A handbook for trainers on participatory local development

Second edition

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The *Panchayati Raj* model in India

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Foreword

"A handbook for trainers on participatory local development: The *Panchayati Raj* model in India" supports the world's biggest endeavour in grassroots governance taking place in India. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment, adopted in 1992, established a solid legal base for participation of the rural poor in local (district, sub-district and village level) government institutions. Some 238 000 *Panchayats* (village councils) representing about 600 000 villages have been constituted and about three million rural people, a third of whom, by law have to be women, elected to *Panchayat* bodies. The handbook is focused on the training needs of these three million newly elected *Panchayat* members, the majority of them semi- or even non-literate and unprepared for the responsibility of local governance. The Government of India has recognized the need for training of these *Panchayat* members for capacity-building on participatory local development.

Preparing the *Panchayat* members, especially the women among them, for their new roles as local decision-makers, calls for education and training on a massive scale, for which adapted training methods and tools are needed. As a first step, there is a need to provide education and training to impart self-confidence to those who have been socially marginalized on caste, ethnic and gender considerations. At the same time, it is necessary to change the attitudes of the socially powerful towards full acceptance of grassroots participation in planning and management of local level development. *A major area of training for village council members is awareness and capacity-building for mobilization and sustainable management of social, physical and financial resources in order to improve the livelihoods of the rural poor who, according to latest official government estimates, make up about 19 percent of the country's 1 billion people.* Village council members must also be empowered to participate in the planning and implementation of poverty reduction policies/programmes and activities initiated by state and federal level governments.

As the United Nations specialized agency with the mandate to promote sustainable agriculture, rural development and food security, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations has embarked on rural development activities to strengthen local institutional capacities for improving livelihoods of the rural poor in this region who form the majority of the world's poorest people. Home to nearly two-thirds of the 800 million hungry people in the world, with more than one-fourth of these in India, the region is the focus of the November 1996 World Food Summit (WFS) goal to reduce global hunger by half by the year 2015.

A key FAO rural development priority in Asia and the Pacific is to improve grassroots participation in decision-making and delivery of support services through decentralization and good regional and local governance. This is in line with the FAO medium-term plan to ensure that decentralization processes contribute to overall development benefiting rural people, particularly the most disadvantaged. It also supports one of the FAO global *priority areas for interdisciplinary action* – local institution building to improve capacity for achieving sustainable rural livelihoods.

As part of its priorities in the region, the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific promotes networking on strengthening institutional capacities for decentralized decision-making in agriculture and rural development, and small-scale enterprise development in member countries. These activities aim to:

- enhance awareness and self-help capacities of the rural poor, including small and landless farmers, small-scale rural producers, rural women, indigenous people and rural people with disabilities;
- enable the rural poor to mobilize local resources; and
- bring about a more equitable sharing of the benefits of local and national socio-economic development.

The development of "A handbook for trainers on participatory local development" for elected village *Panchayat* officials and government staff is the outcome of a process that began

with the *International Conference on Decentralization* jointly organized in 1996 by the FAO Rural Development Division, the World Bank and other UN agencies.

As a follow-up, the FAO Regional Office organized, in November 1998 in Thailand, a regional workshop on *Decentralized Rural Development and the Role of Self–Help Organizations*. The workshop brought together rural development experts from ten Asian countries which are members of the Regional Center for Integrated Rural Development for Asia and Pacific (CIRDAP). The participants discussed action plans for follow-up by governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector within their countries.

Among others, the meeting recommended that the FAO Regional Office and donor agencies continue to actively promote capacity-building programmes to strengthen awareness and skills of local government staff and elected officials and enhance their decision-making ability for participatory planning and implementation of poverty reduction programmes. It also recommended that FAO sponsor relevant skills-training, such as the preparation and use of training of trainers' manuals by rural development training centres.

In collaboration with the Bangladesh-based CIRDAP and the National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) – an organization of the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India – FAO sponsored a series of workshops in India on developing a training of trainers' handbook.

The handbook aims to improve training capacities of NIRD and non-governmental expert agencies for awareness-building and skills-training of the newly elected *Panchayat* members. It focuses on the training of elected local officials in two key institutions of *Panchayati Raj* – the *Gram Sabha* (body comprising all registered voters in a village) and the *Sarpanch* (head of the elected village council). The handbook modules were field-tested in India in collaboration with selected stakeholder groups – government and district level planners, trainers from rural development planning and training institutions as well as NGO/village leaders. Indeed, one of the training modules was prepared by an elected *Gram Panchayat* head.

Although designed for the training needs of all categories of local functionaries associated with the decentralization process in India, the handbook provides guidance on core issues in institutional capacity-building for local development planning, which are, to a large degree, similar in other developing countries within the region. Accordingly, the handbook could be a model for capacity-building training in other countries in the region which have initiated decentralization. Follow-up RAP initiatives are planned for the wide dissemination of the handbook among policy-makers, rural development experts and practitioners within the South and Southeast Asian region.

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Acknowledgements

I

Decentralization for empowerment of rural poor

Why decentralization is important for empowerment of rural poor

Persistent poverty in South Asia

South Asia is still a long way from eradicating hunger and poverty while the gulf between the rich and poor continues to widen in most countries in the sub-region. According to *Human Development in South Asia 2002*, more than one-third of South Asia's 1.4 billion people live on less than US$1 a day.[1] The substantial progress in agricultural production in the region has been "neither adequate nor equitable enough to reduce the region's huge backlog of poverty", says the report.

Ineffectiveness of centrally administered local development programmes

Aware that the 'trickle down' effects of economic growth take too long to reach the poor, governments in the region have relied on centrally administered support programmes and planned interventions to raise living standards, such as:

– subsidized food at below market rates
– micro finance
– relief employment or food-for-work programmes.

These have produced mixed results. Subsidized food has often not reached the needy due to faulty targeting and the unscrupulous diversion of supplies. Micro-finance loans have been used more for consumption than investment and generally not repaid fully. For example, about 60 percent of the loans given out under India's Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) are estimated to be in default (UNDP: 1993).

The food-for-work programmes have been more effective since these involve manual work where daily labour wages are paid partly in food and partly in cash and which, therefore, attract only the really needy. However, in many instances, information regarding periods of slack work in rural areas is not available in time for food-for-work programmes to be organized when they are most needed.

Weaknesses in rural development policies and programmes in India

- Lack of involvement of rural poor in development, resulting in marginalization of non-agricultural workers and landless labourers in economic development.
- Disregard of local resources, knowledge, skills and collective wisdom.
- A 'superior' attitude in government machinery at various levels and a 'passive' and 'servile' attitude among the rural poor.
- Imposition of development programmes without understanding local conditions; technology disseminators not tuned to local socio-economic and cultural realities.

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[1] MHHDC. *Human development in South Asia 2002: Agriculture and Rural Development, (*Islamabad. Mahbub-ul Haq Human Development Centre, 2003), page 4.

Decentralization for empowerment of rural poor

These shortcomings led to the realization that poverty alleviation programmes cannot be effective unless the poor have a voice in the planning and implementation of schemes meant to help them. This, in turn, necessitates decentralization of key government functions.

Decentralization is the transfer of power and authority from the central/state government to the local level government, and to non-government and private organizations. Decentralization enables rural poor people to: a) share in decision-making that affects their daily lives; b) evaluate the outcome of their own decisions; c) minimize chances of misunderstanding; d) understand the difficulties and complexities of administration, planning and management; e) accept responsibility for failure; and f) develop a sense of belonging and commitment to civil society.

Basics of decentralization

- Political and administrative autonomy to local bodies.
- Devolution of revenues to local bodies and empowering them to levy taxes to fund part of their expenditure.
- Periodic local body elections. Reservation of seats on local bodies for weaker social sections.
- Local database on administration.
- Local voluntary and private sector organizations collaborate with local governments in addressing development issues.
- Build local human capacities through improved access to health care, education and productive assets to ensure that decentralization empowers the poor.

Types of decentralization

Political – provides citizens or their elected representatives at the local level with more power in decision making and supports democratization by giving them more influence in the formulation and implementation of policies. The process is known as 'devolution' and is inherently tied with local autonomy.

Administrative – redistribution of authority, responsibility and financial resources among different levels of government. This includes:

Deconcentration – transfer of power, authority, responsibility or the discretion to plan, decide and manage.

Delegation – creation of autonomous units with a great deal of discretion in decision making.

Fiscal – delegation of fiscal and financial powers, including taxation powers to the local self-government bodies.

Leading forces behind decentralization

- Democratization process.
- Structural adjustments and disengagement of the state.
- Emergence of civil society organizations and new stakeholders.
- Growth of local and regional forces in search of their own socio-political identities.

As many Asian countries adopt decentralized development models, they are searching for best ways to:

- motivate and mobilize people to participate in local development;
- strengthen capability for participatory local development;
- strengthen institutional capabilities for training of local decision-makers for their varied and demanding tasks; and
- enhance sharing in knowledge and understanding of good practices in local development.

A number of training tools, methods, courses and information systems have been developed in India and across Asia to address these issues, with participatory training approaches becoming increasingly important. Training methods in India on strengthening local governance within *Panchayati Ra*j also focus on bringing about changes in values, attitudes and behaviour – for e.g. accepting illiterate women as leaders in local development – which are now recognized as preconditions for successful decentralization. Effective training of both local government officials and local elected representatives is urgently needed because without appropriate knowledge and skill development programmes, decentralization initiatives may not yield the desired results.

This handbook has been designed to cover identified gaps in training needs of both local government functionaries and elected grassroots representatives associated with the *Panchayati Raj* decentralization process in India. These include the following training modules: ***participatory planning and management; social mobilization; enhancing women's participation; social audit; participatory local resources management; partnership building; conflict management; planning for disaster preparedness and mitigation; participatory community monitoring and evaluation; and PRA tools.***

The topics covered in this handbook will be relevant for Asian countries with programmes and activities in support of participatory local development.

Decentralization policies and legislation in India

The Constitution of India has set up a republican parliamentary democracy at the national level with the Council of Ministers chosen from and collectively responsible to the elected House of People. This structure of governance is replicated at the level of states, which form the Union of India. The Constitution provided for decentralization in the form of a general directive to the state to establish *Panchayati Raj* institutions (PRIs) at the village level as the lowest rung of governance. According to Article 40 of the Constitution:

"The State shall take steps to organize village *panchayats* and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government."

The true potential of Article 40 lies not merely in its directive to set up village *panchayats* as part of a constitutionally formulated principle of state policy, but in the significant concomitant mandate that *panchayats* be endowed with "such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government". This means that the task would remain incomplete unless village *panchayats* begin to function as units of self-government as a part of a democratic polity.

The vision of village-based self-government came to be appreciated a few years after the Constitution's adoption in January 1950 when it became increasingly self-evident that socio-economic transformation could not be achieved without democratic participation. The Community Development Programme, launched in 1952, had a 'top-down' approach. Although this was soon strengthened by a National Extension Service to tackle the problems of growth and development at different local and functional levels, there was, relatively speaking, only token public participation through nominated representatives of the public.

The growing awareness that lack of public involvement and participation was a major impediment to the implementation of the Community Development and National Extension Service Programmes, was reflected in the government's Second Five-Year Plan. "Unless there is a comprehensive village planning which takes into account the needs of the entire community, weaker sections like tenant-cultivators, landless workers and artisans may not benefit sufficiently from assistance provided by the Government," the Plan document noted.

