

Deepening Democracy

Issues on Gender and Basic Needs

Edited by

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FOREWORD

This book is an output of the International conference on “Deepening Democracy through participatory Local Governance” 19-21 January 2014 at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, organised by the Department of Local Government, Government of Kerala.

Kerala is known for its achievements in human development with its relatively low per capita income. People from all over the world are exploring the factors behind such an achievement. Participation of the people, in the process of development itself has been one of the factors behind the social achievements of the State. The process of Participatory Planning, began in Kerala about two decades ago, opened up the opportunity to the people in designing the destiny of the state, in term of local level plan. The participatory Planning Process involves large number of discussions, workshops and seminars.

The objective of the conference was to take stock of the development in democratic decentralisation, local and abroad, and to evolve strategies to carry forward it. Academics, Experts, Thinkers, Activists and Practitioners presented papers and participated in discussions.

While conducting the conference we had substantial intellectual contribution from Prof. M.A. Oommen. Shri. S. Divakaran Pillai, State Performance Audit Officer, Co-ordinated the programme. The academic support was given by Dr. P.P. Balan and Dr. Sunny George. I also thank all others who supported the conference and the publication of this book.

Dr. M.K. Muneer

Minister for Panchayats and Social Justice
Government of Kerala

Thiruvananthapuram
November 2014

PREFACE

Our institute, KILA is considering this opportunity as a privilege, to publish this volume, as part of our endeavour of the International Conference on “Deepening Democracy Through Participatory Local Governance”, 19-21 January 2014 at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. KILA is instrumental in Kerala, to impart good quality training and other inhouse and field level activiteis aiming at capacity building of both the elected representatives and officials of PRIs in and outside the state. It is functioning as the premier institute in the field of decentralisation and panchayati raj and doing yeoman services to make the system more meaningful, informed, democratic and sustainable. Publications of KILA is a part and parcel of its activities related to the dissemination of ideas emerging out of experiences and field level experiments. This volume forms part of these activities.

The objective of the Conference was to make participation more fruitful and transparent, by focusing on the process of democratisation and by discussing issues related to the day to day life of the common people. This volume is an anthology of some of the papers presented and discussed in the conference, basically related to the above said process and programmes. This volume as such included 14 papers. We preferred to have the contributions of noted officials, young researchers and social activists.

We are thankful to Dr. M.K. Muneer, Hon’ble Minister for Panchayats and Social Justice for guiding us in this regard. We are indebted to Shri. James Varghese, Principal Secretary and Shri. Rajan Khobragade, Secretary of Local Self Government Department, Government of Kerala and all the contributors. We are also grateful to the participants and discussants for their comments on an earlier draft of each chapter. We deeply acknowledge, the services rendered by the Department of Local Self Government, Government of Kerala, for their sustained help and cooperation.

We thank Shri. S. Divakaran Pillai, Convenor of the Organising Committee, elected members, officials and academic experts for the smooth conduct of the Conference. We are thankful to Smt. K.M. Nafala and Sri. C.M.Muhammed Ismail for DTP work.

We hope this volume will help to proceed the ongoing discussions on the democratisation process of the society in general and the decentralisation society in particular.

**P.P. Balan
Sunny George
T P Kunhikannan**

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November 2014

Content

Forward.....	v
Preface	vii
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xi
List of Abbreviations	xii
Introduction	1
1. Two Decades of Panchayati System in India: An Assessment of its Functioning and Road Map for Deepening Democracy	6
2. Review of Strategies of Better Transparency and Accountability in Governance	24
3. Capacity Building: Issues and Challenges Experiences of West Bengal	46
4. Role of PRIs in Child Caring : A Sociological Study of Village Ringzabal in J&K	54
5. Reservation and Women Empowerment : Provisions of 73 rd Amendment	67
6. Introducing the Politics of Presence: Reservations for Women in the Panchayats”	81
7. Women Empowerment through Democratic Decentralization	94
8. Redressal Mechanisms For Women : The Case of Jagratha Samithi in Kerala	105
9. Education Decentralisation and Empowerment of Women : A Study on Andaman & Nicobar Islands.	124
10. Role of PRIs in School Education: Issues and Challenges	144
11. The Severity of Water and Sanitation Problems at Tswlelopele High School Itsoseng township: South Africa	160
12. Drinking Water and Local Bodies- Study Base on Grama Panchayats in Kasaragod, Kerala	172
13. Sanitation Arena of Gram Panchayats in Post TSC Era; A study from Kerala	186
14. Multiple Actors, Conflicting Roles The Case Coastal Polders in Bangladesh	201
Notes on Contributors	215

List of Tables

No.	Title	Page
1.1	Overall Devolution Index Across States	8
1.2	Revenue of Panchayats (all tiers) as Percentage of Respective State Own Revenuen(Rs. in crore)	12
3.1	Functionaries Covered in Mobile Training : Pashim Midiuipur	52
5.1	Women Representatives (including SC/STs) in PRIs (%)	74
6.1	Type of Reservation	82
6.2	Overall Representation of SCs/STs and Women in PRIs	84
9.1	Position of Panchayati Raj in the Islands	132
10.1	Resolutions Passed by the VEC in Dhamtan Sahib	151
12.1	Panchayat-wise evaluation ratings of of drinking water structures .	176
12.2	Panchayat-wise process evaluation ratings of efficiency of drinking water structures.	177
12.3	Panchayat-wise evaluation ratings of effectiveness of drinking water structures	178
13. 1	Sanitation Indicators	194

List of Figures

No.	Title	Page
13.1	Household Sanitation Composite Index	195
13.2	School Sanitation Composite Index	195
13.3	Anganwadi Sanitation Composite Index	196
13.4	Second Generation Sanitation Composite Index	196

List of Abbreviations

BDO	Block Development Officer
CAA	Constitutional Amendment Act
DPC	District Planning Committee
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme
EWR	Elected Women Representatives
IEC	Information Education and Communication
IIPA	Indian Institute of Public Administration
IRMA	Institute of Rural Management Anand
ISG	Institutions of Self Government
NIRD	National Institute of Rural Development
PDS	Public Distributions System
PPC	Peoples Plan Campaign
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institutions
PRS	Panchayati Raj System
RGNDWM	Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission
RTE	Right to Education
RTI Act	Right to Information Act
SC	Scheduled Caste
SEC	State Election Commission
SFC	State Finance Commission
SHG	Self Help Groups
SIPRD	State Institute of Panchayat and Rural Development
SIRD	State Institute of Rural Development
SMC	School Management Committee
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
ST	Scheduled Tribe
TDO	Tribal Development Officer
TSC	Total Sanitation Campaign
UT	Union Territories
VEC	Village Education Committee

Introduction

“After we became independent, we established the rule of the people. Every citizen of India was given the right to vote. The people enjoyed the right to elect their representatives to the state legislature, and to Lok Sabha. It was a step in the right direction, but real democracy did not come into being with it. India will make progress only when the people living in the village become politically conscious. The progress of our country is bound up with the progress in our villages. If our villages make progress, India will become a strong nation and nobody will be able to stop the onward march”. These words are part of the speech delivered by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru in Hindi at Nagaur in Rajasthan on the occasion of the inauguration of the panchayat system in the state, on October 2nd, 1959. Panditji was inaugurating the rule of the panchayats in India, as visualized by the team for Study of Community Project and National Extension Services chaired by Balwantrai G Mehta in 1957.

In the inaugural speech, Nehru reiterated on three basic institutions- a powerful village panchayat, a co-operative society and a school. He said “every village should have a school so that the villagers should be able to receive education. And women should get equal opportunities for education”. In a sense the chapters arranged in this volume, is a modest attempt to make an introspective analysis of what happened in India afterwards to the village panchayat system, the role of women and education and to other basic needs of the people. Here, two vulnerable areas are put into detailed analysis - drinking water and sanitation.

Though Village Panchayat were existed as institutions of local government since ancient times, their existence was solely determined by the political will of the successive state governments, as it was a subject exclusively on the state list of the constitution. No doubt, it was the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) that has given a new life to their institutions in their role as the third tier of governance.

The CAA made it mandatory and elections became periodic and time bound providing a number of affirmative actions, including reservation for women and socially deprived classes. This has helped

to a considerable extent to our rural populace, to assess their entitlement and enrichment and also to evaluate the long road to travel in fulfilling the said objective of the CAA. Kerala, has already gone a long way in institutionalising many of the visions of the CAA, through her initiation of the historic. “People Plan Campaign” and has become a role model to the rest of the country in this regard.

This volume under consideration includes 14 chapters, each of them characterises different issues, but in a coordinated manner. There are nine chapters giving an insight into the national scenario, three chapters specifically on Kerala and two on two different developing nations. The chapters are centered around their basic themes- the process of democratisation, women and gender related issues, and basic needs, which include education, drinking water and sanitation. What follows is a snapshot of the issues discussed in each chapter, broadly dividing them on the basis of themes noted above.

Process of Democratisation

There are three chapters in this section. Mahipal is attempting to make an assessment of the functioning of Panchayati Raj System for the last two decades and also trying to pinpoint towards a road map for further deepening decentralised democracy. His analysis is formulated with a view to ascertain, the extent of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) have emerged as actual institutions of self-government, enabled peoples-participation in general and SC/ST and women in particular. In the light of the experiences the chapter suggests a road map ahead for further deepening grassroots democracy in the country.

D.D Sharma in his capacity as Additional Deputy Commissioner is trying to review the strategies for a better transparency and accountability in governance. He tries to analyse some recent efforts initiated by the government towards systemic corrections, better transparency and accountability in official working, like the RTI, RED, citizens chapters, PGRS, Lokpal, Lokayukta ‘Service Guarantee and e-governance activities. Sharma reiterates that these types of interventions will help in raising citizens confidence in deepening democracy and thus further democratisation of related institutions.

In the process of democratisation, capacity building of both elected representatives and officials hold an important role. Debakanya Samanta, is focussing in the third chapter on the influence of capacity building for effective functioning of the local governance system. In this regards, Debakanya looks in to the issue and challenges of capacity building by critically evaluating its process and procedures. The analysis is based on the authors, experiences in WB as a district level training co-ordinator. The chapter also introduces the methodology of mobile training practised in one district of WB.

Gender and Women Empowerment

In this section of this volume, major thrust is assigned to issues related gender, which include political participation, role of reservation, redressal mechanism, etc.

In this regard Isha and Navjyot focus on women empowerment through the provision of affirmative measures like reservations. The central theme of their arguments concentrate on how the initiative of 73rd CAA is helping women by providing reservation in the PRIs., which empower them politically. By way of conclusion, they observe that the CAA has brought out revealing changes in the political participation of rural women at the grass root level.

Nupur Tiwari also makes an attempt to introduce positive changes in women empowerment through their presence in politics. Here also emphasis is laid on the 73rd CAA and its provisions of reservation, based an empirical study. The chapter, by way of conclusion put forth many suggestions useful to the PRIs to undertake in their future planning.

Shomaliya Warsi and Ekta Chaudary focuses in another aspect of women empowerment based on case studies. PRIs belong to the states of Odisha, Kerala and Rajasthan. The author suggests that women still face formidable challenges from various walks of life, though they proved very fruitful in their political and social upliftment.

Deepthi's intervention is basically a case study of particular type of vigilance committee in Kerala called the Jagratha Samities, in a selected Gram, a Panchayat. She is attempting to make aware of the working

of the “Samiti” by depicting the experiences in the selected grama panchayat and requesting the authorities to enhance its reach and capacity in all ways so as to address the increasing number of atrocities against women and children.

SS Sreekumar, though focusing on women empowerment define it in relation with the propagation of education. This is based on an empirical study conducted in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, The chapter also provides a detailed note on conceptual issues related to local level governance, empowerment and education . It concludes with a list of suggestions that the PRI, can look into in the future.

Basic Needs

We include six chapters on this section two each on education, drinking water and sanitation. These chapters cover issues in the state of Kerala, outside the state and in the developing nations.

Education

Kamlesh Narwani is exploring the role of PRIs in school education in the background of various educational development programmes - like the DPEP, SSA, RTE etc. The author also tries to analyse the role of PRIs in promoting community participation for development of school education. The study also explains the interface between school level management and grama panchayats. This also gave a look in to the social dimensions of participatory process.

Nazeer Ahmed Wani and Shamsul Haque depicts the role of PRIs in child caring. This is a sociological approach, based on village study in Jammu & Kashmir. It is based an empirical survey conducted in one of the tribal village in the State. Since the village is one among the remotest types, the outcome of the study will be much beneficial to the back ward areas of our country. This chapter is basically an interaction between two rural based institutions - the PRI and the ICDS.

Drinking Water

Prof. T.P.Sreedharan focusses on the problem of drinking water in a selected district in Kerala by making comparison of various drinking water projects run by different agencies. The pros and cons of the

agency wise activities are drawn up for discussion and provides chances of peoples intervention at the local level.

Farhat Naz and Marie is making an indepth analysis of how operation and maintenance activities actually take place, and also reveals the multiple actions with overlapping mandates leads to unclear responsibilities and interventions. The chapter discusses the role of all those aspects and recommends the revision of all sorts of legal and social institutions and future frame work related to the issue in Bangladesh.

Sanitation

Meso and Odhav of South Africa, describe the severity of water and sanitation problem by selecting an school in a township in their country. It emphasises to identifying the impacts of present water supply schemes and sanitation programmes on the educational, personal and environmental health conditions of the locality.

Jose and Devanathan, in a detailed study of various aspects of the issue of sanitation programme by selecting seven GP's in the district of Kozhikode. The chapters is prepared in the background of the working total sanitation programme that is being implemented in Kerala.

It is assessing the governance of different components with the help of a composite index, drawn specially for the situation analysis.

The experiences as depicted in this volume with in the country and outside, clearly show that panchayat raj and actual participation of people, have yet to go a long way to full fill its mandated targets. The basic philosophy of decentralisation, that is the process of overall socio-economic development get accelerated only when the common people identify themselves as active partners both in the formulation and implementation of the process and projects of decentralisation. This book reiterates and admit the fact that whatever the case be, PRIs are the catalytic instruments in the process of deepening democracy. In this regard, so many experiments in one form or another in all walks of life are going on in the world, of late in many of the societies of the South. Yes, it has to go a long way or to materialise the objectives as visualised by Panditji in his inaugural speech in 1959.

.....

Two Decades of Panchayati System in India: An Assessment of its Functioning and Road Map for Deepening Democracy

Mahi Pal

The enactment of the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution (hereafter referred to as the Central Act) was a watershed in the field of decentralization as it, inter alia, provided certainty, continuity and strength to the Panchayati Raj System (PRS) in the country. Later on, PRS was also extended to the Scheduled Areas by the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled areas) Act 1996 (hereafter referred to as the Extension Act). Two decades has elapsed after the enactment of the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution and more than 15 years have elapsed after the enactment of the Provisions of Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1996. It appears appropriate to review the functioning of the Panchayats from the point of view of ascertaining as to what extent these institutions have emerged as institutions of self- governments, enabled people's participation particularly vulnerable sections like Scheduled Castes(SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and women in these institutions and in the light of experiences, suggests road map ahead for further deepening grassroots democracy in the country.

The chapter has been divided into three Parts. In the Part I an analysis has been carried out to know as to what extent these institutions have become autonomous as envisaged in the Constitution. Part II deals with empowerment of marginalized groups and women under the Panchayati Raj System (PRS), in Part III of the paper a road map has been suggested for further deepening decentralised democracy followed by a conclusion.

1. Emergence of Local Self Governments

Central Act has both mandatory and enabling provisions. The state governments were supposed to devolve the functions, finance and functionaries pertaining to 29 subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution to the PRIs to enable these bodies to function as institutions of self government. Panchayats have been made as institutions of self-government as per 243G of the Constitution. Although, the term 'institution of self-government' (ISG) has not been defined in the Act, the perception and the connotation are well understood. In order to function Panchayats as ISG, the panchayats have to fulfill two basic conditions, namely, (a) institutional existence in the sense that the decisions are taken by the people's representatives; (b) institutional capacity, which means that these institutions have clearly defined functions, functionaries and finances. In other words, the panchayats should enjoy functional, administrative and financial autonomy. Let us see as to what extent the Panchayats have emerged as ISG after evaluating the progress made towards empowering these bodies in last two decades.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has given a study to the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi to work out devolution of power to the Panchayats across the States based on certain dimensions and indicators. Dimensions and Indicators are given in Annexure.

It may be seen from the Annexure that framework comprises the mandatory provisions given in the Central Act, which are to be expected to be implemented in letter and spirit by the State Governments. It includes constitution of State Finance Commission (SFC), State Election

Commission (SEC) , District Planning Committee(DPC), reservation of women , SCs and STs. Functions includes functions assigned to Panchayats including activity mapping, actual involvement of Panchayats in important schemes. Finance includes giving of 13th Finance grants to Panchayats , effectiveness of the SFCs, formula based fiscal transfers to Panchayats, status of Panchayats' own revenues , expenditure of Panchayats, etc. Functionaries comprises , administrative infrastructure , officials of Panchayats etc. Capacity building includes training and institutions involved in the training. Accountability includes accountability and Audit of Panchayats, social audit of Panchayats, functioning of Gram Sabha, etc.

Annexure indicates that except framework and finance other indicators carry the same weight. Framework carries less weightage due to its mandatory nature and finance is very important because it is the finance which determine the extent of effectiveness of other indicators of the framework. All these indicators with their weightages are given in table 1.

Table 1.1: Overall Devolution Index Across States

Ranks	States	Frame work D1	Func tions D2	Finan ces D3	Funci onaries D4	Capacity Building D5	Accoun tability D6	Overall Rank D
1	Maharashtra	48.95	56.31	55.5	75.37	75	76.64	64
2	Karnataka	67.55	57.96	49.97	63.12	79.04	69.73	62.2
3	Kerala	41.34	52.86	48.52	68.55	58.77	64.64	55.4
4	Rajasthan	68.33	52.97	35.61	40.9	79.43	57.25	52.1
5	Tamil Nadu	69.84	52.33	46.26	39.23	63.4	52.97	52.1
6	West Bengal	56.84	50.57	35.41	37.67	81.18	53.96	49.8
7	Madhya Pradesh	60.37	52.61	34.44	39.45	51.41	62.5	47.3
8	Chattisgarh	53.75	37.53	31.77	33.68	78.52	48.27	44.6
9	Haryana	70.39	31.14	36.91	50.19	42.68	46.09	43.6
10	Gujarat	54.58	38.92	26.55	53.18	46.61	43.76	40.8
11	Odisha	66.5	51.46	35.11	28.55	19.14	53.04	40
12	Uttarakhand	54	53.9	27.23	32.02	43.24	52.85	39.4
13	UttarPradesh	60.02	41.04	26.17	28.57	45.88	41.06	37.3
14	Assam	44.69	42.76	23.13	21.66	67.84	37.65	36.9

15	Himachal Pradesh	56.19	22.43	34.92	35.35	36.15	44.32	36.8
16	Goa	50.7	17.78	18.69	48.23	32.87	41.72	31.8
17	Punjab	60.24	24.25	17.37	23.64	38.67	46.74	31.2
18	Bihar	49.78	39.44	19.4	24.29	42.01	21.6	29.9
19	J&K	15.38	15.28	28.01	23.98	51.61	35.15	28.9
20	Jharkhand	55.01	18.97	13.95	23.52	46.11	28.48	27.3
North Eastern States								
1	Tripura	48.1	46.03	28.37	53.34	29.71	46.91	39.7
2	Sikkim	68.56	45.07	31.37	29.25	41.72	36.3	39.1
3	Manipur	29.52	12.22	24	20.41	45.13	27.27	25.9
4	Arunachal Pradesh	30.88	17.22	25.17	10.14	34.67	24.85	23.7
Union Territories								
1	Lakshadweep	48.89	20.79	7.33	39.82	30.95	28.29	25.1
2	Daman&Diu	56.04	3.43	8.03	33.56	0	30.11	18.1
3	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	28.6	1.11	0.78	39.17	20.85	32.22	17.3
4	Chandigarh	24.16	7.22	25.86	18.8	0	8.14	15.3
	National Average	51.4	34.06	29.45	36.99	49.33	43.33	38.5

Source: *Strengthening of Panchayats in India: Comparing Devolution across States : Empirical Assessment -2012-13 , April 2013, The Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi*

With this brief explanation of the indicators let us discuss the extent of devolution across the States and UTs.

Framework (D1)

Mandatory nature of devolution as given in the 73rd Amendment Act is included in this. It was expected from the States/UTs that these must be devolved or performed in toto. But expectations are belied as evident from the progress made in this regard. Table shows that national average score is only 51.40. It means leave aside the enabling provisions of the Act , the mandatory provisions were implemented to the extent of only 50 per cent. If we see across the States, we find that Haryana ranks first with a score of 70.39. and J & K ranks the lowest (15.38). other states and UTs are placed in between them . Out of total states only 15 states and 1 UT (Daman & Diu) could score more than national average.

But experiences on this front are also not encouraging across the country with some exception here and there . Although Planning Commission has issued guidelines on preparation of decentralized planning to the states but not noteworthy has been done on preparation of decentralized planning. Mahatama Ghandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) made the Panchayats as principal authorities in the implementation of the Act and under it these bodies are expected to prepare perspective plan for village development. But it remains almost on paper. The Twentieth Anniversary Report of the Expert Committee on Leveraging Panchayats for Efficient Delivery of Public Goods and Services headed by Mani Shankar Aiyar submitted its report on 24th April , 2013 to the Government praised Kerala experiences of decentralised planning . And in this regard, Kollam Model was referred and suggested to be emulated by other States.

No, doubt , in Kerala , there are some positive development as compared to other states in case of decentralized planning . But the picture is not as rosy as painted which is evident from the fact that the Report of the Committee for Evaluation of Decentralised Planning and Development, Government of Kerala constituted under the Chairmanship of Prof. M A Oommen (2009) while discussing Decentralised Planning observed. To quote “ It is disclosed that one junior clerk was forced to prepare 120 projects with respect to production and social service sectors in less than one month’s time. Similarly, one lady clerk who is incharge of SC/ ST welfare prepared the entire projects in less than two weeks time in another local body. In the ultimate reckoning despite the Working Groups, clerks prepare the projects in a haphazard manner. Second, there is no coordination of the reports of the various sectoral Working Groups. In other words, decentralized planning becomes a fragmented exercise. This negates the essence of making comprehensive area plans.” (Govt. of Kerala Report,2009, P.168). The studies also reveals that involvement and participation of Gram Sabha which is head and heart of the local

governance was negligible in the district. In nutshell , it may be said that not much progress has been made in this regard.

Functions (D2)

In case of devolution of functions, the situation is very gloomy as indicated by the scores of different states and national average. As the national average is merely 34.06, it means about one third of the expected devolution has been achieved. If we see state wise , we find that Karnataka tops the list(57.90) followed by Maharashtra and Rajasthan. Manipur State (12.22) is at the bottom and rest of the States and UTs are placed in between these states. Only 15 States including 2 North Eastern States have scored more than national average.

Finance (D3)

As mentioned earlier, this dimension of the devolution index carries the highest weightage in the indices. Its national average is merely 29.45 , which is even less than that of D1 (function). The reasons are not far to search as central and state governments do not part with financial power to Panchayats. Among the States and UTs , Maharashtra tops the list with the highest score (55) followed by Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu and Punjab score the lowest (17.37) as table indicates. , UTs Dadra& Nagar Haveli have not even devolved even 1 per cent of expected financial devolution to the Panchayats. Only 12 States including one from North Eastern State - - Tripura have scored more than national average on this dimension.

It may be noted that one of the components of this indicator is power given to Panchayats to mobilise their own resources. In this context, it would be interesting to know the extent of panchayats resources to total resources of the State Government in the country.

Table -1.2 : Revenue of Panchayats (all tiers) as Percentage of Respective State Own Revenue(Rs. in crore)

S.No.	State	Panchayat Own Revenue (2005-08)	States Own Revenue (2005-08)	Own Revenue of Panchayat's as % of State's Own Revenue
1.	Andhra Pradesh	415.4	30057.0	1.38
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	N.A.	465.0	N.A.
3.	Assam	13.1	5176.0	0.25
4.	Bihar	5.5	4639.8	0.12
5.	Chhatisgarh	26.3	6472.4	0.41
6.	Goa	13.2	2156.2	0.61
7.	Gujarat	11.5	22986.6	0.49
8.	Haryana	270.4	14590.2	1.85
9.	Himachal Pradesh	6.1	2986.6	0.20
10.	Jammu & Kashmir	0.8	2653.4	0.03
11.	Jharkhand	0.4	456.1	0.01
12.	Karnataka	198.0	26419.8	0.75
13.	Kerala	292.7	12824.4	2.28
14.	Madhya Pradesh	56.4	13070.3	0.43
15.	Maharashtra	582.3	50523.1	1.15
16.	Manipur	0.3	273.7	0.12
17.	Meghalaya	54.3	468.7	1.59
18.	Mizoram	NA	194.7	NA
19.	Nagaland	NA	221.1	NA
20.	Odisha	10.1	8232.3	0.12
21.	Punjab	125.9	15147.2	0.83
22.	Rajasthan	15.2	14995.1	0.10
23.	Sikkim	NA	838.3	NA
24.	Tamil Nadu	258.5	30014.6	0.86
25.	Tripura	1.3	427.4	0.30
26.	Uttar Pradesh	88.0	27364.8	0.32
27.	Uttarakhand	6.9	3000.8	0.23
28.	West Bengal	58.0	12983.4	0.45
	All States	2610.6	313749.3	0.83

Source: Basic data obtained from Panchayati Raj Department of various States, the XIII Finance Commission and Finance Accounts of the C & AG quoted from Alok V N (2011): Role of Panchayat Bodies in Rural Development since 1959, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, October 22

Table 2 shows that total own revenue of the Panchayats was not even 1 per cent of total state revenue. Surprisingly, in some of the States, this data is not available. It appears neither the State Governments has taken any initiatives to build up the capacity of the Panchayats to mobilise their own resources nor the Panchayats themselves have taken any interest to mobilise their own resources to enable them to take up activities, which they wish to take up at their levels. No efforts have been made neither by the panchayats nor the state governments in this regard.

Functionaries (D4)

This dimension of the index is also very important because if functions and finance have been devolved to Panchayats but functionaries are not on the disposal of the Panchayats. Then how Panchayats could get the work done in the field for fulfilling the expectations of the people embedded in the plan prepared by them for economic development and social justice. Its national average is 36.99 , which is higher than two other components of the triple Fs (Functions , Finance and Functionaries). In case of this indicator, Maharashtra tops the list with a score of 75.37 followed by Kerala (68.55), Karnataka (63.12). If, we put all the States together, we found that only 13 States including one North Eastern States and two UTs scored more than national average as the table indicates.

Above three dimensions (D2, D3 & D4) of the devolution index are very important to enable the Panchayats to function as ISG as envisaged in the Constitution. But all three depict the gloomy picture as their scores hover around one-third of total expected devolution from the States to Panchayats. The State of Maharashtra and couples of southern States performed better on these counts than other States and UTs.

Capacity Building (D5)

Capacity building of Panchayats' personnel is very important because capacitated personnel could deliver the services to their clientele effectively. In this case the national average is 49.33 which is more than the earlier three dimensions of the index. Here, West Bengal tops the

list by scoring 81.18 value followed by Rajasthan (79.43) Karnataka (79.04), Chhattisgarh (78.52) and Maharashtra (75). Table 1 depicts that only 10 States could achieve score more than the national average. None of the North Eastern States and UTs could cross the national average. It shows that capacity building of elected and officials is so crucial, which has been overlooked by the States and the UTs. Overlooking of this dimension is so much, so that Daman & Diu and Chandigarh could not do anything in this regard as their scores are zero as indicated in the table.

Accountability (D6)

Transparency in the functioning of the Panchayats with the involvement of Gram Sabha and auditing of activities by the same institutions are the important ingredients of effective and efficient functioning of the Panchayati Raj System (PRS). In this context, the picture is dismal across the States and UTs as indicated by the table. Maharashtra scored the highest (76.64) and lowest among the States excluding NE States is Bihar scoring merely 21.60. Other States which did fairly the good score are Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh. Merely 6 States including Tripura, a NE State scored more than national average. If we compare among the indicators, we found that less number of States crossed the national average in case of this dimension. But here position of UTs is not as bad as is in case of D2, D3 and D5.

Overall Rank (D)

D indicates the composite devolution index. It shows that national average is merely 38.52, which shows that of total expectation of devolution only 38.52 has been achieved in the country. Putting all States together excluding NE States and UTs, it may be stated that Maharashtra tops the list by scoring 64.04 value and Jharkhand at the lowest of the list by scoring 27.25 value. In case of NE States Tripura is on the top by scoring 39.72 value and Arunachal Pradesh at the lowest by scoring 23.67 value. In case of UTs, Lakshadweep at the top and Chandigarh at the lowest as the table indicates.

In case of Maharashtra, it may be stated that it is the only state amongst the other states which has constantly performed better in the

sub-indices of finance, functionaries, capacity building and accountability of the composite index. The state of Maharashtra has been historical progressive states in the sphere of strengthening Panchayati Raj. Its comprehensive Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samiti Act and a separate Act for Gram Panchayat gave a firm foundation for strong Panchayati Raj in the State. The states of Karnataka is also very close to the rank of Maharashtra as the table reveals. Here also sound foundation to the PRS was laid down when R K Hedge was the Chief Minister of the State.

It may be seen from the table that only 12 states excluding NE States have achieved score more than the national average. In case of NE states only 2 States scored more than national average . In case of UTs , none of them have achieved national average.

It is clear from above analysis that states and the Centre have not shown much political will and administrative support for strengthening Panchayati Raj in the country. It is obvious the political leaders at central and state levels are indifferent in creating a third level of power centre through creating Panchayats as strong institutions. Hence, they are indifferent towards these bodies. However, they have some schemes and programmes which are implementing through these bodies in the name of giving powers to them. In fact . there is no pressure from the Panchayats on these leaders to devolve powers to them. For that there must be demand from the elected representatives, which is not taking place. Whatever is being done in the name of Panchayati Raj is supply driven instead of demand driven. It is very difficult to create demand among elected representatives because they are instead of becoming leaders of the local people have emerged as implementing agencies on behalf of other tiers of the government at state and central levels.

Extension Act

States of Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Orissa , Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh covered under it. The Extension Act has not only made the Gram Sabha a strong body, but also put 'jal, jungle and jamin' (water, forest and land) under its control The State Legislature should have kept in mind the following aspects while amending their respective

Panchayat Acts: (i) Gram Sabha should be made the corner-stone of the entire system of Panchayati Raj by way of according freedom to them in managing, protecting and preserving natural resources and through formulation of socio-economic development programmes, projects and schemes for tribal people; (ii) Relationship between the gram sabha and panchayats should be similar to the one between legis-latures and the government. In other words, panchayats should take the approval of the gram sabha in all matters relating to rural economy and society; (iii) The underlying spirit of the Extension Act is that of devolution of powers and authority (rather than delegation of powers) to the gram sabha which represents participatory democracy rather than empowering representative decentralised democracy in the form of gram panchayats and higher tiers of the PRS. And while devolving powers and authority on panchayat or gram sabha, the state legislature should ensure that panchayats at the higher level do not assume the powers and authority of any Panchayat at the lower level or of the Gram Sabha (Mahi Pal 2000:1603).

But most states covered under it have not kept these principles in mind while enacting their conformity legislations. States have not gone into the spirit of this legislation and have tried to manipulate the provisions in a narrow way. On behalf of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, IRMA had carried out an independent assessment of the functioning of the panchayats across the states. Some of the states which come under 5th Scheduled Areas (where Extension Act is applicable) have also been covered. Based on the findings of this assessment, an evaluation has been done about the grassroots realities. In case of Andhra Pradesh, although several mandatory provisions of the Extension Act have been incorporated in the State Act, actual implementation is lacking. In case of Himachal Pradesh, in practice, most of the functions are handled by the States. In some States as Chhattisgarh some of the provisions such as enforcement prohibition, control over money lending are not clearly stated. In case of Rajasthan, conditions have not been created in the tribal areas to give effect of provisions of the Extension Act at the ground level. This might be on account of deficiencies in the legal framework of the Extension Act

such as clarity of domain of Panchayats and Gram Sabha and due to inability of tribal to seize the opportunities of the Extension Act for their empowerment and self-governance.

2. Marginalised Groups and Women

As indicated elsewhere in the paper that reservation for SCs, STs and women in the Panchayats for membership and chairpersonship has been provided by the Constitution. As a result of this provision, more than 6 lakh SCs/STs and more than 10 lakh women have been holding the offices of the members and chairpersons at different tiers of the Panchayats. It is evident from the various studies that the political space which has been provided by the Constitution to these groups in panchayats and their subsequent exposure to decentralised governance and planning for development has both positive and negative outcomes.

We shall discuss these in this part of the paper. The findings of a study of the working of panchayats in six states conducted by PRIA reveals that: “... 25 per cent women notice and remark on the visible change in their status within their family after they have been elected. ... about 60 per cent of women said that they would encourage women to stand for election. The same percentage (60 per cent) is contemplating to contest PRI election again” [PRIA, 2000]. But the other side of the phenomenon is that SC/STs and women have faced a lot of problems in discharging their duties and responsibilities. The State of Panchayats Report 2008-09, An Independent Assessment done by IRMA says that sample data on proxy representation reveals that about 59% of elected SC/ST women were proxy representatives, of which only about one-fifth were proxies for their husbands and /or male relatives. One third were proxies for dominant castes and about one-tenth for others including political parties.

A detailed picture of the involvement of SC and ST representatives in the early year after reservation was introduced is not readily available. Many studies/ surveys are agreed that participation by SC and ST representatives in decision-making on both governance and developmental issues remained low. But subsequently studies also show

that over the three Panchayat elections, SC representatives have used the space and climate created by the reservation of seats for articulating their voice. The wider political mobilization of SC has no doubt been a supportive factor, but there are a number of instances of SCs collectively claiming their rights to access services and entitlements to resources like mid-day meals, etc.

But at the same time some of the studies revealed other side of the phenomenon. For example, a recent study of 200 women SC and ST representatives in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu found that only one-third of women chairpersons/presidents were able to discharge their official responsibilities with any freedom and independence. Only 35.3% of them called Panchayat meetings, 31.9% chaired them, and 27.7% voluntarily signed resolutions. Only 26.15% of women Presidents voluntarily authorized Panchayat payments, monitored the Panchayat administration and supervised the work of BDOs/TDOs or DDOs as expected of their roles at Intermediate and District levels, and only 23.5% approved contracts for Panchayat development works or reviewed them. Instead, a number of women spoke of rubber-stamping Panchayat decisions and signing cheques at the behest of others (Magubhai et al, 2009).

In fact, caste prejudices emerged as a major problem in the functioning of the Panchayats. This is due to unwillingness and grouse the dominant castes hold for having themselves become ineligible to share the powers and control they have long been used to in the PRIs, on account of constitutional provisions for the marginalized group. Due to the prevailing strangle-hold of the caste structure in rural society in the country, neither the respect for the office of elected representatives nor the simple social values of giving equal regard to fellow human-beings practiced in the field. This has resulted the paradoxical situation, where, on the one hand, Panchayati Raj Act provides *de jure* powers to the office of the chairpersons at different levels and, on the other, *de facto*, they remain bereft of these powers. The local bureaucracy, which is expected to work under the control of the elected representatives of the Panchayats, is either generally away from the scene or succumbs to the pressure of the village politics and power game.

But all has not been lost, and as they say , every cloud has a silver lining. The PRS has been instrumental, to some extent, in igniting the process of releasing the depressed, oppressed and suppressed energy of the these groups who got the opportunity to come forward as elected representatives . It was found that wherever the dalit elected representatives were oppressed and obstructed by the dominant castes, they came out openly to resist and to struggle against the oppressors. Importantly, it was also found that whenever the women Panchayat leaders were literate, they were found to be more assertive than the others. The other side of the phenomenon is that the elected representatives of these Groups, especially the educated ones among them, had become quite visible, assertive and vocal whenever the circumstances allowed. It may be treated as the beginning of the end of the invisibility of these sections in the local governance scenario. This process of their becoming visible, assertive and empowered can be hastened by enlarging the scope of their functions and building their capabilities to function effectively through appropriate training and exposure opportunities (Mahi Pal 2004: 3583).

Thus, the affirmative action for these groups in local governance has resulted in social identities and political awareness among them and created an urge among them to become part of the mainstream political, economic and social life. With initial clashes between the 'higher' castes and the 'lower' castes, there are indications of social cohesion at local levels. The political space given to margi-nalised sections has, to some extent, dealt a blow to the asymmetrical social structure at the local level and given greater space for their participation and involvement in decision-making.

3. Road Map

It is clear from above analysis of two decades of functioning of PRS in the country that Panchayats have not emerged as ISG as envisaged in the constitution. The elected representatives of Panchayats have been grappling with local realities for local governance. Now the issue is what should be the road map ahead for enabling the Panchayats to become such institutions which will fulfill the expectations of the people about their development at local levels. A five pronged strategy has

been given below, which is, if implemented in letter and spirit would enable the Panchayats more strong and their elected representatives would be more knowledgeable and assertive in performing their task at local level.

1. There is need for constitutional amendment. The constitutional amendment should aim at removing discrepancies in the allocation of functions, finances and functionaries and establishing organic links between and among the tiers of the panchayats , preparation of decentralised plans and making Extension Act effective.

2. Effective demand from elected representatives for de facto decentralization does not arise from the grassroots levels. For generating demand for decentralisation social mobilisation is required in mode of elected representatives, for elected representatives by elected representatives .

3. priority to create basic infrastructure like panchayat offices in rural areas. This problem is very serious as revealed by the midterm appraisal of the 11th plan where , it is mentioned that out of the 2, 32, 638 Gram Panchayats , 78, 868 have no buildings and 59, 245 require major renovation (MTA: 50). Now, in such a situation, one can imagine the level of discussion could take place in the villages where society is divided on caste and class basis.. Concerted efforts are needed in this regard.

4. Need to give serious thought to the concept of ‘four pillar state’ of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia. Four pillar state means , centre, state, district and village level governments. Here, the issue is viability of size of lowest tier is important. Panchayats are expected to prepare decentralised plan , which is basically integrated area plan based on the principle of integrating economic activities with social services and putting them at different levels keeping in view population and distance thresholds. Here, the relevance of intermediate tier may be questioned as it has not much role to play in the decentralised governance, planning and development. In this regard, it may be said that Gram Panchayat may be reorganized demographically and geographically to make them viable institutions for local development. Besides, Gram Panchayats must have a full fledged secretariat where all local officials relating to

various line departments sit and villagers instead of going to the house of Panchayat President visit the Panchayat secretariat for action on various matters.

