



Panchayati Raj

MINISTRY OF PANCHAYATI RAJ NEWSLETTER

APRIL - MAY 2012



"My idea of Village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbors for its own vital wants..."

MAHATMA GANDHI (WRITING FROM SEWAGRAM IN THE HARIJAN IN 1942)



process of planning, development and governance, on matters that have greatest impact on the quality of their lives. I am aware that often the Gram Panchayat finds it difficult to obtain attendance at Gram Sabha Meetings. I urge all the Gram Panchayats to prepare an annual calendar of Gram Sabha Meetings in advance and give wide publicity and notice to the dates, time and place when such meetings would be held. The entire proceedings of the Gram Sabha meetings should be video-graphed, in order to facilitate transparency and participation in decision making. Special Gram Sabha meetings should be held to discuss issues which affect the livelihood and quality of life of the village. Participation and attendance of all concerned Government functionaries should be encouraged in such meetings.

Gram Sabha is the only forum that offers equal opportunity to all citizens of a village or cluster of villages to discuss, criticize, approve or reject proposals of the Panchayat executive and also assesses performance! Let us use this powerful platform in the most efficient and effective manner by holding regular and meaningful meetings, encouraging wide and active participation of all Gram Sabha members to bring about transparency and accountability in the system and to improve the quality of life in rural India.

V. Kishore Chandra Deo
Union Minister

Panchayati Raj and Tribal Affairs
Government of India

MY BEST WISHES to all our readers of the inaugural issue of the bi-monthly newsletter "Panchayati Raj".

It is my ardent desire that this Newsletter becomes the vehicle of direct communication linking the representatives of the people at the Gram Panchayat level, State and Central Government functionaries and policy makers and provides a platform for expression to all those working to attain decentralization and self-governance, as envisaged in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment.

The theme of this issue is dedicated to the Gram Sabha and its importance. Article 243A gives constitutional recognition to the Gram Sabha. The Constitution further stipulates that a Gram Sabha may exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the legislature of a State may, by law, provide. The States have vested powers and functions on the Gram Sabha to various degrees.

Recently my Ministry has issued guidelines to State Governments for effective functioning of Gram Sabhas to ensure the direct participation of the citizen in the

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Gram Sabha

& the importance of Local Self Governance



Raheesa Khatoon, sarpanch - Aradaka village, engages villagers in best practices

IN THE PANCHAYATI RAJ set up, the Gram Sabha, the general assembly of villagers has a key role for effective functioning of Panchayats. In the Gram Sabha meeting, the rural poor, the women and the marginalized people get an opportunity to join in decision-making on matters affecting their lives. Active functioning of the Gram Sabha ensures a participatory democracy with transparency, accountability and achievement.

The Gram Sabha is the key to grassroots level self governance

Raheesa Khatun as Sarpanch of Aradaka village in Rajasthan's Ajmer district, a dry zone, has toiled to ensure the Gram Sabha meets regularly once every three months, to ease their problem of acute water shortage. With all 450 villagers now participating, the problem has been solved and villagers do not have to go miles to access water.

Another gram sabha in Kirlapal Dabal village in Goa has brought about tremendous change with the construction of roads, a community hall and an anganwadi. Sarpanch Shri Rama Sonugaonkar is proud that not one house in this pan-

Winners of the Rashtirya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar 2011 for outstanding work*

- Sri Vinesh Iragouda Patil
Shiraguppi, Belgaum
Karnataka
- Shri Rama Sonugaonkar
Kirlapal Dabal, South Goa
Goa
- Smt Rasilaben Dalsaniya
Depaliya, Rajkot
Gujarat
- Shri Raj Singh
Assan, Rohtak
Haryana
- Smt. Sangitabai Koli
Chahardi, Jalgaon
Maharashtra
- Smt Raheesa Khatoon
Aradaka, Ajmer
Rajasthan
- Shri Ganesh Rai
Mellidara-Paiyong,
South District, Sikkim

* The names of the awardees for 2012 will be published in the next issue of the newsletter.

chayat is without water or electricity. There is no doubt that a Gram Sabha is a harbinger of change in villages, and can catalyse overall social and economic transformation.