"Indeed, rural progress depends entirely on the existence of an active organisation in the village which can bring all the people including the weaker sections into common programmes to be carried out with the assistance of the administration," it added. The document emphasized the need for "an agency in the village which represents the community as a whole and can assume responsibility and initiative for developing the resources of the village and providing the necessary leadership".

The thinking underlying the Second Five-Year Plan was that village panchayats, along with co-operatives, could play a major role in bringing about a more equitable and integrated social structure in rural areas. However, the Plan's thrust was to establish statutory *panchayats* in all villages, more as vehicles for national extension and community development projects rather than as units of self-government. It was primarily from this angle that it set the target of more than doubling the number of *panchayats* by 1960-61.

The Balwantrai Mehta Study Team, appointed in January 1957 to assess the Community Development and National Extension Service programmes, observed: "Development cannot 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."

The Team's recommendation for early establishment of statutory elective local bodies with the necessary resources, powers and authority led to the enactment of a three-tier *Panchayati Raj* system in different states in 1959 with two basic objectives viz., democratic decentralization and local participation in planned programmes.

The three tiers of the system consisted of the Zilla Parishad (district council) at the apex district level, the Block Samiti (council) at the intermediate level and village panchayat (council) at the grassroots level. The States of Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh were the first to adopt the system. By 1959, most states had Panchayat Acts and by the year 1960 *Panchayati Raj* institutions had been set up in all parts of the country.

The introduction of Panchayati Raj signified the beginning of a new era of participatory development and laid the foundation of 'democratic decentralization' to:

- *promote people's participation in rural development programmes;*
- *provide an institutional framework for popular administration;*
- *act as a medium of social and political change;*
- *facilitate local mobilization; and*
- *prepare and assist in the implementation of development plans.*

However, the promising start towards decentralization in most states soon began to fade, either under political pressure or due to changes in the growth strategies and policies of the government. The creation of *panchayats* was not followed up by the devolution of powers and resources to these bodies, stalling progress of the decentralization process in the country.

Phases in *Panchayati Raj* evolution

1959 to 1966: *Panchayati Raj* institutions established in most states.

1967 to 1976: Little attention paid to the growth of *Panchayati Raj* institutions with no devolution of powers and resources to these bodies. A new trend favoured creation of new government departments for development programmes meant to improve the lives of the poor.

1977 to 1991: The year 1977 marks the beginning of the revival of decentralization efforts in the country, when the Asoka Mehta Committee identified these factors for the decline of *Panchayati Raj*:

i) dissociation of development programmes from *Panchayati Raj*;
ii) bureaucratic inability to involve *panchayats* in implementation of development programmes;
iii) internal deficiencies within the *panchayat* institutions;
iv) lack of clarity about the concept itself.

The Mehta Committee recommended a two-tier system with the Zilla Parishad at the district level as the first point of decentralization. At the second level, a conclave of villages would

form Mandal (block) Panchayats to provide a better link between higher and local government levels.

The working of *Panchayati Raj* was examined by subsequent expert panels set up by the government, notable among them being the G. V. K. Rao Committee in 1985 and the L. M. Singhvi Committee in 1986.

In view of the limited impact of centrally directed development, the increasing burden on the state of expensive monitoring and the consequent increase in corruption, the committees concluded that there was a need to revitalize *Panchayati Raj*. Its role and powers were limited, elections were not regular and there was little or no accountability to the people at the grassroots. Some states, especially Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, took steps to reactivate *Panchayati Raj* through institutional reforms to make the lower tiers financially and administratively viable and closer to the people.

1992 to present: The year 1992 marks a watershed in the evolution of *Panchayati Raj* with the modification of the country's basic law by the Constitution's 73rd Amendment Act to confer constitutional sanctity and power on *panchayats*. It also gives them an important role in shaping rural progress with the goal of integrating the poorest and most marginalized into the mainstream of development.

The 73rd Amendment calls for a uniform three-tier *panchayat* system throughout the country. It reserves a quota of *panchayat* membership and chairperson positions for Scheduled Castes/Tribes and women; enables the weaker social sections to voice their problems and encourages the emergence of leadership among them.

The *panchayats* were given the power and responsibility to plan and implement programmes to promote economic growth and social justice as set out in a comprehensive list of activities appended to the Act. (See Annex for details of PRI and elected representative numbers in different states of India.)

However, the implementation of the Constitution 73rd Amendment at the field level has been gradual. Although the Amendment has visualized *panchayats* as institutions of self-government, these bodies have generally been viewed only as agents carrying out federal and state government programmes. Even for these, timely funds have not been made available to the *panchayats.*

Transparency - an essential condition for effective monitoring and evaluation - envisaged by the Amendment to be achieved through the *Gram Sabha* (village council) has not been effectively implemented at the field level. Studies have found that *Gram Sabhas* have not been convened even once in many *panchayats* across the country. The difficulty in convening the *Gram Sabha* is attributed to the quorum fixed by the respective State Act.

Despite the recognition of the need for micro-planning in India's Ninth Five-Year Plan, the planning process did not make much headway due to the lack of expertise and necessary information at the local level.

Another dimension, which has become increasingly important, is the role of civil society organizations in local development with India's 7th Five-Year Plan outlining the possible involvement of NGOs in development programmes.

The following conditions are considered necessary for the successful implementation of the 73rd Amendment Act:

- people's participation for development and management of resources;
- simple, low cost, people-friendly technologies based on self-regenerative measures;
- sensitizing and training rural people and their elected representatives to take up their new roles.

Power to the *panchayats*; 73rd constitutional amendment

The *Eleventh Schedule* added to the Constitution of India by the 73rd Amendment Act lists a comprehensive range of development activities to be entrusted to PRIs as part of the decentralization process.

1. Programmes for productive activities – agriculture, irrigation, animal husbandry, fuel and fodder, poultry, fishery, small-scale industries including food processing and cottage industries;
2. Land development programmes – land reforms, soil conservation, minor irrigation, water management and watershed development, wasteland development, social forestry and grazing lands;
3. Education and cultural activities – primary schools, adult education, technical education and libraries;
4. Social welfare – women and child development, family welfare, care of people with physical and mental disabilities;
5. Provisions of civic amenities – drinking water, rural electrification, non-conventional sources of energy, rural roads, bridges, culverts, waterways, sanitation, rural housing and health;
6. Poverty alleviation and allied programmes for social and economic advancement of the weaker sections;
7. Maintenance of community assets and public distribution system;
8. Organization and control of rural markets and village fairs.

The Constitution of India directs state governments to endow *panchayats* with the powers and authority necessary for their functioning as institutions of self-governance with the key responsibility of preparing and implementing plans for economic development and social justice. *Local bodies have been given direct responsibility for decentralized development planning with the introduction of Article 243 ZD in the Constitution. This establishes a District Planning Committee in every district "to consolidate the plans prepared by the panchayats and the Municipalities in the district and to prepare a draft development plan for the district as a whole".*

Decentralized planning has thus become a constitutionally recognized key function of the *panchayats* and many state governments have taken steps to enable elected PRIs to discharge this responsibility. (See Annex I, pp. 123 and 124).

PRIs as a model for participatory local development in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala

Panchayati Raj in Andhra Pradesh

Legislative framework for the establishment of *Panchayati Raj*

The Andhra Pradesh *Panchayat Raj* Act, framed in the light of the Constitution's 73rd Amendment, came into effect in May 1994, setting up a three-tier PRI structure with a *Zilla Parishad* at the district, *Mandal Praja Parishad* at the intermediate and *Gram Panchayat* at the village level. It also provides for the constitution of village *Gram Sabhas* made up of all registered voters in the village.

The state government has satisfactorily conducted elections to constitute the PRIs and has devolved functions, powers, and resources to these bodies.

Election, tenure and composition of members at the three *Panchayati Raj* levels

The PRIs have a five-year term. Members are to be directly elected on the basis of Wards of the *Gram Panchayat* and Territorial Constituencies in the case of *Mandal Parishad* and *Zilla Parishad*, with reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population.

One-third of the total number of directly elected seats in each of these bodies is reserved for the backward classes and another one-third for women. The *Mandal* and *Zilla Parishad* have one or two members co-opted from the minority communities. The Head of the *Gram Panchayat* is elected directly by the electorate in the village whereas the *Mandal Parishad* President and the *Zilla Parishad* Chairperson are elected from among the directly elected members of these bodies. One-third of the top PRI posts are reserved for Scheduled Castes/Tribes and another one-third for women.

There is an organic linkage among the three PRI tiers with the elected heads of the lower levels being permanent invitees to the meetings of the next higher tier. Thus, all *Gram Panchayat* Heads in a *Mandal* participate in *Mandal Parishad* meetings and *Mandal Parishad* Presidents within a district attend the *Zilla Parishad* meetings. The District Collector (top district administration official) is also a permanent invitee to the meetings of the *Mandal* and *Zilla Parishad* Standing Committees. Permanent invitees can join the discussions but without the right to vote.

Powers, functions and resources at each *Panchayati Raj* level

Ten out of 29 subjects in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution of India have been transferred to *Gram Panchayats*. These include minor irrigation, water management, watershed development, drinking water, roads, culverts and bridges.

The *Gram Sabha* is expected to meet at least twice a year to consider matters placed before it by the *Gram Panchayat.* These generally include the annual statement of accounts and the audit report on the administration of the preceding year; programmes of works for the current year; proposals for fresh taxation or for increasing existing taxes; and selection of schemes, beneficiaries and locations. While implementing programmes, the *Gram Panchayat* gives due consideration to suggestions made during the *Gram Sabha* meetings.

There is provision for seven Standing Committees at the *Zilla Parishad* level, dealing with planning and finance, rural development, agriculture, education and medical services, women's welfare, social welfare, communications, rural water supply and power. Each Standing Committee has the *Zilla Parishad* Chairman as ex-officio member and others nominated by him or her according to prescribed rules. The Standing Committee is the decision-making body in its respective field, subject to the ratification of the general body of the *Zilla Parishad.*

Development areas under direct responsibility of each *Panchayati Raj* level

Gram Panchayat
- Implementing land reform measures, including consolidation of land holdings and cooperative management of community lands.
- Implementing programmes related to agriculture, animal husbandry, cottage industry, pre-primary and primary education, health and sanitation, women, children, destitute people and people with disabilities.
- Resource planning by preparing an inventory of human and natural resources and other assets at the village level.
- Preparing and prioritizing plans/programmes to harness these resources to meet local needs and aspirations.
- Disseminating technology to increase farm and related production; expanding services like health, veterinary and sanitation services in their jurisdiction.

Mandal Parishad
- Co-ordinating rural development activities within their jurisdiction and consolidating *panchayat* plans into a *Mandal Parishad* plan.

Zilla Parishad
- Organizing data collection and consolidation of *Mandal Parishad* plans, allocation of funds and approval of *Mandal Parishads* budgets.

Mobilization of resources and responsibilities at each *Panchayati Raj* level

Gram Panchayat

Only the *Gram Panchayat* can levy taxes. This includes a house tax, a tax on the produce sold in the villages (*Kolagaram* or *Katarusum)* a tax on agricultural land and a land cess at the rate of two *paise* to a rupee (2 percent) on the annual rental value of occupied land.