5. Capacity building which has two components namely competence and commitment. Competence denotes training which comprises three things knowledge, skill and attitudes. The commitment denotes not the *chalta hai* (can work) syndrome, but the concern & commitment on the part of the trainers and others who are involved in the process of the capacity building for developing human resources engaged in local development. Capacity building may be taken up in action mode, which denotes engaging various institutions in imparting training to Panchayati Raj functionaries in collaboration of training institutions including National Institute of Rural Development and State Institute of Rural Development with the purpose to mobilize the Panchayats, officials, bankers, community based organizations and community for initiating collective action for local development in holistic manner.

Conclusion

Whenever elections in the states, political parties promise of giving power to the people. But after elections they forget what they have promised because they knew that there is no assertion from the power from below. Our analysis shows that not much powers have been given to the Panchayats even after two decades of its implementation. Marginalised groups have got the seats in the local governance but they are not as effective as should be due caste prejudices and lack of capacity to governance local governments. Remedy of malady lies in organic organization of the Panchayat leaders to assert and bargain for the empowerment of these bodies.

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Annexure

DEVOLUTION INDEX 2012-13

Framework

(Weight 10)

- Basic Details of Panchayat (Reservations etc.)
- Panchayat duration & Elections including State Election Commission.
- Dissolution and Bye Elections of Panchayats
- Constitution and Function of District Planning Committee.
- Role of Panchayats in Parallel Bodies/Institutions
- Autonomy to Panchayats

Functions

(Weight 15)

- Functions Assigned to Panchayats including Activity
- Mapping and Actual Involvement of Panchayats
- Involvement of Panchayats in Important Schemes.

Finances (Weight 30)

13th Finance Commission Grants to the Panchayats – In time and amount.

State Finance Commission (SFC) – How effective?

Formula based Fiscal Transfers to Panchayats

Empowerment of Panchayats to Impose and Collect Revenue.

Funds Available with Panchayats.

Expenditure of Panchayats.

Initiatives related to Finances and Accounts recommended by the 13th FC.

Functionaries (Weight 15)

Physical Infrastructure of Panchayat

E-Connectivity of Panchayat.

Panchayat Officials : Sanctioned and actual staff position

Power and Functions of Panchayat

Capacity Building (Weight 15)

Institutions involved in Training

Training Activities.

Training of Elected Representatives and Officials

Accountability (Weight 15)

Accounting and Audit of Panchayat

Social Audit of Panchayat

Functioning of Gram Sabha

Transparency & Anti-Corruption

Panchayat Assessment & Incentivisation

Review of Strategies of Better Transparency and Accountability in Governance

D.D. Sharma

Winston Churchill once said that, if you put two economists in a room, you get two opinions, unless one of them is Lord Keynes, in which case you get three opinions (Shupe, 2010). Based on the same analogy, it can be said that “if you put two or more persons in our country in a room, no matter how many opinions you get but it is for sure that the onus of all their problems will be put on the system failure”. In that way, everyone pretends to be right and then how a system could fail when it comprises all right people who also happened to be the critics of this system. The base of this problem lies with the colonial legacy, demand & supply imbalance, and the deficiency in governance, which has adversely affected the behavioral pattern of every individual who also happens to be the critic of this system. In such an environment a perfect idealism is an aberration.

There are some definite flaws in the current democratic structure, its institutions, and the law implementation, which is leading to the growing social unrest and widespread corruption (Heston and Kumar;

2008). There exists a good number of rules and laws but establishment of rule of law is a big failure in most areas. This is being realized widely now and there is growing pressure to introduce strong and effective reforms. Governments have started working in this direction so as to impress people for their popular demand. Some of the radical changes have already been implemented and many more are in the pipeline.

Democratic decentralization and the rising expectations of citizens for the accountability are changing the modern meaning of administration and bureaucracy. Public sector reforms have been a regular experience across the world. It is argued that with a new paradigm for thinking about government activity, policy-making and service delivery may emerge bringing with it important implications for public managers. From the traditional model of public administration to 'new public management' (NPM) there is now an increasing focus on public value as a way of understanding government activity, informing policy-making and constructing service delivery (Flynn: 2007).

In many respects, administration is not much different from management; but the two concepts are often used interchangeable (Rutgers, 1966). These managerial functions are bestowed by the various laws and rules duly approved by the legislature in any democratic form of government. Any deviation can however be challenged through the grievance redressal systems or finally in the courts of law. In between, the legislature being directly answerable to the people at large can intervene through several means. Administrative functions have increased with the widened scope of governments over the years. Deficiency in deliverable services with decision lags along with the corrupt practices has lowered the dignity and prestige of administrative machinery. The popular mobilization on the Lokpal issue has also highlighted the urgent need to transform public institution and administrative machinery for transparency, accountability and removal of corruption. The creation of ombudsman is expected to improve bureaucracy through corrective actions and improved standards of administrative performance and service delivery.

Citizen's charters serve as a pact between service-providers and the users and are instrumental in overcoming the innumerable problems that plague public service provisioning. When institutionalized in a rights framework, they empower citizens by guaranteeing public services and reforming administration for their effective delivery. Linkages of citizen charters with service guarantee, grievance-redressal mechanism, Result Framework Document (RFD) and Ombudsman will help the entire public administrative machinery to improve accountability, transparency, efficiency, and the social image.

This paper is an attempt to analyze the strategy to achieve good-governance through different administrative reforms initiated by the Central Government and some State Governments. Initiatives of government have been reviewed for their efficacy in bringing transparency and accountability in the government sector and better citizen service delivery.

Background of Administrative Reforms.

Several Commissions and Committees have dealt the subject relating to administrative reforms and suggested several measures. Some reforms have been introduced on their recommendations. Report on Reorganization of the Machinery of Government (1949) by Mr.Gopalswami Ayyangar recommended that the Central Ministries can be bunched into bureaus. Paul H. Appleby prepared two reports on Indian Administration. The O&M organization and the Indian Institute of Public Administration were set up as a result of the recommendations.

The Committee on Prevention of Corruption was set up under chairmanship of Mr.K. Santhanam (MP) and resulted in the setting up of Central Vigilance Commission. The First Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) which was set up in 1966 established 20 study teams, 13 working groups and 1 task force. It gave 20 Reports making a total of 581 recommendations in a period spread over 1966-70. Committee on Recruitment Policy and Selection Methods (Kothari)-1976, the Commission on Centre- State Relations (Sarkaria)1983 were

some of the important committees. The Fourth Central Pay Commission Report- 1986 also recommended certain changes. Some other efforts were also made by the Committee to Review the Scheme of the Civil Services Examination (Satish Chandra 1989), Economic Administration Reforms Commission, Fifth Pay Commission (1993), Surendra Nath's Committee Report(2003), and the Committee on Civil Services Reforms.

The Second Administrative Reforms Commission was constituted on 31st August, 2005 with an objective to prepare a detailed blueprint for revamping the public administration system. It has submitted 15 reports to the Government of India till date. The Government constituted a Group of Ministers (GoM) on 30 March 2007 under the Chairmanship of the then External Affairs Minister to consider the recommendations of the Second A.R.C. and to review the pace of implementation of the recommendations as well as to provide guidance to the concerned Ministries/ Departments in implementation the decisions. It has since been reconstituted under the Chairmanship of Union Finance Minister on 21.8.2009. Core Group on Administrative Reforms under the chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary has finished examination of all the 15 reports. This Group of Ministers has so far considered eleven reports, namely (i) Right to Information: Master Key to Good Governance (First report), (ii) Unlocking human capital: Entitlements and Governance-a Case Study relating to NREGA (Second Report), (iii) Crisis Management From Despair to Hope (Third report), (iv) Ethics in Governance (Fourth Report), (v) Local Governance (Sixth Report), (vi) Capacity Building for Conflict Resolution (Seventh Report) (vii) Social Capital-A Shared Destiny(Ninth Report) and (ix) Organizational Structure of Government of India (Thirteenth Report) (x) Promoting e-Governance- The Smart Way Forward (Eleventh Report) and (xi) State and District Administration (Fifteenth Report). The decisions of GoM on these reports are at various stages of implementation. In all, 12 Reports have been considered, so far. Remaining 3 Reports (Report No. V,X ,and XIV)are also shortly being put up for consideration of GoM.

Public Service Accountability and the Sevottam Model

The institutional structures of top-down management and isolated managerial efforts have proved inadequate for satisfying performance i.e. delivery of results and outcomes. There was over-reliance on command' models of administrative effort for service delivery. Citizens and service users are stakeholders and participants not just 'customers'. The citizen-centric governance commitment of the Government of India has led to the development of a model for public service delivery. The model named as Sevottam has been developed through extensive consultations with multiple stake holders and it has led to the development of service standard by Bureau of India Standards (BIS). By doing that, India became the first country to have a published standard for Public Service Delivery. Sevottam model can be integrated into Performance-Related Incentives (PRI) model and thus employees of Ministries/departments fulfilling certain level of public accountability be rewarded through PRIs. Since collective efforts of all employees is required for higher quality service delivery, Sevottam score has to be based on some group measure.

The Sevottam framework was designed by DARPG in 2006 as an assessment improvement framework for public service delivery and implemented since 2009 initially in ten Departments of the Central Government having large public interface. This was recommended by the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) in its 12th Report "Citizen Centric Administration: the Heart of Governance. It is now being extended to 62 miniseries of the Government. Four States namely, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa have adopted Sevottam for CBPR pilot projects of quality management system.

The Government of Himachal Pradesh selected Municipal Corporation, Shimla for the first QMS Sevottam pilot project in 2008-2009 (Singh, 2010). As a result, operations of water bills, property tax, registration of births and deaths, and other services provided are being integrated through a common digital database. The Grievance Redress Mechanism has been improved. Improvements have been made in functioning and monitoring of the Solid Waste Management

Plant and financial arrangements have been made for procuring 33 new vehicles. A 'User Manual' for the sector has been created that will facilitate the replication of the process in other municipalities. The User manual has been uploaded on DARPG website, (www.Darpg.nic.in) The capacity of Himachal Pradesh Institute of Public Administration (HIPA) Shimla, has been built in this regard and funds have been provided for opening of a new 'Training Centre on Sevottam' in HIPA.

It is a model of service delivery standards based on experiments in e-governance. The model synthesizes ground realities in India with international best practices and has created an assessment system suitable for government organizations in India. BIS has developed generic standards for quality service delivery (IS 15700:2005) based on the assessment-improvement model developed by DARPG and TCS. The service provider will develop their own sectoral standards for improvement in service delivery. There are nine "Quality of compliance" criteria for which a requirement standard has been developed covering the three areas of (a) citizen charters, (b) grievance redressal and (c) service delivery capability. The criteria are articulated in the form of questions that invite rating on a five-point scale backed up by evidence attached with the application.

An organization that scores well on these criteria deserves commendation for having understood the utility of service improvement tools. Once the sectoral standards are achieved through a systemic process, the organizations can go in for certification. Periodic surveillance under the certification will ensure that the improvements made are institutionalized and a sustainable system for managing the quality of public service delivery is established. An assessee organization can opt to conduct only a self-assessment, or go in for an external assessment. PRIS is envisaged as a tool to incentivize adoption of new service standards and best practices for effective and responsive service delivery with a constant self-assessment to bridge the service gaps (GOI, 2008).

Right to information (RTI)

The Right to Information Act 2005(RTI) is an Act of the Parliament of India to provide for setting out the practical regime of right to information for citizens. The Act applies to all States and Union Territories of India except the State of Jammu and Kashmir. Under the provisions of the Act, any citizen may request information from a “public authority” (a body of Government or instrumentality of State”) which is required to reply expeditiously or within thirty days. The Act also requires every public authority to computerize their records for wide dissemination and to proactively publish certain categories of information so that the citizens need minimum recourse to request for information formally. Information disclosure in India was earlier restricted by the Official Secrets Act, 1923 and various other special laws, which the new RTI Act now relaxes.

The formal recognition of a legal right to information in India occurred more than two decades before legislation was finally enacted, when the Supreme Court of India ruled in State of U.P. vs. Raj Narain that the right to information is implicit in the right to freedom of speech and expression explicitly guaranteed in Article 19 of the Indian Constitution. It is applicable to all constitutional authorities including the executive, legislature and judiciary; any institution or body established or constituted by an act of Parliament or a state legislature. It is also defined in the Act that bodies or authorities established or constituted by order or notification of appropriate government including bodies “owned, controlled or substantially financed” by government, or non-Government organizations “substantially financed, directly or indirectly by funds “by government organizations “substantially financed, directly or indirectly by funds” provided by the government are also covered in it. Private bodies are not within the Act’s ambit directly. However, information that can be accessed under any other law in force by a public authority can also be requested. In a landmark decision of 30 November 2006 (Sarbjit Roy versus DERC) the Central Information Commission also reaffirmed that privatized public utility companies continue to be within the RTI Act, their privatization notwithstanding.

Impact of RTI Act

RTI Act is one of the most people friendly legislation ever. Thousands have benefited from it. But it is true that more than seven years after parliament passed the Act in June, 2005 the road to accessing the information remains arduous. RTI has made both tangible and intangible impact on the system and its people. People have used the RTI tool to get their ration cards, passports, pension funds, birth certificates, income tax refunds, etc. here have been cases when people as old as ninety years and as young as nine years have taken recourse to RTI to get their work done. People below the poverty line, disabled and blind people also have used it to their advantage .

Big scams have been averted by the use of RTI. e.g., when information revealed by RTI exposed that 87% of wheat and 94% of rice meant for the poor were siphoned off by shopkeepers and food grain officers, steps were taken to streamline the system (Kejriwal: 2006). In 2007, data obtained under RTI inspired citizens to question elected representatives to stop a scam worth over Rs. 6000 crores in the Crawford Market redevelopment issues in Mumbai (Gandhi:2007). RTI Act has been incorporated in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act(NREGA). RTI has been judiciously used to expedite NREGA. For example, the villagers of Elengabalsa village of Bandhugaion Gram Panchayat of Koraput District filed an RTI application to know the number of job cards issued in the village, why all the households, who by this time should have got the cards, had not received them., who were the officers guilty of violating the provisions of the Act, etc.

The RTI Act worked as miracle. The Panchayat authorities issued 40 job cards within seven days of the RTI application, promised to deliver the rest within some days. In a similar case in the Tumudibandh block of Kandhamal district, the Block Development Officer, responding to an RTI appeal, immediately released 500 Job cadres promising to give the rest eventually. Keeping aloft the spirit of RTI, section 17 of NREGA clearly dictates that the gram Panchayat must made available all relevant documents of the works done to the Gram

Sabha for social audit. NREGA has brought thousands of people above the family poverty line of Rs. 28,000/-.

Thus the impact of RTI is palpable. People do feel more empowered. Their bargaining power vis a vis public officials has increased manifold. Right to information has definitely resulted in greater transparency in governance. All the levels of the Government- the Centre, states and local bodies including village level Panchayats have put their records in public domain, through publications as well as internet in the regional languages. RTI applications have annually increased by 8 to 10 times. The implementation of RTI has been better in states that adopted RTI Act before, 2005. This means that with time its implementation and use would definitely pick up. The impact includes its use by the general public and by the marginalized groups, change in the mindset and attitude of people as well as the authorities. On the flipside, there have been cases where information seekers were bullied, intimidated and charged exorbitant money to get the information.

When a social activist filed a simple RTI query on the distribution of food grain and kerosene under the Public Distribution System (PDS) in a district in Bihar, the supply officers sought a whopping Rs. 78,21,252 for providing him the information. A person was even jailed in Bihar when he sought some information from a district magistrate. Ordinary citizens fear physical retaliation in invoking PRI against powerful people. This, can therefore, be attempted only by strong NGOs with an established reputation and wide mass support or politicians with countervailing muscle power, and not by ordinary citizens however patriotic and public minded they might be.

An ordinary citizen just cannot muster the courage to walk into a police station and demand factual information on the detenus, duration of custody, prescribed documentation etc. There are numerous cases of torture and harassment against those seeking to invoke RTI. This ruins the spirit of RTI. The fate of any law depends on the quality of those in charge of its implementation, the socio-political culture of the system and the vigilance and participation level of the citizens. A look on the RTI applications filed so far makes it evident that over

75% applications have been filed by men. People in power or in system have used it more. Similarly people living in metros have taken recourse to RTI more. Majority RTI applications are for personal reasons or advantage, many of them pertain to service matters. Most of the applications are by the same people. There is better response from authorities when innocuous information is sought. But when information meant to expose some wrongdoing is sought, information is difficult to come by and those in power collude to torture the information seeker. But it cannot be denied that the RTI has given a boost to the freedom of speech and expression. RTI's role in corruption reduction is impacting although in poverty alleviation it has not been felt as yet.

Citizen Charter

Biggest challenge commonly faced by the citizens is with respect to knowledge about processes and formalities for seeking any service from public offices such as licence, certificate, NOC etc. With citizen charter clearly defining the process, timeline, assigned official and the requisite documents and forms, it will not be possible to avoid applications on pretext of one objection or the other. Citizen's Charter initiative was introduced in Government of India in 1996 with a view to ensure quality public service to the citizen in a transparent manner. The initiative was also agreed upon to be implemented by State Governments/ UT Administrations as part of an Action Plan for Effective and Responsive Administration adopted in the Chief Ministers Conference held in May, 1977. Since then Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances ((AR& PG) of the Government of India has been promoting and coordinating formulating and implementation of Citizen's charters amongst Central Government Ministries/ Department /Organizations, State Governments and Union Territory Administrations. Ten Ministries/ Departments identified for implementation of Sevottam during the first phase are currently at various stages of progress. Government agencies in some Indian states have also initiated the efforts for citizen charters under Sevottam.

Citizen's Charter is a document of commitments made by a Government organization to the citizens/client groups in respect of

the services/schemes being provided to them or to be provided to them. This exercise, if appropriately conceived and carried out, can enthuse and enable organizations to tune their planning, policy and performance to the needs and concerns of citizens/stakeholders/users/clients. For this transformative process to materialize, effective strategies of realization would have to be worked out at multiple level in the political and administrative system. These strategies must incorporate three elements. Firstly, clarity is needed at every level about the objectives of Charter as an instrument of policy rationalization, and administrative tuning to deliver policy goals expected by the citizens. Secondly, designing and delivery of charters as live instruments of citizen-administration interface is required for instituting citizen in public domain. Thirdly, mechanisms for Charter monitoring, Charter evaluation and Charter review needs to be evolved.

In a rapidly changing context where efficiency, effectiveness and competence of state institutions are being questioned, it is imperative for the state agencies to strive for improvement in performance. The Charter programme can become instrumental in promoting the objectives of responsive and accountable governance and also contribute to improvement in service delivery. This can, in turn, put organization in shape and contribute to a change in work culture and staff satisfaction, thereby increasing the comfort level of citizens, who need to deal with these organizations.

The first key component of a meaningful Citizen's Charter is a clear statement of vision followed by the mission statement, Identification of Client Groups/ Stakeholders/users, specification of time-Frames for Each Service, Specification of Service, Quality Standards, Specification of Service Delivery Standards, Clear Information about contact Points for Obtaining Service Benefits, Information about the Functions of Information Facilitation Counters, Providing Information about the Public Grievances Redressal Procedures/ Mechanisms, Information about the Time-frame for the Public Grievance Redress, Information about the time-frame for acknowledgement, Information about the Time-frame for Response, Information about Systematic Review of all Public Grievances, Information about Outcome of Review of grievances, Information

about Procedures for Inviting Suggestions, Inputs, Information about Time- frame for Review of Suggestions, Information about Mechanisms for Processing of Suggestions, Information about Systematic Review of all Suggestions, Information about Outcome of Review of Suggestions, Information about Monitoring Mechanism to Ensure Compliance with Commitments, Information about the Web-site and Relevant Information, and Information about Information Handbook(IIPA): 2008).

Service Guarantee

Right to Public Services legislation comprises statutory laws which guarantee time bound delivery of services for various public services rendered by the Government to citizen and provide mechanism for punishing the arrant public servant who is deficient in providing the service stipulated under the statute . Right to service legislation is meant to reduce corruption among the government officials and to increase transparency and public accountability . Madhya Pradesh became the first state in India to enact Right to Service Act on 18 August, 2010. Several other states like Bihar, Delhi, Punjab, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttrarakhand, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand have introduced similar legislations for effectuating the right to service to the citizen. Central Grievance Redress Bill, 2011 which is tabled in the parliament lays down an obligation upon every public authority to publish citizen charter stating therein the time within which specified good shall be supplied and services be rendered and provide for a grievance redressal mechanism for non compliance of citizens charter and matter connected therewith or incidental thereto.

The common framework of the legislations in various states includes granting of right to public services, which are to be provided to the public by the designated official within the stipulated time frame. The public services which are to be granted as a right under the legislations are generally notified separately through Gazette notification . Some of the common public services which are to be provided within the fixed time frame as a right under the Acts, includes issuing caste, birth , marriage and domicile certificates, electric connections,water connections, voter's card, ration cards, copies of land records, etc. On

the failure to provide the service by the designated officer within the stipulated time or rejected to provide the service, the aggrieved person can approach the First Appellate Authority. The First Appellate Authority after making a hearing can either accept or reject the application, by making a written order stating the reasons for the order and intimate the same to the applicant, and can order the public servant to provide the service to the applicant. An appeal can be made from the order of the First Appellate Authority to the Second Appellate Authority, who can either accept or reject the application, by making a written order stating the reasons for the order and intimate the same to the applicant or can impose penalty on the designated officer for deficiency of service without any reasonable cause, which can range from Rs. 500 to Rs. 5000 or may recommend disciplinary proceedings. The applicant may be compensated out of the penalty imposed on the officer. The appellate authorities has been granted certain powers of a Civil Court while trying a suit under Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, like production of documents and issuance of summon to the Designated officers and appellants.

Grievance Redressal

The Department of Administrative Reforms And Public Grievances is the nodal agency to formulate policy guidelines for citizen-centric government in the country. Redressal of citizens' grievances being one of the most important initiatives of the DAR&PG, formulates public grievance redressal mechanisms for effective and timely redressal/settlement of citizens' grievances. It has developed a Government of India Portal, CPGRAMS that is aimed providing the citizens with a platform for redressing their grievances. The grievances arising out of unsatisfactory response or no response from the Ministry / Department concerned will be taken up by the PG officers of DAR&PG who will take up the matter with Ministry/Department concerned for close monitoring and expeditious redress.

Grievance Redressal Mechanism is a part and parcel of the machinery of any administration as no administration can claim to be accountable, responsive and user-friendly unless it has established an efficient and effective grievance redress mechanism. In fact, the grievance

redressal mechanism of an organization is the gauge to measure its efficiency and effectiveness as it provides important feedback on the working of the administration. The grievances of public are received at various points in the Government of India. There are primarily two designated nodal agencies in the Central Government handling these grievances i.e., Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, and Directorate of Public Grievances, Cabinet Secretariat.

With a view to ensure prompt and effective redress to the grievances, a number of instructions have been issued by Department of AR&PG from time to time, Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) software has been introduced and is operational with every Director of Grievances. This has enabled the Director of Grievances to immediately place the details of grievances received in a database (Efficient 'dak' management) as well as record the fact whether he intends to monitor its progress, identify the section/division where it is being sent, etc., generate the time taken in dealing with the grievance, enable review of pending grievances in the organization or across the organizations, generate acknowledgements to complaints, conduct analysis etc. The system also has the facility of online registration of grievances by the citizens and access to information on the status of his/her grievances.

All grievances should be necessarily acknowledged, with an interim reply within 3 days of receipt and redressed within 3 months of receipt in Organization. The same time limit should apply even if co-ordination with subsidiary offices or another Department/Organization is involved. No grievance is to be rejected without having been independently examined. At a minimum, this means that an officer superior to the one who delayed taking the original decision or took the original decision that is cause for grievance, should actually examine the case as well as the reply, intended to be sent to the grievance hold. All grievance representations received in the Department/Organization, either by mail, fax, e-mail are invariably routed through Director of Grievances before they go to concerned sections/divisions.

Responsibility is fixed in each case of delay, default and dereliction of duty, identified by Director of Grievances, and appropriate action is taken against concerned personnel. At state level too, online grievances redressal and management systems have also come into existence in recent years and becoming more popular with each day. In Himachal Pradesh this programme is known as e-samadhan, started in December 2008. New department namely "Redressal of Public Grievances" has been specially created for it in the state and the Chief Minister himself is the Minister –in Charge thereby making it more effective. Similarly, in Haryana there is Har-Samadhan and Punjab Seva in Punjab. These programmes have been adopted after taking cue from the similar system adopted by the Central Government.

Result Framework Document(RFD)

The Prime Minister approved the outline of a Performance Monitoring and Evaluation System (PMES) for Government Departments in 2009. Under PMES, each department is required to prepare Results-Framework Document (RFD). An RFD provides a summary of the most important result that a department/ministry expects to achieve during the financial year. This document has two main purposes: (a) move the focus of the department from process-orientation, and (b) provide an objective and fair basis to evaluate department's overall performance at the end of the year. The Guidelines are divided into three broad sections: (i) Format of RFD; (ii) Methodology for Evaluation; and (iii) RFD Process and Timelines.

A RFD is essentially a record of understanding between a Minister representing the people's mandate and the Secretary of a Department, responsible for implementing this mandate. This document contains not only the agreed objectives, policies, programs and projects but also success indicators and targets to measure progress in implementing them. To ensure the successful implementation of agreed actions, RFD may also include necessary operational autonomy.

The RFD seeks to address three basic questions: (a) what are ministry's /department's main objectives for the year? (b) What actions are proposed by the department to achieve these objectives? (c) How

would someone know at the end of the year, the degree of progress made in implementing these actions? What are the relevant success indicators and their targets which can be monitored? At the beginning of each financial year, with the approval of the Minister concerned, each Department will prepare a RFD consistent with these guidelines. To achieve results commensurate with the priorities listed in the RFD, the Minister incharge will approve the proposed activities and schemes for the Ministry/Department. The Ministers In-charge will also approve the corresponding success indicators (Key Result Area-KRAs or Key performance Indicators-KPIs) and time bound targets to measure progress in achieving these objectives. Based on the proposed budgetary allocation for the year in question, the drafts of RFDs will be completed by 5th of March every year. To ensure uniformity, consistency and coordinated action across various Departments, the Cabinet Secretariat will review these drafts and provide feedback to the Ministries/Departments concerned. This process will usually be completed by March 31st of each year. The final versions of all RFDs will be put up on the websites of the respective Ministries by the 15th of April each year. The results Framework of each Department/Ministry will be submitted to the Cabinet Secretariat, by the 15th April of each year. It will take into account budget provisions and in particular the outcome Budget.

The FRDs will be drawn up in such a manner that quarterly monitoring becomes possible. Quarterly reports will be submitted to the Cabinet Secretariat. After six months the Results Framework as well as the achievements of each Ministry/Department against the performance goals laid down at the beginning of the year, will be reviewed by the High Power Committee (HPC) on Government Performance consisting of the Cabinet Secretary, Finance Secretary, Expenditure Secretary, Secretary (Planning Commission), Secretary (Performance Management) and, if required, the Secretary of the Department concerned. At this stage, the RFDs may have to be reviewed and the goals reset, taking into account the priorities at that point of time. This will enable to factor in unforeseen circumstances such as drought conditions, natural calamities or epidemics. The report

of the High Power Committee on Government Performance will be submitted to the Prime Minister , through the concerned Minister, for further action as deemed necessary.

At the end of the year, all Ministries/ departments will review and prepare a report listing the achievements of their ministry/department against the agreed result in the prescribed format. This report will be required to be finalized by the Ist of May each year. After scrutiny by the Cabinet Secretariat, these results will be placed before the Cabinet for information by Ist of June each year (GOI, 2012). RFDs are to be maintained on web portal “ Results Framework Management System (RFMS)” managed and monitored by Cabinet Secretariat for all central/state departments. This online-utility also envisages for preparing and submitting the citizen charters for the departments at common gateway.

Lokpal/ Lokayukta

The Lokayukta is an anti-corruption ombudsman organization in the Indian states. The Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) headed by Morarji Desai submitted a special interim report on “Problems of Redressal of Citizen’s Grievances” in 1966. In this report, the ARC recommended the setting up of two special authorities designated as ‘ Lokpal’ and ‘Lokayukta’ for redressal of citizens’ grievances. The Lokayukta helps people bring corruption to the fore mainly amongst the politicians and officers in the government services. It is to be noted that the Lokayukta may conduct raids but surprisingly, it does not have binding powers to punish anyone. Owing to this, many acts of the Lokayukta have not resulted in criminal or other consequences for those charged.

The proposed changes will make the institution of Lokayukta uniform across the country as a three-member body, headed by a retired Supreme Court Judge or High Court Chief Justice and comprising the state vigilance commissioner and a jurist or an eminent administrator as other members. A just and civil society requires a system of government which whilst operating within the rule of law provides for a wider recognition of the need for accountability . The

traditional role of Ombudsman provides an effective accountability mechanism, which is now in place in more than 100 countries. Effectiveness of Lokayukta is related to his primary objective of ensuring that the constitutional state is maintained, public authorities respect citizen's rights and laws and the administrative problems are corrected (eliminate formalities, reduce delays, revise discretionary decision-making processes etc.). Consequently, this mission focuses on monitoring and correcting the public authorities' behavior. This is why the Lokayuktas' effectiveness, or his success in getting his recommendations implemented by public authorities, relies on his ability to make public authorities aware of. That is why he ensures that public authorities are aware of his intervention criteria, the general scale according to which he evaluates the government's administrative behavior.

Whistle Blower Protection

India does not have a law to protect whistleblowers as yet. The Public Interest Disclosure and Protection to Persons Making the Disclosure Bill, 2010 was approved by the Union Cabinet as part of a drive to eliminate corruption in the country's bureaucracy. It resulted after a long wait of around seven years of the first brutal killing of an engineer Mr. Satyendra unbridled corruption in NHAI's Golden Quadrilateral project, and two years later by atrocious killing of an IOC officer Mr. Manjunath Shanmugam and more recently, many other Right to Information activists by anti-social and vested interests.

Activists are seeking quick passage of the Whistleblowers Protection Bill in Parliament, which intends to protect the whistleblowers, facilitate the disclosure of information and uncover corruption and deceptive practices that exist in government organizations. In June, 2011 a parliamentary panel had recommended that ministers, the higher judiciary, security organizations, defence and intelligence forces and regulatory authorities be brought under the whistleblowers protection bill to check corruption and willful misuse of the power. According to Indian law reports, the bill has faced considerable criticism because its jurisdiction is restricted to the government sector and encompasses only those who are working for the Government of India or any of

its agencies. It does not cover the employees of State Governments. The draft Bill aimed at protecting whistleblowers is a welcome move.

The lack of public debate and consultation on the Bill seems to indicate the danger of it becoming another 'paper tiger'. The proposed law neither has provisions for encouraging whistle blowing by providing for financial incentives; nor deals with corporate whistleblowers and does not extend its jurisdiction to the private sector. Indian corporate world ought to have learned lessons after the experience of the massive fraud at Satyam. The Bill aims to balance the need to protect honest officials from undue harassment with protecting persons making a public interest disclosure. Critics are however raising their concerns about certain provisions of the bill as it punishes any person making false complaints and does not provide any penalty for victimizing a complainant.

The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) was designated to receive public interest disclosures since 2004 through a government resolution. There have been only a few hundred complaints every year. The provisions of the Bill are similar to that of the resolution. Therefore, it is unlikely that the number of complaints will differ significantly. The power of the CVC is limited to making recommendations. Also it does not have any power to impose penalties. The Bill has a limited definition of disclosure and does not define victimization. Other countries such as the US, UK, and Canada define disclosure more widely and define victimization. The Bill differs on many issues with the proposed Bill of the Law Commission and the 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission's report. These include non-admission of anonymous complaints and lack of penalties for officials who victimize whistleblowers.

No doubt, the proposed law will assist in detecting corruption, ensure better information flow and pave the way for successful prosecution of corrupt individuals through clear and protected processes. However, the public in India have poor levels of confidence in fighting corruption because they fear retaliation and intimidation against those who dare to make complainants. Another worry pertains to the delay in disposing off these cases. Without public debate on the

provisions of this proposed law, it is clear that there is no way for people to measure its effectiveness when the draft bill comes into force as law.

Discussion and Conclusions

The modern society is fast becoming impatient with the traditional system of government which is not coming up to its expectations in fast changing environment. A Government employee is being perceived as insensitive, aloof, corrupt and the overall administrative system as autocratic, opaque and with no work-culture. This requires a paradigm shift in governance to a system where the citizen is in the centre and he is consulted at various stages of formulation and implementation of public policy. To achieve this objective, India needs a public service which is capable, innovative and forward looking. The traditional role of civil service which was of administrator, service provider and controller of development activities has to make way for the new roles of facilitator and regulator so as to create best environment and conditions in the country for building a nation of excellence or at least, comparable to best governed nations.

The quality of a citizen's life is materially affected by both the decision taken by government and the manner in which those decisions are implemented. Corruption is recognized as a major problem in society, capable of endangering the stability and security of societies, threatening social, economic and political development and undermining the values of democracy and morality. Corruption hurts the public directly and tragically, as it penalizes the honest and rewards the dishonest among them. To live in a society which pursues good-governance practices, is the basic human right of contemporary world. International cooperation is indispensable to combat corruption and promote accountability, transparency and the rule of law.

Containing the menace of black money and restricted economic practices such as hoarding, black marketing, commissions etc. have to be contained by implementing stringent measure. Faith of the citizen in country's institutions is one of the essential elements of good-governance. Therefore, there is an urgent need for radical reform

measures for institutional strengthening in the different pillars of our democracy. There is a positive indication for this with the ongoing initiatives and the growing debates for wider administrative, electoral and judicial reforms.

Economic liberalization, privatization and globalization popularly known as LPG policy have contributed more to the desire to have a transparent, liberal and accountable approach in governance. Additionally, rising level of living, increasing literacy rate and high proportion of young population in the country has increased the expectation level from governance. Civil Society movement for various reforms also represent this aspiration. Social unrest and blame on system failure has also been recognized by the legislature during last few years. The Governments, whether Central or States, are all out to become pioneer in bringing important legislations towards better transparency, accountability and citizen-centric governance plan. States like Bihar, Gujrat and Himachal Pradesh have caught the attention nationally for some initiatives and have been appreciated widely by the public. This trend of healthy competitiveness as well as the acknowledgement of best governance practices is good for the future polity and the society.

One of the important challenges however revolves around the role conflict between Centre and state. In cases where centre is more serious about reforms, states easily find ways for exemption or alterations. In case of role conflicts, states' back out easily on pretext of basic structure of the constitution and its federal base. Lokpal/Lokayukta legislative provisions have also seen such a conflict. This needs to be tackled through a dialogue especially where the subject pertains to states. Propaganda by the Union Government can raise people's demand for such legislations at the state level. In extreme case, referendum is also a desirable option in a democracy, especially when the technology is so advance, affordable, and accessible, Caste, class, community and religious issues have to be tackled very smartly while implementing these initiatives because some misinterpretations will derail the legislative process as faced in Lokpal case. Policy reforms are focused towards citizens but the citizens working within Government set up are frightened by conduct/service rules or simply by the departmental annoyance. This

needs to be tackled with suitable provisions within reform legislations or through amendments in service rules. Biggest apathy of executive system is to allow provisions for exemptions. Exemptions are desired mostly as prestige or status symbol. This needs to be vanished entirely in order to avoid discouragement to rule-abiding citizens, who finance the entire public set-up. With some changes already implemented and other in the pipeline, there is a ray of hope for a better system with efficiency in governance. It will curtail the wastage of human energy and resources for a better quality of life and a prosperous nation.

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Capacity Building: Issues and Challenges Experiences of West Bengal

Debakanya Samanta

For effective functioning of governance and efficient delivery of services through local governance it is very essential to make the functionaries, both elected and official to be efficient and skilled enough to perform their duty and responsibilities. The success of any decentralised governance lies in the hand of efficient functionaries. Keeping in mind Government of West Bengal has developed different strategies to build capacities of functionaries related to local government.

This chapter shall discuss about the capacity development of West Bengal government related to rural local government system, its existing infrastructure, strategies, constraints, challenges and the change in paradigm of training. Accordingly, our presentation is arranged with the following sections. The section 2 demystifies the concept of capacity building and its importance in local governance. Section 3 discusses the strategies and existing infrastructure of training in West Bengal. Section 4 discusses the constraints and challenges of capacity building

efforts in West Bengal. Section 4 indicates about the change in paradigm of imparting training with example of Paschim Medinipur district. Section 6 summarises by way of conclusion.

Capacity Development and Local Governance

Capacity building can be defined as the ability to perform tasks and produce outputs, to define and solve problems and make informed choice. Capacity development (CD) is the process by which people and organizations create and strengthen their capacity over time (European Commission, 2005). Capacity building is not only training and build up technical skills; but also includes responsible institution's infrastructure, equipment, organizational values and culture, incentives, human and financial resources, policy and procedures.

Many of the decentralised process, it is argued that, tasks and responsibilities are transferred to local governments, which did not have yet sufficient opportunities to build the technical and management capacities to perform new tasks. Such capacity building process, involves capacity transfer from central to the local level, are key to the success of decentralisation (www.sdc-decentralization.net).

In the context of decentralised governance in rural areas of West Bengal, a number of subjects specified under 11th Schedule in 73rd Constitutional Amendment, have already been devolved to the local governance system, known as Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI). Effective implementation of these tasks needs efficient, skilled and motivated functionaries. Building capacities of functionaries of PRI appears as a great challenge to the Government of West Bengal. The task involves includes building capacities for completely two different kinds of people. One is elected representatives, elected in the three tiers of PRIs and another is officials in these three tier PRI system.

Strategies and Infrastructure :

In West Bengal, Department of Panchayats and Rural Development is the coordinating agency for rural local bodies. Under this department, the State Institute of Panchahayat and Rural Development plays a crucial role in capacity building and training. To make the capacity building

process more decentralised State Government has opened Extension Training Centres in five regions and each in all districts, one District Training Centre.