The Gram Sabha is the key to grass-roots level self governance and can ensure transparent and accountable functioning of the Gram Panchayat. It is defined by the Constitution as a body consisting of all registered voters of a village within the area of a village Panchayat. In its ideal form, the Gram Sabha offers equal opportunity to all the villagers to discuss and plan their development, criticize, approve or reject Gram Panchayat proposals and review and monitor implementation and performance - thereby immensely improving the accountability of and transparency in the system. Shri V. Kishore Chandra Deo, the Minister of Tribal Affairs and Panchayati Raj, recently reiterated the government's focus on Gram Sabhas by saying that "Gram Sabhas are the foundation of our Panchayati system."

Several Panchayats have done exemplary work through effective Gram Sabhas, adopting best practices in areas as diverse as water conservation, developing infrastructure, crop diversification, employment and revenue generation, improving hygiene and ensuring sustainable development models.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has sought to recognize outstanding work performed by them by instituting the annual Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar for exemplary performances in powering local self governance.

Mahatma Gandhi's dream of Gram Swaraj, or self government through direct participation at the village level, is the basis on which the Panchayati Raj system functions. It represents a development and governance pathway to the future, and is the only way in which a country of India's size and diversity can be truly representative of the aspirations of all its people.

International Interest in Indian Local Self Governance



The Union Minister for Tribal Affairs and Panchayati Raj, Shri V. K. C. Deo with the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development of Norway, Ms. Liv Signe Navarsete

THE MODEL OF local self governance in India has evoked much interest worldwide. Many countries have shown keenness in studying the various decentralisation initiatives being implemented in India. The objective of many of these interactions is to learn best practices from India and replicate them in other parts of the world including Europe and Africa.

Recently, a Norwegian delegation led by Ms Liv Signe Navarsete, Minister for Local Government and Regional Development, Royal Kingdom of Norway, visited India to study the functioning of gram panchayats in promoting decentralized governance in India. The delegation visited the State Election Commission, Andhra Pradesh, to understand the election process and the role of a constitutional authority in the same.

This visit was part of the various activities delineated under the MOU signed between the two countries to drive a comprehensive dialogue and deliberation in the area of Local Governance to facilitate transference of compe-

tence, and to strengthen local self-governance, by capacity building of institutions, focusing on areas relating to achievement of Millennium Development goals, e-Governance, solution sharing and mobilization of resources.

Switzerland, recognised across the world for its effective and efficient system of direct democracy, is now turning to India with interest in local self governance

Similarly, India and Switzerland have entered into a pact for strengthening the mutual co-operation in local self-governance, including mobilization of resources. High words of praise were said by EU's Ambassador to India H E Daniele Smadja for India's achievement in areas of local self governance, during a recent seminar. She indicated that the European Union was keen on learning best practices in the field from India.

Effective Panchayats are key to Genuine Democracy

MAKING THE RESIDENTS of Mellidara- Paiyong understand what Panchayati institutions stand for is, I feel, my greatest achievement. Only a few years ago, people in this idyllic hamlet in south Sikkim used to think that Panchayats are run by the elected members. After becoming Sarpanch four and a half years ago, I have managed to successfully convince people of our village about the importance of their role in Gram Sabhas. The fact is that members of Gram Sabhas play a much bigger role than that of the elected representatives.

Public participation in our gram sabhas has gone up dramatically, particularly since we began announcing the meeting dates well in advance and circulating the agenda for consideration. Now, people not only come up with suggestions, but contribute for the development of the village rather than wait for financial help from outside.

We were the first Gram Sabha to introduce different taxes, like a drinking water tax

Revenue generation models were not followed widely in Sikkim. We were the first Gram Sabha to introduce different taxes, like a drinking water tax, environment tax, house-



GANESH K. RAI

*President,
Melli Dara Paiyong Gram Panchayat, Sikkim
Winner of the Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Samman
Puraskar*

Some of the key initiatives undertaken by Melli Dara Paiyong Gram Panchayat:

- **SINGLE WINDOW SYSTEM**
Service oriented concept
- **WORK PERMIT CARD**
For revenue generation and curbing crimes
- **PANCHAYAT SANDESH**
Monthly news magazine
- **SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT**
Recycle waste product and generate revenue
- **DRINKING WATER MANAGEMENT**
Better service to the people

hold registration tax and so on. I feel pleased to inform you that these taxes were imposed by the people themselves. It is heartening to note that they are not reluctant to pay. Moreover, within a few weeks of our initiative taking off, the State government came up with a notification to other Gram Panchayats to generate taxes. Through these taxes we have been able to construct buildings and also solve the problem of drinking water shortage.