It can also charge fees such as for the use of land and for the occupation of public buildings such as shelter homes, and duty on land in the form of a surcharge at a rate not exceeding twenty-five *paise* to the rupee (25 percent). The state government also shares with local governments the revenue collected under certain items by way of land/local cess, surcharges on stamp duty, taxes on minor minerals and entertainment taxes. The government also provides a variety of grants to PRIs.

Mandal Parishad

The main sources of income are funds relating to institutions and schemes transferred by the government, or heads of departments funds relating to different development programmes. Other sources include funds or aid from central, state and other national bodies promoting *khadi*, silk, coir and handicraft; contributions from *Gram Panchayat/Zilla Parishad*; shares of land revenue; and annual grants at the rate of five rupees per person residing in the *Mandal*. A *Mandal Parishad's* own resources account for only five percent of the total income.

Zilla Parishad

It derives 5 percent of its income from rents on buildings and commercial complexes, market/industrial fees, etc. The *Zilla Parishad* (ZP) is paid a per capita grant of two rupees per person residing in its jurisdiction. An important grant is for salaries of *ZP* staff and school teachers, which accounts for 50 percent of the receipts.

The *Janmabhoomi* programme (See Training module on social mobilization. Pg 40)

The programme shows how the administrative machinery can be made more responsive to local needs and to facilitate participation by rural poor in local governance.

Panchayati Raj in Karnataka

Legislative framework for the establishment of *Panchayati Raj*

The Karnataka *Panchayati Raj* Act of 1993 incorporates the institutional structure set out by the 73rd Amendment. It has established the *Gram Panchayat* at the village, *Taluka Panchayat* at the intermediate and *Zilla Panchayat* at the district levels.

Local development planning, participation and resource mobilization

The PRIs are responsible, among other things, for development planning at the district, *taluk* (intermediate) and village level. This involves identification of local needs and resources for formulating local development projects, determining resource allocation priorities and locating projects within the integrated area development framework.

Although the *Gram Sabha* is expected to prepare and promote village development schemes during its open meetings, in practice, such meetings produce a list of demands, such as for school facilities, drinking water supply, a primary health centre, veterinary dispensary or a market link road. The demands are considered by the *Gram Panchayat* (GP), which prepares a GP sub-plan to accommodate the needs of individual villages as far as possible. The GP plans are incorporated into the *Taluka Panchayat* (TP) plans, which form part of the *Zilla Panchayat* (ZP) Plan. This process is designed to ensure that every local aspiration is taken note of.

To promote regional balance, the State Finance Commission (SFC), set up by the Karnataka Government in 1996, recommended criteria for distribution of resources among the PRIs, giving a relatively higher share to backward areas/regions. Moreover, an untied grant of Rs 100 000 is being given to every GP as additional financial assistance, which should not be adjusted against the funds recommended for devolution by the SFC.

The GPs are also empowered to levy taxes on buildings and lands, which are not subject to agricultural assessment within the limits of the *panchayat* area. The GP can fix the rate for supply of water for drinking and other purposes and levy charges such as tax on entertainment, market fee, pilgrim fee, etc.

However, there is insufficient resource mobilization at GP level. This has continued their reliance on the transfer of state resources on the basis of SFC recommendations, which is limiting the realization of the objective of promoting more autonomous planning and administration by local elected bodies within *Panchayati Raj.*

Panchayati Raj in Kerala

Legislative framework for the establishment of *Panchayati Raj*

Kerala enacted the *Panchayat Raj* Act in 1994 in compliance with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment to set up a three-tier PRI structure of *Gram* (village), block and district level *panchayats*.

Local development planning, participation and resource mobilization

Panchayati Raj institutions came into prominence during the unique People's Planning movement launched by the state government in 1996. Initiated after a major devolution of power and resources to local government institutions, the *Ninth Plan - people's plan* campaign was an attempt to prepare and subsequently implement the ninth state plan with people's participation through these bodies.

The programme involved five phases starting from identification of needs by the *gram sabha*s to implementation of the projects using local expertise and resources. Nearly 40 percent of the state's annual plan outlay was set aside for local bodies, ensuring a liberal measure of autonomy to the PRIs to draw up development programmes.

Phases in the People's Planning Campaign – a learning model

First phase

Gram Sabhas were convened to identify local development priorities, with meetings held on holidays to ensure maximum participation. Volunteer squads visited households to explain the importance of participation while public meetings and different mass media were used to generate mass awareness. Group discussions were organized on 12 identified development sectors. The most important outcome of the gram sabhas was development reports covering local development aspirations, information on natural resources, available statistics and problems.

It is estimated that about 2.7 million men and women took part in the Gram Sabhas. Twenty-seven per cent of the participants were women. About 650 resource persons at the state level, 12 000 at the district level and more than 100 000 at the local level, were trained for active participation in the Gram Sabhas.

Second phase

Local development seminars were organized to suggest action to address the identified development priorities. To facilitate the discussions, participants were given reports of the socio-economic status of the Gram Panchayat. The state of resources was assessed from existing government data, and survey of local geography and history. These exercises were guided by a group of trained local resource persons, elected PRI representatives, and government officials. This involved a massive programme to train resource persons from the state to local level.

The second phase produced an extensive local database, a comprehensive survey of the development status of the panchayat and a list of likely solutions to development problems. Task forces were set up to prepare development projects for each development sector.

<u>*Third phase*</u>

Sector-wise task forces prepared projects based on suggestions emerging from the development seminars. All the 12 development sectors had a task force of 10 to 15 members each and chaired by an elected representative with an officer from the relevant line department as the convenor.

As many as 12 000 task forces were functioning at the village level alone with a total participation of at least 120 000 persons. The task forces prepared about 100 000 projects for consideration by the panchayats. Special efforts were made to ensure the participation of officials and local level experts in the preparation of the projects. Guidelines were issued by the State Planning Board to ensure uniformity in the project reports.

<u>*Fourth phase*</u>

Projects prepared by the task forces prioritized for incorporation into the five-year plans of the panchayats.

<u>*Fifth phase*</u>

Plans are vetted by a panel of experts for their technical viability and conformity with the mandatory government guidelines on planning and costing, before they are forwarded to the District Planning Committee (DPC).

<u>*Final phase*</u>

The DPC gives formal approval to the plans. It is to be noted that even the DPC cannot change the PRI priority, but only ensure compliance with government guidelines. The final development plan for each district in Kerala thus reflects people's needs and aspirations.

Impact of participatory planning model within *Panchayati Raj* in Kerala

The People's Planning Campaign generated a successful methodology for participatory planning for local level development. The methodology is built upon lessons learnt from earlier pilot activities in participatory local development in the state.

How *panchayats* can make a difference

LGIs prevent water pollution

This example of the role of the middle-tier Panchayat Union Council (PUC) in Tamil Nadu State during 1986-1991 shows how elected local bodies can protect the interests of the weak.

The PUC convened an urgent meeting on 30 March 1998 to discuss the grant of a license to start a distillery in the area under the jurisdiction of one of its constituent village panchayats. In village panchayat areas, the authority to grant a license for any trade classified under the category of Dangerous and Offensive Trades rests with the PUC.

It was decided unanimously not to grant permission on the following grounds: i) the distillery could affect village drinking water sources and cause air pollution. A similar case of a distillery causing many problems in another part of the district was cited as an example; and ii) people in surrounding areas were dependent on the ground water for irrigation, which could be depleted by the distillery.

However, the distillery was to be set up by an influential businessman, whose spouse was active in state-level politics and who allegedly employed some panchayat presidents to mobilize support, besides trying to influence leaders in areas that were not likely to be affected. Knowledgeable sources mentioned that a few active presidents of these areas took upon themselves the task of mobilizing support from the other members for this purpose. Panchayat presidents from areas that were likely to be affected were also allegedly offered large sums of money and given assurances that certain development activities would be taken up in their areas if they agreed to back the resolution. There were also promises of jobs in the proposed distillery for a large number of people from these areas. Public meetings were convened in some of these villages where representatives of the businessman explained the direct and indirect benefits to the area once the distillery was set up.

Assured of the support of several PUC members, the industrialist urged some of them to demand reconsideration of the license application by the PUC. According to some respondents of this study, even the PUC Chairman was inclined to permit the distillery after being influenced by the industrialist.

Local people, angered by these developments gathered outside the PUC office in large numbers on the day of the meeting. Anticipating trouble, the police were called and the meeting postponed to later in the day. However, the crowd did not give up. When the PUC met it decided by majority to adopt a secret vote on the issue. However, six Panchayat Presidents, including the Vice-Chairman and three nominated/co-opted members, did not accept this and walked out in protest. The resolution in favour of the distillery was supported by 28 votes and only one against.

But local people petitioned the court against this permission and subsequently, when Tamil Nadu State was put under central government rule, they made representations to the State Governor. The State Government eventually refused to give clearance for the distillery, reportedly on the suggestion of a very high level functionary who, in turn, was impressed by the effective representation made by the villagers.

The case study shows that while many pressure groups can influence PRI decision making, people have ample opportunities for expressing open dissent. The fact that the people did not give up, despite the passage of the resolution allowing the distillery, deserves special

mention. It may be mentioned that the proposed distillery building was abandoned without completion and now houses a religious training institution.

However, the distillery was set up in another part of the same PUC area after the term of the elected PRI representatives ended in March 1991. Since there was no elected PRI representative at the time of granting permission to start the distillery, this did not attract the attention of the people. It may be concluded that the presence of elected PRI representatives is essential for giving voice to the people.

Ex-sarpanches to the rescue of earthquake-affected people

This account of a village affected by the disastrous January 2001 earthquake in India's western Gujarat State shows how elected panchayat leaders can expedite relief and rehabilitation following natural disasters.

"Khangarpur, 30 km off the devastated Bhuj region, presented quite a different picture in the midst of depressing news that even ten days after the earthquake hit the state, people from many villages were wandering helplessly and nobody, including the local authorities, could tell where one could expect some relief."

The former Sarpanch of Khangarpur called a meeting of the villagers and set up a committee to keep watch on the distribution of relief. All relief material arriving in the village was stored in the community hall and given out to families on the basis of the number of members in the household, without regard to caste or position.

"I heard similar stories in most villages of Saurashtra and the surviving ones of Kuchh. The former Sarpanches and Panches have done a splendid job by coming to the rescue of their fellow villagers." Some ex-Sarpanches maintained complete data on the loss of life, injuries, damaged property and relief received by their village. "However, there were some black sheep too. Some ex-Sarpanches exploited the opportunity for enriching themselves and their kith and kin. When people in Moti Malwari village found that their ex-Sarpanch was favouring members of his own caste, they forced him to form a village committee comprising representatives belonging to all castes to supervise the distribution work."
(Source: Neelam Gupta, Panchayati Raj Update: 2001)

Villagers treat water as an economic good – Olavanna, Kerala State

The Olavanna Gram Panchayat in Kozhikode district of Kerala has received global attention for its initiative in providing safe drinking water in an area with three saline water rivers and potable water sources that dry up at the start of summer. During a severe water scarcity in 1985, only 1 600 of the 7 000 households in the Panchayat area were covered by the solitary Kerala Water Authority (KWA) water supply scheme.