Particularly with a view to developing capacities of PRI functionaries to enable them to perform their roles more effectively in the context of the reforms in the panchayat system, action plan is prepared under the leadership of State Institute of Panchayats & Rural Development (SIPRD) immediately after the general election to the 3-tier Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in West Bengal, aiming at training of around 60,000 newly elected PRI members within one year of their assuming office. The action plan for capacity building of PRI functionaries also targeted to cover around 15,000 employees directly associated with PRIs, particularly Gram Panchayat employees, in order to develop their understanding about their roles and functions.

Simultaneously with the election of the PRIs, a State Level Trainers' Teams (SLTT) are formed by SIPRD and District Level Trainers' Teams (DLTT) are formed by all the districts drawing officials from amongst Government officials, ex-PRI members and selected NGOs. The SLTT of SIPRD trained DLTTs so that they could in turn train the newly elected PRI members at the district level. Training designs are also prepared by SIPRD for all categories of functionaries at all levels. A series of training booklets and handouts on various themes of Panchayats & Rural Development are prepared by SIPRD for distribution among the newly elected PRI functionaries.

Besides training of DLTT members and preparation of materials, SIPRD undertakes training of the following categories of PRI functionaries: (a) Zilla Parishad members; (b) Karmadhyakshas (chairpersons of standing committees) of Zilla Parishads and Panchayat Samitis; (c) Sabhapatis (chairpersons) of Panchayat Samitis; and (d) selected district & block level Government officers directly associated with PRIs. Training of the rest of the PRI functionaries e.g. (a) members, Pradhans, Upa-Pradhans, Sanchalaks (chairpersons of sub-committees) and employees of Gram Panchayats and (b) members of Panchayat Samitis was administered by the Directorate of Panchayats & Rural

Development through the District Panchayats & Rural Development Officers (DPRDO) at the District Training Centre.

Panchayat and Rural Development Department has created Society for Training and Research on Panchayat and Rural Development (STARPARD) to coordinate ongoing training activities state wide. With the support from the Panchayat and Rural Development Department, all District Training Centres have been revived to as training hub, with latest technology training facilities, building infrastructure for residential training and providing man power support. These initiatives have pushed the neglected capacity building activities, especially capacity building of PRI functionaries, in the priority list of the district administration.

Constraints and Challenges

Despite the aforementioned initiatives, the capacity building activities face several challenges as follows

- (a) **Non-Coverage:** Despite putting best effort a large section of elected representatives are remain uncovered under the training, the reasons may be many fold.

A large section of the functionaries, especially elected representatives are reluctant to attend the training programme which make them remain unaware of knowledge imparted

Some of them fail to attend due to several personal reasons. In these cases, the women are the most vulnerable. The newly elected women members of PRI sometimes failed to attend due to their family commitments and other social obligations. This makes the situation worse that these women remain out of the ambit of training, which make them unaware of the numerous opportunities already available or created by Government for poverty alleviation and strengthening livelihoods.

- (b) **Late Training:** A large section of the trainee who get any training do indeed get training quite late, mostly when the interest is on the wane and incentive lost.

- (c) Inadequacy: Induction level or even in-service training for Government/Panchayat employees is inadequate; There are reports of employees having got no training in lifetime.
- (d) Infrastructure Gap: There are gaps in infrastructures as well quality trainers to conduct quality training.
- (e) Materials: Most of the training materials (including the language) prepared and used in training do not uniformly suit the needs and levels of all the functionaries, particularly those drawn from backward classes and women.
- (f) Heterogeneous nature of the clientele: Due to heterogeneous nature of the clientele, it becomes difficult on the part of the trainers to pay attention to the needs of the functionaries belonging to the backward classes and women because their issues are superseded and suppressed by those of the influential, the vocal and the elite.
- (g) Attitude of trainer: Quality of training suffers due to lack of proper attitude to training, lack of incentive on the part of the trainers, and weak and conventional methodologies leading to monotony.

The major challenges related to capacity building exercise in West Bengal are

- (a) Change in Attitude: Bring about positive change in the prevailing attitude of the PRI functionaries to training and other capacity building measures
- (b) Cover the absentee: Cover the absentee trainee sometimes appears as big challenge to organise complementary training
- (c) More Decentralised Infrastructure: More decentralised infrastructure, especially sub-district level shall be fruitful for improved training.
- (d) Quality Trainers and Materials: Develop quality trainers across the state with right attitude along with quality training materials appear as challenge to government to ensure quality of training and other capacity building interventions.

- (e) **Prioritisation:** Providing training and capacity building, most of the time does not come under priority list of district and state high level officials. Change in this attitude is one of the most challenging thing for effective implementation of training programme.
- (f) **Women Participation:** Due to some social obligations women members are most uncovered. Bringing them to training programme and compel them to participate actively possess major challenge.
- (g) **Active Participation:** It is often found that though functionaries attend training, they do not participate in the training programme actively, which sometimes dilute the objective of training. Ensuring active participation with sharing their own practical difficulties and experiences needed more innovative methods poses as another major challenge.
- (h) **Collaboration:** Collaboration with NGO and other Civil Society Organisation for innovating training and new technique to reach out to the poorest and most marginalised sections, particularly women belonging to these sections and to create an enabling environment for them to articulate their voices and to motivate them to rise to actions for self-development appears as challenge.

Need for a Paradigm Change :

Keeping in mind the constraints in imparting training and building capacities of PRI functionaries, the Panchayat and Rural Development Department has taken initiative of 'Mobile Training'. Through mobile training a team of subject expert visit a Gram Panchayat to provide training to the elected representatives and Gram Panchayat officials. The team orient the elected representatives and gram panchayat officials on different organisational issues, accounts management, planning and implementation of development schemes, strategies to enhance service delivery, etc. This team provides GP functionaries hand holding support in documentation as well as to clear doubts.

a. Mobile Training: Experience of Pashim Medinipur District

The present study probe deeper in to analyse the impact of the process of mobile training initiative by the District Training Centre of Paschim Medinipur. In this regard, it is to be noted that, the mobile training is not alternative rather a complementary effort along with traditional class room method of training. It is found that through the mobile training conducted through District Training Centre of Paschim Mediniour, in the year 2012-13 covered 498 elected representatives (Table 1). Out of the total elected representatives covered it is found that 66 per cent are men and 34 per cent are women. Keeping in mind the one third reservation norms, it may confer that almost all women members have been covered through the training, except it is found that no women member from the minority community participated in the mobile training programme. The Mobile Training team had trained 516 numbers of GP employees in the year 2012-13. The important thing about this is that, as it provides hand holding support to all, people are very much enthusiastic about it. It is also found that functionaries wait for the team to arrive to get their doubts clear and review their works done. In a very short period, this new approach of training has created significant impact among GP functionaries.

Table: 3.1 Functionaries Covered in Mobile Training : Pashim Midiuipur

Caste Wise Break Up of Attended Elected Representative

SC Male	SC Female	ST Male	ST Female	OBC Male	OBC Female	Minority Male	Minority Female	General Male	General Female	TOTAL Male	TOTAL Female
71	50	100	59	34	11	2	0	120	51	327	171
Caste Wise Break Up of Attended GP Officials											
96	1	35	1	69	6	5	0	282	21	487	29

Source: District Training Centre, Paschim Medinipur

Concluding remarks

West Bengal was the pioneer in initiating decentralised governance in India. History of decentralised governance in West Bengal can be traced back even long before independence. For effective functioning of the decentralised governance and providing effective delivery of services, building of skill of PRI functionaries is necessary. In this regard, several

initiatives are in operation in West Bengal. Apart from the conventional method of training, State Government has taken initiatives to make the training process in a more decentralised way. Set up district training centres and building up of infrastructure is one of the special initiatives. There is a change in paradigm of training through the initiative of mobile training. This training method has found as an effective way to orient and build capacity of functionaries in a more decentralised way to address practical issues raised by the functionaries. This initiative has been emerged as an effective tool to cover the uncovered trainees as well and changing their attitude towards training.

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Role of PRIs in Child Caring : A Sociological Study of Village Ringzabal in J&K

Naseer Ahamed Wani & Shamsul Haque

Child care refers to ‘caring of children in such a way that will ensure their proper mental, physical and social development’. In other way child care involves the assurance of the basic rights of children. These are *Right to Survival, Right to Development, Right to Protection and Right to Participation*. Caring of children from conception to delivery and then deliver to maturity involves the services of various stakeholders, who share a responsibility for caring and development of the children. Among these the role of father and mother i.e. family has a first and primary importance in caring the child. The families cannot up bring their child in isolation; they have to rely on the other agencies for the care and development of the child. The father of the child has to take the mother of the child during pregnancy to the health institutions for regular health check - ups and medical consultations and the process continues till to post delivery period. The child after few years of care at the home has to be admitted in the school for the education. The school acts an important bridge between the family and the community.

School on one side, makes the child a learner, knowledge seeker, skilled person and on the other, prepares him for the various roles to be performed in the community. However, the various institutions concerned with the child care like health institutions, educational institutions are working under the supervision of certain political institutions. These political institutions govern the whole mechanism of working and functioning of the planning, policy and implementation of the different departments, agencies concerned with the welfare and development of the nation and its people. It is the responsibility of the state to provide adequate services to children, to ensure their proper physical, mental, and social development.

Among the state functionaries, PRIs at gross root level have a vital role to play for the welfare of children in particular and community in general. Panchayat Raj on one side is intended to decentralize the power at the gross root level among masses and also involves their participation in the governance and decision making. This not only strengthens the democratic process in the country but also involves the participation of people in national building. PRIs are directly related to the rural development in terms of socio economic and political dimensions. Through these institutions people in the rural areas can demand for better rural infrastructure, which in turn can change their socio economic conditions and politically people participate in the process of decision making regarding their needs and demands.

Village Setting

The present chapter is based on an empirical study conducted within one of the tribal villages of the Budgam namely Ringzabal. Ringzabal is among one of the remotest tribal villages of Budgam. The total population of the village is 905, comprising of 460 males and 445 of females, based on 205 families. It comes under the Zone Hard Panzoo, Block and also Tehsil Khansahab, district Budgam. It is situated on the bank of Nallah Sukhnag, in hilly areas and adjacent to the forest. It lies on the left side of the road, while moving from Tehsil headquarters to the Hard Panzoo. The village is lacking the facilities of electricity, road connectivity. The people of the village had to travel almost one and a half kilometer on foot through the Nallah Sukhnag to reach the village.

The village is almost 12 kilometers away from the Tehsil Head Quarter Khanshab and almost 25 kilometers from District Head quarters.

Socio-economically village is very backward. Majority of the people of the village are illiterate and just three persons in the village are matriculate till now. One of the major problems in terms of schooling in the village is the problem of retention of the students in the schools. This in turn gives birth to huge number of children engaged in labor. In spite of having Govt. Middle and a Primary school in the village, the rate of dropouts and never admitted children is much high. Various reasons are there for this situation in the village in terms of education including poverty, lack of proper school infrastructure, monitoring and supervision to these schools, parental ignorance towards the education of their children. The main source of livelihood of people of the village is farming and laboring. The land available in the village is dry and mostly maize and pulses are grown on it. The area of land available to the households of the village ranges from two to five acres kanal. The women of the village also add to their family income by bringing firewood from the forests and then they make charcoal of it, latter it is sold in the market. Besides every household in the village is rearing the livestock and is mostly performed by the women and children.

The study is primarily an empirical one and it was conducted in one of the tribal villages of district Budgam. The criterion for selecting this particular village is to make a representative sort of analysis of the role of *Panchayat Raj Institutions* in child caring in the tribal villages. The village is also the area of intervention of a Kashmir based non governmental organization namely "Koshish". That is working there on child rights. Our interaction with the Koshish staff also motivated and encouraged us to study the role of panchayat raj institutions in child caring, in a tribal village. The present study has been carried out in line with the case study research strategy and the village has been taken as a case for it. While following the case study research design; the researchers have used interviews and non participant observation, as the research methods. In addition to this we used the base line data as collected by the Koshish from the field on various issues of the children. In non participant observation, researchers observed various

aspects related directly or indirectly with the research problem like school infrastructure of the two schools in the village, living conditions of the children, also their nature of working. Besides, the sarpanch, other panch members, the teachers, community members, children of the village were interviewed regarding various aspects of child caring and the role of panchayat institution in the village. Interviews mostly include informal interactions with the panchayat members, villagers, teachers, children etc. The main objective of this study is to highlight the various issues and problems as faced by the children of the village and to analyze the role of Gram Sabha (grass root functionary of Panchayat Raj Institution) in addressing these issues and problems related to children.

The environment in which the children of the village grow comprise the family of orientation for a child, neighborhood, school surroundings and whole village community. The caring environment of such agencies can lead to the safeguard of the rights of the children. While analyzing the environment of the village in which the children are brought up, mostly focusing the state sponsored agencies like schools and anganwadi centers. It was found that there are various child related issues and problems in the village. These issues and problems have many ill consequences on the proper physical, mental and social development of the children of the village. So before assessing the role of Panchayat in child caring and development, we will first discuss various problems and issues related to children in village. Then we will analyze the role of Panchayat (if any) in order to address these problems and issues.

Issues and Problems: Children below the age of 6 years are enrolled in two ICDS centers of the village. These centers are obliged to facilitate the proper physical, mental and social development of the children by availing various services like supplementary nutrition, immunization, pre – school education, recreational facilities, referral services and health check - ups. These centers are also concerned with the caring of pregnant and lactating mothers in order to facilitate the proper care and development of children from conception to delivery and post delivery period. While analyzing the role of these centers in the care and development of children, it is very poor and unsatisfactory.

The villagers knew these centers only as *Dal centers*, where few food items are distributed among the children. They did not even know about the other services as part of the ICDS scheme. The delivery of supplementary nutrition service too is not satisfactory. These centers face mostly the problems of absence of Anganwadi workers, monitoring supervisions of the concerned officials, shortage of infrastructural requirements, lack of coordination between the ICDS workers and the staff of health departments, lack of training to the ICDS workers and helpers, inadequacy in service delivering requirements etc. So the only hope and agency in the village meant for the children below the age of 6 years in terms of their proper care and development has failed in meeting in delivering its services. The poor functioning of these ICDS centers have direct impact on the development of the children in terms of their health and hygiene, malnourishment, growth. The families of the children are very poor and are not in a position to feed their children sufficiently. So the scheme of ICDS intended to help the children of poor is far away from its goals. The various issues and problems related to children in the village can be pointed as:

- (a) School drop outs: There is a provision of pre-school education in anganwadi centers in order to make the children prepared for the school going and to develop an interest among them towards the education. But there is the problem of student retention in the two schools of the village. Most of the child laborers in the village are school drop outs. If the anganwadi centers cannot be directly blamed for this, but indirectly they have failed to inculcate an interest among children in early childhood towards education.
- (b) Health and Hygiene of the children: The anganwadi workers are obliged to conduct regular meetings with the pregnant mothers, nursing mothers, lactating mothers and adolescent girls regarding various issues related to health and hygiene of themselves, their children and of overall community. The poor functioning of these centers directly affect the health and hygiene of the children. Most of the children in the village are malnourished, in a state of unhygiene conditions. The women of the village did not know about

the importance of gap of time period between the births of two children. We found during our study that there is very little age difference among the children in various families in the village. This illogical child bearing practice in village has direct impact on the health and growth of the mother and the children.

Children of the age group of 6 to 18 include the school going children. In all aspects the school and its surrounding acts as the centre for exercising, the rights of the children, to survival, protection, development and participation. This means that the focus is on learning which strengthens the capacities of children to act progressively on their own behalf through the acquisition of relevant knowledge, useful skills and appropriate attitudes; and which creates for children. It also helps them to create for themselves and others, places of safety, security and healthy interaction. (Bernard, 1999) But the situation in the village is different regarding this aspect. In spite of having Govt. Middle and a Primary school in the village, the rate of dropouts and never admitted children is much high. Various reasons there for this situation including poverty, lack of proper school infrastructure, monitoring and supervision, parental ignorance towards the education etc. The total number of children in the village in age group of 6 to 18 years is 382. In the village, the total number of child labourers is 66. This counts 17.77% of the children involved in the laboring. Among these, 47 are below the age of 14 years. Among these 66 child labourers, 38 are male and 28 are female.

If educational system and community fails to admit the children in the schools and then maintaining their retention in the schools will result in the production of child labourers. Situation in the village is like this. Regarding child labour, there are both never admitted children and also drop outs. There are 34 children, who have been never admitted in the school, including 10 male the remaining 24 female. While, 30 children are drop outs, 29 are male and 1 female Two children are both studying and working and both are male. While analyzing these figures, it indicates that 'girl children' in the village are being neglected in the education process. The problem of retention in the schools is a major concern to be addressed as rate of drop outs is high.

Proper care and development of a child involve various processes. The role of family comes first and followed by the education system, and thus school plays an important role in proper up-bringing and development of the children. The rights of school going children are more secure than the children outside the school. School environment provides a child number of opportunities to grow and develop properly. Children outside the school mostly fell into the traps of exploitation at the hands of various people. Children not engaged in of education cannot remain idle for a long time; they have to be engaged in certain type of activities. In village, the children outside the school are working as child labourers. This children their basic right to education and this in turn affects their right to participation, right to protection, right to development. In village both the schools are government based and have a great role in providing proper care and development of the children. But these schools are facing various problems that are indirectly the hindrances in the care and development of the children of the village. So the schools in the village have failed to create a child centric school environment and have added to the problem of child laboring.

The location of a school in a community is important in catering the students from the locality. School at a large distance can be a hindrance in attending the school especially children of primary classes and also of areas, which are located near the forests. In out study are, both the schools are situated at the opposite fringes of the village at its boundaries, outside from the village community. The village is situated in hilly location and very close to the forests. The households in the village are scattered in a wide range of area and village is also lacking the road facility. The households are connected to each other through muddy footpaths and the same paths go to the schools. Due to lack of roads students suffer a lot in attending the school especially in rainy seasons. Students had to travel large distances to attend the school. Besides, there is always a fear of wild animals in the village. The Govt. Middle School is having its own building and is inadequate in terms of the students enrolled there. All the classes' up to primary are being combined in a single room, because of lack of class rooms. The existing

structure also needs repairing. The primary school primary school in Ringzabal is located in a rented building.

Infrastructure: This is the major factor, which contributes to the poor education in the schools of the State. No one can deny the importance of proper infrastructure in imparting the quality education and attracting children education. Proper infrastructure in terms of buildings, furniture, study material, sports material, play ground, library etc can lead to better functioning of the schools and in turn towards better results. While analyzing the availability of infrastructure in the schools of the village, it was found that these schools are characterized by inadequate infrastructure in terms of spacing, education material, sports material, play ground. The teachers taught different classes in a single room in a combined way, which affects the overall teaching and learning process.

One of the severe problems in these schools is the lack of toilet facility. The Govt. Middle School is having two constructed latrines, but from last two years were closed, due to lacking of water. This is concern for both teachers and students especially for the female teachers and girls. Both the schools are having traditional type of latrines far away from the schools, lacking the provisions of privacy and water facility.

Water availaility in these schools is from the same, source from where the whole community is using and had to carry water from large distances.

Besides these, none of the schools have facilities of electricity, library, computers, audio-visual education, teaching material, heating and cooling instruments. To conclude, the infrastructure present in these schools is quite insufficient.

Student and Teacher Ratio: The inadequate number of teachers as compared to the number of classes held in the schools is another major concern. Although the student teacher ratio is less, the ratio of classes to the teacher is more. It increases the work load on theachers. This inadequacy affects the teaching learning processes adversely.

Both the schools are having very small piece of land without covered boundaries, which the students use as the playground. It indicates the condition of the sports in the schools. Sports material in these schools, also is quite insufficient. Due to this, participation of students in games is very less and just few students from the Middle School had played at Zonal level. The lack of sports facilities is a big question in terms of the student participation, their capacity building, decision making and in overall for their development.

Jute matting is the common material used as furniture for students. This type of furniture to the climatic conditions of Kashmir Valley, is quite inappropriate. As number of months in Kashmir are of severe cold and is quite challenging for the students to bear the cold. And none of these schools are having the facility of electricity, so no provisions of heating and cooling facilities.

Mid Day Meal is being given in both the schools. MDM on one side is a tool for motivating both the children and their parents towards education and on the other side it adds to the nutritional value of the children. In fact it is a welcome step in the direction of proper development of the children and in attracting the children from poor families towards education. But the scheme of MDM has increased the work load on the teachers, as the teachers themselves had to monitor overall process of MDM including the record keeping, bringing food material etc. The food stock provided to the schools is not on annual basis, but the responsible teachers have to bring it by themselves on monthly basis. In addition to this, the children in the school have complaints about the quality of food prepared in the school under MDM scheme.

Migration of Community is another problem of schools in the village Ringzabal. These schools are having the issue of migration of the students. The students' migrate with their families from ending week of the May for period of 3- 4 months. Due to this the roll of students gets halved. Which affects the overall education system in the schools including the set pattern of syllabus, curriculum, etc. While migrating to the places, which are in local language called *Babeki* there they are being taught by the Mobile teachers. While analyzing the situation of

education in their migrated places, is also a matter of concern. As the Mobile teachers very often go these places and there is no provision of monitoring within these migrated places from the Department of Education.

The medium of instruction can have an impact on learning and academic achievement in general. Researches suggest that benefits can be gained by beginning primary education in the student's mother tongue. In Middle School of Ringzabal, most of the teachers are Kashmiri, unable to teach the students in Gojri language. While in Primary School, one teacher is from the community and knowing their mother tongue and others know among Kashmiri.

It is clear from the above discussion that there are various issues related to the children in the village. All these above mentioned issues and problems directly affect the proper care and development of the children. The village is among the remotest villages of the district and socially and economically, very poor and backward. The villagers are less concerned about the education of their children, less sensitized about various government schemes for the welfare of the people especially of their women and children.

The importance of democratic institutions in such type of villages is much high and needed. There should be public representatives of the village who look after and demand the needs and rights on behalf of these villagers from the concerned authorities. The elected members of the village Gram Sabha with a limited powers and budget have acted as a catalyst for the welfare and development in the village. In subsequent section we will discuss the role of Gram Sabha in addressing the issues and problems of the children.

PRI in village Ringzabal: After a very long gap, panchayat elections were held in state of Jammu and Kashmir because of prevailing armed conflict in the state from 1989. Among the three tier system of panchayat raj, only the elections of first tier (Gram Sabha) were held in the state. In spite of passing almost three years from the panchayat elections, nothing has been done for holding the elections for other two tiers. Such a negligent attitude of state government has

its ramifications on the functioning of the PRI's in the state. So in this study, when we talk about PRI and its role, we meant only the Gram Sabha. As in rest of the state, village under study also participated in election process of panchayat and people of the village participated passionately in the election process to elect their members of their panchayat halqa Ringzabal. The panchayat halqa of village is based on a surpanch, 10 panches including three women panches. The constituted panchayat halqa in the village started to work in the village after a period of few months as in rest of the state. In spite of various limitations, loopholes, and challenges the panchayat halqa had continuously worked for the welfare of the people of village. Some of the important works performed by the panchayat halqa of Ringzabal, which have significance in terms of child caring and welfare, are as follows:

Expansion of school building of Government Middle school. The panchayat halqa has started the construction of school building in the village. This can to some extent solve the problem of spacing in the government middle school. Supervision to check the working of school, functioning of MDM in both schools of the village. The panchayat members started to supervise the working and functioning of the schools and became aware about the various infrastructure needs in these schools. These visits of the panchayat members to schools have improved the attendance of teachers, quality of MDM etc. The panchayat halqa have constructed the number of protection bunds in the village. The schools in the village are located on the sloppy lands and children were facing the protection issue due to this. So the panchayat halqa had constructed protection bunds around these schools.

Constructed cemented paths in the village connected with the school. The households in the village were connected with each other and with the schools through muddy paths and in rainy season it was difficult for the children to go to the schools. These paths too were not safe for the children as by walking on them raised a lot of dust that causes various skin and health problems to the children. Now the panchayat halqa had constructed number of cemented paths in the village. These paths had not only helped the villagers in general but children in particular.

Acted as pressure group for accelerating the works on the pending projects of PMGSY and NHPC to complete the works of providing road connectivity and facility of electricity to the village. Very soon the village Ringzabal will get connected with outside district by the facility of road. This road connectivity will have positive impact on the overall development of the village. The pregnant mothers can avail better health facilities from the health institutions in the other areas of the district. The children of the village can go to outside village for the higher education.

Organization of Gram Sabha meetings:

Meetings with the child rights organization Koshish on various issues of children of the village like importance of the education, birth registration, immunization, JSSK, ICDS etc.

Protection of village from the threat of wild animals by erecting walls from forest side of the village. Supervision to check the attendance of anganwadi workers, quality of nutrition prepared in ICDS centre. All them have benefited through interventions of the halqa.

Concluding Remarks

We can say that inspite of these works as performed by panchayat halqa, there is long distance ahead of panchayat for creating child centered environment in the village. There is large gap between the ideal child centered environment and the existing one. One of the most important duties regarding the welfare of the children in the village is to eradicate the problem of child laboring. For this panchayat members have to strive for assuring proper school infrastructure, creating child centered environment in the schools. The ICDS centers, schools in the village are directly associated with the child caring and development. The proper functioning of these institutions can facilitate the process of child care and their development properly. Their proper functioning can be possible only when they will be provided all the infrastructural and superstructure requirements. It is the duty of the Gram Sabha to demand these requirements for the children of the village. These institutions in the village are rarely supervised by the concerned officials because of its remoteness. Panchayat members have to make the concerned officials pressurize to supervise these institutions regularly and they should also supervise these institutions themselves.

The panchayat halqa has to mobilize the concerned departments regarding the infrastructural development of the village. They have to assure an integrative approach among the various departments of the state government in facilitating the child centered school environment in the village. There is need to meet the recreational needs of the children, for that the panchayat halqa had to construct playgrounds in the village; the schools have to be provided with adequate sports material. The issues associated with the children in the village like child laboring, discriminating attitude of community towards girl child, inadequate school infrastructure, need to be prioritized in planning and implementation in the panchayat plans. The panchayat had to strive for assuring all the needs necessary for the safeguard of the rights of the children. There is need to bring the attitudinal changes in the community towards the proper care and development of the children. The state government has to empower the panchayat raj institutions completely and must hold the elections of other two tiers of the panchayat raj in order to make the PRI politically strong and help them to function properly.

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Reservation and Women Empowerment : Provisions of 73rd Amendment

Isha and Navajoyth

Empowerment is an issue for those who face discrimination and deprived of from their rights. In our country women form almost half the population. During the colonial rule women were totally absent from the political scene. This was made possible through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, which had the landmark provision of reserving one-third of the total number of seats in the local bodies for women. It provided an opportunity for women to actively participate in the decision-making processes of their locality and also become spokespersons of the local community (Subramanyam: 2007). Thus, the central theme of this chapter focuses on how the initiative of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act is helping women by providing reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) which empowers them politically.

The chapter is divided into four sections. Section I provide the meaning of empowerment and also discuss the importance of social, economic and political empowerment with special reference to women. Section II prescribes the historical background and provisions

of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. Section III entirely deals with the women reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions in India and also discusses the various positive and negative effects on the status of women through this political reservation. It emphasizes on how the status of women are changed after getting reservation in the post 73rd Amendment era. Section IV is completely devoted to the major issues and challenges faced by women and suggestions to deal with this scenario.

1. Meaning of Empowerment

Empowerment is defined as “giving power to” “creating power within” and “enabling”. It is a multi-dimensional process, which enables individuals and groups to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. It means the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Keller and Mbewe (1991) described women empowerment as “a process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make choices and to control resource which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination” (Subramanyam: 2007). In other words, it creates an atmosphere which enables people to fully utilise their creative potential in pursuance of a quality of life. It also deepens the democratic process.

Women empowerment has become a concern in order to protect the interest of women. Women have always been treated as subordinate to men in every aspect of life. Infact, she had no independent identity of her own. Her identity was always attached to that of her father, husband or son. They were always considered as socially weak, economically dependent and politically powerless and under total domination of the male members of the family. However, the development and empowerment of women are essential in modern times. The degree of women empowerment is largely dependent on social, economic, political and institutional factors. World history depicts that women are not given equal treatment and face all sorts of discriminations. Social-economic, religious and cultural restrictions deject their development. Once their political status is improved, it makes them economically empowered and their social status is also improved.

In the words of Amratya Sen “nothing arguably is as important today in the political economy of development as an adequate recognition of political, economic and social participation of women” (Kaur Ravinder & Reddy. Ramachandra. G: 2007).

Women empowerment has, thus, become a global issue which is being dealt through various human development programmes. Social and economic development of women can be achieved by creating awareness and conscientisation, capacity building through skill development and also through economic activities being undertaken for their economic empowerment. Along with social-economic empowerment, political empowerment is also necessary. The role of rural women was negligible in the political field. Politically empowering women not only gives them equal participation in the decision making process but also provides them due recognition on par with men to participate in the development process of society through political institutions. It includes right to vote, contest, campaign, party membership and representation in political offices at all levels resulting to political empowerment of women.

The main instrument of political empowerment which guarantees representation of women is reservation. It enables women to gain productive power, power to change the rules of the game and also to negotiate the gender relations. Infact, the passing of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments can be considered as the greatest event in the history of India for women’s empowerment as one-third of the seats are reserved for women in local bodies. In India, women’s involvement in political sphere started in late 18th and early 19th centuries. They fearlessly supported great leader Mahatma Gandhi in freedom movement of our country. But the participation of women was actually accepted in India in 20th century.

Gandhi believed that woman play significant role in politics. In his writing in Harijan, 1964 he call attention to *“enroll women’ as voters, impart or have imparted to them practical education, teach them to think independently, release them from the chains of caste that bind them so as to bring about a change in them which will compel men to realize women’s strength and capacity for sacrifice and give her places of honour. If they will do this, they will purify the present unclean atmosphere.”*

2. Provisions of 73rd Amendment

The promulgation of 73rd Amendment placed a new trend in the process of decentralizing governance at local level by providing constitutional status to panchayati raj institutions. This Act gives an opportunity to empower and revitalize the rural local bodies through reservation of seats for women resulted in empowerment of women at grass root level.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment was introduced in parliament in September 1991 by the government of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao of the congress party in the form of a bill for rural local bodies (also known as Panchayats). The bill was referred to a Joint Select Committee of Parliament and was passed in December 1992. The 73rd Amendment Act came into effect on April 24, 1993. This Act was added in part IX to the constitution and entitled as “Panchayati Raj Act”. It consists of article 243, 243A to 243-O. The Act also added to the Eleventh Schedule containing 29 functional items of the Panchayats. The major provisions of the 73rd Amendment Act are as follows:

The key mandatory provisions are:

- I. Constitution of rural local bodies (panchayats) at the village, intermediate and district levels and providing mandatory powers, authority and responsibilities of panchayats.
- II. Direct elections to all seats in the panchayats at all levels.
- III. Compulsory elections to panchayats every five years with the elections being held before the end of the term of the incumbent panchayat in the event that a panchayat is dissolved prematurely, elections must be held within six months, with the newly elected members serving out the remainder of the five year term.
- IV. Mandatory reservation of one-third of all seats in all panchayats at all levels for women and also reserved seats for the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes.
- V. In addition, the act mandates the constitution of two state-level commissions: an independent election commission to supervise and manage elections to local bodies, much as the

Election Commission of India manages state assembly and parliamentary elections and a state finance commission, established every five years, to review the financial position of rural local bodies and recommend the principles that should govern the allocation of funds and taxation authority to local bodies.

3. Women Reservation in PRIs in India

Panchayati Raj in India conceived as the most viable and proper mechanism of realizing goals of democracy and decentralization. PRIs are the vehicles of political empowerment of people at the grass root level because the participation of the rural people from all sections in local governance was institutionalized through this system. Maxine Molyneux (1994) observed, "Politics, more than any other realm, has remained monopoly of men because its condensation of power and authority mainly lies in the hand of this gender." This statement clearly stressed upon the participation of a minuscule percentage of women in political level in every country of the world and more particularly in India.

In spite of holding higher positions at international, national and state level, women's participation at the grass root level was very less or dismissal. The participation of women especially in politics and decision making bodies was not in proportion to their ratio in population. Family responsibility, women's pre-occupation in the struggle to survive and the prevalence of violence and the role of money power in elections and women's lack of control or access over monetary resources are considered to be the main obstacles resulting in low political participation for women. Extreme low participation and representation of women in rural local bodies and political empowerment consistently demands for reservation in PRIs which will give them path to participate in decision making process. This backdrop resulted into the enactment of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 which emphasizes on the participation and reservation of at least one third (33 per cent) of the total seats to women including SC and STs in each tier *viz.* district, intermediate and village levels. This uniform pattern of reservation provide an

opportunity to the rural women to work as elected representatives and also learn how to work in public life, how to solve problems and face difficult circumstances. Political empowerment of women through reservations in local bodies has not only broadly mobilized women but also helped them for shaping their destiny.

Balwant Rai Mehta Committee in 1957 highlighting the need to support rural women in developmental process and also making them part of it. This need was further urged by the Ashok Mehta Committee in 1977. It emphasized on the need of recognizing and strengthening women's positive and active role in the decision making process. This Committee also emphasized on the role of Mahila Mandal as key element for development (Kothari Pant Shubhra, 2010). The consistent demand for women's representation in political institutions was also strengthened through the report published by Committee on Status of Women in India (CSWI) in 1976 which recommended that female representation at the grass roots level need to be increased through policy of reservation of seats for women.

In October 1988, National Proposal Plan for Women (NPPW) suggested 30 percent quota for women holding seats in Panchayat, Zila Parishad, and local municipal bodies. It also recommended for ensuring higher representations of dalits, tribal women and women of weaker sections (Lal Mohan Morley G: 1994). In 1989, under the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, a proposal for amendment was commenced for reorganization of panchayats and along with providing quota to women for representation in local bodies. This proposal was accepted and passed in 1992. As a result, the constitution of India enacted two major Legislation 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts in 1992 with the provision of providing one-third reservation to women in local bodies at all the three tiers and urban areas. Articles 243 D and 243 T were added to the Constitution to provide that not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by the direct election in the local bodies (Panchayats and Municipalities) would be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in the local bodies. (Ram Sunder : 2009)

Positive Impact of Reservation

PRI's provided a common forum for social, economic, political and legal advancement of rural women. Women are now more than nominal in the political bodies and indeed present in the formal institutions of power. Many studies highlighted that illiterate elected women representative were unable to perform their duties well as they lacked knowledge about functioning of panchayati raj. In the present scenario, the outlook is totally changed and women have realized that they have an advantage. Where as it is also evident that women elected representatives whether literate or illiterate are independently taking all the decisions and working efficiently in development of their villages along with community. As stated by Bharti Dogra (2013), a dalit woman was elected as sarpanch in Ajmer District of Rajasthan. She independently worked hard for the development of the village. She faced lots of problems and disagreement by the opposition members. She worked with honesty and marked to be better women leader at grass root level and trying to change the face of Indian village.

The Government of India further took initiative by amending the article 243D of the constitution by introducing new bill in Lok Sabha in 2009. This new amendment raised the reservation from 33 percent to 50 percent i.e., one third to one half of total seats in panchayats. This provision will also extended to the positions of office of the Chairperson. Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Kerala are those states which are providing 50 percent reservation to women in Panchayati Raj elections by amending their State Panchayati Raj Acts (Rai Majoj: 2013).

Therefore, the status of women in India has been undergoing a sea-change under the post 73rd amendment era more precisely through the reservation system which resulted into the various positive changes in the status of women. There is considerable increase in the number of participation among the women in Panchayati Raj Institutions as shown in table 1.

Table 5.1 Women Representatives (including SC/STs) in PRIs (%)

States	Women Representatives (as on 01.03.2013)
Andhra Pradesh	33.5
Arunachal Pradesh	41.6
Assam	36.9
Bihar	50.0
Chhattisgarh	54.5
Goa	32.3
Gujarat	33.0
Haryana	36.5
Himachal Pradesh	50.1
Jammu & Kashmir	NA
Jharkhand	58.6
Karnataka	43.6
Kerala	51.9
Madhya Pradesh	50.5
Maharashtra	49.9
Manipur	48.5
Odisha	50.0
Punjab	34.9
Rajasthan	50.0
Sikkim	50.0
Tamil Nadu	35.0
Tripura	36.0
Uttar Pradesh	40.0
Uttarakhand	56.1
West Bengal	38.4
All-India	46.7

Source: Panchyati-Raj Institution, Ministry of Rural Development

Table 1 depicts the percentage of women elected representatives state wise. The States which have more number of Elected Women Representatives in panchayats are Arunachal Pradesh (41.6%), Bihar (50%), Chhattisgarh (54.5%), Himachal Pradesh (50.1%), Jharkhand (58.6%), Odisha (50%), Rajasthan (50%), Sikkim (50%) Kerala (51.9)

and Uttarakhand (56.1%). As compared to these states the representation of women in other States is low.

Along with providing reservation to women in Panchayati Raj Institutions, Ministry of Panchayati Raj have made special schemes for providing training to elected representatives both men and women. This training is to be provided by the States Institute of Rural Development to equip them to effectively play their role. The main aim of providing training to elected representatives is to eliminate gender inequality and making them capable to take their own decisions. NGOs working in these areas are creating awareness among the women about their rights, decision making process and in relation to other development work in village and for the upliftment of other women. However, providing reservation for women in political institutions is an epoch-making step which increases political participation and women's empowerment. Women are now acceptable as leaders at local level, the mindset of people are changing with the course of time. The increased participation of women elected representatives has led to inclusive growth and development. Various studies reveal the success stories of elected women representatives that they involved equally with men in decision making process in political field.

4. Issues and Challenges

There is no denying fact that 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act provided an opportunity to rural women to work as elected representatives and also encouraged a new class of leadership for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions. Reservation is proved to be advantageous in increasing participation of women in local governance, but merely being member does not ensure success. It provides right to women to represent themselves in political process in Panchayati Raj, but in real sense women are often barred from playing rightful and active role. The conservative attitude in rural areas, lack of education, patriarchal values, religion and family responsibilities and economic absence are still prevailing and making women handicap and restricts them to effectively participate in political processes (Ram Sunder: 2009).

