fifth vertical, incubating innovation, and creating similar simple tech platforms to monitor and intervene in improving ground-level development indicators, AIEDM will fully utilize the power of technology to solve human problems.

Thus, AIEDM envisions optimizing decision-making across three interfaces: across different levels of government; across different departments of government; and between the public and the government. To ensure that the latest tech developments are used, extensive partnerships with innovative tech companies will be essential. Also, basic privacy and data security responsibilities must be met at every level of technology use.

The fifth and final pillar of SCEP is incubating innovation (II). This is both the culmination of capability enhancement and the measure of enhanced capability. The effectiveness of SCEP is continuously measured by its impact on the state's ultimate objective: development. For this, pilot initiatives in the three pillars of development—healthcare, education, livelihood—will be undertaken. Through these interventions, Meghalaya's human resources will be built up, and capacity enhancement will be transmitted from the government to the governed. In line with PDIA, all these innovations are to be developed in an iterative step-by-step manner by the extensive involvement of local officials for problem identification, solution development, and program implementation. The objective is to emulate the randomized controlled trials (RCTs) principles of social engineering and testing innovative solutions for problems across these three fields. Ultimately, five innovations in each of the three fields are to be tested. At the PIP preparation stage, two innovations per field will be developed in detail. Three more interventions for each field will be identified during the initial implementation of ALB. When the field-level functionaries are trained under ALB, brainstorming sessions will identify the problems and develop customized solutions. Building consensus across the hierarchy for implementing those solutions will be a key part of the second phase of ALB. It relies on building effective communication and rapid decision-making across levels of government.

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Each of these initiatives is to be implemented at a small scale and iteratively expanded while incorporating the lessons learned at each stage. The largest scale of each intervention will be at the district level. Selection for each innovation will be on the following basis.

- First project—most capable district
- Second project—most underdeveloped district
- Third, fourth, and fifth projects—one district each in Garo, Khasi, and Jaintia Hills regions

The “most capable district” will be selected from the districts that are implementing extant initiatives in a specific field and will be based on their spending efficiency. For instance, districts with the greatest utilization of their MGNREGA budget, measured in average household person days generated in the district, will be selected to implement the first livelihood innovation. Choosing a ‘capable’ district makes it possible to evaluate the validity of the solution design undeterred by any capability traps in the implementing infrastructure.

Similarly, the “most underdeveloped district” will be identified and slated to implement the second innovation. These indicators are also field specific. An example of this would be choosing the district with the highest maternal mortality rate to implement a healthcare innovation that focuses on improving institutional deliveries. By choosing an underperforming district, there is a chance to see the exponential potential of the innovations and their full effectiveness in alleviating suffering. Due to the staggered implementation of the five innovations per field, there is a chance to incorporate the initial lessons learned from the first innovation into the second.

The last three innovations are planned to be conducted in each of the three hill areas of Meghalaya. Since there is a wide sociocultural heterogeneity among the tribes—Khasis, Jaintias, Garos—it is important to understand the challenges of incorporating innovations in these three different sociopolitical climates. Developing the capabilities of their traditional institutions also needs to be aligned with the specific cultures of each area. By ensuring that one intervention per field is in each of these areas, there is a greater opportunity to test the validity of ALB in empowering each of these communities.

Although the ultimate implementing unit is the district, the implementation is envisioned as a step-by-step expansion of the innovation to be conducted through four tranches as detailed below.

- First tranche—>10% of villages in a single block selected based on lowest field-specific development indicators
- Second tranche—>10% of villages in every block
- Third tranche—>100% scale-up in two blocks—selected based on best and worst performers in the second tranche
- Fourth tranche—>district-level scale-up

Each tranche is to be conducted over the span of one year. Since the first phase of SCEP is to be completed in five years, and each innovation is to begin one year after the previous, only the first tranche of all five innovations per field can be conducted in the first phase. However, the second phase of SCEP is to be for an additional five-year period and will allow the full district-level implementation of these innovations. In the last year of the second phase of SCEP, a comprehensive report detailing the functioning of all 15 II projects will be made. It will describe the lessons learned and best practices developed across all these fields, the improvements done during the course of SCEP, and a scale-up plan for state-level implementation. Keeping with the spirit of innovative experimentation in social engineering, only the top five most promising projects in terms of impact and feasibility will be selected for state-level implementation.

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In the section below, two innovations per vertical are detailed. Three more innovations per vertical will be developed in the first two years of SCEP phase 1.

Healthcare

As of 2013, Meghalaya's total fertility rate was 2.7 compared to the national average of 2.3 and a replacement rate of 2.1. With infant mortality rate and maternal mortality rates much higher than the national average, there is a pressing need to focus healthcare expenditure on improving the health and nutrition status of pregnant women and infants. In line with this objective, both of SCEP's healthcare innovation initiatives are focused on maternal and child health and nutrition.