Maintaining transparency in the working of the Panchayat has been another primary goal of Melli Dara Paiyong Gram Panchayat Unit (GPU). We have taken up several initiatives which would help make people aware thereby bringing transparency in the system of work. Publishing 'Panchayat Sandesh' has been a step towards achieving this very goal. We are living in the information age, where our activities are largely governed by the information we have. It is our effort to publish details of our activities on our GPU website, including initiatives like a mobile phone service, work permission cards and,

most recently, our mission to make this a solid waste free GPU.

I consider gram sabhas as the real agents of change at the village level. Panchayats must themselves decide how to involve public participation in making government programmes and policies a success at the grassroots level, and encourage people to meet their needs locally. Panchayats are the best institutions to spread democratic education and involve the rural community to undertake rural development.

Administratively, also, it is best if the local community decides what is best for it in terms of spending, on infrastructure, or otherwise. Bureaucrats in state capitals may not be so familiar about which locality needs better drainage, which one needs better drinking water facilities and so forth. This must be decided by the local GPU. The time has come for the Panchayats of our country to realize their power, as well as their duties and responsibilities, thereby making our country the world's largest democracy in the truest sense.

Ganesh K. Rai

www.mellidaragrampanchayat.net

Raj Samadhiyala shows the way



Check dams which have transformed Raj Samadhiyala

RAJ SAMADHIYALA LIES on the outskirts of Rajkot district, 25 kms off the Rajkot-Jamnagar highway. The village has created a benchmark in rain water harvesting, sanitation and cleanliness. It has ensured that every household, school and Anganwadi has sanitation facilities, dust and litter free roads, and proper drainage.

This was not always the case. In this small hamlet of 2000 people spread over 1500 acres, villagers decided to take matters into their own hands, by calling meetings of the Gram Sabha. Faced with chronic water scarcity, (the situation was so bad that villagers from neighbouring villages refused to marry their daughters into this village), the villagers took up the challenge.

Launching a crusade against the parched desert-like landscape, villagers constructed small check dams and tanks with funds from the District Rural Development Authority programme. 45 check dams were built over 1,090 hectares, and their number is growing. Small check dams ensured that rainwater percolates underground, and the groundwater level has risen enough for every village house to now have access to piped water and proper drainage.

Encouraged by the success of the check dams, villagers were trained and began water harvesting by developing dykes using Remote Sensing techniques. More than 65,000 trees were planted by the villagers to ward

off further desertification. They now have sufficient supplies of drinking and agricultural water, even during drought conditions. Most amazingly, Raj Samadhiyala, which could earlier barely manage to grow a single monsoon crop, recently had three bumper crops in a single season, with as little as four inches of rainfall in the year! The annual vegetable sale has gone

Raj Samadhiyala gram samiti has created an imprint, of sustainable development through community efforts

up to about ₹ 25 lakh a year, with a range of crops including wheat, cauliflower, chillies, tomato, coriander, brinjal, potato, radish, carrot, guava, mango, amla, and even the water-intensive groundnut.

Since the Gram Samiti (Sabha) was first formed, villagers formulated and enforced a strict code of conduct. Through regular meetings and sustained efforts, gutkha sales have been banned in the village and people are fined for spitting or littering. There are no sweepers to collect garbage, the onus being on the residents, who take turns to dump the garbage at the landfill site from their respective

areas. Cow dung and other wastes are ferried out of the village on bullock carts.

Raj Samadhiyala became Gujarat's first ZERO PLASTIC village, with heavy fines imposed for violating rules.

According to sarpanch Shardaben Mansukhbhai Muchhadiya, four gram sabhas were held in 2011. At their first meeting in 2012, a social audit of MGNREGS was done and strategies for proposed works were discussed and fixed for the year. The village has complete details about APL and BPL families, birth and death records and marriage registration records are maintained and up to date. Well maintained Gram Panchayat records are available, with land records including title deeds.

To ensure availability of clean drinking water, plans are ready to install an RO plant in the village, in collaboration with VASMO.

The Raj Samadhiyala gram samiti has created an imprint, of sustainable development through community efforts, even across the border. Even the Government of Pakistan has shown keen interest in their functioning and wants them to share knowledge with Pakistani representatives to develop villages and improve the quality of life.