The empirical studies associated with women participation in Panchayati Raj, reveals that despite of getting reservation and being

elected as a member of rural local bodies, women are facing lots of constraints in exercising their power and participation in decision making process independently. Illiteracy, lack of knowledge of their duties, absence of awareness about procedures and information related to Panchayati Raj Acts, behavior of bureaucrats, social and institutional constraints restricts them to exercise their leadership and unable to perform their duties well. Subramanyam, (2007), cited a study conducted in the state of Karnataka, that many women elected to panchayats are surrogates for their husband or father who could not contest because of reservation. Women mere act as dummy or kind of puppets in their hands. All the decisions were taken either by their husband or other male family members. Elected women supports and serve them with their vested interest (Subramanyam, 2007). This portrays that, not only they were deprived of taking independent decision but their views and voices in relation to concerned issue was criticized and faced disagreement from the other male members of rural local bodies during the meetings. Usually, women do not attend the meetings of panchayats and their husband acted as proxies there. This shows that reservation provided to women has not succeeded in providing political empowerment and also restricted them to perform their role effectively.

There are innumerable problems and limitations like lack of information, awareness and knowledge, insufficient role clarity and inadequate sense of responsibility, leadership and related skills, lack of safe and supportive environment and negative attitude of folk which are still prominent and hindering women empowerment. These are listed below:

- (i) The first and foremost drawback of empowerment of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions is the electoral process which does not reach to the common rural poor women. Women from elite class and political background capture the seats through power of elitism among rural women.
- (ii) The problem of illiteracy, lack of political knowledge about the functioning of panchayat raj, 'democratic decentralization' are the major obstacles which affects the smooth and proper functioning of rural political system. They did not take part in

deliberations or contribute to major decisions. Women representatives are mere a body without soul in the political institutions and the decisions are taken by the husbands or dominant male members.

- (iii) Gender disparity is another issue affecting the empowerment. Elected Women Representative find hard to express their views as male member of panchayat favours for male headed panchayats. They also face disagreement and non cooperation from other party members. As they mainly look for their self motive and personal interest, which again create gender disparity.
- (iv) The common belief in rural areas, i.e., politics is a dirty game also acts as a constraint on the women empowerment because women are told not to get involved in it.
- (v) Social constraints also restrict women to perform the political work properly. It is very difficult for women in a rural society to manage time for political work as they perform full time jobs of running a home. Therefore, the work inside the villages are undertaken by women themselves but the work dealing outside the villages are performed by their husbands and other male members. Their husbands act as proxies in attending panchayat meetings and dealing with other works.
- (vi) The voices raised or suggestions given on any issue related to development by women elected representatives are given due recognitions by other male panchayat members. Male members and members of other parties often criticize their views. She may try hard to work with other male colleagues. Until and unless the mind set of males are not changed, women will find it difficult to effectively participate in politics.
- (vii) The rotation system of reservation also works against women's interests. In election one third of the total number of constituencies are reserved for women. But these constituencies will be treated as open or unreserved in the next election.
- (viii) Last but not the least, in rural India politics has become increasingly prone to violence. Faction fighting and tense situation created by

political parties during election period creates an insecure environment which put the governmental initiative of empowering rural women in panchayati raj bodies in jeopardy.

Suggestions

The effectiveness or ineffectiveness of women leadership is not the result of any one factor but a combination of factors. These can be socio-economic conditions, culture, gender and caste, etc. To cope up with these challenges various suggestive measures have been provided.

- 1) **Political education-** To empower women politically at the grass root level, political education is seen as a must. In the process of educating women politically, there should be participatory training, awareness programmes related to panchayats, group discussions and distribution of simplified information among the peer group. This will certainly helps in bringing the rural women into the mainstream of politics.
- 2) **Self-reliance-** In order to support and accelerate the process of women's empowerment the additional strategies should be employed as women's empowerment will not be secured by the quota alone. For example, access to micro credit organizations which give them control over their income, autonomy and self-confidence. It further promotes the self-reliance of women (economically as well as socially), build women's capacities, and remove structural obstacles.
- 3) **Awareness-** Elected Women Representatives must be aware about their roles, responsibilities, functions and authority or more precisely about their rights only then they can perform their role effectively and efficiently.
- 4) **Capacity Building-** Imparting training on self development, management, leadership etc. are the main factors for achieving capacity building on the part of women. This in turn resulted into the empowerment of women in the political institutions.
- 5) **Self-help groups-** In order to empower women, self-help groups should be created at village level. With the help of these

groups women can independently establish financial institutions that manage profit-making programs.

- 6) **Workshops-** Weekly workshops on skills training should be organized at the grass root level which empowers women by creating their own income generating activities.

Concluding Remarks

Since independence special programmes has been made to improve the status and role of women in social, economic, political and cultural or religious aspect. The provision of reservation provided to women in PRIs through 73rd Amendment has enlarged women leadership and also resulted in considerable improvement in the status of women. Women are now fighting for their rights and equality and also taking decisions in the political process independently. They fearlessly and strongly coming forward and not allowing their social cultural restrains to deter them from discharging their representation. Increased women political status demanded more equal representation and it has been further increased from 33 percent to 50 percent in PRI's in India. Increasing participation of women at grass root level clearly shows that women are empowering and there is a pressure to increase the reservation of seats in state legislative assemblies and the punishment. The goal of political empowerment cannot met alone with the quota system. In order to promote or empower the women representatives, political education, training and awareness programs should be provided. A combination of constitutional provisions, government policies, social action and self awareness for the rural women, will definitely bring women in rural areas into the mainstream of politics, power sharing and decision making process.

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Introducing the Politics of Presence: Reservations for Women in the Panchayats”

Nupur Tiwari

Due to 73rd Amendment over a million women have come out of their homes for the first time to hold public office and to participate in public activities and this has been the most effective formal step towards political empowerment of women. By contesting and getting elected to Panchayati Raj Institutions, women have shattered the allegory of their own submissiveness - that women are not willing to enter politics. For women, successful grassroots experience has meant a chance to form eloquent voice, to be heard and to make a difference in their communities. It is a known fact that 40% of the elected women represented the marginalized sections and about 70% women representatives were illiterate and most of them had no previous political experience¹. Therefore, it was but natural that there was a widespread apprehension that women will be manipulated by men. However, in spite of several instances of such manipulation and capitulation by women, the presence of such a large number of women in Panchayats has indeed had a deep impact on gender equity.

Elected Women in Village Panchayats

The Constitution prescribes only a minimum level of reservation of one third for women in Panchayats but the States have the leeway to mandate more than that level. Bihar took the bold step of reserving 50% of the Panchayat seats for women. Currently, elected women representatives are in place in 54 percent of seats in Bihar's panchayats. Bihar's example was followed by Sikkim, which increased their reservations for women to 40% and held their elections under the new arrangement in January 2008. Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan etc.

The Constitution (73rd and 74th Amendment) Act, 1992 sets out in detail in Article 243D, the manner in which reservations are to be provided to women and persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The gist of these clauses is as follows:

- (a) There are three kinds of reservations provided for in the Constitution as follows:

Table 6.1 - Type of Reservation

Kind of reservation	Roles of State and Centre	Clause
To seats to be filled by direct election in each Panchayat for women, SCs and STs,	Mandatorily prescribed by the Constitution itself, upto a minimum of 33 percent for women and in proportion to the population of SCs and STs, in each Panchayat	Article 243D(1), (2) and (3)
To posts of chairpersons in each Panchayat,	Mandatory according to the Constitution, but the detailed modalities of which are to be determined through state legislation.	Article 243D(4)
For backward classes of citizens	At the discretion of the State	Article 243D(6)

- (b) Reservations to elected seats are mandated directly by the Constitution, in accordance with the following pattern:
- (i) One-third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat are to be reserved for women. This is inclusive of the reservation provided for women belonging to the SCs and STs (See iii below). [See Article 243D(3)]
 - (ii) For persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, reservations in each Panchayat are to be provided, based on the proportion of the population of SCs and STs respectively in each Panchayat concerned. [See Article 243D(1)]
 - (iii) Within the reservation provided for persons belonging to the SCs and STs as detailed at (ii) above, not less than one-third of the total number of seats that are reserved for the respective categories in each Panchayat concerned are to be reserved for women belonging to the SCs and STs, [See Article 243D(2)]
- (c) These seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies within a Panchayat (Article 243D (1) & 243D (3)).
- (d) The provisions for reservations to the offices of Chairpersons are nearly identical to the above provisions regarding reservations to elected seats. The additional features of reservations to the offices of Chairpersons are as follows:
- (i) While providing for reservations up to a minimum level of one third in respect of women and in proportion to the population in each Panchayat for SCs and STs, the manner in which this is done is left to the legislature of a State to provide by law. [See Article 243D (4)].
 - (ii) Unlike in the case of rotation of reservations to elected seats, which is discretionary, the rotation of reservations to offices of Chairpersons of different Panchayats is mandatory. [See the second proviso to Article 243D (4)].

Table: 6.2 Overall Representation of SCs/STs and Women in PRI's

	No. of Panchyats	No. of ERs	SCs	STs	women
Zila Parishads	542	15,613	17.5 %	11.0 %	37.2 %
Intermediate Panchayats	6,094	156,794	21.0 %	7.3 %	37.1 %
Village Panchayats	232,855	2,645,883	18.4 %	11.5%	36.9 %
Total ERs (%)	-	-	18.5 %	11.3 %	36.9 %
Total ERs (N) 1,039,058	239,491	2,818,290	521,522	317,479	

Source: MoPR, 2006

The Survey Report:

A recent survey², commissioned by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and executed by the Nielsen Company – ORG Marg under the guidance of an academic advisory committee, provides many new insights into Social and Political empowerment of women in the new Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). This is the largest-ever survey on any aspect of Panchayat functioning, covering Gram Panchayats in 23 states, with a total sample size of over 20,000, including Elected Women Representatives (EWRs), Elected Male Representatives (EMRs), ex-EWRs, official functionaries and members of the community. Nearly three-fourths of the EWRs in the sample belonged to the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and OBC categories, and were evenly divided above and below the poverty line.

Reservation has played a significant role as four-fifths of all the representatives got elected from reserved seats. The role of reservation was also evident from the fact that it emerged as an important motivator (43%) for contesting the first election as much as its withdrawal was an important reason for not contesting the election among former women representatives (39%).

The majority of the elected representatives had contested only one election (87%) and hence the proportion of first timers in politics was also high (86%). Around 14 percent were re-elected more than once at

the gram Panchayat level. Further analysis showed that the majority of ex-women representatives could not get re-elected because the seat from where they were elected was de-reserved in the next round.

While no gender discrimination in the Panchayat is reported by 60% of elected women representatives, acceptability in Panchayat meetings and enabling them to raise issues freely was mentioned by 94%. A supportive professional environment evidently motivates elected women representatives to perform better, as 60-64 % reported an increase in their interaction with line departments and parallel bodies.

Even the participation of common women citizens in various activities such as attending Gram Sabha meeting, etc. has reportedly increased (68-78%). However, issues related to the planning for rural development works and identification of BPL families were discussed mainly by the Male Pradhans and Ward Members.

While 21% claimed to be self-motivated, about 22% said that their spouse had inspired them, which was higher in the case of women representatives (30%). Interestingly, members of community groups (such as Mahila Mandals, Self Help Groups, Youth Clubs, Cooperatives, etc.) seems to have played an important role, as 22 % of elected representatives reported how they were motivated to take the plunge in electoral politics.

However, 8% of the elected representatives-mainly from West Bengal, Sikkim, Tripura and Kerala-also disclosed the role of political parties in motivating them. Husbands (30%) and other family members (12%) were reported as playing an important role in motivating women representatives to contest elections the first time.

The economic status of more than half (54%) of the elected representatives was above the poverty line (APL) as per the village list reported by the respondents. There were a higher proportion of APL individuals in the case of Pradhans (72%), as compared to ward members (50%). Almost two-fifths (38%) of all EWRs were reportedly, below the poverty line , the majority of this category being ward members (41%) rather than Pradhans (24%). This indicates, overall, that the Pradhans are better off than other Panchayat members. However, not much difference was observed between the economic

status of male and female elected representatives.

One-third of elected representatives report interactions with the police, local bureaucracy and officials in the line departments to discuss scheme and participation in elections campaigns. Taking proactive initiatives in signing petitions, participating in protests, alerting media or notifying police/court about local problems was mentioned by 24-35 percent of elected representatives.

That reservation has been critical to the representation of disadvantaged groups is confirmed by the fact that 88 per cent of them were elected on reserved seats. Approximately 85.8 per cent of all representatives surveyed were first-timers in the Panchayats, while 14.3 per cent had been elected for a second or third term. While 15 per cent of women pradhans had been re-elected twice or more, 37 per cent of the male pradhans had been similarly re-elected. Of the ex-EWRs interviewed, 11 per cent said they had contested but lost the election, while 39 per cent indicated that they did not contest a re-election because the seat had been de-reserved

Now majority of women representatives are no more proxy of their male relative patrons. 58 percent of women representatives are now taking their own decisions to contest elections. This is a big achievement. 15 percent of women Pradhans are able to win elections second time. Women belonging to younger age groups of 21-35 years have shown better performance compared to the women belonging to the age group of 35 years and above. Women members of active committees at village level were found to be more successful at Panchayat level. Again quoting the Report, dalits were also benefited by the whole process. Reservation has inspired and prompted them to contest elections

Karnataka, for instance, provided, for 25 percent reservations in their two tier Panchayati Raj system in 1987. This was replaced by the constitutionally mandated one third reservations in 1993. Along with the head start the State had in 1987, several NGOs took the lead to undertake special capacity building programmes for women elected representatives. Issues such as proxy participation and gender friendly budgets were discussed in small networks of women representatives. These small networks began to grow and share their experiences

amongst each other. Today, the results of this subterranean movement are that 41210 seats of the 96090 seats in all levels of Panchayats put together are occupied by women, in spite of only 33 percent of the seats being reserved for them. What more remarkable than the fact that 42.89 percent of the seats are occupied by women, in the category wise break up. Of the 17859 SC elected representatives, 8222 are women; which is 46.04 percent. Of the 10311 STs elected to the Panchayats, 6672 are women; 64.71 percent.

From Representation to Participation

There is, however, big difference between representation and participation. It is easier to legislate representation, but it is rather a complex and difficult task to create conditions for participation. The proper representation does not automatically lead to proper participation. It is important that they are in a position to influence decision making and prepare and implement the schemes for economic development and social justice.

Results from a nation wide survey of women's participation in Panchayats suggest that a majority of the EWRs report an enhancement in their personal effectiveness and image after being elected. They also report a reduction in household responsibilities. There are many instances of EWR of the Panchayat taking a keen interest and playing a significant role in the workings of grassroots politics. It has often been observed that women prioritize those developmental needs that seem to be more pressing from their perspective. EWRs have initiated work on plans of bringing in piped water in the village and also to build schools as against infrastructural development favoured by men. There are number of success stories where EWRs of the Panchayats have taken the lead in making efforts for smokeless stoves, crèches, community halls, and have taken the initiative in family and matrimonial matters, counseling abusive and/or alcoholic husbands. Women are also seen to be more involved in monitoring the presence of teachers and medical staff in the school or health centre, and inspecting nutrition centres under the Integrated Child Development Scheme. Sometimes, women-headed Panchayats have even experienced a dramatic increase in their revenues, sponsoring the auction of village ponds, community forests and village markets for the larger welfare of the community.

Based on a six country study, the author Harry Blair (2000) argued that there is a significant potential for promoting local governments but there are some limitation in two areas that is participation and accountability. He pointed out that although India has conducted election periodically since Panchyati Raj has been introduced but intimidation and vote buying happen more in India than in other countries under study. In the case of accountability, there are scopes with serious constrains. Finally author suggested that there is “considerable scope for enhancing both participation and accountability at the local level. On the participation side, local government can bring new elements, particularly women and minorities into local politics in meaningful ways..”

Another study on the women participation in politics in local self government and corruption by Vijayalakshmi (2008) reveals that although nearly 40 per cent of the elected positions in the institutions of local government are occupied by women and the presence of more women in government will engender public policy, and also tends to reduce corruption. But the evidence shows that gender is not a significant factor in explaining levels of corruption. “The results also suggest that institutional measures such as accountability, risk factor and the role of opposition parties were crucial in explaining the levels of corruption. To consider gender as a factor in corruption has several limitations, unless it is seen in conjunction with the status of women in different areas of political space”.

The 73rd amendment gives a new direction by guaranteeing one third representation of women in the Panchayats but Women’s representation and presence in panchayats has continued to be influenced by the same ideology and tokenism as has continued at other political levels despite the political equality guaranteed by the constitution. (Buch, 2000)^s.

The illusion of Inclusion:

Heroic tales of women battling the odds abound in media reports and research studies. It is no accident that many of these accounts are from those States where the Panchayat system is weak and neglected. Very often these individuals are heroes because of defective Panchayati Raj. On the other hand, in States where the

framework of Panchayati Raj provides a nurturing environment for grassroots empowerment and does not inhibit it, one finds a larger scope for people to function effectively, without having to resort to heroism. In fact, there are fewer odds to battle, in these States. In such States, since Panchayati Raj itself is a winner, those within it are all winners, in some measure or the other. Unfortunately, research in the functioning of Panchayati Raj often falls prey to anecdotes. Most studies have very low value as they often have poor sample sizes and biases of researchers, both positive and negative, creep into the conclusions. Finally, constitutionally mandated Panchayati Raj is too young to throw up time series analyses of any great value.

Women's effective participation in the Panchayati Raj or the latter's usefulness for women's rights and development will become a reality only if panchayat system itself operates in a principled, self-governing, and significant way. It is important to strengthen the system and involve greater people's participation. Panchayati Raj is often a charade in several States and political rhetoric hides their marginalization. One needs to analyse why such a widespread negative impression about PRIs has taken root. Much of it is a matter of selective memory and autosuggestion – ignore the good stories and highlight the bad. However, the functioning of Panchayats is quite distinct from that of higher level governments. First, being closer to the people, a lot more corruption gets exposed to public view and compared to corruption at higher levels. Second, while grass root level institutions have distinct advantages in localizing government, they also face proximate political and social pressures that make traditional virtues of public administration such as impartiality, neutrality and anonymity difficult to realize locally. Third, regardless of whether PRIs are elected on a party basis or otherwise, they are political institutions. Elected members have constituencies both in the geographical and socio-political sense. One cannot avoid legitimate aspirations to nurse constituencies in today's context of highly competitive electoral politics and one must accept that there is bound to be a tendency to favour a region, a group of people or even individuals in developmental decision-making. Fourth, unlike legislators, PRI elected representatives are vested with executive authority and are empowered to take decisions having financial implications and authorize expenditure from public funds, decide levels

of taxation, exercise power of collecting taxes and regulatory powers which are of a quasi-judicial character.

The women participation may not be greatly enthusiastic right now but it will definitely be seen in future. The issue of surrogate participation of women is one of those popular notions that just refuse to fade away. Yes, in some circumstances, where cultural and the social system is highly patriarchal, proxy participation continues. However, in circumstances where surrogate participation is seen the actual situation might be that the man might be playing a nurturing and consulting role, assisting the new woman entrant into the Panchayats. Further, while surrogate participation might exist for the first elected term of the woman, quite often we come across situations where women have increasingly asserted themselves, once they have gained confidence – even winning the next election on their own worth, rather than as symbols of their male backers. The difficulty of many EWRs to change their age-old customs and practices is an important reason for their being not effective in delivering development. As women are still considered one of the neglected categories in some of the regions of India, there should be a separate quorum for attendance of women and for attendance at Gram Sabha meetings. In view of the crucial importance of adequate women's participation in meetings of the gram sabha, a sub-quorum of female attendance should be built into the required quorum. Moreover, provision may be made that meetings of the gram sabha be preceded by meetings of the Mahila Sabha, comprising all adult women voters of the village panchayat, to ensure that gender concerns and preferences get fully reflected in the proceedings of the gram sabha. In addition to that each village should have a 'Mahila Mandai' and Mahila Sabhas should be encouraged to facilitate women's concerns and be raised on priorities in meetings of Gram Sabhas and Ward Sabhas. Political parties and social activists should be encouraged to create greater awareness among the women about the importance of Panchayati Raj Institutions and the need for active participation in Gram Sabha meetings. There should be a provision of women component plans in PRI budgets. There should be a linkage between Self-help groups and PRIs at all levels. Women candidates should be given an opportunity to serve full term. Even education cannot make much difference unless training regarding the rules of panchayati Raj is imparted.

There must be special training for women at the Gram Sabha level as Women hardly get any training for capacity building. Most of them are ignorant about their rights and responsibilities to function as people's representatives in a democratic system. There are number of training Institutions and we have training facilities, but the questions attached with it are: Are these training facilities adequate? Are the training programmes meaningful for the women from the villages; Can these training Institutions give effective and meaningful training to all the women getting elected every five years? Training is a continuous process and women cannot go frequently to distant state capitals where the SIRDs are located for training.

A very important aspect of empowerment of women is giving them opportunities to visit and study successful programmes. Women in the villages suffer from lack of mobility and interaction. The women from the tribal and dalit communities need very special training for empowerment. They need special institutions for the same. But till today there are no institutions for this. To change the patriarchal mind set of our communities we have to create special awareness programmes for our society as a whole. There is a need to bring the concept of financial literacy as in Kerala where in every panchayat level financial training and proposal making trainings has been conducted for the last 10 years. This is very important and is needed in other parts of the country also.

It is for sure that without the system of reservation women would have had no role to play in grassroots politics in India. As statistics show, 95% of women claimed they would never come to acquire positions in Panchayats, if there were no provision of reserving seats for them (Centre for Women's Development Studies:1999). Reservation has at least succeeded in bringing the womenfolk in rural India into the political forum and elected women could now imagine standing against a man in future. The successful EWR, now act as kind of role models for the others. The increased proportion of the EWR has ensured the principles of justice between the sexes and this has certainly led to the fulfillment of certain interests of women, which may otherwise be neglected. If reservations for women in panchayati raj

institutions are to lead to their empowerment in real terms, social, economic and political conditions which facilitate and encourage their participation needs to be created. As with most matters of empowerment, mere political will and articulation of policies alone will not translate into benefits for women. The translation into sensitive implementation would require changes in administrative and social structures. Moreover a collaborative approach between the household, the community, the State, voluntary organizations and the media needs to be developed. The approach must also be multi-pronged, taking into account policies, laws, judicial processes, attitudes and social imaging of women.

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Women Empowerment through Democratic Decentralization

Shomaila Warsi, Ekta Chaudhary

In recent years, there has been a growing realization that development goals cannot be realized unless gender inequalities are removed and women are empowered to choose and decide about their own welfare, the welfare of their families, and the communities in which they live. The importance of women's empowerment on the international development agenda is amply clear from the policy statements made at such high level international conferences as Beijing Platform for Action, the Beijing + 5 Declaration and Resolution, the Cairo Programme of Action, the Millennium Declaration and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. All these forums have identified gender equality both as a development objective in itself, as well as a means to promote growth, reduce poverty, and promote better governance. Women's empowerment is essential for ensuring not just their personal or household welfare, but empowerment of women is also necessity for the very development of a society, since it enhances both the quality and the quantity of human resources available for development. Enhancing women's status

and their empowerment can play a decisive role in the success of many development programs and bring about positive social changes.

Of the many ways of empowering women, one major way is to empower women through legislation for ensuring participation in political decision making.

Such an approach provides the women with a constitutional platform to stand up to men, to raise their voice on issues concerning women oppression, subjugation and other such related issues and thus in effect, providing them with an identity in an orthodox patriarchal male dominated socio-economic and political set up. It also provides women a much needed forum to seek redressal of problems directly affecting them: the true essence of empowerment.

The Government of India passed the, the Constitutional 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts mandating 33 per cent reservation for women in Panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) which were an important milestone in the women empowerment. In 2009, the Union Cabinet approved 50 per cent reservation for women in PRIs. Today there are nearly 1.5 million women in these bodies who are playing an important role in the development of country in general and rural development in particular.

20 years after the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts were passed women have been overcoming all the age old barriers which were hindering their progress and are now virtually challenging men in almost every field'. This chapter will trace the evolution of Women's Representation in Panchayati Raj over the last two decades, highlight the challenges and triumphs of this process of representation, and report on present best practices on the ground in terms of women's empowerment.

Women's Representation in Panchayati Raj:

Panchayati Raj is not a new phenomenon in India. Its illustration in history goes back to more than 1000 years. It has its roots in Ancient Indian Institutions when the villages were little republics governed by their Panchayats. During this period, it was not that women could not join politics, but the fact was that they did not take interest in it due to a patriarchal set up. The British through their ruthless method of revenue

collection and the introduction of Zamindari land tenure system almost destroyed these ancient republics and as well the involvement of women in politics. (Bhagat, 2005).

After Independence, despite having a constitution, which embodies lofty, ideals like equity and equality, social justice could not be achieved. Even when India had a woman Prime Minister for quite a number of years, the situation of women at large did not change for the better. Women's participation in politics remained quite insignificant in India even after 59 years of self-rule. (Nanda 2006). From October 2nd 1959 when the first Panchayati Raj institute was inaugurated, to April 24, 1993 after the 73rd Amendment Act came into force it has been an uncertain and undulating journey for Panchayats. The structure and process of Panchayats are equally pivotal as they bring to bear and entitle role member there in to perform. If the overall scenario of Panchayats was largely despairing, another disquieting aspect is that almost one half of rural population was virtually kept out of Panchayat arena. In the traditional Caste Panchayats, Village Panchayats and in the British Scheme of local governments women remained entirely excluded. (Nagendra 2004). In establishing Panchayats most state government apprehend the provision of co-option of two women in case no women could come through direct elections. Prevalent practice during 1960's and 1970's was the co-option of two women at best for each PR body, as women could not come through direct elections, even though the requirement of co-option of women was not followed uniformly for all PR bodies and in every state, for instance Uttar Pradesh Jammu and Kashmir, did not follow the scheme (Institute of Social Studies Trust: (1995).

From the outset, women's involvement in PRIs was dominated by two inter-related themes: representation of women in these bodies and effectiveness and outcome of their participation. Co-option of few women was the only available option for women to participate and it was a travesty for it could not produce the desired and verify no results at all. The co-option method, of course provided one convenient scope for the dominant caste/class leaders to install their family women such as wife; mother as their yoke and the very purpose of the policy was led to fall flat. It took 43 years to realize and recognize

that women are yet another disadvantaged group and they also require a solution to their discrimination. Women have received a preferential consideration and that too only in the sphere of political representation and that again in local governments (Rao: 1996). Women are changing the governance in India. They are being elected to local councils in an unprecedented numbers as a result of amendments to the constitution that mandate the reservation of seats for women in local governments. In India, we call this new system the Panchayati Raj Institution System (PRI). The women whom PRI has brought into politics are now governing, be it in one village, or a larger area such as 100 villages or a district.

Role played by Women Case Studies

A nationwide survey commissioned by central government in 2008 to study the status of elected women in panchayats, covering 114 districts, 228 blocks and 1368 gram panchayats across 23 states, reported that “while earlier reservations for women were a matter of ridicule, now stories of women being puppets in the hands of male relatives and similar anecdotal accounts have become rare. Women have begun to take full charge of their official responsibilities in panchayats. The selected women representatives have been increasingly ensuring their effective participation in budget preparation and the identification of criteria to guide panchayats to specially prepare gender-sensitive budgets” (Ministry of Panchayati Raj 2008). This study included 1,368 heads of gram panchayats, of which 907 were female; 5,350 elected ward members, of which 3,973 were women and 1,377 were male; 1,302 former women representatives; and 20,154 community members. The empowering social and developmental impacts of working as a panchayati raj functionary were evident in a number of the study’s findings, including the following: about 72 percent of elected women representatives reported having been actively involved in providing civic amenities; 62 percent said they had made efforts to increase enrollment and mitigate domestic violence; and a sizeable proportion of women representatives reported enhanced self-esteem (79%), confidence (81%) and decision-making abilities (74%).

Following are some examples of effective women leadership at the grassroots level, which other women can look toward to and derive

inspiration from. The case of Rummebai, a tribal elected panchayat member, for example points to the fact that women leaders have increasingly realized the power of their position and feel empowered to demand their basic rights. They may not succeed in each and every case. But the message that comes clear through these examples is the courage and commitment shown by women in standing their ground, doing exemplary work despite the odds, under the watchful eyes of the villagers to whom they are accountable.

Given the opportunity and required support, women will assume their rightful role as leaders and decision makers, and as one woman member of Madhya Pradesh pointed out “This is only the beginning”.

CASE 1:

In 1995, an advertisement appeared in all the leading newspapers of Madhya Pradesh stating “Laxmi Ujjala, Sihore ki Collector Nahi hain” with a picture of Laxmi Ujjala, suggesting that even though she is not a Collector, she has equivalent power.

Laxmi Ujjala was the Sarpanch of Lashuria Parihar Panchayat, Sihore district, Madhya Pradesh. She was 45 years old, educated up to Class X and belongs to the general caste category, in a Panchayat dominated by Thakurs and Yadavs. The Panchayat has 20 members, other than the Sarpanch. As Sarpanch, Laxmi Ujjala stayed in the shadow of her husband, who carried out all the Panchayat functions. (He was a government employee with the Bhopal Collectorate). Gradually she began asserting herself and started going to the Block Office to get information on the various schemes available. Her interaction with the community grew and exposure to the outside world increased. Her interest and initiative in doing Panchayat related activities grew. The foregoing advertisement was the catalyst for bringing her out of the shadow of her husband and since, there has been no looking back. She has established her credibility as a leader by getting important government schemes, particularly, programmes for women approved for her village, taking the initiative in building a temple through contributions and leading from the front, while implementing the Total Literacy Campaign in her Panchayat.

Today, she presides over Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat meetings and takes the lead in organizing the women in her Panchayat. She has even been writing letters to the Prime Minister and Chief Minister, drawing their attention to transferring a water tank, which though constructed on her Panchayat land, due to its size, falls under the jurisdiction of the Janpad Panchayat. On one occasion, she even took some people of the village and met the Chief Minister in this connection. The issue of the water tank requires an Amendment in the Act but she has not given up and is still actively pursuing the matter.

CASE 2:

Shanti is the Pradhan of Madhopur Panchayat, Kushinagar district, Uttar Pradesh. She is 36 years old and a graduate schoolteacher. She belongs to an OBC category in a village pre-dominantly inhabited by the Scheduled Castes. Under her leadership, the Panchayat gained control of a piece of Panchayat land that was encroached upon by the village youth club, run by the Nehru Yuvak Kendra. Shanti took the initiative and called a Gram Sabha meeting, where it was decided, that the club should hand over the land to the Panchayat. However, the Nehru Yuvak Kendra took the matter to court. Ultimately the ruling was in favor of the Panchayat. The Sarpanch presides over and conducts Gram Sabha meetings twice a year. Besides, informal Gram Sabha meetings are held every month where people come to discuss various issues of concern requiring decisions or to make clarifications with the Panchayat and to enable effective interaction between the Panchayat members and the community.

CASE 3:

When the Baitu-Bhimji seat in Baitu block, Barmer district (Rajasthan) was declared reserved for a woman, the entire community, persuaded the MLA of Gurha Malani and his family, to allow his wife Bhikhi Devi to contest. The villagers also convinced the other candidates to withdraw so that Bhikhi Devi could win unopposed. Sarpanch Bhikhi Devi has worked tirelessly. The grants available for development programs, especially for construction works, have been properly utilized. Her effective planning and monitoring have produced such high quality work, that it has set her Panchayat apart and gained recognition by the Zila Parishad. Considering the socio-cultural milieu of western Rajasthan,

where women are considered subordinate to men and are rarely included in the decision making processes, her contribution is worthy of appreciation. The National Commission of Women recognized her achievements by presenting her with an award on 8 March, International Women's Day. There are hundreds of similar examples where women have shown that given the opportunity they are no less worthy than their male counterparts.

Challenges:

Being elected to office is of course a major step taken by women to enter the political arena. But this is only the first step. The real test of women's empowerment begins when they start exercising their rights and responsibilities—participating actively in the decision making processes of their village, developing their confidence and establishing their qualitative presence in the power structure. According to various studies and investigations conducted by several organizations both government and non-government, some of the factors which adversely affected the active participation of women are illiteracy and low education levels, compliance with social restrictions, lack of comprehensive understanding of their roles, caste system, patriarchy, political affiliations and indifferent attitude of government officials, etc. A great hurdle faced by women elected members is the legal provision of no confidence motion, which was often misused by the influential sections and upper caste to thwart the enthusiasm of the women elected members and the marginalized groups. Spread of malicious rumors by vested interests is yet another constant fear that women face. In the case of SC/ST members the prejudices of government officials are discernible. Used to interaction based on a well-defined caste hierarchy, these officials found it hard to re-orient themselves in dealing with women and SC/ST elected members.

Following are some of these challenges that women face in their day-to-day Political functioning. Women who have stood up to these challenges are those who have attempted to gain an understanding of their own oppression and utilized their offices to break away from the oppression that they along with other women in the community faced.

CASE 1:

Draupadi was overjoyed when she was first elected Panchayat Samiti member in Thuamul Rampur block, Kalahandi district in Orissa. The rotating reservation system introduced after the 73rd Amendment, catapulted this matriculate tribal lady into prominence. Draupadi was happy at the thought that there was light at the end of the tunnel. However the tunnel turned out to be endless. She complained bitterly about the reservation policy of the Government. While tribals are predominant in the entire block, the post of Samiti Chairperson is reserved for an SC woman, who would naturally turn a deaf ear to the problems of tribal people; be it a demand for information or delegation of responsibility. There is complete non co-operation from the Samiti Chairperson. This is precisely because she is well aware that Samiti members are of no use once the election is over. A Chairperson's impeachment is a remote possibility, as Panchayat Samiti members cannot agree and political casteism rules. As a Samiti member, Draupadi cannot do much at the Panchayat Samiti nor has she any say in Panchayat affairs. Take the example of education in the Panchayat. Draupadi formed a co-ordination committee to encourage the value of education. She tried to persuade those teachers, who were irregular, to attend. Repeated requests to both the teachers as well as the Block were of no use. Worse, the teachers have started threatening her. She says if the teachers had been local, this would never have happened.

CASE 2:

Even after being elected, women have been subjected to resistance, manifested through violence, against her and her family. The perpetrators are usually the ex-Sarpanch, Up-Sarpanch or political parties (her own as well as the opposition). The atrocities inflicted on these women often force them to submit or step down, as in the cases of Fatima Suhra, President of Puthigae Panchayat, Kasaragod district, Kerala and Lissy John, member of Chunkathara Panchayat. Fatima Suhra, a school teacher, was motivated and encouraged by her party to contest elections, but threatened by the same party when she refused to take bribes, allocate tubewells only to those wards dominated by her party or issue cheques for work not undertaken. Political *gundas* threatened her husband too with his life. Although she was determined to fight and

held on till the last moment, she eventually gave in to the persuasion of her family members. Lissy John, an independent candidate who was actively involved in Mahila Mandal activities, was similarly threatened, defamed through posters depicting her as a prostitute and finally forced to step down when political *gundas* burnt down her house.

CASE 3:

Mishri Devi, a tribal of Thikri village, Dausa district, Rajasthan was elected Sarpanch from a seat reserved for an ST woman. This idea was unacceptable to the upper caste males because she was an untouchable. On August 15, 1998 she was not allowed to hoist the National flag during Independence Day celebrations. She was humiliated and even the sweets she brought were thrown in a drain. There are many more such examples where women have been subjected to harassment and even cases of violence against them have also been reported.

Democratic decentralization has proved to be very fruitful in the empowerment of women. Women have become torch bearers in the development of country through their effective leadership qualities. As stated earlier, they still face formidable challenges. Following are some of the suggestions which can be useful in overcoming these challenges and help in further empowerment of women:

1. An important requirement for bringing about empowerment of rural women is to bring about attitudinal change in both men and women. Therefore, they should be imparted education for bringing about social and political awareness among both. Studies on women in politics have emphasized that contact with outside world makes women more alert and also active in the political process. There could be two ways of doing it. Firstly, interaction between enlightened rural women and illiterate elected one's should be encouraged. Secondly, these women could be taken out to the urban areas and their interaction with educated urban elected women representatives be arranged.
2. The Government should provide financial support and infrastructure to successful women organizations to take up the responsibility encouraging the women elected representatives. This

could be taken up by the leaders of women's movement in the state. They can also provide support to sensitize the rural women. The Government should provide security to women candidates from criminals, during and after elections, till they are in office. However, a sincere will of the Government, co-operation of the people as a whole would encourage and increase the empowerment of women in turn, would lead in true sense, the development of a society.

3. It is evident that men's attitude towards women's entry into politics has begun to change from that of total rejection to limited encouragement and in some cases even to active encouragement. This trend needs to be strengthened through orientation courses and training programmes for officials and elected representatives, both men and women. Besides there is a need to train the women leaders at regular intervals to enable them to manage the responsibilities assigned to them in the Panchayats at all the levels. Since the hard up women members found it difficult to forgo their wages for attending training programmes, these must be organized at their doorstep and some of the articulate Panchayat leaders should be involved as the trainers. The women should also be encouraged to organize themselves. The Mahila Mandals in the village can be effectively used as instruments to mobilize them for this purpose. Some successful women's organizations can also act as catalytic agents for encouraging the women's participation in social and political activities.
4. Incentives play a vital role in ensuring the participation of elected representatives in decision-making. It has been noticed that there are certain very active and enlightened women leaders at all the levels of Panchayats, who have been successfully implementing the developmental schemes and have ensured overall development of their constituencies. Such leaders need to be encouraged by publicizing their leadership qualities and honoring them in public meetings. It will certainly encourage other women representatives and their success stories and good practices will get replicated.
5. The media both print as well as electronic can play an important role in creating awareness in the rural society. It can act as an agent

of political socialization for inculcating the values of gender equality and gender justice

Concluding Remarks:

Owing to the existing of gender disparities and gender gaps, it is imperative to state that the ‘empowerment approach’ to women in development could prove crucial in narrowing the gender gaps. Women in most developing countries do participate in social and economic activities. For example, they are being engaged in agricultural activities, serving in different government departments as well as working in ‘non-governmental organizations’. Their presence in the political sphere of life, however, is still minimal particularly in Parliament. Politics itself is about power. The power to take decisions, power to influence decisions, power over who should get what, how and when, and the power over values, ideas and recourses etc. This leads us to the notion that political presence to a great extent can help empower women. The two assumptions (political presence of women in decision-making structures and its impacts on the formulation of policies) to support the above argument are being tested using democratic decentralization as a policy approach. Decentralization is about good governance. It increases participation of citizens in governance at the grass root levels. In many countries, decentralization has resulted in government’s affirmative action’s to ensure inclusion of women in the political sphere of life.