The Panchayat commissioned a piped water scheme in 1987 in its Vettuvedankunnu ward, funded by government grants. It consisted of an intake well, an overhead tank and pipelines to distribute drinking water through public stand posts to 400 households. Some 18 piped water schemes have been built to provide drinking water to more than 1 300 families through public and house taps. The KWA implemented two more schemes in 1990 and 1998 to serve 2 400 households. Since the quality of KWA services was not up to the expectations of the people, Olavanna villagers were encouraged by the Panchayat president to meet their drinking water needs themselves.

The Panchayat scheme generated enthusiasm and applause in three villages. The Panchayat's financial constraints led a retired school teacher to collect money from the community and install a small 1 HP pump with an intake well to serve five neighboring families in the hamlet of Kambiliparamba, with the support of the Panchayat.

With the support of the Panchayat president, 54 other households of this hamlet got together in 1989 and, with a contribution of Rs 4 500 each, formed a registered co-operative society to run a drinking water scheme. There are now more than 26 successful private cooperative societies in this Panchayat and many more are being set up. Thus, the Panchayat has enabled the villagers to start their own schemes and its role has been modified from being a provider to a facilitator and regulator.

Ralegaon Siddhi – a model of water-harvesting

Located in a semi-arid region in Maharashtra State, the village of Ralegaon Siddhi has demonstrated the power of community-based partnership and networking. The centerpiece of its success is a water-harvesting system set up by community initiative. This has led to other gains such as the advancement of women, improved school enrolment, especially of girl children and a ban on liquor sales in the village.

The initiative was a joint endeavour of the block administration, two NGOs, some schools, parent-teacher associations, media and local foresters. It has transformed Ralegaon's highly degraded eco-system and made it one of India's most prosperous villages. A survey commissioned by the New Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment found that a quarter of all Ralegaon households registered annual incomes over Rs 450 000 each.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh State is learning from Ralegaon's example to implement its own watershed project. The legendary Anna Hazare, who is the main driving force behind Ralegaon's success, is advising the Andhra Pradesh Government.

Sukhomajri – community action transforms once barren village

Located in the rainfed Shivalik hill region in Haryana State, Sukhomajri village was once incapable of feeding its people, most of whom preferred to migrate to the cities in search of a livelihood. Today, it is a model watershed development village and produces three crops every year. Sukhomajri now has a forest of Acacia Catechu, locally known as khair, valued at Rs 900 million.

As with Ralegaon, Sukhomajri's success is based on partnerships among communities, biologists, holders of traditional knowledge, NGOs and foresters, which have transformed the once poverty-stricken area into one of India's richest villages.

Community action enables farmers to counter drought

Under the leadership of a local NGO, 500 semi-arid villages situated in the Aravalli hills in Alwar district of Rajasthan State are reviving the local tradition of water harvesting and restoring depleted groundwater resources. This has enabled local farmers to withstand consecutive years of drought. As in Ralegaon Siddhi and Sukhomajri, distress out-migration has been largely arrested. Studies show that the Village Domestic Product has increased in proportion to the investments made in water conservation.

With dozens of villages undertaking water-harvesting activities in the same watershed, the five rivers in the area are no longer 'monsoonal drains' and flow round the year. Over

25 villages in one river basin have come together to form India's first community-based River Water Parliament to jointly manage the regenerated rivers.

The success of the Alwar villages is rooted in a solid community network and its links with the district administration, research institutions and environmental activists. The concept of a Water Parliament, initiated by inspirational leader Rajendra Singh, is now inspiring similar ventures in other arid areas of the country.

II

Training of trainers on participatory local development

Participatory training methods

The recognition of the benefits of participatory local development planning has engendered changes in the needs, concepts, approaches, techniques, the general conduct of and ways of measuring the effectiveness of training. This has led to a number of innovations, including a shift from instructional to interactive to the greater use of a participatory approach in training.

The conventional approach of 'giving' in a training situation is being gradually replaced by 'sharing', 'learning together' or acting as a 'facilitator' (See Annex II, page 89). The role of a facilitator is to encourage participation without being judgmental and by listening with interest and empathy to help the trainees (participants) to tap into the reservoir of their own abilities gained through their experiences. This is known as the 'participatory approach' having a strong content of interaction.

Training that aspires to promote stakeholder participation in local development planning must use participatory methods in its design, context and conduct. It should

1. bring about changes in attitudes, behaviour and functioning of various governmental and non-governmental development functionaries and elected representatives through a change in their perception of the abilities and needs of rural people;

2. change attitudes and behaviour of rural people through empowerment by a) arming them with the information to take right decisions, and b) equipping them with the skills/means to implement these;

3. be need-based, a continuous process, an integral part of any development strategy and include institutional development; and

4. be able to measure progress against identified key indicators and goals.

The trainer should judiciously assume the role of a facilitator/catalyst; facilitating the trainees/participants to effectively use their knowledge/skills and experience for solving development problems.

This is also in keeping with the changing perceptions of rural development as reflected in the Eighth and Ninth Five Year Plans as well as the 73rd Constitutional Amendment and innovative decentralization of rural development efforts such as *Janmabhoomi* in Andhra Pradesh.

Training needs assessment (TNA)

An assessment of training needs for participatory local development must take into account rural development programmes and strategies, organizational culture and functioning of the decision-making process, in particular the attitudes, behaviour and local livelihood conditions and needs of rural people concerned.

TNA provides answers to the following:

- where training is needed?
- who needs training?
- who will organize the training?
- where will it be organized?
- what will be the content of training?
- what skills and knowledge are needed?
- will it be institutional or non-institutional?
- are requisite training facilities available?
- are resource persons of requisite calibre available?
- who will finance the training?
- what are the likely outcomes of training?

TNA for capacity-building on main local development activities at each PRI level

*Zilla Parishad (*District)	Blocks (*Mandal Parishad*)	*Gram Panchayat* (village level)
Collection of data and dissemination of information.	Implementation of rural development programmes in collaboration with *panchayats*, NGOs and other local-level institutions.	Resource planning through preparation of an inventory of human, physical and natural resources and assets available in the village.
Consolidation of plans of action of the Blocks within the district.	Propagation of improved methods of cultivation.	Assessment of their potential for development, cost and technical support needed for exploiting the potential.
Distribution of funds to Blocks or *Mandals.*	Improvement of livestock and establishing minor veterinary dispensaries.	Preparation of village development plan.
Examination and approval of their budgets.	Expansion and maintenance of medical and health services and elementary education.	Active involvement in plan implementation and monitoring.

Identification of stakeholders

The stakeholders to be trained at district, sub-district, block (or *Mandal* or *Taluk*) and village levels are:

- senior state government officials responsible for local development planning;
- PRI members, including *Gram Panchayat* elected officials and the *Sarpanch* at village level;
- new entrants, especially women and those from weaker sections elected under the one-third quota provided by the 73rd Constitution Amendment;
- functionaries of government line departments; and
- representatives of NGOs/CBOs/SHGs/media.

The training can be to upgrade skills and refresher courses; pre-posting and refresher courses for higher level central and state officials; specially for certain implementing staff of various rural development programmes; refresher courses for new entrants to political parties; special courses run by different government agencies/institutions

for women and functionaries from other weaker social sections; or run by NGOs for their staff, representatives of other NGOs and for self-help groups of women, other weaker sections and youth.

Training of PRI officials is a big challenge because of the vast and varied nature of local needs and situations. Training courses can be i) pre-service training; ii) orientation training; iii) induction training, iv) in-service training; v) on-the-job training; and vi) refresher training/orientation. These can be residential programmes in training institutions or on-the-job, conducted by mobile training units. Women who are unable to leave family responsibilities need training within the home environment. Adult/non-formal education, health, nutrition and hygiene programmes for women, are examples of mobile training where training facilities go to the trainees instead of the other way round.

SPATIAL-SPECIFIC TRAINING

Residential training programmes on theory and practice have the advantage of giving the trainees confidence and time for self-assessment in terms of peer values and help in attitude-building and behavioural change.

TARGET GROUP-SPECIFIC TRAINING

This training is geared to the needs of marginalized social groups who need special attention for mainstream integration, e.g. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India.

GENDER-SPECIFIC TRAINING

Women in most developing countries are now recognized as an important part of decision making in society and are being mobilized to participate in development. This has given them newer roles and functions, generating the need for new capacity-building programmes. Women are also actively involved in political administration and need to be specially trained for their new roles and responsibilities.

For instance, a large number of women, on being elected as *Panchayati Raj* representatives, have a crucial role in the grassroots decision-making process. Gender-specific training is essential to develop and nurture potential skills in women for their successful integration into the development process.

Capacity-building areas for training

Capacity-building areas for training of trainers on participatory local development, which have been identified on the basis of the assessment of training needs of PRI council members, government officials, NGOs and CBOs are: i) advocacy/promotion/learning; ii) social mobilization/participation; iii) local leadership; iv) social development/gender issues; v) technical/professional/managerial skills development; and vi) thematic topics.

Content of training modules for training of trainers on participatory local development

For elected PRI council members	*For PRI government officials, NGOs/CBOs*
Powers, functions and resources of local government	Powers, functions and resources of local governments
Poverty alleviation/human resource development schemes	Social mobilization
Identification and prioritization of local needs	Participatory planning for social development and poverty alleviation
Self-governance	Management of project implementation
Participatory monitoring	Participatory monitoring
Social auditing	Gender sensitization
	Coordination between the local governments, NGOs and CBOs

Concepts of training

Instructional	Interactive	Participatory
The acquisition of knowledge by a participant leads to action. The participant learns what the trainer teaches. Learning is a function of the capacity of the participant to learn and the ability of the trainer to teach. Individual action leads to improvement on the job. Training is the responsibility of the training institution. It begins and ends with the course.	Motivations and skills lead to action. Skills are acquired through practice. Learning is a complex function of the motivation and capacity of individual participants, the norms of the training group, the training methods, the behaviour of the trainers and the general climate of the institution. The participant's motivation is influenced by the climate of his/her work organization. Improvement on the job is a complex function of individual learning, the norms of the working group and the general climate of the organization. Individual learning, unused, leads to frustration. Training is the responsibility of three partners; the participants' organization, the participants and the training institution. It has a preparatory pre-training and a subsequent post-training phase. All these factors are of key importance to the success of training.	Awareness of problems and confidence in the ability to find their solutions precedes receptivity to motivation and learning skills. When the trainee/participant contributes to the design and conduct of the training course, it increases his motivation and the relevance of his/her training and provides practice in the use of popular participation as the mobilizing device for development. The use of participatory approaches on the job increases the capacity of the trainee to transmit his/her knowledge and influences the norms and the climate of the activity in which training effectiveness is measured. Training involves the exchange of knowledge between the facilitator and the participant and in defining the nature and environment of the learning problem. It is a combined effort to ensure that the skills learned are adapted to the problem that the participant will face. The web of relationships of the training institution will, if it is to be effective, have many linkages.

Source: United Nations, 1978, New York. *A Manual and Resource Book for Popular Participation Training*, Vol -1, Introduction.

III

Training modules for training of trainers on participatory local development

Introduction

The training modules are meant to cover gaps in existing training programmes that were identified by a broad-based training needs assessment among stakeholders. The focus is on two key *Panchayati Raj* institutions – the *Gram Sabha* including all registered voters at village level and the *Sarpanch* (head of the lowest elected tier of *Panchayati Raj* institutions – the *Gram Panchayat*). The main issues here are lack of participation of the rural poor and the lack of preparedness of local elected officials. Hence the need for training for good local governance.