According to data from the NFHS 4, the percentage of institutional births, a crucial parameter for access to healthcare services, improved from 29% in 2005 to 51.4% in 2016. Yet the state still lags behind the national average by 27.5%. Meghalaya is the second worst-performing state in terms of institutional deliveries in the entire northeastern region, according to the "Healthy States, Progressive India" report by NITI Aayog. Similarly, the percentage of assisted births (by a doctor/nurse/LVH/ANM/other health professional) was as high as 90.8% in the urban areas and 48.1% in the rural areas of the state. Differences within the state range from 89% in the South Garo Hills district to 40.8% in the West Khasi Hills district. To bridge this gap, SCEP intends to capitalize on the lessons learned in South-West Garo Hills to promote institutional deliveries through basic health status tracking. An app to track key information regarding pregnant women such as ante-natal check-ups, expected delivery date, hemoglobin status, and immunization status will be created. Grassroots functionaries such as Asha workers and auxiliary nurse midwives will be trained to collect and track these data. Greater integration with ambulance services to transport expectant mothers to hospital for check-ups and deliveries will be ensured. Being the first initiative under healthcare, the district with the highest spending efficiency in terms of maternal benefits schemes such as PM Matritva Vandana Yojana and Janani Suraksha Yojana will be selected to implement this intervention. Following a scale-up plan of the four tranches, the initiative will be gradually implemented throughout the district. At every stage, careful recording of results, lessons learned, and challenges will be part of the program.

The latest data available on the infant mortality rate (IMR) also point to a worrisome situation in the state. With 39 deaths per 1,000 live births, Meghalaya's IMR is higher than the national average of 34. Furthermore, the rural IMR (40) in the state is almost 15 points higher than the urban IMR. According to *ORF*, the rate of exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) in the state is almost 20% lesser than the all-India average (54.9%) and ranges from 10.4% in the South Garo Hills to 45% in the East Garo Hills. Only 9% of children received a health check within two days of birth (from a doctor/nurse/LHV/ANM/midwife/other health personnel), and only 47.5% mothers received postnatal care (from a doctor/nurse/LHV/ANM/midwife/other health personnel) within two days of delivery. These are considerably below the national averages. The numbers are far worse in the state's rural areas and point to poor health infrastructure and a lack of manpower. To address this, the second initiative under healthcare will focus on early childhood development (ECD). This intervention will be modelled on the pilot initiative undertaken by the Meghalaya State Rural Livelihoods Society (MSRLS), in partnership with World Bank, in the Rongram block of West Garo Hills. Leveraging the robust women of the Self-Help Group (SHG) network in Meghalaya, the intervention will focus on elevating household behaviors and practices related to ECD through extensive community mobilization and training of expectant and new mothers. The training will cover the essential 'To-Do's in the first 1,000 days after childbirth. Similar to the first initiative, the effectiveness of the training will be monitored through app-based data collection and tracking undertaken in Anganwadis and through Asha workers. Being the second

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intervention in healthcare, this will be implemented in the poorest-performing district based on the latest infant mortality rates.

Beginning in year 3 of SCEP implementation, three more healthcare interventions will be designed, developed, and implemented.

Education

The rapidly expanding population of Meghalaya has to be empowered with quality education so that the state can fully reap its demographic dividend. The recent school education quality index (SEQI), released by NITI Aayog, evaluates learning outcomes, infrastructure and facilities outcomes, equity outcomes, access outcomes, and governance process aiding outcomes. It ranked Meghalaya as seventh out of the nation's eight small states. Despite a healthy teacher/pupil ratio of 1:30, Meghalaya has persistent problems: poor learning outcomes, ghost schools, and abysmal preschool enrolment rates. SCEP aims at addressing these challenges through its two education initiatives.