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Redressal Mechanisms For Women : The Case of Jagratha Samithi in Kerala

Deepthi M.U.

Violence against women and children is a problem of pandemic proportions all over the world. Based on multi-country data collected by United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), up to 70 percent of women experience physical or sexual violence from men in their lifetime - the majority by husbands, intimate partners or someone they know. According to World Health Organization, among women aged between 15 and 44, acts of violence cause more death and disability than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents and war combined. Violence against women occurs in all socio-economic and cultural population subgroups; and in many societies, including India, women are socialised to accept, tolerate, and even rationalize violence, especially domestic violence, and to remain silent about such experiences. This chapter analyses the scope of local self government bodies in addressing such issues, especially those of violence against women through the vigilance committees called “Jagratha Samithi”. Along with this, we also examine the best practices followed by Pananchery Grama Panchayat, the pioneer in instituting Jagratha Samithi in Kerala. It also

analyses the gaps in the performance of the Samithi in the present milieu and put forward some recommendations for better performance.

In the context of increasing gender based violence in Kerala society it is important to evaluate the role of Jagratha Samithi in addressing the women's issues and eliminating the root causes of enforcing discrimination against women. Jagratha Samithis were to be constituted at each Grama Panchayat as per the instructions issued by the State Women's Commission. But contrary to the expectations they were constituted in a limited number of Grama Panchayats, albeit there was enormous call for such a mechanism throughout the State. Even where it was formally constituted, no serious attempt was made to strengthen its functions. The Orders, Guidelines and Circulars did not help in activating the Jagratha Samithi at different levels. It is also a matter of concern to examine the functions of the Samithi where it is still running. It is of significance to see how far the grievance redressal mechanism for women working at the door step of the common people has succeeded in delivering gender justice, if not, what are the reasons for its failures. In these circumstances, this study evaluates the activities of pioneer Panchayat of Jagratha Samithi in Kerala, Pananchery, and sees what factors contribute for their enduring success while majority of their counterparts failed to be persistent regarding the initial momentum in establishing and continuing the Jagratha Samithi interventions in their respective local governments.

Violence against Women- There have been increasing instances of violence, particularly domestic violence against women in Kerala. A study conducted by INCLIN and ICRW on domestic violence in Kerala found that as high as 62.3% and 61.61% of the women in Kerala are subjected to physical torture and mental harassment as compared to 37% and 35.5% at the national level. The same study found that Thiruvananthapuram, the capital of Kerala, ranked first among the five cities in India in the prevalence of domestic violence against women (ICRW : 2002).

A study by Sakhi for the Department of Health reports an average of 2 women patients coming to the Out Patient Departments (OPD's) with injuries due to violence (Sakhi 2004). There are increasing reports

of dowry related violence, rape and other atrocities against women in Kerala (Women's Commission, 1999). Wife beating has been found to be the most common and yet the least reported of atrocities against women in the State with only one out of ten cases being reported to the police.

In a collaborative study conducted in Thiruvananthapuram and Kozhikode districts of Kerala by SAKHI Women's Resource Centre, Thiruvananthapuram, UNWOMEN and JAGORI, both working in New Delhi and Anweshi functioning in Kozhikode, sexual harassment has been pointed out as the main safety problem by 98% women and 99% common witnesses. This was followed by robbery, as reported by 60% common witnesses and 51% women. The respondents have shared their experiences of robbery by young men in bikes wearing helmets and snatching ornaments and in some lanes they even sexually harass women. Verbal and visual abuse is the most common forms of sexual harassments, as reported by 80% women respondents and slightly more by common witness. This is followed by physical harassment, as reported by 60% women. Only 26% women reported stalking and 21% flashing (Aleyamma et al, 2011).

As Dr.Mridul Eapen, Former Member of State Planning Board rightly points out "the growing uneasiness with Kerala's uneven social development is due to the rising visibility of gender based violence, in particular domestic violence, (homes and other safe places are increasingly becoming venues of violence against young girls/women) very often linked to dowry demands, mental ill-health manifested increasingly as suicide, downtrends in women's property rights and rapid growth and spread of dowry, even as the levels of education continue to rise. This calls for urgent intervention by planners and policy makers. She also adds that the question "how far has education broken down patriarchal structures" has obviously to move beyond gender parity in literacy rates to the gender differentiated patterns of education and skill acquisition and its impact on employment and earnings; the reproductive role of women and unequal sharing of household responsibilities between men and women and the impact on decision making and control over resources which continue to perpetuate women's social and economic vulnerability.

As per the State Crime Record Bureau, crime against women has increased from a total number of 9381 in 2007 to 13002 in the year 2012. Similarly, there is a substantial increase in Crime against children also. In the year 2008 the total registered cases were 548 and in 2012 it increased up to 1324.

Women Empowerment Mechanisms

The invisibility of women in the public domain of Kerala, despite the commendable improvement of their educational and health status, is a paradox that has drawn considerable attention during the recent years (Seema and Mukhejee: 2000). However, the new Directions in 73rd Constitutional Amendments that one third of the seats should be reserved to women and the democratization process implemented by Government of Kerala named “People’s Planning Campaign” have contributed in creating an atmosphere favourable to the political participation of women in Kerala. In the Panchayat elections conducted in October 2010, this has been upgraded to fifty percent seats for women in all the Local Self Governments of including that of Presidentship, Standing Committee Chairpersons and membership in DPC in Kerala.

The approach of the Ninth Plan was also to create an enabling environment where women could freely exercise their rights both within and outside home, as equal partners along with men. This was reflected in the early finalisation and adoption of the ‘National Policy for Empowerment of Women’, which laid down definite goals, targets and policy prescriptions along with a well defined ‘Gender Development Index’ to monitor the impact of its implementation in raising the status of women from time to time.

Secondly, the Plan attempted ‘convergence of existing services’ available in both women-specific and women related sectors. To this effect, it directed both the centre and the states to adopt a special strategy of ‘Women’s Component Plan’ (WCP) through which not less than 30 per cent of funds/benefits flow to women from all the general development sectors. The operational strategy of 9th plan directs all the central Ministries and state departments to draw up Time – Bound Action plans for women. This is with the aim of translating the

policy into a set of concrete actions through a participatory process of consultations with both the governmental & nongovernmental sectors. (Volume II, Ninth Five Year Plan, Planning Commission).

According to Eapen (2004) it had a particular relevance in the state of Kerala which embarked on a pioneering experiment in decentralised governance beginning with the 9th Five Year Plan (1997-02), attempting to devolve almost 35-40 percent of plan funds to the Local Self Governments (LSG) who were given considerable autonomy to prepare comprehensive area plans addressing problems of local development. A conscious attempt was made in Kerala's decentralized planning framework to integrate women's issues in all phases of the process, further strengthened by the mandatory requirement of 10 percent of plan grant to be set apart by LSGIs for projects directly benefiting women—the Women Component Plan .

Eapen and Kodoth (2001) in their study on “Demystifying the High Status of Women in Kerala” discuss the policy approach to women in planning in Kerala. They reveal that Kerala is the only state in India that has attempted to carry out gender planning in the context of women's empowerment. The development process in Kerala has been more sensitive to women's issues; however, the underlying perspective of the state on gender roles in society and the sexual division of labour has been rather stereotypical. The study argues that with the Ninth Plan formulation and the introduction of WCP, Kerala makes a decisive break in the history of Indian planning in the approach to women in development.

In their study based on Gender, Governance and Decentralised Planning, Seema and Mukherjee (2000) conclude that “decentralisation need not necessarily lead to greater gender justice. But, it does open up new opportunities for intervention, particularly, given the one-third reservation for women in LSGIs. The procedures laid down for the People's planning process and statutory requirement of WCP creates space for even small women's groups, whose influence may not extend beyond the locality, to intervene in the development process and impart it a gender dimension. The formation of SHG's and the mutually reinforcing structures, systems and processes is slowly altering the notion and practice of both citizenship and governance in the Panchayats”.

Apart from this, the Tenth Plan reinforced commitment to gender budgeting to establish its gender-differential impact and to translate gender commitments into budgetary commitments. State government has taken certain initiatives in terms of women targeted schemes (gender responsive) through Flagship programmes in the Eleventh plan. These are gender awareness programmes including the implementation of the protection of women from domestic violence act and the flagship programme on finishing schools for women to enhance employability of women through skill training.

Jagratha Samithi

The term Jagratha Samithi literally means a Vigilance Committee. Jagratha Samithis, along the lines of the three-tier decentralised governance system were constituted on the initiative of the Kerala Women Commission to benefit a larger number of women in all parts of the State. They were intended to help in reducing the distance between women in the villages and the services provided by the Commission. “Jagratha Samithis are committees formed at the level of every local government in Kerala and under their umbrella. It acts as a quasi judicial mechanism from the Panchayat Ward level upwards to protect the rights of women and children. Built on the principles of gender equity and justice, the Jagratha Samithi pro-actively, as well as by responding to complaints, takes steps to ensure the safety and security of women by addressing matters related to violation of women’s rights” (SDC-Cap-Deck: 2003). It works in District, Village and Ward levels in the Panchayats and at Municipality/Corporation level in the urban Local Self Governments.

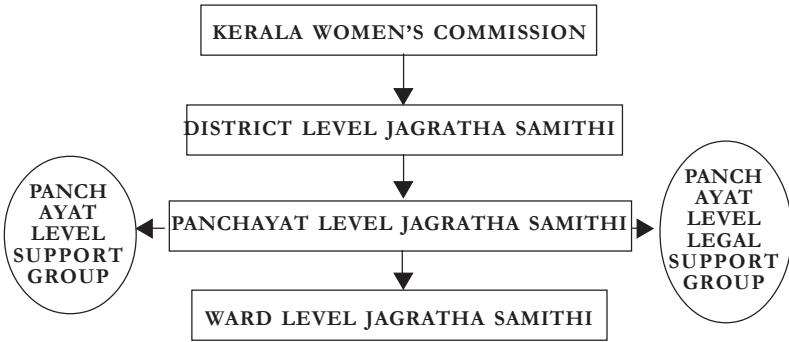
It was in 1997 that the Government of Kerala issued orders on setting up district level committees for redressal of atrocities against women and to protect women’s rights. The Committees were to be headed by the District Collectors and were to have Presidents of the District Panchayats, District police heads, the Revenue Divisional Officer in his /her capacity as Dowry Prohibition Officer, Representative of Municipal Chairpersons from the district, a lady lawyer, a lady doctor and three representatives of grass root NGOs as members. Immediately after this, the Government issued another order setting up Jagratha Samithi in each Panchayat for the same purpose as that of the District Committees.

According to the Government Order dated 28-05-2004 from the Social Welfare Department (G.O(MS) No.39/2004/SWD), there will be six members in a Panchayat Jagratha Samithi. The Panchayat President is the President and ICDS supervisor is the Convener of the Jagratha Samithi. The other members are a lady elected representative, a lady lawyer, CI or SI of the local Police Station, a Social Worker or Elected Representative who belongs to SC/ST. Apart from them, Doctor from the Primary Health Centre, a woman representative of Ward Vigilance Committee and CDS Chairperson also should be permanent invitees.

The complaints could be written, oral (such complaints must be registered in writing by the convener with the signature of the complainer and a witness), by post or through the complaint box. Apart from this, Jagratha Samithi can file a case if any of the members feel that the Samithi has to take up any particular issue. In such circumstances, the issue has to be discussed in the Samithi. The issues should, as maximum as possible, be resolved at the ward level, if not, could be taken to Grama Panchayat level. Higher level consultation, where required, would be taken up first with the District Committees and then with the State Commission.

Programme on Capacity Development in Decentralisation in Kerala (Cap Deck) supported the starting and functioning of Jagratha Samithis in Kerala. The establishment of Jagratha Samithis were through the support of few NGOs in six selected Grama Panchayats like Pananchery (Thrissur) with Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), Madavoor (Thiruvananthapuram) with Santhigram, Varappetty (Ernakulam) along with Liss India, Mukkom (Kozhikkode) through Association for the Welfare of the Handicapped (AWH), Payyoli (Kozhikkode) again with Association for the Welfare of the Handicapped (AWH) and Meenangadi (Wayanad) along with Centre for Youth Development (CYD). Among these, the institutionalization of Jagratha Samithi intervention in Pananchery occurred well before the initiation of the other pilot projects. At present, 856 panchayats have formed such samithis which function almost like the commission itself. The indigent sections which were denied an access to justice now have a forum to redress their grievances. (The Hindu)

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF JAGRATHA SAMITHI



Scope of Jagratha Samithi

The initiatives taken by the local governments by the name “Jagratha Samithi” to redress the atrocities against girls and women are of great importance. The fundamental duty of the Samithi is to lift up local support by strengthening the networks available at the local level and to coordinate the different networking systems to arrive at a proper solution. As women’s issues are getting addressed in the local level, the follow-ups are also trouble-free, thus offering an opportunity for uncomplicated redressal of the issue. Women can, thus, overcome the concerns of non-accessibility of the other centralized systems and it removes the obstacle of distance as distance from the Commission affected its effectiveness in the delivery of services to the women in far-flung places especially from the northern part of Kerala.

As Jagratha Samithis are the eyes and ears of the Kerala State Women’s Commission (KWC) and also because it has got mandatory support from police department, social welfare department and other judicial aids, the Samithi’s reliability also exerts a pull on the womenfolk. Thus, it empowers women and helps them to seek help from other judicial mechanisms. Moreover, the credibility and acceptability it establishes in the local area cannot be undermined by issues women used to have with other centralized legal mechanisms because of the Jagratha Samithi’s approachability and friendly attitude. Traditionally, there is a practice of political parties getting involved in dispute

settlement of the locality. It is also a matter of attention that Jagratha Samithi creates a chance for dispute settlement through a separate mechanism and consequently it ameliorates the burdens of the elected representatives and helps them to utilize their time for other activities of the locality.

It is a known fact that people prefer to have informal mechanisms to solve their problems and hesitate to approach the formal institutional mechanisms like courts and police and women, especially, have the tendency to cover up their issues thinking about the complexities of such mechanisms. Jagratha Samithi is an answer for this. The members of the Jagratha Samithi, as they are aware that they are under public scrutiny and also because they are known to everyone in the Panchayat, will try their best to be fair in their interventions.

Pananchery Panchayat

Pananchery Gram Panchayat, one of the largest Panchayats in Thrissur district is located in between Thrissur Corporation in the west and Palakkad district in the east. Agriculture is the backbone of the Panchayat's economy and it provides employment to a large number of people in the primary sector. According to the local myth, the place where Banan's Fort is situated is called as Pananchery.

A third of its land is reserve forest. Many important Central and State Government institutions like the regional station of Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, the Banana Research Institute, the Kerala Forest Research Institute, the Kerala Engineering Research Institute, the Forest Information Centre, the State Seed Farm, the Peechi Wild Life sanctuary and the very Peechi dam itself are located in this Grama Panchayat. Institutions like the Kerala Agricultural University and Veterinary College are close by.

Pananchery is the pioneer in the institutionalization of Jagratha Samithi. Even though constitution of the Jagratha Samithi was made mandatory by the Government of Kerala, none of the Panchayats was keen to do it. The State women's Commission along with SDC-Cap Deck made some efforts in six Grama Panchayats of Kerala and produced a report on the basis of that in the year 2007. The idea was to pilot the Samithi in a few Grama Panchayats and based on the

experiences, scale it up to the entire State. But the impetus has not been reflected throughout the State and corresponding awareness building and capacity building could not be given either. But in Pananchery the activities of Jagratha Samithi were already in progress by then. In 2002, Pananchery Gram Panchayat with SEWA as the partner organisation, came forward to revitalise the Jagratha Samithi activities as part of the SDC-CapDecK Programme. Eventually, Jagratha Samithi started on 19th August 2004, but was formally inaugurated on Women's Day, i.e., on 8th March, 2005. The Panchayat envisioned the Jagratha Samithi to go beyond the confines of a vigilance committee. In Pananchery, it was actually established as a Jagratha Samithi-cum-Family Empowerment Forum (JS-FEF) and is still continuing in that manner.

It was started with a six-month long awareness generation phase, during which a number of activities like Gender status study in every ward of the Panchayat, after broad-based discussions, Discussions on the findings of the study at various levels and conscientisation on the need for mechanisms to address the issues that emerged, Special programmes for men, Public meetings at major centres, Meetings of women's Self Help Groups (SHGs) at ward levels, ward level meetings of men, formation of a coordination committee, inclusion of all women elected representatives in the Jagratha Samithi, involvement of all political parties in environment creation activities, etc were taken up.

Initially a survey was conducted to understand gender issues and the status of women in the Panchayat at five workshop-cum-data gathering sessions. The workshops focused on grasping how the status of women was assessed in the society and to understand different aspects of gender violence. The need for Jagratha Samithi to curb violence against women was expressed by 93 per cent of them. Following this, in order to generate gender awareness in the Panchayat, a series of workshops were organised, both for men and women. A consultation was organised in Pananchery to frame the structure and rules for the model JS-FEF. The Jagratha Samithi was envisaged as a broad platform for the empowerment of women rather than a mere statutory body. It was not meant to be an alternate dispute redressal forum but as one that could also function as a truly empowering forum. Through this process, the bye-laws of the Jagratha Samithi were

prepared and presented to the Panchayat, where they were unanimously approved.

Jagratha Samithi functions were regulated by the byelaw prepared by an expert committee and approved by the Panchayat Governing Body. The chairperson of Jagratha Samithi is the President of the Gram Panchayat and the ICDS Supervisor is the convenor. The members of the Samithi consisted of all the women representatives of Gram Panchayat, the Sub Inspector of Police, a woman advocate, and three women social workers (One is reserved for SC/ST Community).

Jagratha Samithi deals with Civil (Wealth related, boundary disputes, telephone, electricity line related, drinking water issues, road disputes, retrieval of loan etc), Criminal (Sexual harassment within and outside homes, sexual perversions, physical assaults, indecent behaviour and insults, drug related, illicit liquor induced etc) and Family (Family issues and feuds, abandoning the wife, for maintenance, for protection from the husband, for protection from children, old age related problems, etc) cases. Family cases stands first with more than 500 in numbers, criminal cases occupy second place with 173 cases and civil cases are in the third position in Jagratha Samithi of Pananchery Panchayat. Also there are 64 oral cases which include anonymous reporting of anti social activities in the Panchayat. From its beginning in the year 2004, around 1300 cases are resolved through the Samithi.

Key activities in Pananchery

There are three major wings for Jagratha Samithi in Pananchery: 1) The Complaint Cell, 2) Gender Desk and 3) The Library-cum-Training Centre. The Complaint Cell concentrate on case hearing, legal advice, counselling, field enquiry, activities of ward level vigilance cells, and core committee. The Gender Desk Sub Committee is responsible for the formation and functioning of Gender Desks in schools. Through Gender Desks in schools, the problems of children are addressed and protection is made sure. There are instances of resolving issues like child sexual abuse through the Samithi with the aid of Police. The Desk organises monthly meetings in which gender awareness classes are held. Other relevant issues related to society and environments are also taken up in such meetings. Study tours, joint study programmes etc. are also organised by the Desk.

The Library-cum-Training Centre function as a resource centre and undertakes various trainings like gender training, pre-marital course for youngsters, legal literacy programmes, and public relations programmes, in association with government departments and educational institutions, and encourage women to read gender-related books. This Centre provides information on issues affecting women and ways to resolve them. Reader fellowship meetings, awareness generation using audio-visual media, study classes, pre-marital counselling etc. are activities that are taken up by this Centre. The Library has a collection of about 1600 titles. An amount of Rs.5000-10,000 is allocated from the Plan Fund to purchase books related to law, Children and Gender justice.

Ward level vigilance cells were set up under the leadership of the Ward elected member with a trained social worker as Convener. These cells have a membership of 5 to 11 persons who were sworn in before the Gram Sabha which increases the credibility of the members. The Vigilance Cell functions as the eyes and ears of the Jagratha Samithi. A Legal Advisory Committee was organised with the women Panchayat members, Sub Inspector of Police, a social worker, a lady lawyer and representatives of the Ward Vigilance Cells. This sub-committee meets with the public twice a week, on specified days, to receive complaints. With this sub-committee handling the complaints directly, the speed at which issues were addressed could be enhanced. The Jagratha Samithi-cum-Family Empowerment Forum (JS-FEF) has a tie up with Vimala College Extension Centre for Counselling and it also has a permanent female advocate for legal assistance.

A monthly Evaluation meeting is being conducted regularly with all the members of the Samithi. Another important feature of Pananchery is that it consists of all the female elected representatives of the Panchayat. Even though the Guideline has the provision of only one female elected representative in the Samithi, the Panchayat has made sure that all the female participants are involved. This makes the smooth function of Jagratha Samithi a collective responsibility of the entire women members of the Panchayat, not just the duty of one. This feature has definitely contributed to the efficacy of Jagratha Samithi in the Panchayat.

Another peculiarity of Jagratha Samithi in Pananchery is that it has set up a separate office and has appointed separate staff for the functions of the Samithi. This unique feature makes certain that the functions are affected neither by the changes in Panchayat leadership nor by the transfer of government employees like the ICDS supervisor. In fact, it is the third Panchayat President in Pananchery in three years after the *last* election to the Local Self-government Institutions in Kerala held on October 2010. This means that the changing figures in Panchayat leadership has nothing to do with the functions of Jagratha Samithi thanks to the sturdy roots already established by the Samithi in the Panchayat and also to the separate staff system which is permanent and is functioning there since its creation in 2004.

The Samithi makes sure that there is no unnecessary interference from the elected representatives, especially the political party pressure which is a common obstacle for the smooth functioning of the Jagratha Samithi in many other Panchayats. This in turn, reassures the integrity of the Samithi in the minds of general public. In addition, networks like kudumbasrees are utilized effectively to create awareness among a large group of public and empowering them to react to a large extent. The complaints which could not be sorted out inside Kudumbashree are being transferred to Jagratha Samithi.

Apart from this, in Pananchery, the members of Jagratha Samithi make it a point that the complaint is being resolved at least within three months and it can go only up to six months at the maximum. The regular follow up of the Jagratha Samithi is another attractive feature of Pananchery. Continuous and regular follow ups through telephone and summoning of the parties later for follow up meetings in the weekly meetings, etc. are some other characteristics. The “Jagratha Samithi Day” is also celebrated along with Women’s Day every year on March 8th with Rallies, Messages and Cultural Activities.

Examples of Interventions in Pananchery

Ø CASE I.

A woman’s husband has given his land on lease for cultivation. The person who took the land on lease started to consume alcohol with his friends in the leased land and the husband also joined them. This has

become a menace for the family members but neither the lessee nor the lessor, ie, the husband, were ready to hear the plight of the woman. The woman registered a complaint in the Jagratha Samithi. The members met with the persons involved and served notice to stop the activity. In three consecutive sittings the persons involved agreed to stop the activity.

Ø CASE II.

A woman who made an Intercaste love marriage without her parents' consent was being tortured by her husband and mother in law and she was silently tolerating the torments. Jagratha Samithi took suo moto cognizance of the issue. The Samithi called all the parties for the hearing. Separate counsellings were given for the wife, husband and mother in law. The husband and mother-in-law finally accepted the mistake and promised not to harass her again. Several follow ups were conducted so as to make sure that the family has sorted out the issues and is living happily.

Ø CASE III.

A woman who is partially blind has requested her neighbour not to take his cow through the front path of her house during the rainy season, because the cow dung mixed up with the rain makes the way dirty and slippery which in turn makes the way unable to walk and is a threat to her eyesight problem. But the neighbour refused to follow her and one day she bursted out to the neighbour in frustration. Her husband came home seeing this and on a sudden infuriation he started beating her severely with a wooden piece and this ended up with serious wounds on several parts on her body. The Panchayat Jagratha Samithi sought help from the Circle Inspector of Police. They filed a written complaint and took actions against the husband.

The Way Forward and Suggestions

In many Panchayats where the Jagratha Samithi was formed, the initial motivation deteriorated when there was a change in the Panchayat leadership and officials. In Panchayats where the newly elected representatives or the transferred officials showed no interest in the functions of the Jagratha Samithi, the vigour and momentum weakened later on. Because it is the judiciary of poor people, the Jagratha Samithi

can function well only if there is a strong political will from the part of the Panchayat committee.

Jagratha Samithi was expected to prevent the atrocities against women and children, to bring various issues hampering their upward mobility and growth into the forefront, to improve the capacity development of women and to elevate the overall status of women in the society. But it is a matter of disappointment that the general public are still not aware about the functions of Jagratha Samithi. If the public had known that the only thing they have to do is to report the abuse they came to know to any one member of the Samithi, many of the shocking cases capturing our attention today through mass medias wouldn't have happened.

The attitude of public reflected in many debates following some recent issues points out to the tremendous efforts needed to be taken in deconstructing gender roles and reshaping gender attitudes in our society. The Jagratha Samithis have to ensure that the general public, functionaries and elected representatives approach issues of social concern with a gender eye. Such an orientation should be based on which the Samithi has to work because without eliminating the basic reasons for the issues, the conflict resolution happening in the Samithi would end up as simple 'compromises' (mostly from the part of women). Examining the activities of Jagratha Samithi, it has been pointed out that "the body (Jagratha Samithi) is to act as a pressure building mechanism against violence against women. The Jagratha Samithi member's sensitivity to deal with violence is inadequate and it has been difficult to institutionalize the system. This is one of the most lucid examples of trying to bring about policy to combat violence against women but entrenched patriarchal values have not enabled dispensing of justice". (Bhaskaran, 2011).

Women empowerment is a social process. For that matter, alienated activities here and there will not result in concrete results. Step by step planned efforts are necessary to create gender awareness and for enhancing gender equality in our society. Such efforts could be incorporated in almost all the activities of the Panchayats. The Panchayats can effectively do the following activities to ensure this:

- Conduct gender status study in every Wards of the Local Body and carry out discussions on the findings of the study at various levels. The data should be the base for the future projects and programmes and could be used effectively to address the issues of women and children of the area.
- Discuss the issues in Gramasabhas which will also help to increase the women participation in Gramsabhas .
- Conduct development seminar and address the issues in the seminar.
- Mass awareness campaigns could be carried out in which the participation of men and children should be ensured. Establishing Gender Desks in schools with a view to sensitise and create gender issues among children will be fruitful. Conducting monthly meetings and trainings on relevant social issues and asking the children to develop solutions to resolve them will also help. They should be provided with a feeling that they are responsible to create a society based on justice and equality.
- The Participation of all the female elected representatives must be ensured in the activities of Jagratha Samithi. A pool of master trainers within the local body could be developed so that they can provide training to other groups of men, children, provide community based trainings and trainings to other vulnerable groups. The local body can set up a Women's library and Training centre which can provide information on women's issues and the ways to resolve them .Also they can make use of audio visual materials, inspirational books ,collection of case studies and real life stories which can motivate women and children. The Panchayat can also make arrangements for study classes for teenagers, pre marital counselling , family counselling, etc .
- Involvement of all political parties must be ensured and feeling of togetherness should be created to confirm the participation of all.

- The activities of Ward level vigilance cells have to be strengthened under the leadership of the Ward elected member with a trained social worker as the Convenor. These Cells should function as the eyes and ears of the Jagratha Samithi.
- A Legal Advisory Committee should be mandatorily organized with the women Panchayat members, Sub Inspector of Police, Social Worker, lady lawyer and the representative of the ward Vigilance Cells. This Committee should meet the Public on specified days so that the Public can have direct accessibility and the speed at which the issues are addressed could also be enhanced. The Committee can organise Legal Classes to the general public as well.
- It would be better to establish a separate staff system for Jagratha Samithi with adequate funds and infrastructure facilities.

Along with this the Government can also move some steps forward to improve the present situation of Jagratha Saithis in Kerala. The decisions reached by the Jagratha Samithi should have a legal status before the court of law that the complaints will be considered with due seriousness by the defendants and for that matter providing legislative powers for the Samithi is essential. Apart from this, more clarity should be specified in the guideline with regard to fund allocation and office administration.

Concluding Remarks

It is disheartening to note that there is no valid data available in any of the government departments or websites, regarding information on Jagratha Samithi such as number of Jagratha Samithis constituted, number of cases dealt with, etc. except a chapter in the Annual report 2010-11 of Kerala State Women's Commission (KWC). But the alarming number of atrocities against women and children have definitely exerted a pressure on the authorities to rejuvenate the activities of the Jagratha Samithi. In response to a recent shocking child abuse incident, state minister for Social Security And Local Self Government said "Vigilance committees and school officials now have the responsibility of monitoring the neighborhood on the status of children and to notify police if any suspected case of child abuse is found in

their vicinity”. So is the case of startling number of atrocities against women in our society. So, let us be hopeful that authorities will definitely initiate some sincere efforts to revive the activities of Jagratha Samithis by adopting the best practices followed by Panchayats like Pananchery in the near future. Increasing awareness about the merits and potentials of Jagratha Samithi is, indeed, the need of the hour.

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Education Decentralisation and Empowerment of Women : A Study on Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

S.S.Sreekumar

Post colonial development scenario since 1970 has experienced a phenomenal shift in the development strategy of the marginalized. Academicians and policy makers since 1970s have consistently engaged themselves in research on women's development. Numerous research studies have been conducted in the third world that seeks to create policy aimed at improving lives of women. As a result various approaches have been adopted towards this end. Guided by the view points of researchers and practitioners in this multidisciplinary field, Eva Rathgeber¹ outlines general frameworks and she identifies three distinct theoretical paths in the field: Women in Development(WID), Women and Development(WAD) and Gender and Development(GAD).

Women In Development subscribes to the assumptions of modernisation theory. Its programmes generally stress western values and target individuals as catalysts for social change. Modernisation theory depicts traditional societies as authoritarian and male dominated

and modern ones as democratic and egalitarian. Thus it appears to show oppression faced by women. For the most part, liberal feminists have endorsed this view. In contrast, progressive feminist critiques of modernisation theory find it implicitly gendered and its characterisation of Third World women distorted and detrimental²

Boserup's³ documentation of the regressive impact of development of women's lives and livelihoods signaled the start of liberal feminists' advocacy of the integration of women into development as workers and producers. Tiano⁴ labels this move to address gaps in modernisation theory as developmentalism. Although developmentalists appear to make radical demands for women's inclusion, they do not advocate structural change in the system in which women are to be included. Their advocacy efforts have contributed to the shifts in policy that led to new variants in Women in Development.

Surveying four decades of development policy, Moser⁵ finds five distinct WID approaches that reflect policy evolution. Building on concepts developed by Molyneux, Moser evaluates each approach in terms of its ability to meet those practical needs of women that require urgent attention (such as employment, health services, water supply, etc.) and women's more strategic needs which must be met to change their subordinate status in society (i.e. legal rights, gender based division of labour and domestic violence). Moser's first category, the '*welfare approach*' focuses solely on women's reproductive roles and includes programmes to control population growth, which is seen as the primary cause of poverty. Therefore it targets practical rather than strategic needs. Moser's second category, the '*equity approach*' dominated the agenda of WID during the UN Decade of Women (1975-1985) and represented the initial phase of feminist organising which called for gender equality. The UN's backing of women had a lasting impact on social legislation which enhanced women's civil and political rights in many countries. The third approach is '*anti-poverty approach*' and concentrated on enhancing women's productive role through wage work and income generation, thereby neglecting strategic needs. The fourth approach in Moser's typology '*efficiency*' is associated with IMF structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s and stresses women's reaction to the debt crises through their participation in the newly

restructured economies. In the climate of the current economic reforms the urgency of addressing practical problems has overburdened women and stalled their progress towards meeting strategic needs. The fifth approach in WID is '*empowerment*' which represents Third World feminist writing and grass root organising. This approach addresses women's strategic needs to transform laws and structures that oppress them through bottom-up process of organising around practical needs:

Empowerment : A Conceptual Framework

The concept 'empowerment' has widespread usage and is the key focus of development programmes. Post- colonial developing world since early 1970s has experienced a phenomenal shift in the development strategy of the marginalised. In the backdrop of declining access of a vast number of people to the means of livelihood, security, literacy, health care facilities, housing and other basic necessities of life, the philosophy of social justice was integrated in the development discourse in 1970s. Again since 1990s, especially in the wake of globalisation, the strategy of empowerment with development has been adopted to integrate marginalised sections with the mainstream⁶. The World Social Development Summit, 1995 talk about people's initiatives, people's empowerment and strengthening capacities of people. Regarding objectives of development it specifically mentions that empowering people to strengthen their capacities is the main objective of development⁷. In the Declaration, there is more focus on empowerment. "It recognises that empowering people particularly women to strengthen their capacities is a main objective of development and its principal source. Empowerment requires the full participation of people in the formulation, implementation, evaluation of decisions determining functioning and well being of societies"⁸.

There is further commitment to people's participation through decentralisation, open management of public institutions, and strengthening of the abilities and opportunities of civil society and local communities to develop their own activities and resources⁹. At the UN General Assembly in 2000, heads of states and Governments took stock of the gross inequalities in human development worldwide and recognised their collective responsibility to uphold principles of

human dignity, equality and equity at the global level¹⁰. In addition to declaring their support for freedom, democracy and human rights, they set eight goals for development and poverty eradication to be achieved by 2015, i.e., Millennium Development Goals. Among the eight goals listed, the third relates to promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women¹¹.

The term 'empower' literally means to give power or authority. According to Webster's New Dictionary the prefix 'em' is attached to noun "power" to create a verb. This prefix is used to form verbs meaning "to make, make into or like, cause to be". Thus, "to empower" is to make cause or cause power¹². The noun "empowerment" refers to the process by which power is gained, developed, seized, facilitated or given. An individual or group moves from a condition of relative powerlessness to relative power through empowerment process¹³. The Social Work Dictionary defines empowerment as "the process of helping a group or community to achieve political influence or relevant legal authority"¹⁴

The concept refers to ongoing capacity of individuals or groups to act on their own behalf to achieve greater measure of control over their lives and destinies¹⁵. The literature on empowerment offers further insights. It has been characterised as the anti-thesis of paternalism by Swift¹⁶ whereas Rappaport¹⁷ featured it with key themes being the participation of people in their own empowerment. For experts like Pinderhughes¹⁸ and Beigel¹⁹ it is the building on individual and collective strength. Individual qualities associated with empowerment include self-efficacy according to Barton²⁰, participation in the opinion of Kieffer²¹ and rationally motivated action referred to by Mondros²². The process of challenging existing power relations, and of gaining greater control over the sources of power, may be termed as empowerment. This broad definition is given by feminist scholars and activists within the context of their own regions²³. The practitioners describe it as a psychological process to change. One critical element of this change is gaining awareness of power that exists in an individual, family, group, or community. Let us examine the definition of empowerment given by World Bank. Empowerment stands for "the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in,

negotiate with, influence control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives”²⁴.

Central to the concept of empowerment are four elements: a) Access to information, b) Inclusion and participation, c) Accountability, d) Locally organised capacity and subsequent networking with wider movement groups to create climate of pressure on the holders of power. Indeed empowerment is a long drawn process and cannot be achieved within the given arrangements without a proactive state intervention. In this backdrop, the notion of empowerment has been widely integrated with the development strategy of the state since 1990s. In brief, *empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to a greater decision – making power and control, and to transformative action.*

Empowerment of Women

The development strategies which are implemented within the pre-existing structural arrangements of the society have not been able to bring an end to the deprivation of the marginalised groups, rather have largely contributed to the social reproduction of marginalisation. The Human Development Report (1996) has drawn attention to the jobless, voiceless, ruthless, fruitless and futureless growth all of which contribute directly into creating marginalised population²⁵.

Marginalisation in the traditional perspective is a complex process of relegating specific groups of people to the lower or the outer edge of society. It pushes these groups of people to the margin of the society following the parameters of exclusion and inclusion. Sociologically, there are several dimensions of marginalisation. In the *economic perspective*, it denies a large section of society equal access to productive resources, avenues for the realisation of their productive human potential and opportunities for their full capacity utilisation. Thus they are provided with very limited space for upward occupational mobility, and are excluded from the range of economic opportunities and choices. Politically, the process of relegation denies equal access to the formal power structure and participation in the decision making process leading to their subordination to dependency on economically and politically dominant groups of society.

In developing societies social categories such as the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, educationally backward minorities, women, landless agricultural labourers, workers of the unorganised sector are generally considered as marginalised groups. Even though they are not a homogenous category, they have emerged to be the deprived in terms of economic, political, social and cultural indicators of development. Women as a social category cut across the boundaries of all other categories – caste, race, status etc. Within the social category, they are the most oppressed. Education and Empowerment

The chances of marginalisation for poor countries are significantly enhanced by the fact that economic growth is becoming increasingly linked to a nation's ability to obtain and apply knowledge. Education is one of the powerful weapons in the fight against rural poverty. The economic success of the east 'Asian tigers' and more recently of China, has been based on a much higher level of literacy and basic education than India has²⁶. In the context of the current development paradigm, initiatives for developing education in rural areas can play a positive role in raising the literacy rate and building social capital and also makes an increase in employability. This will lead to higher standards of living and improved quality of life and social well being.

Education transforms human beings into human resource for engineering social change and enhancing all round development. It is a continuous process of acquisition of knowledge, skills, augmenting capabilities, reason and sound judgment. It is a tool for behavior modification, learning citizenship values and rights, understanding the self, the environment, values and acquisition of decision making skill. Paulo Frier observes that "an appropriate dialogical form of education is essential to conscientise people, transform the self and build oppression free society. The process of conscientisation involves identifying contradictions in experience through and becoming part of process of changing the world. "It is through such a process of transformation of the individual selves-their empowerment or liberation from disempowerment – that society will be transformed

Indian Scenario

Traditionally, Indian society was characterized by a highly stratified caste structure, which renders an extremely complex, diverse institutionalized system of inequality. Access to formal education was exclusive and restricted to the upper castes. The educational system debarred women except in the case of those upper castes, where some women could achieve ordinary levels of education leading to literacy. In such cases, the family took the responsibility of training women for predominant roles of housewife and mother²⁸. During the British times, the state run educational system attempted to replace the stratification based on caste to one based on class. However, in the process, the internal differentiation of power based on caste lines remained intact as the upper castes took up the roles as upper classes in the changed scenario²⁹.