Although tailored to the training needs of *Panchayati Raj* functionaries in India, the modules provide guidance on core issues in institutional capacity-building for local development planning, which are, to a large degree, similar in other developing countries within the region.

Objectives

1. To equip trainers with the means to enhance the awareness and skills of *panchayat* functionaries, including women, in order to increase their confidence in their capabilities to address the core issues of day-to-day local governance. In many cases, the *Sarpanch* is a woman who is least prepared for her new role.

2. To familiarize trainers with participatory training tools and to assist them in acting as facilitators, offering alternatives/new methods to tackle problems/issues faced by elected *panchayat* functionaries.

Structure

The modules cover the different stages of participatory local governance ranging from social mobilization to participatory community monitoring and evaluation. An additional module explains the use of the different participatory training tools. Reference information and case studies/examples relevant to the training are also included in the annex.

1

Training module on participatory planning and management

Participatory planning

Participatory planning is a process by which a community undertakes to reach a given socio-economic goal by consciously diagnosing its problems and charting a course of action to resolve those problems. Experts are needed, but only as facilitators. Moreover, no one likes to participate in something which is not of his/her own creation. Plans prepared by outside experts, irrespective of their technical soundness, cannot inspire the people to participate in their implementation.

However, the training on participatory local planning and management of the three million newly elected local government Panchayati Raj officials, one-third of them women, is a major challenge. The handbook module on this topic is intended to be utilized by NIRD and State-level government and non-government agencies to build awareness of both government officials and grassroots representatives, elected to district, mandal and local village-level councils, including the village head, called the Sarpanch, who is often a woman.

Awareness building on principles of participatory planning

1. Development should be seen more as a change from the bottom up than from top down.

2. The development process should be managed as a natural organic process rather than according to plans, goals, objectives, targets and schedules, implying that goals and targets may change and, therefore, their timing should be tentative and flexible to make room for adaptation to local conditions.

3. Development programmes should aim to strengthen local organizations and not state and central government bureaucracies. New programmes should be chosen according to their ability to increase local development management capacity. Start with a few schemes to solve some immediate local problems to build local confidence and experience.

4. The development process is supported by local institutions with village panchayats, primary cooperatives, religious, youth, community-based users' and self-help groups playing a lead role. It is more important to make sure that the development process is rooted in a strong local institution than ensuring that local institutions have a grasp of all the finer technical points. It is comparatively easy to arrange technical services from outside than to bring about social involvement and willing popular participation in the development process. Strong local institutions are necessary as support posts quite independently of whatever technical skills and other background they may have.

5. It follows from the above that the development process must be based primarily on confidence and learning rather than on experts and training. It is more important for the people who will take decisions at the local level to have full confidence of the people they represent, than to be trained experts. This also implies that technical staff of departments should work in tandem with local institutions rather than sit on judgement on the plans prepared by these institutions.

Simple is practical

The participatory planning process has implications for the working methods of a conventional local development planner. Current decentralized planning techniques often keep people out of the planning process, which severely limits their ability to deliver the intended results at local level and reinforces the centralizing tendencies in decision-making. The basic issue of whether people or planning techniques should be changed first, has not yet been answered.

As a facilitator of local change, the development planner will have to shed much of the planning jargon and simplify his planning techniques so that these are widely understood. In view of the training needs of the three million newly elected local decision-makers and the limited local expertise, there is an urgent need for training material on the introduction of simple local planning methodologies and techniques that can be used at the village level, with minimal need for external assistance.

How to initiate participatory planning

(i) *Identify local needs, particularly of rural poor families*

- The best way to find what people need and what they see as possible solutions to their problems is to ask them directly. This also creates awareness and willingness among the people to take part in any action that will follow.

- But before asking what they want, it is necessary to establish a common ground of understanding with them. There are bound to be conflicting interests within a community. Special skills and sincerity are needed to build consensus.

- It is important to ensure steadfast community support for a pro-poor development initiative. Local officials, CBOs, field workers of voluntary organizations, teachers, women, and retired people, must be involved in the consultations and discussions.

(ii) *Collect basic data*

- Once local contacts are established, the next step is to collect, with the people's help, basic data about the community, characteristics of the area, resources situation, socio-economic status and other relevant facts.

- The aim is to get a factual baseline picture which will help in setting goals and measuring changes brought about by the project at a later stage.

- It is helpful at this stage is to associate with local officials and NGO functionaries in collecting and verifying facts from different sources.

- To seek people's cooperation, it is important to respect their ideas and abilities. The focus should be on the community as a whole and seeking its commitment to helping the poor.

- Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) is a practical tool for participatory data collection and analysis.

(iii) *Formation of working groups*

- It is helpful is to form working groups that include local officials, to prepare status reports and develop perspectives.

- The aim of the working groups is to analyse and compare data, draw inferences and identify priority areas for intervention. This is aimed at greater clarity and strengthening of participation of local people, particularly the rural poor, by giving greater local planning responsibility and establishment of good working relationship between technical planning experts and the local people. Importance is to be given to detailed specification of the roles of participant individuals, groups and committees in carrying out the tasks.

- Conflicts and disagreements may arise in the process, which are not in themselves a negative factor, but have to be properly resolved and managed at every stage of decision-making.

(iv) *Formulation of the objectives*

- The first step in participatory local planning is to define precisely what specific objectives are to be achieved, which should be stated in concrete terms, e.g. increasing i) incomes of identified households, ii) production of certain crops and iii) literacy among locally elected women officials .
- The objective may not always be quantifiable, particularly when it involves attitudinal changes. Its still helps to be as specific as possible so that people can see how much change has taken place.

(v) *Deciding the strategy*

- This is the most difficult part of participatory local planning as it involves assessing and mobilizing needed resources and choosing the planning methods. It is important to specify: a) resources that are locally available and those needed from outside. (people with skills, funds, raw material inputs, etc.); b) if resources are available when needed; and c) who should be approached, who will approach and with whose help to secure these.

- Consider alternative local planning methods and approaches such as (i) whether to contract a job to private individuals or to do it on a cooperative basis; ii) whether to focus on several small household-based units or one big unit; and iii) whether to train local people as trainers for the jobs or to hire trained personnel from outside.

- Once a course of action is chosen, it should be explained and specified in clear terms to avoid confusion and misunderstanding among the local stakeholders.

(vi) **Ensuring feasibility**

- The working groups at this point should consider whether the objectives are realistic. It is important to ensure that: i) assumptions and stipulations regarding the availability of resources, managerial competence and technical expertise are realistic; ii) proposed activities are economically viable; and iii) local market can absorb the expected outputs.

- It is important to identify potential project beneficiaries and check how the benefits would flow to them.

(vii) **Preparing the work plan**

- This is a blueprint for decentralized project management drawn up by the project implementation committee, specifying the 'what, who, when and how' of local project implementation.

- The work plan should contain the following information in simple tabular form: (i) all activities for implementation of the project; (ii) names(s) of the person(s) responsible for each activity; (iii) starting and completion time for each activity; and (iv) the means to carry out the activities.

- It should also define the outputs expected from each activity to measure performance during implementation or on completion of the project, for effective monitoring and evaluation.

Project work plan format

Name of the activity	Name(s) of the persons responsible	Time schedule		Resources required (human, money, material)	Checking for acceptance, availability
		When to start	When to complete		

(viii) Preparing the budget

- The material and human resources must be given a monetary cost, which form the project budget.

- The cost is further broken down in terms of each period of time and also in terms of availability - whether locally available or to be secured from outside.

- External resources can be government grants or loans from financial institutions, etc.

Budget format

Item	Cost			Total	Sources of funds		
	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year		Local contribution	Outside	
						Grant	Loan
Material							
Equipment							
Personnel							
Travel							
Training							
Official							
Others							

Participatory planning
Operational steps

Ascertain feasibility

Check consensus
Acceptance
Availability, etc.

Set objectives

Targets
Strategies
Schemes

Form working groups

Identify needs
Resources, analyse data
Why poor are poor?

Involve people

Collect data, community profiles
Area characteristics,
Who are poor? PRA

Preparatory work

Informal contacts
Rapport building

Local People

Give ideas
Define problems
Suggest solutions
Determine priorities
Community support bases

Steps in implementation of local development projects

1. *Appointing a project coordinator*

- After hiring staff and technical persons for different jobs according to the schedule, the organization/agency in charge of the project should appoint a coordinator for the project.

- The coordinator can be hired from outside or someone from within the community with the commitment and demonstrated leadership qualities can be chosen for the job.

2. *Setting up a project implementation and monitoring committee*

This is made up of the project coordinator, representatives of the local community and a representative of the funding agency. Its role is to supervise implementation on a day-to-day basis and to work as a crisis management group.

3. *Staff training*

This is needed to reorient project planning staff for the jobs to be performed.

4. *Transparency*

- Important for retaining community interest and support for the project to ensure its smooth progress. Maintain total transparency in procurement and use of resources. Project details, budget and sources of funds can be displayed publicly at different places in the project area.

- Involve more and more local people in various activities with daily/weekly briefings to inform community leaders about ongoing activities and problems, if any. Care is needed to ensure the quality of inputs procured and used.

5. *Anticipating obstacles*

The project coordinator should be aware of likely difficulties, be able to anticipate obstacles and take preventive action. Advance action is needed to ensure timely availability of workers, especially technical people. Plans should be ready to deal with any contingency.

6. *Timely release of funds*

- Implementation is often delayed by the non-availability or inadequacy of funds. Various bureaucratic formalities, postal delays, etc. may delay commencement.

- If there is more than one source of funding, it is all the more necessary to ensure that no mistake is made in completing formalities of Terms and Condition (T&C) documents and also in submitting timely progress reports, which are needed for timely release of fund installments.

- The project coordinator should ensure that there are enough funds for the activities as well as for paying project staff salaries.

- It is important to be prepared for delays by having flexibility in project design for such eventualities. Sticking to the guidelines and instructions of funding agencies and adherence to the project schedule are the best way to ensure timely releases of fund instalments.

Monitoring

This is important for timely and proper project implementation. Monitoring provides feedback so that necessary adjustments can be made in the work plan and budget. Therefore, monitoring schedules are often based on the project work plan. It is essentially a tool that helps both project-implementing and funding agencies.

1. *Monitoring parameters*

- Time schedule
- Cost
- Process

These are already specified in the work plan. Monitoring reports must be reviewed by the project implementation committee, focusing on information about delays – the extent and implications, needed corrective action and the person or agency responsible for it. This not only points out the source of the fault but also protects project management from blame for the delay.

An honest assessment of the implications of delay, under or over-utilization of funds, leads to timely corrective action. It also helps in building a reasonable case for additional funds in case the delay is caused by the late release of funds and results in escalation of project costs.

Periodic monitoring format

Name of activity	Due on	Actual on	On time	Implications of delay	Action required	By whom

2. Integrity

- It is important for the implementing agency to maintain a high level of financial credibility, which is closely watched by funding agencies.

- Monitoring, therefore focuses on cost-flows and wherever there is under or over-expenditure, this should be brought to the immediate attention of the funding agencies. It should be discussed frankly with them in order to reach agreement on the best course of action.