News Snippets

J&K ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES TRAINED

Panchayat elections were held in J & K, after 3 decades. MoPR organized training of 53 elected representatives (ERs) and trainers in Kerala, Odisha, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, AP and Karnataka. ERs received hands-on-training, learning about features of J&K PR Act, roles, responsibilities and business rules of Halqa Panchayats, Gram Sabha and its role in development, preparation of panchayat plans and financial management were included in the training module.

NO PANCHAYAT AREAS IN NE

An Inter-Ministerial Team visited North Eastern States, where Panchayats do not exist, for reforms in local self government. Mizoram is one such State. As a result of such efforts, Mizoram has already constituted Gram Sabhas. The State has constituted a State Election Commission, which now conducts all elections to Village and District Councils. In the 6th Schedule, areas covering districts of Lawngthlai and Saiha, the District Councils have legislated for women's reservation.

NATIONAL PANCHAYATI RAJ DAY

To commemorate the National Panchayati Raj Day on 24th April, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj is organising a national conference at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi. This will be inaugurated by the Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh. Several annual national awards to best Gram Panchayats, Panchayat Empowerment and Accountability Incentive Scheme (PEA.I.S) awards to State governments and the Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar to the best Gram Sabha of the country will be presented.

Women's participation in Gram Sabhas



Dr. Hrusikesh Panda, AS, MoPR in Sarangi village in Jhabua district

AT MEETINGS WITH women representatives during visits to the Gram Panchayats of Mohanpura, Devjhiri Panda, Bhagor, Debarbadi and Narwalia of Jhabua Block in Madhya Pradesh, officials of a central team led by Additional Secretary MoPR, found that the women were raising not the usual issues of power, roads and connectivity, but talked of irrigation, second crops, drinking water, absent teachers and livelihood-related matters.

The tenor of meetings across ten gram sabhas in Jhabua confirmed the view that active and vocal participation by women in gram

sabhas raises genuine, critical issues of their livelihood, health and education.

According to Additional Secretary Dr. Hrusikesh Panda the women talked about the need for proper irrigation to grow additional crops, crop diversification for agriculture and tussar cultivation, and also access to potable drinking water, the absence of teachers in schools and so on.

The officials gathered information from the women about the status of women's empowerment and other central government - formulated development schemes. They informed the women that in just one year, the district administration initiated several projects to empower women in 30 Gram Panchayats. They discussed the efficacy of these schemes and suggested that, in order to ease the implementation process, an integrated effort was required between the district administration and the gram sabhas directly.

Elections to Panchayats and Municipalities

THE CONSTITUTION OF India requires that elections to Panchayats and Municipalities should be held before the expiry of its term and, in case of dissolution, within six months from the date of dissolution. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has been closely monitoring this aspect because regular elections are essential for the democratic functioning of local governments.

A case in point is Puducherry, where Panchayats elections have not been held within the six months period. This will mean that Panchayats in Puducherry will lose the Central Finance

This will mean that panchayats in Puducherry will lose the Central Finance Commission (CFC) grants.

Commission (CFC) grants. The Municipalities will be deprived of JNNURM and other grants. The MoPR is also going to have a Plan Scheme to support the Panchayats, and the Panchayats in Puducherry will not be eligible for this. Additional Secretary, MoPR went to Puducherry recently and met the Lt. Governor and the Chief Minister for holding of elections.

Gram Sabha ushers in Prosperity



The Gram Panchayat office in Kirlapal Dabal village, Goa

THE GRAM SABHA in the village of Kirlapal Dabal in Goa has brought about a tremendous change in terms of development, with the construction of roads, a community hall and an anganwadi. Another feature that stands out in this panchayat is the gender ratio; that there are more women than men, but that makes no difference to them.

The Goa Mineral Foundation is an incredible icon of motivation to the members of this panchayat, as they often provide monetary assistance to them. This prompts them to keep working harder.

The Kirlapal Dabal village panchayat was awarded the Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar in 2011 for the excellent observance of the year of the Gram Sabha (Oct 2, 2009 to Oct 2, 2010).

Sarpanch Rama Sonugaonkar personally feels that the national recognition has helped them in several ways, not just monetarily, but primarily as a source of motivation.