After independence, the constitutional guarantee of equality changed the conceptual thinking on the educational development of women and urged women to play multiple roles in the polity, economy and society. The role of education to take up these new responsibilities achieved new significance. In line with these pronouncements, the government through its policies, attempted to address gender gaps. The objectives of the periodic five year plans reiterated the principle of equality, thus announcing a political consensus for creating conditions which would lead to the progressive removal of all forms of discrimination against women.

In the Report entitled “Towards Equality”, education is recognized as a major instrument for social change. Understanding the “ambivalence between traditional and the new attitudes on women’s education is essential”. Only then one can examine “the progress of women’s education in the country, because it has an impact on academic planning, allocation of resources and development of values in the society for both men and women”³⁰. After education included in the Concurrent list in 1976, the Central Government provided resources for development of education to the states. The National Policy on

Education drafted in 1986 states that “in order to neutralise the accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well- conceived edge in favour of women. The national education system will play a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women³¹.”

Decentralised Governace in the Island Territory

Local self governing institutions began in the A&N islands in 1957 with promulgation of Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Municipal Boards) Regulations, by the President of India. Under the Regulation, a Municipal Board at Port Blair, the lone urban area, was established. This body started functioning in 1958. Majority of its numbers were elected. To cater to the civic needs of rural area, the Andaman and Nicobar (Gram Panchayats) Regulation, 1961 was promulgated by the President of India on 1st March 1961. The regulation provided for establishment of Gram Panchayats and Nyaya Panchayats in these islands. Since the population of Nicobar Group of Islands is predominantly tribal, they have their traditional Panchayats and village captain who are able to settle local matters and problems amicably.

With the passing of the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment, further decentralisation was introduced in the islands in the 1990s. In 1994, the Municipal Regulations of 1957 and the Panchayat Regulation of 1961 were repealed by the Andaman and Nicobar (Municipal) Regulation, 1994 and the Andaman Nicobar (Panchayat) Act, 1994 respectively. The Port Blair Municipality is the only urban local self governing body in the islands. Port Blair Municipal Council consists of 18 wards. As per 73rd Amendment of the Constitution of India, the new Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) began to function with a three – tier system. Accordingly there are 69 Gram Panchayats at village level, seven Panchayat Samities at Block level and one Zilla Parishad at district level. Provision for reservation for women has also been effected as provided in the constitutional amendment.

The following table shows the position of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the Islands:

Table 9.1 Position of Panchayati Raj in the Islands

Tehsil /Panchayat Samitis		Gram Panchayat		Panchayat Samiti Members	Zilla Parishad Members
Diglipur	North & Middle	15	132	15	06
Mayabunder	Andaman	08	81	08	03
Rangat	South Andaman	14	141	14	07
Ferrargunj		15	163	15	06
Prothrapur		10	113	10	05
Little Andaman		04	46	04	02
Campbell Bay		03	31	03	02
Total		69	707	69	31

Source : Andaman and Nicobar Gazettee Extraordinary, 24th September 2010

The new Panchayat Act has the same jurisdiction as the repealed Panchayat Regulation, and is confined to the erstwhile district of Andaman excluding the area occupied by the Andamanese, Onges, Sentinels and Jarawas, but including the whole of non – tribal, Campbell Bay area, The Nicobar District is outside the preview. The blocks of Campbell Bay are included in the one Zilla Parishad.

On this background, an empirical study has been conducted in the context of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are:

- i. to examine the extent to which *education* has been *accessible to women* in rural area of the islands;
- ii. to study the impact of decentralised governance on *social mobilisation and political participation of women*; and
- iii. to examine the extent to which *women* in the rural area have been *politically socialised*.

The above mentioned objectives have been studied in the context of decentralized governance.

Major Findings of the Study

A. Access to Education

1. Basic education has been accessible to majority of respondents i.e., for 78.59 per cent. Schools are accessible for women living even in remote areas.
2. Regarding facilities in the schools, the study observed that majority are not satisfied with the facilities available in schools in the island territory.
3. Around 37 per cent respondents opined that they could not obtain basic education though schools are accessible. Many discontinued studies even at the primary level. Reasons for this include early marriage, lack of interest in studies, orthodox mentality of parents' regarding the education of girl child and poor economic background of the family.
4. Regarding the chances for undergoing higher education it has been observed that only 13.25 per cent of respondents obtained chance. Among the reasons for deprivation of higher education, the study considers four as relevant in the context of the island territory. These include *-poor economic conditions prevailing in the family, marriage at early age, parent's reluctance to send girl child for higher education and family problems faced by them hindered them in pursuing higher education.*
5. The study reveals that those who could not get basic education due to several socio-economic reasons *presently realise* the need to undergo education. They realised their inability to participate in local governing bodies, especially in the meetings of Gram Sabha.
6. A change in the perception towards education of children can also be observed in the study when majority of women are of the view that both boys and girls have to be given equal opportunity in obtaining education. They opine that girl children should not be deprived of getting proper education.

7. Majority of respondents who obtained education opined that they could not get education of their choice. Programmes / courses of their choice and interest were not available to them.
8. The study observed that education obtained by women was mainly an advantageous factor for managing household matters (57.93 per cent are of this view). Education also helped them to obtain self confidence and ability to interact with others in socio-political life.
9. Regarding accessibility to mass media the study observed that television is the popular media in the island territory through they gain information. 90 per cent of respondents view T.V. Only 27 per cent have the habit of reading newspaper. This is not a promising trend.

B. Political Socialisation and Participation

10. The extent to which the women in rural area have been oriented towards political and governmental matters has been studied. The study reveals that only 40 per cent are actively showing interest to attend to political and governmental matters 'regularly'. Involvements in domestic affairs and apathy have been observed as factors. However, 85 per cent opined that they are aware of the political parties working in their area, though the *awareness is limited to symbol and not in substance*.
11. Among those who are interested in politics opined that (50.68) they have preference for any one of the political parties in their area. Around 50 per cent also opined that they exercised their franchise on party basis. (Hence, there exists a correlation between these two elements/factors).
12. Study of perception regarding their interest in participation in political matters reveals that only 7.67 per cent are interested to participate. Nature of their participation has also been studied. Majority of who are interested to participate opined that exercising franchise is the main act of participation.

13. Another noteworthy finding of the study is that those who exercise franchise majority opined that they took decision independently, i.e they are not influenced by husband or other family members.
14. 45.33 per cent of respondents used to attend meetings of Gram Sabha. Reasons pointed out include lack of proper information regarding the conduct of meetings, absence of persons to accompany and absence of conducive environment for women to attend the meetings.

C. Social and Political Mobilisation

15. Majority of the respondents opined that they are not members of any social or cultural organisation. Even though some organisations are formally present in the rural area, they are not found to be active in mobilising rural women. Lack of *effective organisations* has been pointed out as the main factor for this phenomena.
16. Self Help Groups financed by the NABARD and the Andaman State Cooperative bank has been found effective in the rural area. The study reveals that 80.67 per cent are aware of the working of SHGs. Many women in the rural area especially in the South Andaman District are of the view that these groups play a vital role in mobilising women and helped to obtain awareness regarding socio- economic matters, e.g., banking procedure is known to many women through their involvement in SHGs. Regarding interest in participation in SHGs the study observed that 49 per cent respondents opined that they are interested to work in SHGs.

D. Women and Decentralised Governance

17. The study reveals that 54.33 per cent women are aware of the present set up of the PRIs.
18. It is worthwhile here to note that 57.66 per cent are aware of the reservation applicable to women in PRI as a result of the

73rd amendment of the Constitution. Even 36 per cent women are of the view that the present reservation of 33 per cent has to be increased to 50 as done in states like Kerala.

19. Many rural development programmes are being implemented through PRIs. The study observed that 57.33 per cent are aware of employment guarantee programme implemented through PRIs.
20. The study reveals that only 41.67 per cent are aware of welfare schemes implemented in the islands like *Sarvasiksha Abhiyan*. In the case of *Mid Day Meals* implemented 45 per cent are aware.
21. Awareness of financial matters has also been studied and the result shows that majority are aware of the *banking procedure*, the percentage being 70. In the case of awareness regarding *Life Insurance* schemes it was observed that only 37 per cent are aware.
22. The study also examined the extent to which women in the present time enjoy freedom in participation in various aspects of social life. They enjoy freedom in spending money for household affairs and were consulted in deciding various household matters.

Suggestions

1. The study reveals that *basic education is accessible* to majority of the respondents. However, regarding facilities available in the educational institutions, many of them are not satisfied. The study suggests that proper measures to be taken by the concerned line Department to appoint staff with appropriate skills and to impart effective orientation to them.
2. Though basic education is accessible to majority of women in villages, they *could not obtain higher education* in a desired manner. Among other factors, geographical location of the islands is also an added one for this situation. Programmes and courses as desired by the students after their schooling are not accessible to the islanders. *Proper orientation has to be given to the educated youth*

to seek jobs in mainland, and explore possibilities of self-employment opportunities in the island territory.

3. The study observed that in some remote areas of the South Andaman District, *students have to walk even six kilometers for schooling*, for eg. Ward 1 of Shoal Bay Gram Panchayat in South Andaman District. Many parents hesitate to send their wards especially female children to far away areas for schooling. In this regard another suggestion is *to open schools in the remote areas* with facilities for teachers to stay in the locality.
4. *Adult education programmes* in the villages has to be strengthened so that illiterate women in rural area can attain literacy and to sustain it. Here it is to be emphasized that focus should be on functional literacy.
5. It has been observed in the study that majority of the women in the rural area have *not cultivated reading habit*. To cultivate regular reading habit newspaper should be made available even at the remotest areas of the islands. Another suggestion to cultivate reading habit is to *start rural libraries and activating the scheme of mobile library*. For this initiative can be taken by the Gram Panchayats with help and cooperation of educational institutions and NGOs. This will also help to socialise rural mass including the women folk.
6. Due to lack of accessibility of information, the students and youths are *unaware of career opportunities and career options*. Organising career campaigns in schools and colleges to make girl students aware of education and career opportunities can be a step to socialize girl students.
7. Appropriate programmes can be formulated to bring about a greater involvement of women in science and technology. In this context, it is worthwhile here to state that attention should be given to adapt *indigenous technologies, knowledge and practices* (ITKPs) of Panchayats.
8. Andaman and Nicobar Islands is a multilingual society. In multilingual societies, following a multiple language policy is

one of the avenues to ensure full democratic participation. Papua New Guinea a linguistically and culturally diverse nation has implemented an educational reform in 1993 to meet the needs of indigenous people. This can be experimented after appropriate modifications.

9. It has been observed that even after reserving 33 per cent seats for women in PRIs, around 45 per cent are not aware of the structure and functioning of PRIs. The Gram Panchayats have to initiate measures for creating awareness among the villagers regarding composition and working of PRIs. Then only they can participate in the local governance.
8. Actual aggregation of interests is not taking place in the island territory. To aggregate the interests of women, it is suggested that due representation for women has to assured in the functioning of all political parties.
9. Another suggestion which can help in developing orientation towards political objects is to impart instruction in democratic values. This can be initiated at the school level. The teachers can take steps to indoctrinate moral values and democratic principles which can change attitude of students which will help them in socialisation.
10. The Island territory is neither having a sound agrarian nor an industrial base. In this situation it is imperative to take up self employment ventures. The youths have to be motivated to take up self employment schemes for which many institutions are ready to grant financial assistance. The Gram Panchayat has a crucial role in this matter. The matter of self employment ventures has to be discussed in the Gram Sabha meetings so that suitable employment opportunities can be identified as per the resources available in the gram panchayat area, though the availability of resources may differ from one Gram Panchayat to another. Ventures like this is possible only with the collaborative efforts of NGOs and Civil Society Organisations. NGOs working in the islands can impart training programmes.

11. The SHGs have been found to be effective institution at the grass root level in facilitating access to development. The SHGs should be encouraged so that the groups become dynamic change agents. The local bodies can identify such service related opportunities especially in the areas of health, education and social forestry. Appropriate steps at the grass root level can be initiated so that women SHGs could be made to participate to ensure better utilization of available services, resulting in greater involvement of women in the developmental activities related to local bodies. In this regard it is worthwhile to mention here that community development reduce the cost of creating jobs and improve cost effectiveness of transferring resources to poor people.
12. Strengthening of the institution of Gram Sabha and its functions is yet another suggestion for effective political participation of women. The conventional outlook created among the minds of the villagers that it is a platform for distribution of welfare schemes has to change.
13. The study revealed that around 40 per cent of respondents married before they attain 18 years of age. This is not a promising trend. It is the need of the hour to suitably address the issues of early marriage and spacing of children. Early marriage is also a factor for increase in drop out rates. Interventions such as spread of education, compulsory registration of marriage and special programmes like Balika Samridhi Yojana should have impact on delaying the age of marriage.

Concluding Remarks

The island territory consisting of two groups – Andaman group of islands and that of Nicobar group, is *geographically* cut off from mainland. *Demographic* profile reveals that out of the total population, 62.30 per cent are living in rural area, and among the whole population 46.70 per cent are women. People from many states in India reside here and hence this is a multilingual society. *Economic* scenario depicts that the area has neither strong agrarian nor industrial base and

consequently unemployment is emerging as a problem facing the islanders. Majority of the people are *apolitical* by nature. Usually, they are not taking interest in gaining knowledge on socio-political matters. They have a *passive attitude*. They take less interest in organising groups and to articulate interests.

This study shows that situation is slightly changing. Presently women in rural area are showing interest in knowing socio-political issues affecting them and discuss these issues in the groups. Many women presently realise the need for gaining education which might have helped them to participate in the grass root governance and thus contribute to socio-political development of the islands. This realisation of the need for education has a positive impact also on girls' education. In the study majority of respondents opined that girls are to be treated at par with boys in the matter of imparting education. They viewed that girls should be educated because they have to find their livelihood through education. *These observations lead to the fact that women in the rural area are getting politically socialised.*

This study emphasises the strengthening of SHGs because in many rural areas of South Andaman Dist, the scheme has found good response from the beneficiaries of SHGs. The researcher finds that there is a conducive environment for smooth working of SHGs. For this the women in rural areas require sensitization, encouragement and support from concerned agencies.

There is a need to strengthen capacity building initiatives for elected representatives and functionaries. Elected women representatives from remote parts of the islands find it difficult to attend programmes, even if held at Port Blair, due to the peculiar geographic and topographical conditions. Moreover, the UT is not having an Institute to impart training for local self government functionaries and elected representatives as available in other states. Hence, the need of the hour is to have a partnership between training institutes and civil society organisations to cater to the capacity building needs of elected representatives and panchayat raj functionaries of the islands. The partnership model has been tried in many states but it requires more institutional and sustained arrangements.

Measures to improve the status and role and thereby promoting and encouraging the rural women to participate in socio-political life has to be given top priority. Women have a fundamental right to equality with men in all aspects of life and they can play a crucial role in sustainable development. It is therefore essential to integrate gender perspectives in policies, projects and programmes. Reservation of seats for women in PRIs is only the first and the primary step. The next step is to develop their capacities so that they can perform their role properly. Proper policy interventions and effective implementation, awareness building at family, institution and community levels are needed to reduce constraints and facilitate participation of women in the mainstream. Women should be promoted and encouraged by the concerted efforts of Government in partnership with civil society for enhanced and quality political participation. An increased participation in all spheres of political life will ensure political parity with men and at the same time serve the larger issues concerning women. It is only when women come to power and control with a new understanding of power different from the patriarchal understanding, that empowerment in the real sense will take place. Education is a milestone of women's empowerment since it enables women folk to respond to the challenges and to change their life from following the traditional role. *It is learnt that rural women once empowered through education and training are found to be more effective in social change and community development than men.*

The process of decentralised governance has to be accompanied by democratisation and control from below with the active participation of women. Decentralisation support is to be put into the context of a wider process of institutional reforms and programmes for reducing poverty in rural areas. Effective decentralisation can make institutions more responsive to the poor people provided it allows them to hold public servants accountable and ensure their participation and ultimately poverty reduction.

In the island context, a mass political culture in the rural area has to emerge. For this, interest groups, political parties and their frontal organisations can play a crucial role. Emergence of a strong middle class with political consciousness and vigil can help to initiate the growth of participant political culture. Only a vigilant middle class can help in

the formation of public opinion, influence policies and make demand for favourable and appropriate legislation necessary for socio—economic and political development. Simultaneously, efforts need to be made for enhancement of the ability of PRIs. Here lies the relevance of strengthening Gram Sabha as a forum for villagers to discuss their problems freely and frankly. Vibrant Gram Sabha can contribute effectively to decentralised governance. This is the appropriate time for the larger civil society to think of new actions that can bring changes in favour of decentralized governance. The PRIs have to provide space for discussing and deliberating critical gender issues. The PRIs can become more engaged and proactive around strategic gender issues and provide space to promote gender equity with in an overall framework of gender responsive governance.

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Role of PRIs in School Education: Issues and Challenges

Kamlesh Narwana

“So long as we do not discover or create a representative and democratic institution which will supply the local interest, supervision and care necessary to ensure that expenditure of money upon local object conforms with the need and wishes of the locality, invest it with adequate powers and assign to it appropriate finances, we will never be able to evoke local interest and excite local initiative in the field of development...development can not progress without responsibility and power. Community development can be real only when the community understands its problems, realizes its responsibilities, exercises the necessary powers through its chosen representatives and maintains a constant and intelligent vigilance on local administration. With this objective, we recommend an early establishment of statutory elective local bodies and devolution on them the necessary resources, power and authority.”

Quality education is not only a prerequisite for any developed and vibrant society but also a fundamental right of every citizen. It contributes immensely to the human capital formation and helps to attain the goal of poverty eradication. Like most of the other welfare

states, India had also realized this fact well in advance and gave an overriding priority to the development of its educational system. Going with the conventional wisdom, it emphasized on the role of local governing bodies in general and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in particular in education system. Though the concept of decentralization was adopted as early as in early 1950s, it became the focal policy point only in mid 1980s when National Policy on Education- 1986, clearly assigned a major role to the PRIs, in programmes of school improvement. The Education Policy of India, 1986 further strengthened the effort of decentralization, when it talked about giving more power to the local bodies by decentralizing the educational administration in any educational document.

Another boost for decentralization came in 1992 through the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments that gave legal recognition to the local governing bodies i.e. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in rural areas. Education was one of different areas which were kept under PRIs. Under these amendments, all the states were instructed to take necessary steps to decentralize their educational administration. In the newly introduced Right to Education, Local governing bodies have been given duties to provide free and compulsory education to every child.² Village Education Committees (VEC), Parent Teacher Association (PTA), School Management Committee (SMC), School Monitoring and Development Committee (SMDC), Urban Education Committee (UEC) and Village Education and Development Committee (VEDC) were established in different states by passing different state acts.

In this context, this chapter attempts to assess the role of PRIs in improving the school education. It is based on primary field survey in a village Dhamatau Sahib, Jind District, Haryana. The study examines the structural, functional as well as financial linkages between the panchayat bodies and VECs/WECs with a view to strengthen the interface and ensure wider participation of the primary stakeholders, i.e. community. Our presentation is divided in to 5 sections. First and second section presents the background and methodology. Third section deals with theoretical concern on interface between PRI and educational committees. The fourth section discusses the data from the field. Fifth and last section put forth the suggestions by way of conclusion.

Background

In Haryana educational committees were framed in the four phases. In the first phase, VECs were established in four educationally backwards districts (Hisar, Kaithal, Jind, and Sirsa) in 1996 under the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). In the second phase of DPEP, VECs were framed in rest of the districts in state. The third phase of construction of VEC started with Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA). SSA emphasized on the community mobilization thorough the VEC for the educational development of the village. Now under the newly implemented RTE act, the VECs are replaced with School specific committees in form of SMCs. Out of the four districts where first time educational committees were established, Jind was the most backward district (in terms of male-female literacy ratio). Therefore Jind is selected for our study. The selection of the village Dhamtan Sahib was done on the basis of government report and State School Board reports. This has been reported as the ideal village of this district from the perspective of quality of education by Board of School Education, Haryana in 2005-06 (Haryana School Result 2005-05). The village was declared 'an ideal village' in 2006 by the state government (State Administrative Report 2006-07). Keeping the large parameters of the micro studies in mind, only government schools were observed.

Methodology

A mixed methodology was used for the case study. It was based on survey research, obtaining primary and secondary data through interviews, and document analysis. Open-ended questions and interviews were transcribed and inferences were drawn. Parents with different socio- economic backgrounds, *Sarpanch*^[3] of the village, ex-presidents and ex-secretary of the Village Education Committee VECs, female and SC (Scheduled Castes)⁴ members of the VECs, teachers of the school and members of newly constituted SMCs (School Management Committees) were interviewed. Information was also collected from documents and records available in schools and education offices. The data for the study was collected in two rounds. in 2007-2008 and in 2011. This time VECs were replaced with school specific committees i.e. School Management Committees (SMCs)⁵ under newly implemented Right to Education Act 2009.

Educational Participatory Bodies and PRIs

Kantha denotes PRIs as the institutions most proximate to the people and the general body at panchayat level, that is, the gram Sabha, has an open character, they can lay claim to being legitimate community based institutions.⁶ After the 73rd amendment, different states have passed their state acts and various state specific education bodies were established at the local level. These have different nomenclature following more or less same structure e.g. Village Education Committee (VEC) in Haryana, Village Educational Development Committee in Punjab, Vidyalaya Kalyaan Samiti in Delhi etc. In few states more than one committee are also established e.g. VEC and School Management Committee (SMC) in Uttarakhand and Parent Teacher Association and Panchayat Education Committee in Kerala, etc.

The linkages between the PRI and these educational bodies' can be seen from the perspective of 3F i.e., Functionaries, Functions and Finances. In the context of functionaries, the structural linkage becomes important in terms of common membership of PRI members in Panchayat and VECs/SMCs. Under the different guidelines of these committees, it has been recommended that *Sarpanch* of the village will be the chairperson/president of the VEC. The other members of Panchayat can also be nominated as the members of VECs. In few cases, VECs have their subordinate committees for construction and maintenance of school buildings, named as Village Construction Committee. In these committees again, members of Panchayat occupies important position. Besides having common members, both the administrative machineries are at the lowest hierarchy, panchayat at the lowest hierarchy of decentralized administration and VEC is the lowest unit of the educational administration. As per the composition of SMC under RTE, The committee will have the elected representatives of the local authority. Besides, at every level of educational administration, PRI members are part of the administration. Box No.1 presents these linkages. So VEC and SMC have the closest links with panchayat. These structural linkages provide ample opportunity to the PRIs to play an important role in improving the school education.

Box No.1

Provisions under SSA to link with Panchayats: SSA's implementation frame work provides space for community participation and involvement. This is provided through institutional structure like :

Village Education Committee (VEC)/ School development and Management committee (SDMC) - Gram Panchayat representative are members, sarpanch is chairperson, except in Rajasthan)

Cluster level Education committee-CLEC (where Panchayat Samiti representatives will be members)

Block Level Education Committee-BLEC (having Panchayat Samiti representatives as members, in some cases Block Panchayat Chairperson also heads BLEC)

District level advisory Committee-DLC (with Zilla Panchayat representative as members, in some cases ZP chair is also the president of DLEC)

So VEC and SMC have the closest links with panchayat. These structural linkages provide ample opportunity to the PRIs to play an important role in improving the school

Functional linkages between PRIs and SMCs have diversified domain. The School Management Committee shall perform the following functions:

- (a) monitor the working of the school;
- (b) prepare and recommend school development plan;
- (c) monitor the utilisation of the grants received from the appropriate Government or local authority or any other source; and
- (d) perform such other functions as may be prescribed..

In terms of functional linkages, it can be said that help of panchayat becomes indispensable for SMC to perform its functions in effective manner. Vasavi says that, "A village panchayats cannot remain totally isolated form a village-based institution like the primary school. It deals with the schools on occasions like festival days, during inspections of the school by district authorities or when there are disputes between teachers and the village community."⁷ The functional linkages can be viewed form three perspectives, school management and academic issues, community mobilization, and financial assistance. In case of school management, Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE), providing infrastructural facilities, arranging Mid Day Meal (MDM) and civil works etc. are primary tasks expected from the SMC to be performed. In case of UEE, drop out and retention of children, the

SMC is expected to conduct door to door survey and to organize Prabhat pheris, Bal Mela etc. In conducting these activities, PRIs can provide household wise information and assist them to convince village community.

In the academic areas, the PRIs are expected to converge with SMC in filling vacant posts by appointing para-teachers. To create a feeling of ownership for schools among masses, SMC as an institution is given responsibility to mobilize community. In the same way, panchayats are responsible for over all development of village by community development programmes. In this regard, SMC and VEC can be assumed as its sub-ordinate committees by the Panchayats in the area of educational development. Both can prove complementary to each other in achieving their goals of community mobilization. Financial assistance is another realm where the SMC need to work closely with the panchyats as it has been given responsibility to monitor the utilization of the grant received from local authority. Construction of school building i.e. toilets, kitchen, boundary wall and rooms, etc. are different areas where these committees can look up to Panchayat.

Besides keeping these high expectations from collaboration of PRIs and education committees, there are many doubts which have to be kept in mind to gain the maximum benefit from these kinds of collaborative equations. Local level village politics is one of the major hurdles in this regard. In most of the cases nomination of Panchayat members as VEC members comes as a result of consensus of the village community. But the word 'consensus' seems to be hiding many issues in itself. Many studies have concluded that this consensus seems decision of most dominant group of the village. The dominant groups in village use political influence to get their members selected for the VEC. This trend can prove major obstacle in establishing cordial relation between VEC and PRI. In this regard, Acharya concludes that PRIs, instead of spearheading the decentralization of the educational process, became a tool in the hands of the major political parties, which sought to implement populist policies like 'no detention' rather bringing in a thorough revamp of the entire system⁸. But seeing from a different angle, D.A. Mathew argues that "it can be said that political parties and state governments, instead of enabling panchayats to function as self -

governing bodies, are making them mere tools in their hands. Isn't it utopian to assume that a process of decision-making at the village/panchayat level would be free of conflict and power play?"⁹

To represent the socially backward sections in Panchayats, there are provisions of gender and caste based reservation in the membership of Panchayats. Same trend has been followed in the formation of VEC and SMC. In spite of this reservation based representation; the instances of exclusion have remained very common. If this trend is prevalent at the Panchayats level, the probability of its repetition at VEC level becomes high. In such cases, PRIs and VECs linkages can take a reverse turn. In this case, states have to play a monitoring role. These different theoretical concerns have been analyzed in the present study.

Case Study of School Committees and PRI

As per the recommendations of 73rd amendment, Haryana also passed "The Haryana Panchayati Raj Act" in 1994. While defining different functions of Panchayats, the act clearly mentions¹⁰ that

"Subject to such rules as may be made, it shall be the duty of the Gram Panchayat within the limits of the funds at its disposal to make arrangements for carrying out the requirements of sabha area in respect of the following matters including all subsidiary works and buildings connected therewith: -

XIII. Education including Primary and Secondary Schools-

- (1) Promotion of public awareness and participation in primary and secondary education.*
- (2) Ensuring full enrolment and attendance in primary and middle schools and its management.*

XIV. Adult and non-formal education-

Promotion of Adult Literacy.

XV. Libraries-

Village Library and reading rooms.

Thus the Act gives responsibility of educational developments of the village to the Panchayats. The same decentralized structure has been created in the educational administration also. In Haryana, village has been used as a unit for the implementation of this decentralized structure. Under the decentralized educational administration, VECs under SSA and SMCs under RTE act have been established as the lowest unit at the school level. Here we, examine the structural, functional as well as financial linkages between the panchayat bodies and VECs/ SMCs with a view to strengthen the interface and ensure wider participation of the primary stakeholders, i.e. community.

a. The 3Fs: Functionaries, Functions and Finances

Firstly to view the first F (functionaries) in the form of structural linkages, all the schools in surveyed villages were found to be following the government guidelines (as per both SSA and RTE) which indicate the considerable presence of PRIs members. The presence of *Panchayat* members reflects the strong structural linkages. The impact of structural linkages was found quite visible on the functional linkages. The VEC meeting minute's registers and interviews with different VEC members show that VEC deals with a variety of issues. Table 1 presents resolutions passed by the VECs.

Table : 10.1 Resolutions Passed by the VEC in Dhamtan Sahib

1.	Demand for appointment of teachers
2.	Construction of School Office
3.	Repairing of Boundary wall
4.	Supervision in Construction of School Building
5.	To stop drop out
6.	Scholarship for students
7.	Construction of toilet
8.	Construction of pucca road
9.	Arrangement of hand pump
10.	Appointment of Chowkidar for Girls School
11.	Conducting door to door survey
12.	Care of school plants
13.	Appointment of teachers on vacant posts

Source: Data collected from the VEC Meeting Register, 2007.

From the above table, it becomes very clear that VEC is mainly involved in providing infrastructural facilities. The discussion with different members of VEC and interviews with headmaster/headmistress shows VEC have been working with Panchyats in performing these functions. To give a few examples, the boundary wall of the Senior Secondary School (boys) was very short and boys used to jump the wall and run away. The matter was discussed in VEC meetings. VEC decided to seek the help of village panchayat. The panchayat placed the demand for financial help before the Block Education Officer (BEO). The grant was sanctioned. But that was not sufficient. The money was sanctioned only for 2 feet of height. Then a combined meeting of VEC and Panchayat was again called and Headmistress said that since the existing boundary wall itself is in bad condition, it is necessary to repair it first than increase its height, otherwise all the sanctioned money will also go waste. VEC members accepted the suggestion, then the money was collected from the panchayat account and work was finished in the planned way.¹¹ Village community provided the labour and the whole work was inspected by the villagers themselves. When the construction of the wall was completed, VEC member called the Panchayat meeting, all account of the total wages and expenditure were presented before the community.

In another case, girl's primary school did not have proper arrangement for drinking water and toilet facility. The head teacher approached the VEC and raised the issues in the VEC meeting. The VEC accompanied with panchayat members forwarded the demand to Block Education Officer. The grant sanctioned was not sufficient and whatever money was sanctioned, it had taken too much of time. But VEC started the work even before getting any money form the administration. The arrangement for two hand pumps was made. The extra expenses were arranged by the panchayats.¹² To put another incidence, In girls senior secondary school, there was no chowkidar and this caused a serious problem in the rural areas, parent hesitate to send their girls to school once they reached the age of puberty. VEC with the help of Panchayats, appointed a part time chowkidar. The salary was paid by the Panchayats.

Another important fact is the ‘Back to government school campaign’. Before the formation of VEC in the village, the government schools of the village were at the verge of getting close down. Private schools were flourishing in the village. The poor quality of education in government schools, irregularity of teachers and insufficient teaching staff were the main reasons for this condition of the government schools. VEC called a meeting of all government school heads and panchayat members. All these issues were discussed and it was decided to address all the issues and start a ‘Back to Government School campaign’. In order to improve the quality of school education, first of all it decided to fill all the vacant seats of teachers. In this regard, demand was forward by VEC to BEO. By the efforts of VEC, sanctioned posts got increased and guest teachers were appointed. Some posts in primary school were filled by appointing local youngsters. Panchayats arranged for the salaries of these part time teachers.

The irregularity of school teachers was another major concern which needed urgent attention. It was also complained that one teacher used to come to school in intoxicated condition. Regular visit and monitoring by the panchayat members solve the problem to a considerable extent. VEC members decided to call meeting of whole Panchayats. VEC planned to put forward all the issues before the Panchayats. The meeting was called. VEC proposed to improve the condition of school if the whole village was ready to extend their support to VEC. VEC ensured them for quality education and good results. Various resolutions were passed in the Panchayat meeting with vocal votes. Then a local ritual of “Putting salt in a utensil called *lota*” was performed by all the community members. This was a kind of pledge taken, in which villagers said that they would not send their children to private school. If any one found breaking the rules, he would be excommunicated (*us ka hukka pani bad kar diya jayega*). This Panchayat meeting proved a turning point in the history of school education of Dhamtan sahib.

It becomes very relevant to quote one more incident to show the involvement of Panchayats in educational issues of the village. When the private schools were getting close, the private schools heads got the government teachers transferred by using the political connections. When the villagers came to know about it, VEC members, Panchs

and many influential elder persons of the village met the MLA of that local area and these teachers transfer was got cancelled. This incident proves the extent of role, PRIs playing in solving the educational problem of the village.

The VECs members have also helped in improving the physical environment of the village. One VEC member cited the example of kuccha road in front of School. The road used to flood in rainy season. It was almost impossible for small children to access the School. With the help of Panchayat, road was changed into a pucca road. Villagers extended their help for this purpose. Concept of “*Shram Daan*” was used. One day was fixed for every class for maintenance of the school campus. Trees and flowers were planted by children themselves. Playground was maintained and inter school competitions were held. Thus the field evidences indicate that functional and financial linkages between VEC and PRIs have played decisive role in improving quality of school education.

b, Social Exclusion, VEC and Panchayats: Gender and Caste Perspective

VEC and PRIs have done remarkable jobs in the village in improving the quality of school education. However as far as issue of social inclusion or exclusion is concerned, there are some other aspects of the functioning of the VECs. Before analyzing this issue, it is necessary to have a look at the social composition of the village.

Total population of the village was 9598; with 5376 males and 4222 females. Children in the 0-6 year age group numbered 1807, with the male to female ratio being 788:1024.¹³ The sex ratio clearly indicates the position of female in the village society. The pattern of the sex ratio in village is not different from district and state i.e. it also shows the declining graph of female population. The social profile of the village shows that the Scheduled Caste (SC) comprises approximately 17 percent of the total village population. Among the SC, *Chamars* are the most dominant group. *Balmiki, Mazhabhi Sikhs, Bazigar, Od* are other castes which come under SC. Among general category, *Jaats, Brahmins, Baniyas, Mehtas, Sikhs* are main castes. Jaat comprises the most influential and dominant community of the village. Among the Backward Caste

(BC), *Nais*, *Sunar*, *Lohar*, *Kumbar* are the major communities. *Jaat* community being the dominant one, sociologically and population wise both, the real power seems to rest with them. Most of the time, post of the *Sarpanch* is being held by the candidate of *Jaat* community. The representation of women is only on paper, the real power is being used by her husband, which was revealed by the interviews with *Sarpanch* and other villagers.

c, Gender Perspective

To look from the gender perspective, it is important to mention that Haryana is a patriarchal society. In a comparative study on Haryana and Himachal Pradesh's schooling by Marie Eve Bondroite, it was found that there is less equality in Haryana among male and female. It was observed that many mothers in Haryana have no idea of the cost of schooling and considered this to be their husbands' business.¹⁴ In spite of high female work participation, female have little say in their daily household matters. This scenario is also reflected in the villages. 20% seats of VEC and 50% seats of SMCs are comprised of female members. When the meeting registers of the VECs were checked, it was found that these female members are never present in the meeting of VEC. When personal interviews were conducted with them, one of the representatives felt very surprised to know that she is a member of the committee. She was never intimidated about her membership. So there is no question of her participation. She candidly said that her name might be there only because of the legal requirements. The other one said that, the females of the village are not allowed to speak in front of the elders of the village, present in the meetings. Second reason cited by her was that they remain very busy with the household chores so they hardly have any time for 'Such Futile' activities.¹⁵ Her statement shows the lack of awareness regarding the importance of VEC.

Another issue which can be an important factor responsible for 'no female participation' and also shows face of patriarchal society is 'Veil System'. The Veil System is still prevalent in the society. Females kept themselves under veil in front of their elders. This veil system ensure that female don't speak or participate in front of the elders of the village. These rigid social traditions don't let them gain confidence

to participate in public spheres. This culture of grabbing social spaces by male and lack of confidence among females is cultivated since their schooling. It was found that in the co-educational school, there were different sections for boys and girls in the same class. If there is need to organize any combined class, teachers have to see permission of the principals. This was done on the instructions of village *panchayats*. In such gender based segregation, female don't get confidence to share the public spaces with male. The field evidences show that given proper opportunity, female can play important role in solving educational problems of the village. In all the villages, it was found that when parents were invited for formation of SMC, mostly mothers came to the school.^[16] Principle of one surveyed school shared her experience when she says that whenever we call parents of any child, generally mothers come to the school.^[17] In spite of social barriers, they try to listen to the complaints from the teacher and understand the issues. Female participation generally was found visible in ensuring the regular attendance of their child in school. There is need to focus on this potential role of female. Given the social and cultural barriers, it was noticed that mothers have comparatively high rate of participation in attending school meeting or visiting schools when they are supposed to deal with female teacher or it is a girl's school. Male to female interaction still remains very limited.

One more factor which emerges here is that parents give more preference to boys' education than girls. They prefer to send their boys to private School and girls to government schools. In spite of the fact that majority of girls attend the government schools than boys, female members have no role to play in the functioning of these educational committees.

d, Caste Perspective

Besides gender, caste remains another social impediment to obstruct the community participation. Alike female representation, scheduled caste (SC) representative also have seats in VECs and SMCs. Their participation also remains rooted in social and cultural traditions of hierarchies. They were there because representation of these communities is required by the structural guidelines of the VEC. When

SC representative was contacted, he said that caste differences prevailed everywhere. Whenever he tried to give any advice, either he was silent or no attention was paid to his suggestion. So, slowly he had started withdrawing from the meeting. He said that, most of the discussion in the VEC meetings centered around five vocal members, the others remained passive listeners.¹⁸ The reason behind it was said that they were in that position because they have the capacity to make donation to school and VEC. His statement was checked with his attendance in the meeting register. Except few initial meetings, he remained absent from the VEC meetings. When Headmistress was asked about this, she said that though caste differences prevailed but some reasons were exaggerated. She always remained present in the meeting and make it sure that no partiality being done in favor of upper caste.¹⁹ But because headmistress is also from upper caste her statement cannot be relied fully.

Incidences of social tension between upper and lower castes outside the school premises, is reflected within school functioning also. To mention one incident from field, in one of the surveyed school, a cook for Mid-Day-Meal was appointed from lower castes. Though social profile of the school maintains the majority of lower castes students, but still parents of upper castes objected the appointment. These small number of upper caste children did not eat food till the time that lower caste cook was there. Then that cook was replaced with a new cook from upper caste. It shows the extent of influence of upper caste.^[20] These incidents certainly affect negatively the participatory process since, the SMCs and VEC could not take action against such deeds in spite of presence of SC representative.

Another incidence of relationship between upper class teacher and lower class students reflect the social barriers. Generally teachers ask students to fetch water for class teacher. When this school was visited for survey, the teacher themselves brought water for me, when asked why she didn't ask any student to get water, her reply carried castiest notions. She replied that there are only two students from upper caste and both of them are absent today, so she can't let these untouchables to touch the water. These social division inside the classroom reflect the social conditions outside Upper caste teachers generally don't consider the studies of these students necessary.