The first initiative is aimed at improving early child care and education (ECCE). Since only 17% of children aged 3 to 5 years attend ICDC-run preschools compared to the national average of 38.7%, and only 43% attend any PSE compared to the 69.4% national average, there is a great potential to improve ECCE in the state. The initiative will use a multipronged approach to enhance the education of children between the ages of 0 and 6. Initially, there will be an extensive community mobilization in the selected district to improve PCE enrolment rates. Once access to children through the Anganwadi preschools is ensured, the intervention will be modelled after the Perry Preschool Study. Conducted between 1962 and 1967 in Michigan, the study found that the implementation of the study model had led to greatly enhanced capabilities of the children as detailed in its report: *Lifetime Effects: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study through Age 40*. Through an array of intellectually stimulating activities, a child's mental and motor skills are improved from a very early age. Encouraged by the high returns of the Perry School Project, the latest developments in brain science will be used to design a comprehensive activity-based learning curriculum for the children in the age range of 1 to 6 years. Implemented in daily 3-hour classes, this model relies on creating a nurturing environment to support children's self-initiated learning activities and carrying out both small- and large-group activities covering the areas of personal initiative, social relations, creative representation, movement and music, logic and mathematics, and language and literacy. The cornerstone of this project is the regular training of the Anganwadi workers who act as PSE teachers and weekly interactions with parents to ensure that learning continues at home as well. Using simple learning tools such as jigsaw puzzles, abacus, games to identify shapes and colors, and stacking cups, the child's avenues for mental development are increased. By teaching parents, the basic techniques of personality development, such as asking guiding questions and encouraging impulse-control, they are made equal participants in the child's development. As the first education intervention, this will be implemented in the district with highest enrolment rates for PCE. During the PIP preparation stage, a knowledge partner that has significant experience in implementing ECCE projects should be on-boarded to develop a curriculum that caters to the specific sociocultural milieu of the selected district. It is essential that the curriculum is broken down into clear activities and is available in the local language to ensure uniform implementation across institutions. Similar to the Perry School Project, there should be a continuous tracking of the children under this initiative.

The first intervention focuses on children between the ages of 0 and 6, but the second intervention is directed at youngsters in the age group of 6 to 14 years. This age group comes under the purview of India's Right to Education Act. To improve their learning outcomes, this intervention

incorporates seven key lessons learned from the successful Telangana model currently used by the Telangana Social Welfare Residential Education Institutions Society (TSWREIS). The interventions are:

- Mandatory 30 min of “DEAR” (drop everything and read) time where everyone in the institution, including the teachers and support staff, will read any book except the regular textbooks. For this intervention to be successful, there needs to be a well-stocked library in every institution. In tandem, writing should be encouraged through mandatory daily diary writing of 30 minutes.
- Building aspiration through “message saturation.” This intervention is focused on middle school (6th–8th standard) and high school (9th–12th standard) students. Here, the idea is to revamp the physical environment of the children with aspirational information such as inspirational figures, reputed institutions of higher education, and regular screenings of influential documentaries. The key is to increase the children’s exposure to success and to cultivate ambition.
- ‘Activity-based learning’ involves transforming the middle-school syllabus into modules that focus on teaching the curriculum through activities. This is to promote self-learning and improve conceptual understanding. Partnership with industry experts to develop appropriate activities that fully capture intended lessons is important.
- A significant reason behind the success of TSWREIS is the liberal usage of technology in learning. By partnering with an edu-tech firm, every child will have an alternate method to learning other than through their teacher. To incorporate this lesson with Meghalaya’s II plan requires a similar well-planned partnership with a reputed industry player. There is also a need to improve computers/tablet as well as Internet connection access at the schools to enable the use of technology as teachers.
- The positive influence of sports and other extracurricular activities in enhancing the children’s overall learning experiences has been long proven. In this vein, and in order to provide a well-rounded education to the students, this intervention will capitalize on the current cultural interest in guitar and football. The success of this intervention depends on creating a reasonable incentive structure for qualified trainers to visit the schools.
- ‘Super Student’ is the gem of the TSWREIS model. To create a culture of collaboration through friendly competition and to enhance peer-learning, a multilevel competition will be arranged for students who create and deliver lectures to their peers on specific topics. To improve the sense of ownership and inculcate creativity, the topics will be unorthodox and require significant independent thought and research by the student. By creating a network of intra- and inter-school competitions each with significant cash prize as well as ample recognition, this intervention uses the ‘earn while you learn’ philosophy. By having the winners of these competitions to travel to neighboring schools to showcase their talents, there is an inbuilt system to share lessons learned and best practices.
- ‘Exposure visits’ to such places as Rajya Darshan within Meghalaya, Bharat Darshan, and Vishwa Darshan’ can act as an incentive to perform as well as a source of inspiration. By visiting eminent institutions and historical sites, there can be a step change in aspiration levels. In tandem with this, guest lectures especially from social entrepreneurs, academicians, and civil servants can also reinforce the children’s ambitions.

Each of the seven steps requires detailed planning and customized design; however, the successful implementation of this innovation relies on the capability enhancements of government teachers. There needs to be a spirit of ownership, accountability, innovation, and compassion that is instilled in the teachers. TSWREIS’s teacher training model can be used as a basis to develop a robust teacher training program for this intervention. Unlike the healthcare interventions, both

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education interventions should be implemented in the same district to ensure that the beneficiary children accrue adequate learning opportunities over the full cycle of their education.

Three more initiatives will be developed and implemented in the field of education during the course of SCEP.

Livelihood

Meghalaya is one of India's poorest states with a GDP per capita of \$4,130 in PPP terms compared to the national average of \$7,174. The challenging geography (hilly terrain and torrential rainfall) and thin population density (spread out villages with an average of 50 households) mean that the emergence of economies of scale, market access, and private sector development will be difficult to achieve. Hence, creating meaningful livelihood opportunities, especially for the state's primarily agricultural and rural population, is of great importance. The third pillar of II addresses this issue and focuses on creating sustainable, remunerative livelihood opportunities in the target districts.