- Implications of delay or cost-overrun can also be discussed with the village community to explore possibilities of mobilizing local contributions to compensate for the extra cost. Integrity pays in the long run.

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2

Training module on social mobilization

Social mobilization enhances participation of rural poor in local governance

Social mobilization is the cornerstone of participatory approaches in rural development and poverty alleviation programmes. It is a powerful instrument in decentralization policies and programmes aimed at strengthening human and institutional resources development at local level. Social mobilization strengthens participation of rural poor in local decision-making, improves their access to social and production services and efficiency in the use of locally available financial resources, and enhances opportunities for asset-building by the poorest of the poor.

Role of *Gram Sabha* and public information in social mobilization

The Constitution's 73rd Amendment has made the village council, the *Gram Sabha*, into a very powerful tool of social mobilization. Many types of neighbourhood groups, health and literacy programmes, *Mahila Mandals* (village women's groups) and the mass media - newspapers, radio and TV – also play a vital role in social mobilization at the community level. Social mobilization of rural poor at community level will be successful if directly linked with issues affecting their livelihoods. For successful social mobilization of the rural poor, there is a need for improved access to public information on local development issues directly linked with their livelihood interests. An effective way of doing this is by facilitating free access to public information on local development programmes and activities, which has been a critical factor in the success of *Panchayati Raj* in the States of Kerala and Andhra Pradesh.

Examples of successful social mobilization

Total sanitation programme in Avanur *Gram Panchayat*, Kerala, India

This example of successful mobilization of the entire community by a gram panchayat to meet a basic need has been widely recognized. It has brought national honour and a cash prize of Rs 1.2 million to the panchayat. In 1996, a survey held by the Avanur Gram Panchayat in Kerala State found that over 2 000 of Avanur's 5 000 households were too poor to afford basic sanitation facilities. The Gram Panchayat President convened a series of awareness-building meetings for all families below the poverty line.

As an outcome of these meetings it was agreed that the Gram Panchayat would provide all these families building material for a sanitation unit, with the condition that each beneficiary family would complete 20 percent of the work on its own. The meetings focused on awareness-building of women as main beneficiaries. Much to the surprise of all, the campaign was successfully completed within three months. The Gram Panchayat spent only 20 percent of allocated resources because 80 percent of the work was done by the

beneficiary families themselves. In this way, a total of about Rs 12 million in assets could be mobilized for the poorest families.

Total housing scheme in Avanur Gram Panchyat, Kerala State, India

The Avanur Gram Panchayat used the cash award of Rs 1.2 million to start a Total Housing Scheme for families below the poverty line. This led to 500 houses being built during 1997-2000. The Gram Panchayat gave each family an amount of Rs 20 000 in three stages, as a grant. The beneficiary families contributed their own labour and material worth Rs 30 000 for each unit. The scheme created assets worth more than Rs 25 million.

The Gram Panchayat has also successfully implemented a drinking water scheme and neighbourhood units in Avanur, and was declared the 'Best Panchayat' in Kerala for its innovative work.

The Janmabhoomi programme in Andhra Pradesh: a learning model for capacity-building for participatory local development planning

Janmabhoomi was inspired by South Korea's Saemaul Undong programme and launched in January 1997 as a mass mobilization effort to involve people in rural development planning and decision making through PRIs in Andhra Pradesh.

It aims to take the administration closer to the people, make it more responsive to their felt needs and to promote transparency and accountability in public affairs. It is also directed against the caste system. It has specific programmes for disadvantaged groups like women, the Scheduled Castes and Tribes and people with disabilities to integrate them into the mainstream of development.

Janmabhoomi has activated the Gram Sabha, which is convened every three months and presided over by the Sarpanch, the Mandal president, the ward member and government officials.

Janmabhoomi objectives/methodology

Objectives
- Bring governance nearer to the people
- Participation of people, especially weaker social sections, in development process
- Responsive, transparent governance, accountable to people
- Through above, achieve goals of poverty alleviation and equity.

Methodology
- Large-scale information dissemination
- Formation of self-help groups (SHGs) of stakeholders in key sectors of the rural economy to promote mass mobilization. Development funds routed through SHGs, which are statutorily recognized.

Institutional arrangements
- *Gram sabha* at the habitation level
- Habitation committee at the habitation level
- Nodal team at the *Mandal* level
- *Janmabhoomi* volunteers' team
- Social animators

- District level committee (Collector as its Chairperson)
- State level committee (Chief Minister as its Chairperson).

Rural development activities under Janmabhoomi

- Verification of data on below poverty line (BPL) families.
- Formation of SHGs in 36 543 habitations, with 13 269 habitations still to be covered.
- Finalization of rural artisan survey information for the Artisan Action Plan.
- Entry point activities in watershed and joint forest management areas, as part of a 10-year Wasteland Development Action Plan.
- A total of 13 903 water-harvesting structures worth Rs.430 million completed as against a target of 20 312 structures.
- More than 24 000 irrigation works, bringing 512 000 hectares under irrigation.
- Women mobilized to set up micro-enterprises.

Impact of the Janmabhoomi decentralization experiment in local development planning

The programme has so far completed 13 rounds of participatory decision-making in local development. The most important impact has been to generate public awareness, galvanize the administrative machinery and open up access of rural poor to local governance. *Janmabhoomi* has also developed a strong community spirit among the people and improved transparency in administration.

Participation of rural poor in social mobilization programs as part of decentralization in Nepal

In Nepal, a citizens' charter has been prepared and district development councils (DDCs) organized under the Local Self Government Act (LSGA) with subject-wise sections (for e.g. on agriculture & livestock), each equipped with computers and accessories. Job descriptions of the section have been prepared and staff trained in different areas to become more professional. Institutional reviews to identify DDC capacity gaps have been initiated and an internal communication system established.

Local development fund (LDF) bylaws have been approved and the LDF made operational from July 2002. The LDF has developed pro-poor policies with at least 50 percent credit capital earmarked for the poorest of the poor. The repayment period and credit activities are defined according to the local poverty profile and first priority for seed grant utilization is given to the poorest of the poor.

District development plans are published annually and all village development committees have prepared and published five-year plans. There are regular meetings, interaction and coordination and initiation of different development activities with line agencies, I/NGOs and private sector. Development activities, income and expenditure are published regularly in district bulletins. Internal revenue increased from NRs3 328 882 in 1997 to NRs12 281 500 in 2001. External resources are mobilized from various international donor agencies.

Decentralization programmes in Nepal emphasize social mobilization as an instrument for the more efficient allocation of local resources.As an example, community organizations in the country's Kavre district identified the poorest of the poor on the basis of consensus, which facilitated their participation in village development programmes.

For example, the local women's group built a community centre without outside help. They organized weekly meetings for members of their group, who contributed only five rupees each, every week. Yet, this enabled the women's group to mobilize NRs 48 000 and invest NRs 85 000. This example was followed by village men, who established 34 men's groups, which met every Saturday, with each member contributing NRs 15. These local women's and men's groups were able to save and invest their capital for the construction of a bridge near the centre of the village at a total cost of NRs 140 000, which is a sizeable contribution from the local poor.

The core elements in the strategy for social mobilization and capital formation among the poorest in the Kavre District, are self-governance; institutional development of community organizations (COs); social capital development; skill and enterprise development; micro-finance activities; and infrastructure support. Local capacity has also been developed and strengthened by human resource development, strategic management, organization structure and culture financial and information management.

The guiding principles are sustainability, a participatory approach, gender equity, good governance, decentralization and human rights.

Contributed by K. P. Mukundan, President of Avanur *Gram Panchayat*, Kerala, India.

3

Training module on enhancing women's participation

Main objectives of the training module for women local council members

1. To explain the 73rd Constitutional Amendment to newly elected women *panchayat* members.
2. To make women local council representatives aware of laws protecting women's rights.
3. To make women council members aware of their roles and responsibilities in local development.
4. To enhance participation of women members in development planning within *panchayats*.
5. To develop women's leadership and communication skills for enhancing social mobilization.
6. To make them find ways and means to interface with other layers of local self-governance within the State and claim the *panchayat*'s entitlements.
7. To familiarize them with rural/women/child development programmes to reduce poverty
8. To empower them to identify and break cultural barriers and improve their social-economic condition.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act strengthens women's participation in local development planning

- Provides for reservation of seats in favour of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population and for *reservation of one-third seats for women at all levels.*

- Provides for *reservation of the office of Chairperson at all levels in favour of* Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and *women.*

Capacity-building of women in participatory local development planning

Systematic awareness-building and training is needed for enhancing rural women's capacity to take up their new responsibilities as local legislators and decision-makers under *Panchayati Raj*.

The local government bureaucracy is also in urgent need of sensitization to women's problems and issues linked to gender bias in local development planning. The panel responsible for formulating the training agenda should include elected women representatives besides local development personnel.

The training of women *panchayat* members should be based on their own local experiences and elicit their involvement in preparing a framework that will enable them to

analyse and understand their roles and responsibilities in accordance with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment.

Design of a training programme for women village council members and *Sarpanch*

- Training should be both for trainees and trainers.
- Training programme should have a focus area and relevant content areas.
- Framework should be flexible and flow according to the participation of members and their viewpoint.
- Process of training should not be fluid but tailored to the needs and expectations of the trainees.
- The content should not be lecture-oriented, but based on interactions and discussions.
- Resource persons could function as catalysts to help local women council members understand roles and responsibilities.
- Local experts should have working knowledge of the local language and training methods and material should take into account sensitivities of women council members.
- Trainers should use participatory training methods and tools, which meet women trainees' expectations in the area of decentralized rural local governance, both in method and design. Field visits should be an integral part of the training programme for women council members.
- The training material should be, wherever necessary, pictorial.

Broad contents of the training module for women local council members

Empowerment

- Institutional empowerment; empowerment of different segments of rural society
- Empowerment of PRIs empowers different segments of society
- Political, economic and social dimensions with special reference to SC/ST, BC (backward castes) and women
- Socio-cultural milieu and women's empowerment

Leadership

- Meaning and importance in any institution or organization
- Context of leadership *in Panchayati Raj*, its significance
- Women leadership, male leadership, leadership among other weaker sections – SC/ST & OBC (other backward castes)
- Leadership – socio-economic and political profile of the state in the context of PRIs.
- Capacity building of *Panchayati Raj* representatives/leaders
- Qualities of a good leader for good governance
- Leadership and ethics
- Developing systemic thinking abilities

Communication skills

- Confidence-building
- Capacity and awareness-building
- Access to information through Information Technology

- Ability to communicate in any language

Stress management

- Coping with day-to-day affairs
- Group interactions and discussions
- Consultations for remedial measures
- Ability to resolve conflicts at the local level

Gender sensitization

- Sex and gender issues in the process of development, specifically rural development
- Socio-cultural and related factors leading to gender discrimination, analysis of rural society
- Awareness and capacity-building in PRIs
- Gender considerations in the process of local planning
- Gender issues and problems, capacity-building of women representatives in *Panchayati Raj* especially their role in decision-making coupled with different centrally and state-sponsored programmes for women's development and empowerment.

Training needs assessment of women council members

A quick appraisal of the trainees before the start of the training will help the trainer in designing the training programme. This can be done by: i) obtaining a brief bio-data of the participants and ii) SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis. Since the training is for elected women members at all three PRI levels and for officials dealing with PRIs, it will not be difficult to obtain their personal particulars.