As Acharya (1985), also analyses this aspect' “..they feared that universal and compulsory enrolment would deprive them of the easy supply of child labour. In that case, they would be forced to hire in adult people instead of child labour at a higher wage which would cause an increase in their cost of agricultural production. Besides they feared that labour relations would deteriorates if laboring classes were educated. It was generally apprehended that the labouring classes would refuse to submit to the authority of higher strata and would try to assert their rights and privileges once they got a little education.” As mentioned earlier, mostly the poorest of the poor section of society send their children to government school. These people generally have no time to attend the meetings of VEC/SMCs or visit the school. Even some time, when they really want to visit, their daily hand to mouth situation don't permit them to do much. The relatively affluent sections of society (irrespective of caste and ethnic identity) shrug off their responsibilities towards the monitoring or supervision of (government run) schools, which they (and only they, given the social set up) are otherwise capable of doing. Their ability to take expensive private measures for their children's education creates a false sense of security, which makes them indifferent to other, sometimes greater, social insecurities (Kumar and Das: 2004).

In spite of the very encouraging role played by the VEC and Panchayats, the gender and caste issues remain unsolved. Here it becomes relevant to put Vasavi's remarks, “The idea in drawing attention to problem associated with organizing for collective benefits is not to deny the people's capacity- in social, psychological or political terms- to organize, but to note and underscore the problems associated with organizing democratically across caste and class boundaries.”²¹ So keeping in mind the potential of PRIs and VEC's collaborative equation, there is need to create more sensitization towards these issues at Panchayat level.

Concluding remarks

Our analysis has thrown light on the role played by the PRIs in the school education. The structural relation between PRIs and VECs and SMCs has proved very helpful in the case of strengthening the functional

and financial linkages. Enrolment drives, appointment of teachers and para-teachers, improving physical environment of the schools and providing infrastructural facilities in the schools etc. are different areas where PRIs have provided enough support both financially and administratively. However the limited role of marginalized section (women and SCs) needs special attention. Efforts should be made to evolve some mechanism to give voice to the marginalized sections also which found to be unheard in our analysis.

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The Severity of Water and Sanitation Problems at Tswlelopele High School Itsoseng township: South Africa

Masego Kgosiemang and Kiran Odhav.

Water is a limited natural resource; it is a public good which is fundamental for human health and life. It is a natural resource that should be used sensibly. It should be preserved for the common good of all people and the global ecosystem on this earth. Water is also considered to have cultural significance beyond its health and environmental values. It is essential for securing a livelihood and enjoying cultural practices. In urban areas, due to increase in population, fresh water resources are affected by the overuse of the existing limited natural resources as well as the increasing pollution caused by urbanization which causes water scarcity in quantity, as well as in terms of its quality (WHO, 2003).

Access to water and sanitation services remains highly correlated to wealth and race in post-apartheid South Africa. Under apartheid, differential access to water was institutionalized through legal mechanisms and governmental structures, and material wealth by differential access to domestic water supply networks. Whereas white communities continued to enjoy “first world” services, the majority

of black South Africans had access to water of much poorer quality, or had no water or sanitation facilities (Taylor and Francis).

According to WHO/UNICEF (2010) sustained beneficial outcomes from water and sanitation interventions in the developing world are still an elusive goal for many people and their governments. According to the United Nations, in the year 2000, 1.1 billion people lacked safe water and 2.4 billion people lacked adequate sanitation. In Africa in particular, an estimated 62 percent have access to safe water supply, with 47 percent coverage in rural areas and 85 percent in urban areas. Adequate sanitation in Africa is estimated to be 60 percent overall, with 45 percent in rural areas and 84 percent in urban areas.

Water insufficiency is a universal problem; both urban poor and rural people are at the fore front of the problem of poor access to clean water and basic sanitation. This is also a major situation in Itsoseng Township in the North West province, where learners have to spend eight hours at school with no water during school days. The focus of this chapter is the problem of access to adequate water and sanitation and its impact on the learners and teachers at Opelang Middle School in Itsoseng Township, which is between Mahikeng and Lichtenburg. This problem has been going on for more than five years now.

The school has one tap as a water supply, which does not function most of the times. Lack of water is not safe for the school users both learners and teachers. Toilets are blocked due to the lack of water. Learners are struggling with sanitation and have to go to nearby houses for toilet facilities during school hours, and this disturbs their lessons. It is obvious that the poor access to clean water and basic sanitation is affecting the lives of learners and teachers of Opelang Middle School. This lack of access to quality water and sanitation has adverse effects on the personal well-being of the learners and teachers, and does not create a conducive educational environment. Therefore, the issue of access to clean water and basic sanitation must receive attention from the responsible authorities.

This chapter will explore the significance of clean, safe and adequate water and sanitation at Opelang middle school in Itsoseng Township. It will also examine the relationship of the school to the Ditsobotla district municipality on matters related to water and sanitation problems.

“We are also trying to generate knowledge that will inform the formulation of policy and practical solutions to address this problem. This study is important both to the school and the community as a whole, since water is one of the main sources of satisfying many basic needs. Provision of clean and safe water is a basic need of learners and teachers in any school.”

An initial survey of the literature shows eleven studies investigating drinking water provision and five examining water both for drinking and for hand washing (Haines et. al., 2000:96). All the studies that exclusively investigated water for drinking were conducted in developed countries: ten studies in the United Kingdom and the United States and one in Germany. Seven of the eleven studies measured the change in water consumption from increased water provision in schools. All eleven studies reported inadequacies in provision of water for drinking, and the benefits of improving drinking-water provision in schools.

Economically developed countries may have sanitation facilities that enable females to manage their menstruation cycles privately due to an abundant supply of clean water, privacy, affordable sanitary materials and undergarments, and may also have supportive female teachers and school nurses to help manage their menstruation (Sommer et. al., 2010:33, 526). However, deficiencies in sanitation facilities to manage menstruation in schools in the United Kingdom were reported in two cross-sectional studies (Jones et. al., 2007:27, 87). Post-pubescent female schoolgirls in Tanzania and South Africa reported challenges to travel to and to attend school during their menstruation due to their inability to afford sanitary materials and inadequate school facilities such as the lack of running water, or broken doors that do not allow privacy for females (Abrahams et. al., 2006:753 and Sommer et. al., 2010:527). Schoolgirls in South Africa also reported a fear of using sanitation facilities, due to sexual attacks in school toilets that were situated far from the school building. They also avoided school during menstruation (Abrahams et. al., 2006:753).

The aim of this chapter is to investigate the severity of water and sanitation problems at Opelang middle school in Itsoseng Township. The research strategy was chosen as it enabled the researcher to examine in detail prospects and challenges that the learners and teachers are facing because of the problem. The problem has been investigated within a specified time frame, using a combination of appropriate data collection devices. This chapter presents the research methodology which consists of the assumptions, regulations, and methods.

There are two types of research paradigms which are qualitative and quantitative. This research was concerned with the lived experience of a group with a phenomenon of interest. The researcher used the qualitative approach due to its suitability in social research, which can be done in the subjects' natural setting (De Vos, 2001). Qualitative research is a type of a primary research in which the researcher collects first-hand information obtained directly from participants (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In this study, data was collected from the learners, educators, principals and a Ditsobotla district municipality representative.

Our analysis is centered around Opelang middle school which was opened in 1972. The school is situated in the Eastern part of the capital city of the North West province in Itsoseng Township, to the west side of the R503 road towards Mafikeng. It is in Ward 7 of Ditsobotla Municipality. The school has 132 learners, 4 educators and one principal. The population used for this study was the learners, educators, principal of Opelang Middle School, two women that cook for the learners in the school, and the representative of Ditsobotla district municipality. A sample was drawn from these participants and conclusions were drawn using the sample that was selected from the population.

According to the local municipality, Itsoseng Township faces a severe shortage of water and a sanitation crisis. The quality of life of the residents has been seriously affected by this on-going water problem in their community. According to the Ditsobotla district municipality representative, Itsoseng Township has been experiencing water shortages for many years. Opelang Middle School uses only one source of water which is not working most of the time.

Causes of Water Problems

The respondents indicate that most people see a decline of water infrastructure systems in the community of Itsoseng. The water infrastructure systems such as the municipal pipes and the community reservoirs are no longer used because they are no longer repaired or maintained and they were too old to work effectively because of the lack of maintenance. People in this community used to get water from the municipality pipes. A new reservoir has been built but is not used because according to The Ditsobotla District Municipality, there is an ongoing negotiation about the land that the water pipes have to pass through in order to supply water to the community.

The research findings show that water provided through one tap to Opelang Middle School is not enough. Respondents resort to coping strategies when there are water shortages. Most of the respondents from Opelang Middle School have to go and ask for water and toilet facilities from nearby houses during school hours and this affects their lessons. Respondents are forced to stay for eight hours without water, and to use unhygienic toilets (photo 4.2). Boreholes are very expensive and the school cannot afford to install one because the annual money they receive from the government is not enough.

The data collected from the sample of respondents shows that 96 percent of the school use the school toilets and the majority of these are females. While male learners can just stand next to a wall or tree and urinate, female learners have many more difficulties.

As one of the female respondent explained

“I cannot go to those stinky toilets and I have to stay pressed with the urine in my bladder for hours and during my menstruation period it is even harder because time to time I need to go to the toilets and check my sanitary pad”

Impact of Poor Access to Clean Water and Basic Sanitation

The insufficiency and non-functioning of water and sanitation services in the school affects girls more than boys. Providing toilet facilities for girls and women not only requires a physical structure, but also needs to address the issues of privacy, safety, convenience and

cleanliness. Toilets for girls in the school had no doors and no water basins. In the words of one of the girls:

“Our toilets don’t have doors and basins for hand washing, and for us girls it creates huge problems and we are embarrassed to use them especially during menstruation”.

Due to the poor condition of their toilets, they had to use the toilets of nearby houses. The effect is both psychological and physical due to various issues such as privacy, convenience and cleanliness.

The girl learners of Opelang Middle School were also concerned about their menstruation period since it is a time of special need for hygienic management. The interaction with the girl learners evidently indicated the difficulties they faced regarding the water problem and no proper toilets. Flushtoilets were blocked and there were no basins for hand washing. However, teenage girls had to use the blocked and unhygienic toilets during their menstruation, making their condition very noticeable. Thus, for privacy and to avoid embarrassment, some menstruating girls do not go to school during their menstruation. They said that this definitely affected their learning process once a month, although they were absent for days on end or dropping out. Disposing of the sanitary pad was another problem faced by the learners. There are no bins or pits for disposal of sanitary pads. One of the girls shared their experience:

Based on the findings, there is a poor availability of sanitation facilities in Opelang Middle School. There is also an inadequate supply of the related materials such as anal cleansing tissues, and particularly for female and male learners. According to the mean values, the hand washing facilities are also inadequate to effectively serve the population in the sampled school, while the urinals also need to be increased in number.

The school latrines are ventilated, though there are no doors, basins or dustbins, and there is rarely water or soap for hand-washing. During the interview, teachers identified that one sanitation success of the school has been to educate pupils on improved sanitation and hygiene practices, and that few very illnesses have occurred because of the poor sanitation. The relationship between water and sanitation was once again addressed

by a school teacher, quoting that *“if water is available, then sanitation can be improved.”*

Despite the general unpleasant condition of the latrines and urinals, the respondents continued to utilize the available facilities simply because they have no other option when nature calls. However, cases of illnesses related to poor hygiene and sanitation practices were not a common phenomenon in the sampled school. This shows that although the situation is not at its best, neither is it alarming in terms of sickness.

The use of toilets and urinal facilities was rated at 70 percent although a considerable percentage (57.5 percent) of the learners had complaints of poor cleanliness of the facilities. Regarding the hand washing facilities, very few of the learners (20 percent) bother to wash their hands. Most of them (80 percent) do not bother at all. Despite sound knowledge of the diseases that could affect them by poor sanitation and hygiene practices, use was generally low among learners of the sampled school.

Based on findings and analysis, the study clearly indicated problems in water and sanitation facilities, in terms of their adequacy, functionality and appropriateness. On the one hand, the school was hard pressed to meet even the basic water and sanitation needs, while on the other, the need for improved facilities to meet the needs of special groups such as menstruating girls, were emerging concerns. These problems were further compounded by seasonal variation in the of water, contamination, increased demand from the community when the facilities were shared, poor conditions of latrines and lack of operation and maintenance, including a separate maintenance budget. The study also found that the representative of the Ditsobotla district is equally concerned about current issues and problems faced by school, and they are hopeful that the new water reservoir and strategy would overcome most of the problems.

Hand-washing is another concern at Opelang Middle School. While people in Opelang Middle School did know to wash their hands before eating, and after using the toilet, the challenge was to make the practice more accessible and affordable. Water for hand-washing and drinking was often not made available. Hand-washing practices and use has

not been made more available by the construction of locally built hand-washing stations, or water basins in the toilets.

Further, disparities were observed in the type of toilets and maintenance budget provided to different levels of the school. Although the government is aware of and concerned about the problems and issues faced by the school, there was inadequate information on water and sanitation available in school. The current situation of inadequacy and non-functioning of water and sanitation facilities in the school has affected the girls more than the boys. The girls are affected both psychologically and physically due to various issues such as cleanliness, convenience, privacy, and in disposing of sanitary napkins during menstruation. Menstruation and its hygienic management were not discussed much at the school. During the interviews girls expressed difficulties which had to some degree affected their learning process, since some girls stayed home during menstruation.

Recommendations

Water, sanitation and hygiene education programmes should be in place. Learners should be given more training and education about water and sanitation. There should also be a focus on creating awareness concerning consequences of using poor quality water and unimproved sanitation systems. The awareness creating campaign and training would have an important role in shaping the learner's state of mind.

Given the situation faced by learners whose parents want them to be educated, it is suggested that the school management must take control of this problem since it has been going on for more than five years. Both the Department of Education and the Ditsobola District Mayor should revisit the school, so that they can see what these learners are going through:

1. Water should be treated as a basic human right. Sufficient water and infrastructure should be provided to each school to satisfy their basic water needs.
2. Water and sanitation utilities should be regulated to improve efficiency; ensure equity and accountability to all people living within

that area. Water provision should be in line with the principles of non discrimination and equality.

3. There should also be a program to make the learners, educators and the principal aware of how to use water wisely, and how to reduce its wastage.
4. The adequacy ratio defined in the draft School WASH Policy and Strategy (2008) should be adhered to and implemented strictly. The adequacy ratio should factor in both quality and quantity of water, not just meeting a theoretical ratio of adequacy.
5. If the budget is sufficient, all female toilets should be designed for best usage surrounding the menstrual issue. Otherwise a separate unit or latrine should be designated for use during menstruation to ensure privacy.

Concluding Remarks

Based on findings and analysis, the study indicated severe problems in water and sanitation facilities, based on hygiene and health adequacy. It tried to locate the social structures that are either inadequate or non-existent to deal with such problems, whether in terms of the school or the Ditsobotla district municipality. Findings also seek to respond to the research topic stated in chapter 1: The severity of problems relating to water and sanitation at Opelang Middle School in Itsoseng Township.

The study discovered clear proof that clean water and sanitation facilities could certainly make a difference to the quality of learners' experience. It also showed there were still many examples of some learners being temporarily excluded from school because of inadequate facilities (this was particularly an issue for menstruating girls). The study concludes that severe problems exist in water and sanitation facilities, in terms of adequacy, functionality and appropriateness, at Opelang Middle School. Although girls were not discriminated against, these issues have affected the girls more than the boys, especially the menstruating girls.

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Drinking Water and Local Bodies- Study Base on Grama Panchayats in Kasaragod, Kerala

T P Sreedharan

Kasaragod District in Kerala records an annual rain fall of 3300 M.M and eight rivers are flowing through the district. In spite of these and the schemes run by Kerala Water Authority (KWA) and LSGs, 58 % of households suffer from the scarcity of drinking water. To address this from April 2001 as a part of sectoral reforms, pilot project under Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission (RGNDWM) and later in 2004 a new programme *Swajaladbara* were initiated in the district. Nine rural drinking water schemes were completed with the assistance from central government. Similarly with the aid of LIC and Government of Kerala 90 small scale drinking water schemes were also completed by 2005. During the periods of decentralization, LSGs have invested in drinking water on a large scale. In place of the dependence on large pipe water schemes managed by KWA, local governments attempted to rejuvenate local ponds, dig wells, drill tube wells and create small scale water distribution schemes (Issac and Franke,2000).

This chapter is based on two independent studies. First, is in three Grama Panchayats(GP) in Kasaragod District in 2008 and the other in

five GPs in 2012. The studies aim at bringing out the role of LSGs in solving the issue of drinking water scarcity. The role played by GPs in this matter since the inception of Peoples Plan Campaign has been widely acclaimed. GPs have been instrumental in digging ordinary wells and tube wells in public places and in disbursing subsidy to financially backward households for private wells of all sorts.

Apart from GP mediated drinking water schemes projects there are projects implemented directly by Kerala Water Authority under the state Government and those executed under RGNDWM. As the KWA schemes are independent of LSGs and have a uniform pattern of implementation and maintenance throughout the state, we have attended them in our review. In the case of RGNDWM the role of GP is that of a facilitator. The study attempts to evaluate the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of a few drinking water projects directly implemented by three GPs vis a vis a few GP facilitated DW schemes under RGNDWM.

From a social perspective, the GP schemes were providing a useful service to the economically weaker sections of society. The beneficiaries of RGNDWM schemes were households that could afford to share the capital cost of installation and their monthly share of operation and maintenance (O&M) charges. The GP schemes, on the other hand, provide water to the households absolutely free. Given the widening inequality in the distribution of incomes and wealth, providing water free of cost to deserving households is an urgent necessity to met with. The question that emerge from our analyses of the GP schemes is whether they have the necessary capacity, skills and resources to address the issue of water supply. In the sample, the GPs did not seem to have acquired the capacity for efficient planning and implementation of water supply schemes. If the GPs fail to develop the necessary skills and capacity, it is likely that parallel schemes such as the RGNDWM will gain more acceptances. That would undermine the importance of local governance, which is expected to bring about equity and inclusiveness in the allocation of basic human needs such as safe drinking water.

The first study was conducted in 2008 for Research Unit on LSGs under the Centre for Development Studies (CDS). The study was

done in three GPs with more or less the same socio-political and economic background. These Panchayats are named A, B, and C to conceal their identity. They are predominantly agrarian panchayats in different geographic locations of the District. The concepts central to this study—relevance, efficiency and effectiveness—are analysed using information obtained through qualitative methods and tools such as semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, participatory observations and field studies. Snowball samples of actors and users of selected assets were identified through discussions with present and previous elected representatives (ER), political party leaders, activists and clients. Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were conducted to understand the process of identifying needs, preparing projects and implementing and monitoring them. To give credence to the qualitative analysis, we assessed a few drinking water projects using criteria consistent with the International Fund for Agricultural Development's (IFAD) evaluation methods and the plan procedure for decentralisation in Kerala. The criteria-based ratings give an overall picture of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and overall performance of the projects studied. The meanings and definitions of the concepts used in each criteria and a five-point scale of qualitative measurement is provided in the Appendix.

Status of Drinking Water

Scarcity of drinking water forms a serious issue in the slotted panchayats. About 95% of the households in Panchayat A depends on surface wells for drinking water. According to the Panchayat Development Report (1997); of the 3,184 wells in the panchayat, around 2,200 (69%) dried up in summer. And of the total 24 bore wells in the panchayat, 14 were defunct. About half the households in Panchayat B experienced an acute shortage of drinking water at the time, the Peoples Plan Campaign (PPC) was launched. Although 80% of the households in Panchayat C had their own surface wells, water in most of them had the tendency to deplete during summer. Open wells, bore wells, rainwater harvesting structures and small-scale water supply schemes were the major projects implemented in the sample GPs. Besides, these all the panchayats had about 10 to 15 units of the RGNDWM in their jurisdiction. The role of the GPs varied between these two—while

they played the role of a mediator or facilitator for the centrally sponsored scheme, they played the role of a provider for their own schemes.

The potential beneficiaries meet under the initiative of GP had to elect a committee from among them. These beneficiary committees of the RGNDWM units managed all activities from identifying sites to implementing projects and distributing water. The committees collected user fees from all the beneficiaries with no exemption to poor and marginalised groups. To ease the burden of users, several RGNDWM units adopted innovative mechanisms such as running mutual benefit finance schemes (chit funds or *kuris*) to raise finance for O&M. There is a separate wing of officials consisting of an engineer, an accountant and a social mobiliser to initiate and supervise the project implementation.

The institutional structure of GP-sponsored water supply schemes was not comparable with those of the RGNDWM. Unlike RGNDWM schemes, most of the GP schemes provided water as a free good. There were public taps installed of the roadsides, but no metered house connections. Users were free to access water from these taps and LGs met the capital cost of installation. But in several cases, fund allocation was inadequate to meet the full cost. Usually the total funds earmarked for drinking water projects were distributed equally among all the wards for different schemes in a panchayat. For example, in Panchayat A, Rs. 14,625 each was allocated to 11 drinking water projects implemented during 1997-98 and 2001-03. That amount was grossly inadequate for completing projects in several places. Completed schemes depended on GP funds for major repairs and to replace parts, especially motors and pumps, and were generally managed by the GPs. The overburdened staff of the GP have no incentive to pay any special attention to the GP sponsored DW schemes.

Detailed Assesment

We selected a random sample of four GP schemes and two units of RGNDWM projects for detailed assessment and evaluation. The sample drinking water projects, the cost incurred, the time of completion and their benefits as follows.

Panchayat A: (a) RGNDWM project (about Rs. 6 lakh in 2002-03, coverage about 55 households); (b) panchayat drinking water scheme (began in 1997, borewell and water tank, coverage about 10 households).

Panchayat B: (a) panchayat drinking water project (borewell, and water tank, began in 2002-04, coverage about 90 households); (b) panchayat drinking water project (surface well and a water tank 1 km away, constructed in 2001-02, coverage about 70 households).

Panchayat C: (a) panchayat drinking water project (Rs. 2.62 lakh in 2000-01, coverage about 42 households); (b) RGNDWM project (Rs. 6.65 lakh in 2004-05, coverage about 80 households).

Qualitative data and criteria-based analyses indicated that all the water supply schemes were relevant. A slight difference in the relevance ratings of one unit in Panchayat A and another one in Panchayat C was because of their location at disadvantage. Wells and tanks were not located in the appropriate area rather they are in places where land was available either free or at relatively low rates. Criteria-based evaluation ratings of relevance are given in Table 1.

Table 12.1: Panchayat-wise evaluation ratings of drinking water structures

Sl. No	Criteria	Panchayats					
					C	B	A
		b	a	b	a	b	a
1	Clarity of needs	5	5	5	5	5	5
2	Essentiality	5	5	5	5	4	5
3	Articulation of needs by users	5	4	3	3	3	5
	Relevance	5	4	5	5	4	5

Note: 5 - excellent, 4 - good, 3 - satisfactory, 2 - poor, 1 - very poor.

Given the high relevance of the projects, one would expect great efficiency in implementation and use. But that was not the case with the GP schemes. Criteria-wise evaluations indicated that three out of the four sample GP schemes were implemented without any scientific information on technical feasibility and economic viability. One scheme in Panchayat A was too small to reap the economies of scale. Moreover, sufficient funds were not available for its efficient construction. But

RGNDWM units were efficient and they reaped the benefit of economies of scale. Our evaluation ratings are given in Table 2.

Table 12.2: Panchayat-wise process evaluation ratings of efficiency of drinking water structures.

Sl. No	Criteria				Panchayats		
					C	B	A
		b	a	b	a	b	a
1	Information based	5	5	1	2	4	1
2	Financial sufficiency	5	5	4	5	5	1
3	Transparency	5	5	2	4	4	2
	Efficiency	4	4	2	2	2	1

Note: 5 - excellent, 4 - good, 3 - satisfactory, 2 - poor, 1 - very poor.

The sample RGNDWM units adopted a preference-based approach along with community participation in decision-making, especially for the choice of location, planning, design, implementation, control of finances and management arrangements. The scheme provided a significant amount of capacity building and information, education and communication on water and social mobilisation. Water sources and tanks of RGNDWM schemes are located in suitable places. Land was bought in suitable locations at market rates, since finances not being a constraint. Collectivism and co-operation of users was ensured through registered co-operatives. The scheme incorporated conservation mechanisms such as rainwater harvesting and ground water discharge systems for resource sustainability. Transparency in implementation was another highlight of the RGNDWM schemes. User societies directly supervised the implementation of the projects. LSGs provided all facilities and support to officials and the local community. It was noted that the officials did not undermine people's preferences and the user community was given scientific information to take informed decisions on planning and implementation, right from selection of the site to O&M of the scheme.

The planning, implementation and management of GP drinking water supply schemes were a testimony to the clientelist approach of the decision-makers. Local leaders of the ruling party and elected representatives (ER) followed a patron-client approach rather than

leaving the GP schemes to the democratic and informed decisions of potential users. The LSGs, therefore, failed to evoke a feeling of ownership among the users. The users, in turn, approached the GP for all kinds of repair and maintenance. Since the GPs were overburdened with a wide variety of functions, they had neither the time nor resources for efficient operation and maintenance (O &M) to ensure an uninterrupted supply of water. However, user groups said that the schemes were very effective in addressing the problem of acute drinking water shortage in summer. As far as the local people were concerned, the schemes meant something in the absence of nothing. The GP schemes were partially effective in mitigating the problem of acute shortage of drinking water during the lean months. Criteria-wise assessment and evaluation ratings (Table 3) point to the effectiveness and overall performance of the schemes.

Table 12.3: Panchayat-wise evaluation ratings of effectiveness of drinking water structures

Sl. No	Criteria				Panchayats		
					C	B	A
		b	a	b	a	b	a
7	Supervision and monitoring	5	1	4	1	2	5
8	Maintenance	5	1	4	1	2	5
9	Sustainability	5	2	4	1	1	5
10	Present status of the project	4	2	4	1	3	5
	Effectiveness	4	1	4	2	4	4
	Overall performance	4	2	4	2	3	5

Note: 5 - excellent, 4 - good, 3 - satisfactory, 2 - poor, 1 - very poor.

Even though the GP schemes were poor in O&M, local leaders and elected ward member provided all support for making them effective. Take the case of project (a) in Panchayat B. A user committee under the guidance of the local unit of a political party manages to provide free water to about 90 households through public taps. The GP meets the cost of the electricity used for pumping. Local leaders collect contributions from users to pay the pump operator. But nobody knows what will happen if the next panchayat Governing Body objects to paying the electricity bill. Ward member and party leaders said that they were trying to restructure and revitalise the GP schemes without

violating the principles of equity and inclusiveness. They also said that the institutional designs of RGNDWM schemes were good models that could be emulated since they provide examples for good governance synergised with the principles and processes of true decentralisation.

Drinking water supply schemes were effective in addressing the problem of acute scarcity of water in summer. But a lack of institutional capacity¹ was evident in the construction and O&M of GP schemes. Formal institutional arrangements were practically absent for water pumping and distribution. It was the client-patron relationship between the providers (local leaders of the ruling party) and users that sustained uninterrupted water supply. The providers made arrangements for pumping water, for timely repairs and maintenance and to pay electricity bills. However, this clientelistic approach negated the basic tenets of participatory democracy and decentralised governance.

The LSGs appeared to have failed to ensure equity and welfare provisions for the deprived sections. For instance, water supply connection points were usually located on the side of motorable roads and those living in the interior, especially in rural areas, were likely to be discriminated against. If governance is for the wider benefit of society, which predominantly comprises of the poor, “no citizen should suffer because of her/his choice of location of residence” (Oommen 2000: p. 412). But in the sample GPs, location disadvantage made the real benefit of free water supply inaccessible to several households. RGDWM schemes were “market driven” and the deprived sections had to share the cost of running the water supply scheme. Planning and project preparation requires factual data and the services of professionals and skilled and trained personnel. There is already a procedure in place for LGs to avail themselves of the services of local experts to help prepare plan proposals and projects, and as advisors. But this is almost redundant when policy-makers are not willing to adhere to factual data-based planning because it would eliminate, or at least reduce, the scope for clientelistic party politics. It is also true that factual data on several key issues are not available at the GP level. So we suggest that a data base may be created at the GP level. All the line departments and agencies and institutions collecting

data related to the development aspects of a region should have to maintain it in a retrievable format and share it with LSGs. The Department of Statistics should support this so that LSGs always have updated data required for local-level planning. Technical experts have to be given the freedom to prepare technically efficient, economically viable and socially relevant projects based on factual data. The institutional capacity of LSGs has to be enhanced so that they can choose and prioritise efficient projects looking at the resources available to them at each point in time.

Maintenance and upkeep of community assets under the ownership of LSGs require a separate budgetary provision and institutional arrangements. Responsibility for the O&M of each asset should be assigned to specific individuals or agencies, and they should be made accountable for the use of community assets. In brief, an overall shuffling is called for in the practice of project preparation, implementation and O&M if assets are to be created in an efficient and sustainable manner under decentralisation.

The Second Study

The second study done for Institute of Social Sciences, Delhi relies mainly on primary data. Two Developmental Blocks were selected at random and from each Block four villages were selected. These 8 villages were from five Grama Panchayats. From each village hundred households were selected at random for detailed survey by using a structured questionnaire. Besides, FGDs and interviews were held with various stakeholders.

Sources of drinking water in the District are of highly degree of variation. Out of the 783 Households (HHs) surveyed 88% of the households depend on wells for all domestic purposes including drinking. Other sources include hand pumps, ponds, streams and small scale water supply schemes. Roof water storage tanks are mostly in public buildings. Only 7% households in the surveyed GPs utilize public water supply. 83% of house holds assumes that their water source is well protected. This is so because wells are the major source of water and their protection of well is the responsibility of the owner himself.

Irrespective of the efforts under decentralized planning for two and a half decades water is available at home only for 36.8% households only. For 58.7% it is within 100Mts. Those households which fetch water from a distance of more than 100Mts is 4.2%. It is the socio-economic disadvantaged sections who have to travel along was to fetch drinking water.

96% of the households said that they need less than 1000litres of water per day and that much water is available from the source. For the rest availability and requirements are between 1000 and 2500 litres. There seems to be a conscious effort on the part of the houses to limit their requirements to the available amount of water. 82% of houses use dug wells throughout the year. 9.3% have water only for 9 months while 8.5% have it only for six months. 77.7% are satisfied with the quantity of water. Around 87.1% houses are satisfied with the quality of water. Around 30.3% opined that there is no treatment of wells by the GP.

Panchayats and Devolution

The amount spent by various local bodies to address the issue of Drinking Water varies according to the priorities of the Governing Body. The amount allocated by the sample GPs for providing drinking water varied from GP to GP, but it is an appreciable percentage of the amount each allocated in the service sector.

In the methodology adopted for decentralized Planning, meeting of Grama Sabha(GS) has a central role. It is in Grama Sabha that the identification of local needs is made. In preparing the developmental projects of a G.P, the consensus thrown up at Grama Sabha meetings is playing an important role. The acknowledged centrality of G.S. is to ensure participatory democracy. It is a strong tool to oppose the elite capture of developmental plans.

The response of the households on the role of GS in planning drinking water related issues is disturbing. 24.4% said such discussions do not take place. 73.3% expressed their ignorance. Though during the earlier years of Peoples Plan Campaign (1996-2001) the attendance and quality of discussion at Grama Sabha meetings were impressive,

over the years the meetings have become routinised. No meaningful discussions on developmental plans seems to take place at these forums. The ward member explained that issues of water were discussed in GS meetings, but it is put forth as benefits that participants seek from GP.

70.1% of the households in the sample have not heard about social audit of water and sanitation schemes. 20.9% affirmed that such process is non-existent. Around 91.2% households opined that there are user groups for operation and maintenance of schemes. Probably this is so in *Jalanidhi* schemes under .RGNDWM programme. 3.7% households that committees are formed at ward level to operate and maintain water supply schemes. NGOs are not usually involved in O&M activities. There are no GP schemes to protect water supply sources as revealed by 90.7% respondents. There is no meaningful plan for harvesting rain water and conservation of water.

The lack of monitoring and social audit for local government initiated projects as evidenced from the primary data. It shows the reflection on the poor performance of GPs. Grama Sabha meetings are also conducted in a cursory manner to fulfill statutory obligations. This is evidenced from the lack of discussion at these forums on very crucial issues like water scarcity which the citizens have to face. On the whole, though at the macro level there are laudable achievements; many things need to be done at the grass roots to sustain peoples' interest in participatory governance.

Appendix A

The three main criteria used are relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. They are consistent with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) evaluation method, which ensures people's participation throughout the evaluation process. The meaning and definition of the main and sub-criteria used are as follows.

Relevance is defined as the extent to which a project (development intervention) is consistent with local development needs and priorities and also with the "requirements" of the beneficiaries and policies of the government (provider). The following three aspects are used to

examine whether they are in conformity with the processes of participatory and decentralised planning envisaged in Kerala.

1. Needs identification, or identifying needs, (clarity of needs). A clear idea about whether a project is actually required for local development, especially to improve the quality of service delivery or the welfare of the people in a location. Verification of the project documents and discussions with major user/beneficiary communities help gather the relevant information on needs identification.
2. Clarity about who the users/beneficiaries are and clarity of purpose and use (essentiality). This indicator is to elicit information on whether the potential users/beneficiaries are identified in advance and also to understand whether there is any “capture” by interest groups.
3. Whether the potential users themselves articulated their needs (articulation of needs by users). The question of who articulates the need for a project in a grama sabha and other grass roots-level democratic forums is an indicator of awareness, democracy and participation of the local community in decision-making.

Efficiency means how economically resources or other inputs are converted into results. Right information, sufficient finance and transparency in decision-making are the essential requirements for ensuring efficiency in implementation. The meanings of the three sub-criteria are:

1. Scientific assessment/information on technical feasibility, economic viability, and social acceptability (information based).
2. Finance allocation (sufficient finance). Financial planning and sufficient allocation of finance are essential for the successful completion of a project.
3. Transparency in implementation (transparency). If the execution of a work is carried out in the way in which it is documented in the project proposal, we can take it as excellent in terms of transparency.

Effectiveness is defined as the extent to which the basic objectives are achieved or are expected to be achieved. The following four aspects are expected to have an effect on the effectiveness of a project. Moreover, they are in conformity with the process envisaged in the implementation of a project under decentralised planning.

1. Supervision and monitoring mechanism. Proper supervision and a monitoring mechanism are essential for efficient execution of the work related to the creation of an asset. The institutional structure for supervision and monitoring is evaluated in terms of how efficient it was in practice.
2. Mechanism for proper maintenance. Unless there is an institutional mechanism for operation and maintenance, it is likely that the quality of an asset will deteriorate. This is evaluated in terms of how efficient the institutional mechanism for operation and maintenance of a project is.
3. Mechanism for sustained use. An institutional arrangement for ensuring the present as well as the future use of a project is essential for its long-term effectiveness. We need to understand and evaluate how effective these arrangements are for the sustained and uninterrupted use of the asset created.
4. Current status of the project. This is measured in terms of how best the project is now being put to use and what the quality status of the structure and equipment is.

Besides the above three main and 10 sub-criteria, we arrived at an overall project performance rating based on the ratings of the three main evaluating criteria. The entire evaluation and assessment exercise was based on qualitative information. Evaluators were expected to use their judgement in determining the performance rating related to each criterion and also the overall performance of a project. Each criterion was measured on a five-point scale ranging from excellent to very poor. These qualitative measurements were 5: excellent, 4: good, 3: satisfactory, 2: poor, and 1: very poor.

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Sanitation Arena of Gram Panchayats in Post TSC Era; A study from Kerala

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Sanitation is the safe management of human excreta and includes the provision of latrines and the promotion of personal hygiene (definition as provided by the World Health Organization). Sanitation as a copious hackneyed term consists of aspects like excreta disposal, solid and liquid waste management, vector control, personal hygiene etc. An estimated 2.6 billion people worldwide remain without proper sanitation and there by lack protection against preventable diseases, which claim the lives of thousands daily, primarily children under the age of five (UNICEF, 2008 a). The issue of open defecation is severe in India. Nearly 75 per cent of the population in rural India still defecates in the open areas. The issues of open defecation, lack of sanitary awareness, and low awareness of improved hygiene behavior still remain as major challenges in the health realm of rural India. For tackling the foresaid issues the Government of India launched the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC)¹ in 1999 with the goal of achieving rural sanitation coverage by 2012.

Introduction of TSC has resulted in generating a major shift in the approach and strategies adopted in the implementation of conventional

sanitation programs (Gireesan and Chathukulam, 2007). The campaign laid emphasis on Information, Education and Communication (IEC), capacity building and hygiene education activities with the involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and various Community Based Organizations (CBOs) which was intended to increase the awareness among rural folk to generate demand for toilets. A nominal subsidy amount was also provided. The responsibility of delivering the program goals vested with the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Later, the Government introduced a fiscal incentive program by the name Nirmal Gram Puraskar (NGP)² to motivate the Gram Panchayats in achieving total sanitation.

The TSC has completed one and a half decade of implementation and the NGP has completed nearly one decade of operation. The total sanitation campaign could be termed effective in addressing the first generation sanitation issues across the Gram Panchayats in Kerala. As the State look forward for a new dimension in sanitation over the next five year plan it becomes necessary to comprehend and evaluate the sanitation scenario that prevails in the State. This chapter, will assess the governance of different components with the help of a narrative and quantitative synthesis based on the situation analysis from seven selected Gram Panchayats of Kozhikode district, Kerala.

This chapter precaution is organized in four major sections. The first section launches the work on a four part division i.e. introduction, objectives, approach & methodology and the study area. The next section discusses anganwadi, school and household sanitation and also examine the Panchayat level sanitation scenario and the status of Community Sanitary Complexes. This section also investigates the possibilities of a logically existing correlation between the total sanitation scene and the spatial pattern. The third para presents the empirical model through a statistical exercise. Section four concludes the paper with thrust on the lessons learned, suggestions and recommendations.

The major objectives include the assessment of the sanitation scenario from the selected Panchayats, assessment of anganwadi, school and household sanitation status, assessment of the status of the community sanitary latrines in the district, solid waste management scenario, NGP

utilization, the future requirements and more importantly to visualize the effectiveness of understanding the scenario.