The first intervention is deeply intertwined with Meghalaya's Bottom 20 initiative. Bottom 20 (B20) is an initiative relying on the convergence of various extant development schemes to create sustainable livelihood opportunities to the poorest quintile of the population. In B20, every block has a menu of "livelihood packages" (LP) with three or more "livelihood activities" (LA) each. The poorest households will be identified by the traditional village organizations (Dorbars/Nokmas), and various development funds will be routed to these households to develop the required infrastructures for all the LAs in a single LP. Given its success and imminent scaling up, SCEP's II could be used to develop customized livelihood packages for all the blocks in selected districts. Being an experimental initiative, II will involve vast community engagement to identify creative livelihood activities that elevate not only the individual income but also social wealth. To better direct the intervention, the LPs created for each block should focus on creating women-friendly livelihood activities. During the course of the intervention, willing women-headed households in the selected district will be chosen as the target beneficiaries of the newly created LP. A minimum of one package per block is envisioned under this intervention. At least two households per village should be involved in the newly created LP.

The second intervention focuses on organic farming in Meghalaya. The state government is working to counter environmental degradation and has set in place sustainable agricultural practices through legislation that will promote organic farming across the state. This drive is planned to be supported by extensive farmer mobilization projects. In addition to environmental benefits, this shift will allow Meghalaya to cater to the rapidly growing organic produce market, especially in ASEAN countries. Under II, SCEP will further develop organic farming by providing financial, technical, and marketing assistance to willing farmers in the selected district. With a goal of converting 10% of the cultivated areas in the district to organic farming, the intervention will focus on crops such as jackfruit, pineapple, areca nut, Muga silk, mushrooms, and strawberries for which Meghalaya has a distinct advantage. In addition to handholding the initial transition to organic farming, the intervention will also put in place marketing mechanisms to build organic consumers across the country. Finally, the marketable surplus after preliminary value-added processes would be made available to producers across the nation through online purchase.

Similarly, three more interventions under the umbrella of livelihood generation will be designed and implemented over the course of SCEP.

Conclusion

While accepting the current capability gap in government, SCEP is meant to holistically transform governance. It proposes a broad, two-pronged approach to the five verticals. ALB and

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AIEDM are plans for resource optimization: The capacity of government actors is improved, and the productive use of technology for decision-making is enhanced. RFR is the culmination of optimization process that begins with the process mapping done under GPM. GPM is also the primary monitoring and evaluation framework that will test SCEP's efficiency, while II tests SCEP's effectiveness in aligning with the broader objective of development.

Only the broad framework and the underlying rationale of the verticals are discussed in this document. A detailed project implementation plan is the next stage of SCEP design. Various industry experts should be asked to create the deliverables for each vertical. ALB requires partnering with academia to create the learning modules and conduct the training, and GPM will need in-depth input from private sector companies with expertise in process mapping and human resource management. Since the deliverables of GPM—action board and NPAS—are both tech platforms, the appropriate technology provider should also be on-boarded at the earliest stage of design. NITI Aayog's Development Monitoring and Evaluation office could be a strong guide in the creation of appropriate KPIs. There should be maximum integration between action board, process map, and the Government of India's e-Office initiative. AIEDM is one vertical where even initial design requires extensive dialogue with industry leaders in technology. For instance, tracking expenditures to create an accurate projection of the financial resources required is a possible use of AE to enable high-level decision-making. But the contours of the project can be developed only in continuous collaboration with the industry experts who understand how technologies can be put to use. Finally, II is the most extensive vertical of SCEP and requires multiple knowledge partners to design, execute, and evaluate each intervention.

The next design step is to create a preliminary project report and the first list of required resources. Once the preliminary estimates are in place, resources should be mobilized through financial partnerships. Industry or academic experts should then be on-boarded to develop a detailed project implementation plan. Given the sheer scale of SCEP, this process could take up to 12 months. To coordinate and lead these partners, a dedicated task force should be created and headed by a qualified bureaucrat with a demonstrated commitment to capability enhancement. After PIP, an appropriate implementing agency, preferably an autonomous society, should be created. This society will lead the first phase of SCEP, making sure plan implementation is rooted in democratic principles and decentralized decision-making. At this stage, SCEP is envisioned as a five-year program for phase 1 with a possible five-to-seven-year extension depending on project performance.

Thus, through enhanced capability, improved decision-making, and wide community engagement, SCEP will convert the public service delivery mechanism of Meghalaya into a capable, robust, pliant, and responsive organization that effectively and efficiently achieves the state's development objectives.

Reference

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