Who are the women trainers/trainees?

- Core women trainers from national training/research institutes/department of personnel & training/training and development cells/university teachers/NGOs.

- Women master trainers from state training/research institutes/department of personnel & training/training and development cells/university teachers/NGOs.

- District/divisional level women trainers from regional training centres/college teachers.

- Sub-district/divisional women trainers from extension training centres (ETCs)/college teachers.

- Elected women representatives at *mandal* or block level and women local development officials.

- Women elected as village council members.

- Retired women teachers/officers.

- Women staff in NGOs/CBOs.

- Women government/bank officials.

What are the requirements for women trainers?

- It is important for the trainer to be in constant touch with the trainees. *Not much can be accomplished if 'trainers' suddenly appear on the scene, conduct 'training' and vanish. This should be discouraged. It is necessary to be one among them.*

- Trainers can build rapport by residing in the field for some period while conducting the training.

- Links with established voluntary organizations with clear knowledge of the field is essential.

Examples of capacity-building programmes for elected women council members

Karnataka: use of satellite broadcasting, computers and promotion of social safety nets for women

The experimental programme launched by the Government of Karnataka was the second of its kind in the country. It used one-way video and two-way audio satellite broadcasting technology developed by ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) to beam programmes to 17 districts of Karnataka. The Department of Women and Child Welfare beamed programmes for elected women gram panchaya representatives. It is possible to organize video-conferencing among women panchayat members in villages, taluks and districts, and with anybody anywhere in the country.

In the Bellandur village Gram Panchayat, 30 km from the Karnataka State capital Bangalore, women panchayat members can access administrative data for five villages with the click of a computer mouse such as size of family land holdings, taxes due from them and the number of beneficiaries under various housing and employment schemes. The status of applications for power and water connections can also be seen on the two computers at the Panchayat office.

Set up in 1977, the Women's Welfare Society, Belgaum, has been working to assist women in distress and children from poor families. Over the years, it has expanded its work in Belgaum city and to nearby rural areas like Hidkal, Hunnur and Aralikatti.

Sangathi, a family counselling centre started by the Society in 1993 in Belgaum, has helped settle matrimonial disputes amicably in some 900 families. Women in distress can get immediate assistance from Santwana, a 24-hour help-line. The Society has also established a short stay home at Hidkal in Hukkeri taluk for women and girls in distress, which offers food and accommodation free of cost. It also provides vocational training, like tailoring. Two printing press units in Belgaum and another in Hidkal, teach women composing, printing and book binding, to start their own ventures. The Society runs seven creches for children of working women.

Its Urban Family Welfare Centre at Vadagaon in Belgaum, provides health check-up and family planning services to the people. The Society is also providing education to slum children and has organized campaigns on AIDS awareness.

Project expenses are met from public donations and assistance from organizations like the Central Social Welfare Board, the Department of Women and Child Development, the Directorate of Health and Family Welfare Services, the Karnataka State Women Development Corporation and Nehru Yuva Kendra. The society has about 700 staff. Its efforts won the Society the 1996 State Award and the Rani Kittur Chennamma Award in 1999.

Kerala: exchange programme for women council members

The Centre for Rural Management in Kerala State and the Institute of Social Sciences, Southern Regional Centre, Bangalore, organized an exchange programme for women panchayat members in the two states. It enabled Panchayati Raj functionaries to understand and gain first-hand experience of panchayat functioning in states other than their own. Stressing the vital role of training and education in preparing effective and dynamic women panchayat leaders, the field visits also developed bonding with counterparts in other states, adding to their self-confidence. Unlike formal training programmes, exchange programmes are more responsive to specific local training needs.

Andhra Pradesh: women's group enterprise development

Bindu Mahila Sangham of Srirangam village in Nizamabad mandal saved Rs.17 000, got a revolving fund of Rs. 25 000 and 80 000 from the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD). Anjaana Mahila Sangham and Sai Mahila Sangham make ready-made garments. Rudramma Mahila Sangham of Yedapally village makes leaf plates and earns at least Rs.10 000 in two months.

The groups use a marketing network set up with the help of the Mandal Development Officers. Similarly, Arvind Mahila Sangham was able to sell 200 000 rupees worth of soft toys at the annual industrial exhibition held in Hyderabad. Arvind Mahila Sangham of Dharmavarm village also successfully marketed their goods at the bazaar arranged by the state government.
The Baba Mahila Sangham of the Lambda's is an interesting case. Located in Ausali Thanda, a hamlet of around 40 houses, two SHG groups made Bnjara garments and assorted ornaments made from German silver.

Nepal: women's group enterprise development in Kushadevei village, Kavera District

The female community organization (FCO) in Kushadevei village, Kavera district of Nepal is a classic example for the study of social mobilization. The Kushadevei FCO initiated individual economic enterprises as well as collective, village enterprise development schemes. The self-rule adopted by the FCO is the backbone of their achievement.

At least eighty percent of the members actively participate in the meetings conducted regularly at settlement level. Each member regularly saves the amount decided by the CO. The manager takes decision on the basis of consensus on the agenda presented in the meetings.

The CO keeps account of the savings and investment, which are examined at every meeting. Members put forward suggestions on development initiatives and improving their settlement, which are subject to intense discussion during the meetings. The CO members have jointly undertaken some activities for the community through their own resources without any external support.

Examples of women panchayat leaders as effective local development managers

A large number of women grassroots leaders across India are disproving the perception in a section of the media that women panchayat representatives are merely proxies for their male relatives who do not take active interest in the affairs of their panchayats. The following examples demonstrate that women can run panchayats successfully:

1. Struggle against corruption

- *Pushpa Rana, Pradhan of Atakfarm panchayat in Dehradun district, Uttaranchal State strongly resisted the officials' demands for bribes. Although this created a lot of delays and other problems, she finally had her way.*

- *Sojar Bai of Ramtek panchayat in Harda district, Madhya Pradesh State went one step ahead and got the corrupt official, who was demanding a bribe, suspended.*

2. Efficient use of resources

- *Alka Chauhan taught a lesson in public finance to government engineers. A support wall built in her Nalapani village in Dehradun district at a cost of Rs 42 000 had collapsed and a junior government engineer estimated it would cost Rs 45 000 to rebuild. But Chauhan organized the villagers to build the support wall at a cost of only Rs 25 000, and the money thus saved was spent on other development works.*

- *When Suraiya Begum became chairperson of Sultanpur Chilkana Nagar panchayat, it was burdened with debts. Even some of her supporters feared that new development works would not be taken up till old debts were cleared. But by the time she completed her five-year tenure, a record number of development works worth Rs 8 million had been completed.*

3. Resolving disputes

- *Suraiya Begum has helped resolve many family disputes. Pushpa Rana prevailed upon villagers to settle all disputes among themselves before approaching the police, saving them the money they had to spend on bribing the police and middlemen.*

4. Fighting alcoholism

- *In Gazidipur village of Sharanpur district in Uttaranchal State, panchayat member Kamia confronted the Pradhan who favoured setting up of a liquor shop in the village and successfully organized village women to get it removed.*

- *On being elected Pradhan of Bhilangana block of Tehri Garhwal district in Uttaranchal State at the young age of 23, Veena Sajwan began mobilising local women against the*

sale of liquor that was promoting alcoholism among local men. She even met the State Chief Minister and reminded him of his promise to curb the liquor menace.

Source: Bharat Dogra, '*Women justify reservation policy in Panchayats'* (*Panchayati Raj Update: 2001*)

Contributed by K. Subha, Institute of Social Sciences, Bangalore, India & M. Sarumathy, Assistant Professor, Centre for *Panchayati Raj*, National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Hyderabad, India.

4

Training module on social audit

Basis of social audit

Social audit as a term was used as far back as the 1950s. There has been a flurry of activity and interest in the last seven to eight years in India and neighboring countries. Voluntary development organizations are also actively concerned.

Social audit is based on the principle that democratic local governance should be carried out, as far as possible, with the consent and understanding of all concerned. It is thus a process and not an event.

What is a social audit?

A social audit is a way of measuring, understanding, reporting and ultimately improving an organization's social and ethical performance. A social audit helps to narrow gaps between vision/goal and reality, between efficiency and effectiveness. It is a technique to understand, measure, verify, report on and to improve the social performance of the organization.

Social auditing creates an impact upon governance. It values the voice of stakeholders, including marginalized/poor groups whose voices are rarely heard. Social auditing is taken up for the purpose of enhancing local governance, particularly for strengthening accountability and transparency in local bodies.

The key difference between development and social audit is that a social audit focuses on the neglected issue of social impacts, while a development audit has a broader focus including environment and economic issues, such as the efficiency of a project or programme.

Objectives of social audit

1. Assessing the physical and financial gaps between needs and resources available for local development.
2. Creating awareness among beneficiaries and providers of local social and productive services.
3. Increasing efficacy and effectiveness of local development programmes.
4. Scrutiny of various policy decisions, keeping in view stakeholder interests and priorities, particularly of rural poor.
5. Estimation of the opportunity cost for stakeholders of not getting timely access to public services.

Advantages of social audit

- Trains the community on participatory local planning.
- Encourages local democracy.
- Encourages community participation.
- Benefits disadvantaged groups.

- Promotes collective decision making and sharing responsibilities.
- Develops human resources and social capital

To be effective, the social auditor must have the right to:

– seek clarifications from the implementing agency about any decision-making, activity, scheme, income and expenditure incurred by the agency;

– consider and scrutinize existing schemes and local activities of the agency; and

– access registers and documents relating to all development activities undertaken by the implementing agency or by any other government department.

This requires transparency in the decision-making and activities of the implementing agencies. In a way, social audit includes measures for enhancing transparency by enforcing the right to information in the planning and implementation of local development activities.

Public documents for social audit

(i) All budget allocations, beneficiary lists, muster rolls, bills, vouchers, accounts, etc. must be available for public scrutiny.

(ii) All applications for licenses/permits and certificates issued by local self-government institutions must have a serial number. Registers indicating date of application and date of clearance in each case should be available for reference by any applicant. If possible, copies should be publicly displayed.

(iii) Public assessment of tax, exemptions, grants, etc., to ensure there are no complaints of undue preferential treatment.

Several states have declared all *Gram Panchayat* plan documents related to beneficiary selection, budget cost estimates, etc. to be public documents. A daily notice to be posted at the site of all development works, lists names of workers, wages paid, cost and quantities of material, transport charges, etc.

However, social audit arrangements have mostly been ineffective because there is no legal provision for punitive action. States should enact legislation to facilitate social audit by the *Gram Sabha.*

Appropriate institutional level for social audit

The most appropriate institutional level for social audit is the *Gram Sabha,* which has been given 'watchdog' powers and responsibilities by the *Panchayati Raj* Acts in most States to supervise and monitor the functioning of *panchayat* elected representatives and government functionaries, and examine the annual statement of accounts and audit reports. These are implied powers indirectly empowering *Gram Sabhas* to carry out social audits in addition to other functions. Members of the *Gram Sabha* and the village *panchayat*, intermediate *panchayat* and district p*anchayat* through their representatives, can raise issues of social concern and public interest and demand an explanation.