Since the award was presented, the one aspect that he has ensured is the fact that not one house in this panchayat is without water or electricity. Rama Sonugaonkar was thrilled at his panchayat having won the award and expressed his happiness, giving thanks to the collective effort of members of the gram sabha.

The Kirlapal Dabal village panchayat was awarded the Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar in 2011

“The fact that our hard work and the support of the villagers paid off is extremely gratifying”, he said. He also said that the assistance provided by the Directorate of Panchayats had helped bring the progress we see today, but stressed on the fact that villagers need to be educated about their rights, including the right to information.

Through SHGs and Microfinance

SELF HELP GROUPS have proven to be the best tool for the economic empowerment of Goa's BPL women. This is a story of a bunch of uneducated village BPL women of Harijanwada, in Thane- Dongurli taluka, who were unemployed and doing their ordinary housework although they had marketable skills. Their daily business was to make items out of bamboo. One day, these women visited the Block Development Officer's office where they met a Technical Assistant of the District Regional Development Authority (DRDA), who explained to them about forming a Self Help Group. After selling Bamboo items, they were saving the money which remained after meeting daily expenses. The BDO official explained to them how forming a SHG would be beneficial to them.

These women decided to form a SHG and named it 'Savitribai Self Help Group' Harijanwada and opened an account in the State Bank of India, Thane branch, with an amount of ₹150 per month, which they were saving monthly from selling bamboo. After completing one year, DRDA sanctioned them a revolving fund and the bank sanctioned cash credit facility. Out of this amount, the group started making more items out of Bamboo and sold them directly in local markets. They took part in exhibitions at Margao, Panaji and also at Mumbai. They got good response for their items in the exhibitions.

The members of 'Savitribai Self Help Group' Harijanwada have not only improved their condition, but have helped others. Their example inspired women of Karapur village of Bicholim block to form the "Vithalapur Self-Help Group". This group started making sweets, masalas (spices) and readymade garments, while doing crochet, embroidery etc. With the revolving fund money they have increased their business and started selling their products in the local as well as city markets.

Statewise Panchayats at different tiers

State / UT	District Panchayats	Intermediate Panchayats	Gram Panchayats	Total
Andhra Pradesh	22	1098	21852	22972
Arunachal Pradesh	16	155	1756	1927
Assam	21	191	2205	2417
Bihar	38	534	8474	9046
Chhattisgarh	18	146	10033	10197
Goa	-	-	190	190
Gujarat	26	223	14144	14393
Haryana	21	119	6279	6419
Himachal Pradesh	12	77	3241	3330
J&K	22	143	4089	4254
Jharkhand	24	257	4464	4745
Karnataka	30	176	5631	5631
Kerala	14	152	977	1143
Madhya Pradesh	50	313	23028	23391
Maharashtra	33	352	27971	
Manipur	4	-	160	164
Odisha	30	314	6234	6578
Punjab	20	142	12800	12962
Rajasthan	33	243	9201	9477
Sikkim	4	-	163	167
Tamil Nadu	30	385	12617	13032
Tripura	4	23	511	538
Uttar Pradesh	72	821	52021	52914
Uttarakhand	13	95	7555	7663
West Bengal	18	333	3352	3703
A & N Island	3	9	67	79
Chandigarh	1	1	17	19
D & N Haveli	1	-	11	12
Daman & Diu	1	-	14	15
Lakshadweep	1	-	10	11
Puducherry	-	10	98	108
Total	584	6312	239165	246061

The Panchayat system in India aims to act as an effective unit of administration and performing functions affecting almost all aspects of the village community. The Constitutional (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 looks to provide a 3-tier system for all states, to hold Panchayat elections regularly and to provide reservation of seats for SCs, STs and women. The 3-tier system consists of :

- Gram level panchayat,
- Intermediate level panchayat, and
- District level panchayat.

FEEDBACK

Any response or suggestions regarding this newsletter would be welcome. You can contact us with your feedback as per details mentioned below :

- PO Box: #2, New Delhi
- Email: newsletter-mopr@nic.in
- SMS: <MOPR> <your comments> to +91-92200-92200

ADDRESS

Panchayat _____

Village _____

Block _____

District _____

State _____



CONTEST

Dear Readers,
An interesting way to test your knowledge about Gram Sabhas:

Do you have to be elected to become a member of a Gram Sabha?

- Yes ■ No

You can reach us with your answers at:

- PO Box: #2, New Delhi
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