The sample size was worked out in consultation with the *Suchitwa Mission*³³ The Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) in the State was coordinated and monitored by the Kerala Total Sanitation and Health Mission (KTSHM) and their activities were confined to the Panchayats. The Clean Kerala Mission (CKM) was enabling the urban and rural local bodies in establishing solid waste management systems. The above Missions were integrated as *Suchitwa Mission*, which started functioning since April 2008. This institutional reform has enabled the up scaling of initiatives envisaged in the *Malinya Mukta Keralam* Action Plan. The Mission is taking steps to strengthen its technical capabilities in various aspects of sanitation., Government of Kerala and the district administration TSC, Kozhikode. It was decided to cover around ten percent of the total number of Gram Panchayats in the district.

Primarily, an assessment of the existing anganwadi sanitation infrastructure, environment and initiatives with reference to the child care scenario is made. For the study, 32 anganwadis from seven Gram Panchayats of the district were considered. Inadequate infrastructural facilities seem to be the major constraint in the effective functioning of anganwadis. Nearly 81 per cent of the total anganwadis functioned in government buildings whereas the rest in private properties. Most of the anganwadis that functioned in the private buildings do not have toilets (T.N.Seema , 2001). Only 81 per cent of the total anganwadis have toilets. The rest have to depend on the neighboring houses. Sanitation facility in all the anganwadis was restricted to a single latrine. Majority of the anganwadis lack water connection. Baby friendly latrines need to be constructed as the next step. Cleanliness was by and large satisfactory. The physical condition of the toilets needs to be upgraded in majority of the cases. Drinking water was made available utilizing various sources such as hand pumps, tube wells and open wells. The solid and liquid waste management aspect needs to be improved in all the anganwadis.

A survey on school sanitation was carried out in 28 selected schools of which 12 were government schools and the rest belonged to the aided category.

Menstruation and Sanitation

All over India girls often stay away from school on heavy period days, as schools are either far off or not suited to dealing with menstruation and its associated problems. Puberty and the onset of menstruation pose challenges for girl students which impacts a girl's desire to complete school education. With limited sanitary comfort they may be very uncomfortable out of the fear that they will face this odd situation any moment (Chung, 2001). It is in this context that they should be provided with sound and safe sanitary conditions

Children's ability to learn may be affected by inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene conditions in several ways (Katrak, 2010). The sanitary conditions in the schools need improvement. In a number of cases the number of toilets available to the total strength of each school and each section is below the required rate. Cleanliness and hygiene level require attention. Only very few schools reported to have underwent de worming program. The number of toilets especially for girls is very limited. This is much critical in the case of high schools and higher secondary schools. Very few schools have facilities for disposing napkins. The girl students of high school and above in many instances couldn't avail the toilet facility due to safety, availability of water, hygiene and cleanliness. Safety and security issues are predominant in the toilets. The solid and liquid waste management scenario requires consideration. In the district many schools are still to achieve acceptable levels of water, sanitation and hygiene, and are devoid of adequate facilities. They were found to lack resources, skills or adequate institutional support. The physical upgradation process may be organized in a phased way so that the most critical problems are identified and rectified.

While sanitation has historically been a domain of household decision making, in the last two decades household access to toilets has improved due to the increased public priority accorded to it, mainly in rural areas (Anupam Tyagi, 2011). This part of the study focuses on the sanitation scenario on a total sample size of 496 households. The Panchayats has achieved almost 99 per cent coverage with only limited backlog which the authorities are keen to rectify. However, the issue of open defecation still persists in few cases in the coastal Panchayats. Financial constraint is

the most frequently stated reason for late adoption and timely upgradation of the facility. The BPL households were noted to have a better early adoption rate. The authorities have succeeded in motivating a large number of Above Poverty Line (APL) households to construct toilets in their premises without any financial incentives. The status of many of the toilets requires up gradation. None of the households have proper solid and liquid waste disposal mechanism and dumping of plastic waste adds to the menace. Absence of sanitary marts and effective delivery mechanisms are still a matter of debate.

Commuters, fisher community, migrant laborers, and local citizens coming to public places are the main target groups of the scheme “Community Sanitary Complexes”. A total of 18 complexes in the district were studied during the evaluation, a few of which are not functional. Many of them have attributed the reasons to scarcity of water. There was no public involvement in the planning and implementation of the community complexes, except for two cases. Separate space for women is not available in five of the community complexes. About 34 per cent of the community complexes have issues of foul smell, and many have issues of cleanliness. The maintenance of the complexes is not done properly.

Gender Perspective in Sanitation

One of the most significant divides between women and men, especially in developing countries, is found in the sanitation and hygiene sector. The provision of water, hygiene and sanitation is often considered a woman’s task. Women are promoters, educators and leaders of home and community based sanitation practices yet their own concerns are rarely addressed. Societal barriers often restrict their involvement in decisions regarding sanitation facilities and programmes (GWA: 2006). Often in urban areas, women face innumerable security risks when they use public facilities. Their privacy and security are partly determined by ease of access to, and location of sanitation facilities (Gender in Water and Sanitation, 2008). As was evident from the field observations the women of the household have to wait for their turn. It is noted that the male in many cases have the habit of smoking inside the toilets which makes it difficult for the ladies of the house to use. Since

responsibilities consume considerable time, there are instances from the study area where women had little to no time to pursue education or job.

Major Findings:

An attempt is made to comprehend the NGP utilization, existing practices and major findings from the selected Gram Panchayats.

The progress of TSC in the district has been quite encouraging. The seven selected NGP Panchayats have performed well despite some unavoidable constraints. The democratic decentralization process launched in Kerala has helped to bring health services to different tiers of society through the expanded social networks and institutions of decentralization. The Local Self Governments (LSGs) succeeded in ensuring better household sanitation and drinking water facilities to the people (Rajesh and Benson, 2012). The flow of funds has also increased to the Panchayats by which more sanitary issues could be attended. Decentralized governance reflected positively on the total sanitation campaign in Kerala (Chathukulam and Thottunkel, 2010). The Panchayats selected are spread across the District on varying topographies. An attempt is made to draw a few inferences from the logically existing correlation between the total sanitation scene and the spatial patterns. Let us have a look at the geographic space of the selected Panchayats which could be seen in the details given below.

Azhiyur and Thikkody are coastal Panchayats. Maniyur, Perambra and Nanmanda are situated in midland region while Kodanchery is situated on an undulating hilly terrain. Olavanna Panchayat adjoins Kozhikode Corporation which is representing an urban character. Azhiyur and Thikkody are densely populated owing to its coastal character. There are a few instances from the coastal Panchayats where in open defecation still exist. Issues of polluting the water bodies are much higher in these Panchayats. Waste disposal (especially plastic) along the major roads and railway lines are common. Issues of drainage and liquid waste are common along the coastal region. It would thus require much more planned attention to be paid to the coastal Panchayats. Maniyur, Perambra and Nanmanda are situated in the midland region. Density of population is relatively smaller than the coastal region and

the clustering of settlements have helped in creating better attention. The relatively higher landholding size has helped the community in either burying or burning the wastes produced. The cleanliness standards are much visible in these Panchayats yet there exist issues of solid waste disposal. Kodanchery Panchayat is situated in a relatively hilly and undulated terrain. Physiography seems to be a hindrance in total sanitation coverage. This also acts as a negative factor in planning operations. The non availability of space and its environmental character is a hindrance on addressing second generation sanitary issues. Olavanna Panchayat adjoins the Kozhikode Corporation and has already begun to show characteristics of urbanization. The Panchayat has not yet attained complete sanitation coverage. The regions witness drainage issues, issues of water bodies getting polluted, second generation and have a high demand for community sanitary complexes.

Sanitation Index and Its Effectiveness: An Overview

The total sanitation scenario of the Panchayats varies according to sanitation parameters, performance indicators and variables. Conventional wisdom is often used in assessing the performance and comparing the results which is incomplete without a scientifically based construction of indicators. There exist a number of parameters and indicators in the present study which ignited the thought of summarizing the data and construction of a composite index for sanitation. The principal objective of this brief is to compare the Panchayat's performance in the sanitation sector with respect to school, anganwadi and household sanitation and related indicators and how effectively they used the NGP amount received for sanitation coverage. In this context an innovative measurement framework known as Total Sanitation Index (TSI) was developed which compare the Panchayats based on the composite score of selected priority indicators. The TSI thus is a method of numerically benchmarking the sanitation performance of a Panchayat.

Structure of the Sanitation Index.

Construction of an index has three essential steps: one of theory (field), another of mathematics (formulations) and finally that of statistics (estimation). In actual practice all three interact in some way. Theory in

the present context helps us in choice of variables. The first step towards arriving at a methodology for the construction of an index development involves the interpretation of the total sanitation in the context of the present study. This stage is designed to create a theoretical framework which will render the underlying basis for the selection of indicators and is intended to support the composite index. Sanitation in the context of this study is considered in a broader framework which included excreta disposal, cleanliness condition, sanitation infrastructure, safe drinking water facility, solid and liquid waste management, vector control and personal hygiene.

Mathematics is about method of normalizing the variable and deciding the aggregation scheme. The indicators stated before were analyzed in line with selected schools, anganwadis and households of seven selected Gram Panchayats. These indicators were fixed on a three point scale viz. good, moderate and poor. Marks were assigned and the respective marks are three, two and one for good, moderate and poor. A total score for these components (school, anganwadi, households and second generation issues) for each Panchayat were derived from the table. An average score for these components (for normalizing the irregularities in sample size) were arrived at and finally the index for each individual component was constructed. These were termed sub indexes. And finally a Total Sanitation Index (cumulative index) was constructed in order to rank the Panchayats in terms of sanitation achievements. The Panchayats taken together formed the sample area and was tested with the applicability of the index in real situations. This kind of exercise would confine the range of value between zero and one. One advantage of this procedure is that better discrimination is built-in in this index, particularly when an entity is compared with another rather than when it is compared with itself over time. Primary and secondary data collected from the Panchayat authorities facilitated the statistical estimation part.

Discussion and Results: Empirical Evidence and Panchayats Performance

An empirical assessment of the sanitation status of the selected Panchayats is presented in this section. Results are presented for

each of the four components namely household, school, anganwadi and second generation sanitation and their respective indicators. The Panchayats are ranked according to the Total Sanitation Index (TSI). A certain set of indicators is chosen for each of the components to assess the sanitation status. These indicators form the base score on which the calculations are made. They are given in the table No.1

Table No. 13. 1: Sanitation Indicators

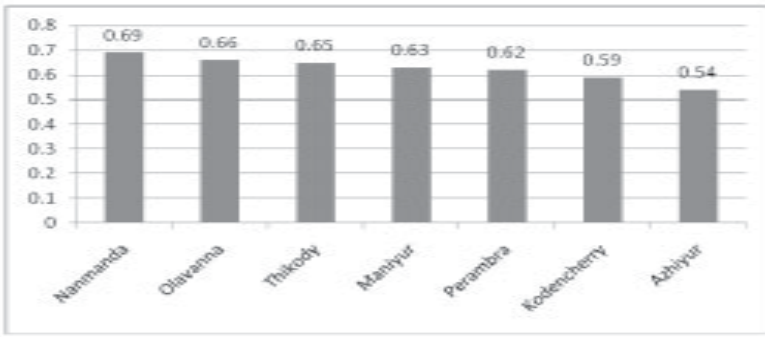
ANGANWADI	SCHOOL	HOUSEHOLD	OTHER INDICES
Cleanliness	Cleanliness	Toilets	Solid Waste
Drinking Water	Drinking Water	Usage	Liquid Waste
Toilets	Full Fledged boys Toilets	General Status	NGP Fund Utilization
General Status	Full Fledged Girls Toilets	Cleanliness	Community Sanitary Complexes
Cleanliness Status	General Status	Personal Hygiene	Panchayat's Initiatives
Toilet Facilities	Cleanliness Status	Solid Waste Management	
Hand washing units	Toilet Facilities	Liquid Waste Management	
Solid and Liquid Waste Management	Hand Washing Units		
	Solid and Liquid Waste Management		

Source: Field Verification

Since, the presentation of individual tables and calculation dynamics is an elaborative process this could be explained with the help of an example of a single component. Let us consider the case of schools for the same. The maximum score in case of schools based on the indicators is 27 (9x3). Hence the average score divided by the maximum expected score gives us the actual composite score. Say for example in the case of Panchayat one, let us consider that the average score is 17.60. This divided by the maximum score for indicators ie 27 and worked out the percentage of the actual composite score which is 65.18 in this case. The score is divided by 100 to be converted to a

scale between zero to one. The score will thus be 0.65 (when rounded). Thus in this manner a composite index is prepared for the four components for all the seven Gram Panchayats. Later a cumulative index is prepared based on the indexes of these components. The results, thus derived (based on the above calculation procedure) is provided below for the seven selected Panchayats.

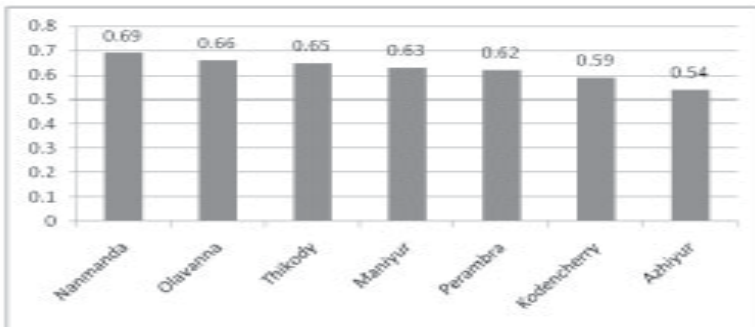
Diagram No. 13. 1: Household Sanitation Composite Index



Source: Calculations from field survey

In the case of household sanitation, Olavanna Gram Panchayat tops the list with an index of 0.86 followed by Maniyur, Nanmamba and Thikkody with an equal index of 0.81. Azhiyur and Kodancherry Gram Panchayats are in the third position with an index of 0.76 and Perambra Gram Panchayat is in the last position with an index value of 0.67.

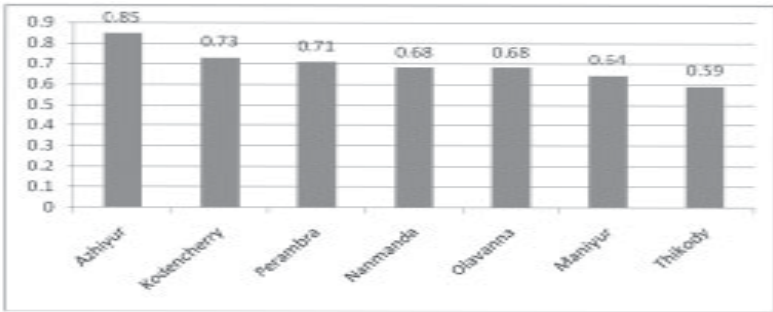
Diagram No. 13.2. School Sanitation Composite Index



Source : Field survey

In the school sanitation, Nanmanda Gram Panchayat leads with an index value of 0.69 followed by Olavanna, Thikkody and Maniyur with indices of 0.66, 0.65 and 0.63. Perambra Gram Panchayat is in the fifth position with a value of 0.62 followed by Kodancherry and Azhiyur with values 0.59 and 0.54, respectively.

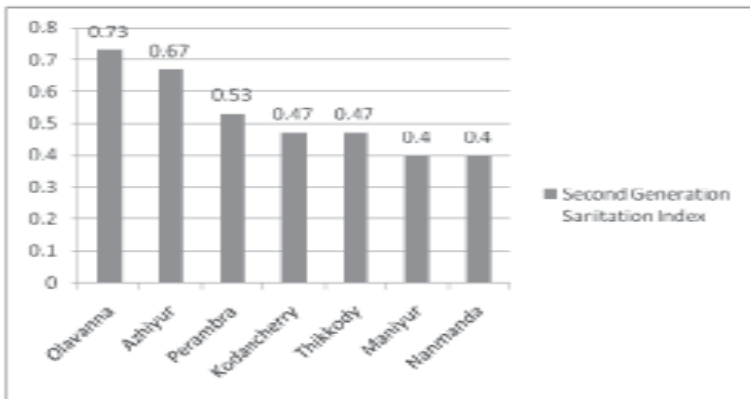
Diagram No. 13.3. Anganwadi Sanitation Composite Index



Source: Statistics and Calculations from field survey

Azhiyur Gram Panchayat ranks in the first position in Anganwadi sanitation with an index value of 0.85 followed by Kodancherry and Perambra with values of 0.73 and 0.71. Nanmanda and Olavanna are in the fourth position with an index of 0.68 followed by Maniyur and Thikkody Gram Panchayats with indices of 0.64 and 0.59, respectively.

Diagram No.13.4 : Second Generation Sanitation Composite Index



Source: Statistics and Calculations from field survey

In the case of second generation sanitation issues Olavanna Gram Panchayat is in the top position with an index of 0.73 followed by Azhiyur and Perambra with values of 0.67 and 0.53. Kodancherry & Thikkody Gram Panchayats are in the fourth position with an index of 0.47 and Maniyur & Nanmanda in the fifth position with an index of 0.40.

Olavanna Gram Panchayat is well ahead in terms of household and second generation sanitation but it has comparatively low levels in school and anganwadi sanitation. Azhiyur is at the top in anganwadi sanitation but has lower levels in school sanitation and second generation sanitation. Nanmanda is well off in addressing household sanitation but was poor in addressing second generation issues. The graph reveals that the school sanitation condition in all the Panchayats is moderately unique. Nanmanda Panchayat tops this list. Perambra Panchayat tops the list in anganwadi sanitation but was not good in addressing the second level sanitation aspects. Thikkody Panchayat has taken efforts in addressing the household sanitation while it was relatively poor in addressing second generation sanitation. Maniyur is well off in household sanitation but is poor in addressing second generation issues.

The final outcome of the exercise is the Total Sanitation Index (Cumulative Index otherwise) which is formulated based on the calculations and results from the four individual component indices the sub indices as it was represented. The total of the four sub indices divided by four gives the final index for each Panchayat. The index has been designed specifically to capture the relative positions of each Panchayat in terms of total sanitation. As presented in the table and graph given above Olavanna Gram Panchayat top the list with an index of 0.73 followed by Azhiyur, Nanmanda and Kodancherry with indices of 0.71, 0.65 and 0.64 respectively. Perambra and Thikkody have an equal index of 0.63 and Maniyur Gram Panchayat is in the last position with an index of 0.62. The index has thus summarized the performances of the Panchayats with regard to the sanitation effectiveness becomes the base which must be built upon to create a robust tool to evaluate and compare the coverage and development in sanitation sector within politico-administrative units and across time. It is acknowledged, however, that this exercise has shortcomings.

Weightage aspects have never been considered here. All the indicators were given equal consideration. To avoid value judgments on the relative importance of each input and outcome, unweighted averages were used. Moreover, there may also exist weaknesses in data presentation. Each index has attempted to summarize the complex data in one single figure. The index is designed in such a way that upgradation become possible with the expansion of research. Wider application of the index on varying scales can be used to determine its applicability.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter tried to assess and evaluate the TSC outcomes in selected Panchayats of Kozhikode district which would help in drawing policy lessons to be incorporated in the policy drafting stages of Nirmal Bharath Abhiyan⁴(NBA). The total sanitation scenario of the Panchayats, vary according to sanitation parameters, performance indicators and variables. An innovative measurement framework known as ‘Total Sanitation Index’ (TSI) was constructed which helped in the numerical benchmarking of the sanitation performance of the Panchayats. The index was formulated for comprehending the relative positions of each Panchayat in terms of total sanitation. According to the Total Sanitation Index, Olavanna Gram Panchayat topped the list with an index of 0.73 followed by Azhiyur, Nanmanda and Kodancherry with indices of 0.71, 0.65 and 0.64 respectively. Perambra and Thikkody have an equal index of 0.63 and Maniyur Gram Panchayat is in the last position with an index of 0.62. The overall performance is good. The total sanitation coverage in the district has neared the total. The instances of open defecation are very few, thanks to IEC and awareness. By promoting and incentivizing latrine use, the TSC has had positive initial impacts on children’s health and human capital. Effective decentralization and governance have supported the venture. The second generation issues of solid and liquid waste need to be taken care of. Issues of sanitation at the nodal points, urban nodes for example have to be solved. The cleanliness standards are yet to be maintained.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Scaling up successful sanitation programs is an important suggestion. Assistance is not reaching at the expected level to a few among the

poorest of the poor. Programs should target groups or locations lagging behind owing to the minimal resource base. Community based solutions are much needed and should be adopted wherever possible. Complete eradication of plastic menace should be a priority. Permanent options for solid waste management (models like waste to energy could be thought of) should be adopted. Sustainable partnerships for investment should be thought of. The situation should be monitored with the support of web based Management Information System (MIS). IEC need to be strengthened. The active involvement of women and community based organizations should be made a priority.

The issue of open defecation is met to a vast extend in the district. A computerized database is much required in supporting the future planning operations. The study suggests that increased incentives and rewards can motivate Panchayats in addressing the second generation issues. Carving out second generation issues especially that of the solid waste management it seems to be the priority as per the shift from TSC to Nirmal Bharath Abhiyan. The paper has stressed on the effectiveness of narrative and quantitative methodologies in carving out the real sanitation scenario of the district.

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Multiple Actors, Conflicting Roles The Case Coastal Polders in Bangladesh

Farhat Naz & Marie-Charlotte Buisson

The government of Bangladesh invested in large scale coastal embankment projects in the 1960s and 1970s. The polders then played an important role in protecting coastal communities from water related disasters and increasing agricultural productivity. However, over time maintenance of these infrastructures became problematic leading to a national policy which requires local communities to participate in operation and maintenance. An in-depth analysis of how operation and maintenance activities actually take place reveals that there are multiple of actors with over-lapping mandates, which often leads to unclear demarcation of roles and responsibilities. This induces conflicts, power struggles and results in lack of proper maintenance. This chapter discusses the role and responsibilities of these multiples actors. It recommends revising the legal water management framework, improving the coordination and giving a formal role to local government institutions, which are often instrumental in carrying out operation and maintenance.

The analysis is based on primary data collected in 2012 and 2013 in Coastal zone of Bangladesh. Fieldwork was conducted in nine study sites: five large polders built by BWDB and four sub-projects (less than 1000 hectares) under the supervision of LGED at an initial stage. Qualitative data were collected in these nine sites through 57 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and 92 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). Data were purposively collected in different contexts in terms of distance from the main rivers and sluice gates, level of siltation of the surrounding canals and concentration of various types of cropping systems. The KIIs were held with different stakeholders like

farmers, women headed households, Labour Contracting Societies (LCS) group

Union Parishad (UP) members, Water Management Organization (WMO) members, BWDB and LGED officials. Apart from the qualitative primary data; secondary data such as government and donors reports and statistics are also used to support our analysis.

Water management of Bangladesh

a) Decentralization

In parallel to and resulting from the physical, political and economic changes of the coastal zone, institutions involved in water management evolved. In this particular context, the introduction of new institutions follows two historical trends decentralization and formalization. In Bangladesh, the decentralization practice is mostly political, and depends largely on attitude of ruling political parties (Islam and Fujita, 2012). Political decentralization is the transfer of authority to a sub-national body. Political decentralization aims to give citizens or their elected representatives more power in public decision making. Local government in Bangladesh is usually dependent on the central government for most of their activities, and the central government has the power to dissolve a local body on charges of gross inefficiency, abuse of power, or inability to meet financial obligations (Habibullah, 1996). The local government institutions in Bangladesh have been created more with the intention of exercising centralized control over people in remote locations than with empowering and supporting

local government institutions in rural areas. The role and functions of rural administration in Bangladesh have remained limited from the time of its establishment (Khan, 2009; Hussain, 2005; Noor, 1996).

The existing lowest-tier rural administration i.e. Union Parishad, in Bangladesh is usually dependent on the middle-upper-tier rural administration i.e. Upazila Parishad, for most of its activities and thus has a limited role in rural development programs (Islam and Koichi, 2009). At present, there are three rural local government tiers in Bangladesh, known as Zila Parishad at the district level, Upazila Parishad at the sub- district level and UP at the union of villages level.

In the field of water management, decentralization was initiated in 1999 with the formulation of the Bangladesh National Water Policy (NWP) and then operationalized in 2001 with the Guidelines for Participatory Water Management (GPWM). These guidelines clearly state communities are the main stakeholders. The Bangladesh National Water Policy (NWP) of 1999 for the first time recognised the role of water in poverty alleviation and called for inclusive water management (Quassem, 2001). At the same time, these policies argue for a formalization of the institutions involved in water management. Thenceforth, the guidelines opened the participation into water management to a large range of actors, but they also from the starting point create confusion on the respective roles of each of these actors. National Water Policy of Bangladesh closely follows donor led development discourse (Dewan, Mukherji and Buisson, 2013). Despite NWP's focus on citizen power, the steps outlined in GPWM focusses more on consultation on project design and implementation without clear mechanisms to ensure that the stakeholders hold final decision-making powers. As a result new actors have been steadily introduced in the water management sphere.

b) Defining the actors

Actors are here defined as individuals or group actively involved in water management. The actors could be formal or informal and they are classified on the scale of formal and informal institutions. Various actors influence water access and water control, they have different degree of power to do so. It is close to the form of power illustrated

by Foucault (1975) who argues that power is not the instrument of a dominant State, but rather is situated in the daily enforcement of social and political practices. Therefore we are interested to see power from the Foucault sense, where we can say institutions and power are closely interrelated; and how institutions directly affect power distribution and practices.

Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED) entered into the water management arena in the 1980s. LGED is also an implementing agency in terms of water management but refers to the Ministry of Local Government Rural Development and Cooperatives. LGED has formalized its role in the water sector through the Small-Scale Water Resources Development Sector Project (SSWRDSP) which started in 1995. Through this project, LGED has provided flood control, drainage and irrigation infrastructures to sub-project areas with less than 1000 hectares. Their approach lies heavily on the local stakeholders' initiative and on communities to identify interventions and ratify

Whereas rural governance in Bangladesh is based on a three tier system of which Union Parishad as a Local Government Institutions (LGIs) are elected formal actors and stand at an intermediate level between the government and the communities. Indeed, Union Parishad happens to be the first and most locally accessible tier of the government. UP is under the supervision of the Ministry of Local Government.

UP comprise 12 members, nine members from nine wards of the union and three women members, one each from three wards; all are elected through direct universal adult suffrage (Mujeri and Singh, 1997). As defined by the GPWM Union Parishad were supposed to be 'adviser' of the WMOs. In addition, in command areas of less than 1000 hectares, they should gradually receive the ownership of the infrastructures. Nevertheless facing the lack of legal mechanism and resources to afford these roles, the Union Parishad are only informally involved in water management. Currently, their main involvement in water management is through the social safety nets which provide funds and labour to undertake infrastructures rehabilitation (road, embankments and canals).

c) Actors in operations

1. *Centralized and formal operations: the former khalashi system*

Initially, after the creation of polders in the 1960s, BWDB employed government-funded gatemen called *khalashis* to operate the gates through local requests. Thence government did not expect the communities to be involved in the day-to-day management of water infrastructures. The *khalashis* system worked efficiently, as there was someone responsible for the operation of the gates and the communities were not liable for any funding for the O&M. But this system got discontinued in the late 1980s.

However, the 1990s saw a push for decentralization and people's participation, which led to a structural adjustment process requiring from BWDB to change its approach to water management. As a result, the system of state funded 'gatekeepers' *khalashis* got abolished and instead it is now expected that communities should take over this responsibility. Moreover, after withdrawing gatemen and closing the recruitment of gatemen, BWDB also lacks adequate manpower to take care of day to day operation.

2. *Formal Water Management Groups*

According to the GPWM (GoB, 2001), the WMOs are responsible for the internal water management; whereas they have the entire responsibility in the case of WMCA in sub-project, the responsibility is shared between the different levels (WMG, WMA, WMF) in BWDB polders. Translated into the ground, this means that the WMOs are responsible for the operation of the gates as well as for the preliminary discussions required to reach a consensus on the required operation. This situation is indeed happening in some locations. For example, in polder 43/2F a farmer described the role of coordination that the WMG has to reach a consensus on the operation.

3. *Gate committees:*

Considering that the Water Management Groups may supervise water management for several villages, they most of the time have to operate several gates. They consequently very often delegate their role

at a lower scale to gate committees. This should therefore simplify the decision making process by reducing the number of stakeholders to the users of this particular gate. These committees can sometimes be informal but they can also be formally related to the formal Water Management Group. Even if gate committee are supposed to report to the WMG, by holding the decision on operation, these small groups also hold the power. Similarly, the WMCAs also delegate their responsibility to gate committees to decide on the operation of gates including opening and closing.

4. Informal operations and elite capture

In practice, WMOs are not always able to prevent elite capture in operation of the gates. For example, it was commonly found that gher owners or local elite dominate the decision over the operation of gates, for example in polder 31 and 30.

Due to elite capture, gates operations fail to reach an efficient and fair outcome. In Jainkathi, the WMCA can only control one of the two gates due to a land dispute involving influential families. In Jabusha, factions in the WMCA have led to the leased and blocked canals which are used for aquaculture, disrupting irrigation through the main canal (Dewan, Buisson and Mukherji 2013).

Officially, WMCA is supposed to take decision regarding flushing in and draining out of water during different farming seasons and within farming season, during the strong-current (goon) and slow-current fortnights (be-goon), but effectively, the adjoining gher owner holds effective control in Latabunia.

In a context where about 50% of the land of Latabunia belongs to outsiders, elite capture is a clear source of conflicts. Conflicts occur between outsider leaseholders and local paddy cum fish famers particularly regarding the drainage of water from the gher before planting aman paddy. In these cases, the theoretical role of conflict resolution lied at the WMOs level are unlikely to be seen. The data collected establishes that elite capture is prevalent in most of the polders but this is predominant in areas where no water management project was implemented and consequently where no WMOs have been

formed, like in polder 3 for example. So in these polders, operations are informally managed and capitulation by influential elites is the standard. Then diverse situations have been observed with different degree of informal management and capture. For example for some gates in polder 3, BWDB section officer gives decision or intervenes on opening or closing of particular gates. Although the BWDB officer insists to keep the gate closed in the dry season, it can be opened any time if the interested person bribes the staff or gives tips to the proxy gateman.

5. From collective to private operations

Community water management, even when the decisions are subject to elite capture induce collective decision over the control and access of the resource. Though it has been noticed that a large number of decisions related to water access are taken out of the collective sphere and can therefore be considered as private operations. Indeed, private actors develop their own strategy in terms of water management to fulfil their water requirements. In polder 31, there are about 24 private gates and seven pipes according to the mapping done for this analysis. It was learnt from the respondents that the private gates are neither operated by the gate committees nor by the WMGs; these are operated privately by individual gher owners. Similarly, in spite of a smaller area to operate, sub-projects also face private operations. In LGED polders, there are number of private gates, which are apparently under the control of the landowners. In Latabunia, the embankment is crossed by tens of underground pipes, some temporary closed with mud and some with more sophisticated with closing system. Such opening and closing is decided by individual gher owner without any coordination with their neighbours. This situation makes the WMCA who is hardly controlling one gate powerless in preventing salinity intrusion and in draining the area for paddy cultivation.

6. Union Parishad in operation

As previously stated Union Parishad involvement in water management is supposed to be limited to an advisory role. In many places, UP are not even playing this role and are absolutely foreign from the operation of the gates. However, the data collected also

suggests that in the absence of any formal and functional Water Management Organization (WMO), the Union Parishad (UP) also become an important substitute in operating the gates. Thus a number of local gate committees who held the responsibility of

operating gates are related or headed by Union Parishad. The UP as an organization is not involved in operating the sluice gates but the UP chairman and the members of the concerned union could be involved. For example, UP representatives can be found in the beel committees or local gate committees are headed by an UP member or the UP chairman. However, as established by the below quotation from polder 30, the involvement in UP in water operation is not always synonym of balances power.

7. Gaps and overlap in operation

Institutional arrangement of water management varies across and within polders about who opens the gates and takes the decisions. Indeed, from one gate to another one, the institutional arrangement which led to the decision and to the physical operation of the gate is neither exactly the same. The national policy and especially the GPWM locate the responsibility of the operations at the community level, the decision is indeed taken at a very decentralized level. But in all the locations, whether BWDB polders or LGED sub-projects, the informal actors such as local elite tend to dominate the operation of the sluice gates. Operating the gates is vital for livelihoods of the coastal zone. Taking advantage of this requirement, of the missing or unsustainable formal groups and of the vagueness of the policy, several actors try to put forward their own strategy of water management serving their own vested interest. In some places, this leads to conflicts between different actors as in the case of Polder 31, Latabunia, or Jabusha. Thus, the multiplicity of actors on the scene of operations produces overlaps and conflicts; nevertheless the structure of power in rural Bangladesh limits these overlaps and conflicts to the benefit of private interestsd) Actors in maintenance of polders

1. Breach at the central level

Institutionally, the BWDB is the owner of the water related

infrastructures in the polders. The BWDB has a special wing called Operation and Maintenance of the polders in each district and there is as an O&M office, headed by an executive engineer. However, the field findings establish that BWDB tends to wait for allocation of funds which are rarely available unless some disaster takes place or minor maintenance becomes major and attracts attention of higher authority. Hence, BWDB executes repair work occasionally when funds are available. For such work the BWDB engages contractor by tender. There is also a general view that as BWDB staffs are outsiders thus they lack local knowledge and ownership, and thence they are not sincere to the needs and local development.

2. Water Management Groups

According to the GPWM, the WMGs are made responsible for planning, implementing, operating and maintaining local water resources schemes in a sustainable way. Indeed, the WMGs are supposed to do the i) preventive maintenance of the medium and minor hydraulic structures, bridge, culvert etc; ii) preventive maintenance of the main embankment and secondary embankment; iii) routine/annual maintenance (desalting) of field channels, drains etc; iv) clearing weeds, obstacles from secondary and tertiary channels, canals drains etc; v) regular greasing of gates and vi) annual painting and minor repair of minor gates and replacement of fall board. Even if these reparations are called minor, it happens that these are most of the time beyond the capacities of the WMOs. To finance minor and regular maintenance the WMO has to rely on his own funds. These resources can either come from contributions from the community either from some sources of income (interest from micro-credit, leasing of canals.

3. Informal and local level involvement

The deferred maintenance resulting from central actors as well as community level formal organizations misfiling of their role induce a lack of trust from the users and community members who therefore consider that they have to rely on themselves.

Often local communities report that they have to protect themselves by low cost repair work through their own initiative. For example, in

Bagachra-Badurgacha sub-project, most households own land and due to their own interest they work voluntarily toward maintenance of the infrastructures. Indeed, local people make bamboo piling to prevent damage or to repair damaged part of the embankments.

The role of individual community member becomes all the more crucial in case of emergency. Whereas formal and centralized levels need time to mobilize the required resources, the informal community level has more flexibility. Moreover, whereas household may have difficulties in estimating their interest in contributing toward maintenance, the emergency situation bring clear and short term incentives.

4. Union Parishad

Union Parishad is then playing a supporting role alongside the informal and local actors to maintain the water infrastructures.

The initial role of Union Parishad in maintenance was limited to emergency reparation. As the lowest level of public administration in Bangladesh they are also the first level of relief. Their role was therefore important after Sidr and Aila cyclones. Apart from mobilizing financial resources they also mobilised the communities and organized the voluntary work. This was for example particularly important in Latabunia sub-project where the embankment and the village were submerged.

Facing deferred maintenance in their unions, some UP have gradually increased their involvement in maintenance in order to give responses to the increasing demand coming from their voters. Thereby, it is widely believed that as UP has people representatives at the grassroots level and the UP members and chairman have strong link with the local people. Their involvement can also clearly be related to the failure of the WMOs.

Unions Parishad face a certain number of problems to get stuck in maintenance of polders. As per the legislation, their role is to coordinate and to advice the WMOs, they therefore don't have any resources dedicated to water infrastructure maintenance. In addition,

embankments are the ownership of BWDB, so UP cannot rehabilitate the embankments without their agreement; they similarly have to coordinate with LGED for maintenance work in sub-projects. Thus, despite having financial, technical and institutional capacity constraints, the Union Parishad executes some repair work and re-excavation. Their involvement in maintenance uses at least two tools. The first way of being involved is through mobilization. The chairman of UP often mobilized people to repair embankments which is often done by voluntary work, in addition people donate bamboo, timber and other materials.

6. Conclusion

This analysis has shown that water management in the Coastal zone of Bangladesh is much more confused than the procedures and roles defined by the policy may suggest. Indeed, a large number of actors anchored in the political, social, economic or administrative systems are involved in the decisions and actions related to operation and maintenance. The roles of these actors have been understood through a top-down scale to point out the level of decentralization and through a formal-informal scale. The multiplicity of actors on the scene of operations produces overlaps and conflicts; however the structure of power in rural Bangladesh limits these overlaps and conflicts to the benefit of private interests. On the maintenance scene, gaps and deferred maintenance arise from the multiplicity of actors in terms of maintenance, which this leads to disrepair and degradation of the infrastructures which steadily weaken the sustainability of the coastal zone livelihoods. Thus, we found that the policy created confusion on the respective roles of each of each actors and did not take into account the social and institutional structure of Bangladesh and the existing power relations. Whereas formal actors miss-fill their role and responsibilities, many informal actors, individuals or groups such as gate committees, *gher* committees or *beel* committees fill the gap. Similarly, while local government institutions (LGIs) have been largely by-passed in the policy, they remain informally involved in water management when required.

These results bring a certain number of recommendations forward. First, the policy in terms of water management has to be revised and

clarified; this policy has to take into account the particularities from the coastal zone and the existing power relations between central and decentralized actors as well as between formal and informal actors.

Secondly, the analysis from the qualitative data points out the lack of formal coordination between the different actors. An underlying coordination occurs through conflicts but this type of coordination brings power relations into the game and prevents some actors to be taken into account.

Finally, the role of local government institution in water management should be formally recognized. The Union Parishad (UP), the lowest tier rural local government, closet to the rural people and elected by them, has realistic possibilities to play a vital role in water management. Their involvement would ensure long term sustainability of the process and a balanced adjudication. Nevertheless, this would only be possible through increasing their control over local resources and over the choices on resource allocation (Ullah and Pongquan, 2010).

Indeed improved water governance and successful operation and maintenance in the polders requires the definition a new legal framework more inclusive of the institutional realities of Bangladesh, an improved coordination between all the stakeholders and the formal recognition of the local government institution essential role in water management.

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