Right to information for Gram Sabha members

Some States have already passed Right to Information Acts. Notwithstanding some weaknesses, the Acts have opened the way for transparency in administration from the State to the *panchayat* level.

The Right to Information Acts specify the modalities for obtaining information and provide penalties or failing to furnish or supplying false information. The Acts facilitate social legislation such as on minimum wages and gender rights and, more importantly, pave the way for public debate on government development projects.

However, none of the Acts have defined the right to information to include inspection of works and documents, and the taking of notes and extracts. This is needed to make the social audit by the *Gram Sabha* more effective.

The *Gram Sabha* should have the mandate to: inspect all public documents related to budget allocations, list of beneficiaries, assistance under each scheme, muster rolls, bills, vouchers, accounts, etc., for scrutiny; examine annual statements of accounts and audit reports; discuss the report on the local administration of the preceding year; review local development for the year or any new activity programme; establish accountability of functionaries found guilty of violating established norms/rules;
suggest measures for promoting transparency in identifying, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating relevant local development programmes; and ensure opportunity for rural poor to voice their concerns while participating in social audit meetings.

Social audit committees

Social audit can also be used for auditing the performance of all three PRI tiers with a social audit committee at each level. These committees should not be permanent, but can be set up depending on the nature of programmes/schemes to be audited.

Social audit committee members can be drawn from among programme stakeholders. It is advisable to use the services of retired functionaries of different organizations, teachers or persons of impeccable integrity living in the *Zilla Panchayat*/Block *Panchayat/Gram Panchayat* jurisdiction. Both facilitators and social audit committee members can be trained by social audit experts.

Steps in social audit in local bodies

1. Clarity of purpose and goal of the local elected body.

2. Identify stakeholders with a focus on their specific roles and duties. Social auditing aims to ensure a say for all stakeholders. It is particularly important that marginalized social groups, which are normally excluded, have a say on local development issues and activities and have their views on the actual performance of local elected bodies.

3. Definition of performance indicators which must be understood and accepted by all. Indicator data must be collected by stakeholders on a regular basis.

4. Regular meetings to review and discuss data/information on performance indicators.

5. Follow-up of social audit meeting with the *panchayat* body reviewing stakeholders' actions, activities and viewpoints, making commitments on changes and agreeing on future action as recommended by the stakeholders.

6. Establishment of a group of trusted local people including elderly people, teachers and others who are committed and independent, to be involved in the verification and to judge if the decisions based upon social audit have been implemented.

7. The findings of the social audit should be shared with all local stakeholders. This encourages transparency and accountability. A report of the social audit meeting should be distributed for *Gram Panchayat* auditing. In addition, key decisions should be written on walls and boards and communicated orally.

Key factors for successful social audit

-   Level of information shared with and involvement of stakeholders, particularly of the rural poor, women, and other marginalized sections.
-   Commitment, seriousness and clear responsibilities for follow-up actions by elected members of the *Gram Panchayat*.
-   Involvement of key facilitators in the process.

How to enhance local capacities for social audit

-   Organization of a mass campaign to increase public awareness about the meaning, scope, purpose and objectives of social audit.
-   Establishment of a team of social audit experts in each district who are responsible for training social audit committee members (stakeholders).
-   Implementation of training programmes on social auditing methods - conducting and preparing social audit reports, and presentation at *Gram Sabha* meetings.

Social development monitoring (SDM): a social audit process

SDM is a periodic observation activity by socially disadvantaged groups as local citizens who are project participants or target beneficiaries. It could also take the form of action intended to enhance participation, ensure inclusiveness, articulation of accountability, responsiveness and transparency by implementing agencies or local institutions, with a declared purpose of making an impact on their socio-economic status.

Conclusion

To sum up, the following proposals can be made to make social audit a regular and effective institution to promote the culture of transparency and accountability through the *Gram Sabha.*

1. States should enhance *Gram Sabha* powers to make them effective instruments of participatory decision-making and ensuring accountability of PRIs in local development planning.

2. An agency like the Ombudsman can be set up to look into complaints of local maladministration.

3. Development functionaries found guilty of violating established norms for local development planning should be punished.

4. It is important to ensure that rural poor are given due protection when they wish to stand up to speak against any misconduct.

GRAM PANCHAYAT STAKEHOLDERS
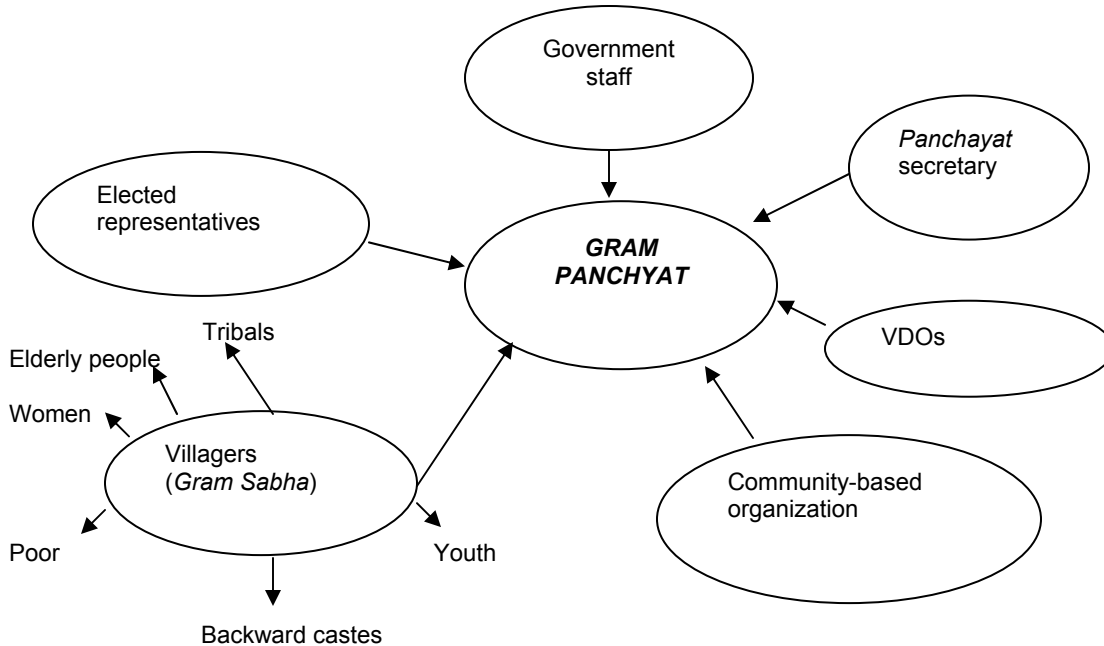
Examples of social audit

1. *Social audit in Jharnipalli Panchayat, Agaipur block, Bolangir district, Orissa*

In October 2001, the gram sabha members of Jharnipalli Panchayat conducted a one-day social audit of development works carried out in the panchayat over the preceding three years. This audit took place with the active participation of many individuals and agencies, including block and district administration officials, MKSS [Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sanghatan], NCPRI [National Campaign for People's Right to Information] and Action Aid India.

The audit found that:

- *Although the works were not carried out, the sanctioned funds were shown in the records as having been utilized.*
- *Contractors were banned under government guidelines, but 31 contractors were working on the project.*
- *Muster rolls were not maintained by the contractors.*

- *Instead of the target of 100 man-days of employment for families below the poverty line (BPL), only 12 half days of work were generated.*
- *The BPL families could not buy subsidized food from the public distribution system (PDS) shops as partial wages because they did not possess the needed ration cards.*

2. *Micro-development planning as part of social audit*

A voluntary development organization Samarthan and PRIA (Society for Participatory Research in Asia) collaborated in a participatory micro–planning exercise with local officials, panchayat members, members of different castes, etc. The process was a way to bring resources to the local community and to increase its involvement in Gram Sabha meetings which took place four times a year.

This led to the identification of several goals. One was to construct a drain. Inspired by the participatory local planning process, the community contributed half the cost of the drain (Rs 50 000). Those who could not give money offered their labour. The rest of the money came from the district office and was mobilized by the Gram Panchayat and its pro-active woman president, the Sarpanch.

Every member of the Gram Sabha developed a sense of ownership of the project. The Gram Sabha monitors the work. Gram Panchayat representatives also hold regular ward-level meetings. The relationship between people and their local representatives developed quickly into one of mutual support.

3. *SDM of schools for 'rehabilitated' child workers, Jamtara district, Jharkhand State, India*

In 1995, the non-governmental Child Labour Elimination Society (CLES) initiated a project to set up 40 Vidyalayas (schools) in three blocks with a high incidence of child labour in Jamtara district. The funds for the project were provided by the Ministry of Labour, Government of India.

To supervise the schools, three-tier committees were formed at the district, block and panchayat/village levels, with the district-level committee having the Deputy Commissioner as its ex-officio chairperson. At the block level, the circle officer (CO) is the nodal officer entrusted with the responsibility for smooth functioning of the schools. The committee at the panchayat and village level includes members who were active during the mass literacy campaigns in the district. However, most committees at the lowest level are either defunct and not functional or not properly constituted. Visibly, this particular weakness has resulted in the diminution of an important forum of citizen interaction, reflection and action.

Programme activities

1. *A series of block and village level meetings with parents were followed by meetings with local civil society groups/activists and schoolteachers and generated a lot of optimism. Some parents showed keen interest in monitoring the school.*

2. *Parents formed a committee of five to eight members, decided on indicators and modalities of monitoring and the role and responsibilities of monitors. Committee membership was kept small to ensure easy consensus and spontaneity. Women showed remarkable interest and had a strong presence on the committee.*

3. *After much argument and discussion, the parents finally decided on three indicators for the purpose of monitoring, viz. – the presence or absence of two teachers; serving of midday meals to the children; and routine health checks for children by the local health department.*

4. *The committee was entrusted with the task of monitoring the first two indicators four to five days a month and the health check, once a month, usually on the last working day of each month. It was also agreed to devise a suitable format to record data, keeping in view the limited ability of parents in recording detailed observations. Data was to be recorded on simply designed but ingenious worksheets with suitable pictures/drawings depicting the three broad indicators.*

5. *An important aspect of the indicator development exercise was the clarity in the minds of parents about the larger objectives of the monitoring i.e. to ensure responsiveness, efficiency and accountability in teachers, doctors and block level government officials. Parents who were initially concerned that monitoring would be seen by other stakeholders as 'encroaching on their territory', gradually began to realize that building an atmosphere of trust holds the key to realizing their long-term objective.*

6. *The very process of engaging themselves in monitoring the working of the schools not only helped build confidence in the parents, but also imparted the necessary basic skills of negotiating with government officials. Committee members met the medical officer and circle officer armed with reliable data from their monitoring and apprised them of the working of the schools along with their concerns and suggestions. They also held regular discussions with the teachers on school functioning to understand their perspective and problems and suggest remedial measures. The schoolteachers extended complete support to the parents based on a shared perception that the future of the school lies in working closely with other stakeholders.*

Impact

The parents met the circle officer and apprised him of their findings, concerns and suggestions for improved school functioning, such as slackness on the part of doctors in conducting routine health checks, difficulties in the running of one school due to a vacant teacher's post, need for roof construction/repair in another school and sports equipment for all schools. The district official accepted some of the demands. This and other such meetings helped citizens to understand the way government business is conducted and the skills of negotiating with officials.

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