



Panchayati Raj

NEWSLETTER OF MOPR

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)



GREETINGS TO ALL Friends in Panchayats across the country. I am happy to share my thoughts with you on the very important subject of 'Nutrition' and how Panchayats can be an effective forum to reach the message of improving nutrition levels in every household in the rural areas. We must focus not only on education and skill up gradation but also on improvement in health parameters one of which involves improving nutrition levels. During July, 2011 Govt. of India has constituted a Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Committee at village level, as a Sub-Committee of Gram Panchayat which is to function under the overall supervision of the Panchayat. State Governments have also been advised to involve the local Ward Member as the Chairperson of the Committee and in case there is more than one Ward Member in the area, a female member should preferably chair the Committee. This Committee is expected to create awareness about nutritional issues, significance of nutrition as an important determiner of health, identify locally available food stuff of high nutrition value and promote their production and consumption, and identify mal-nourished children for special care.

tion, and identify mal-nourished children for special care.

The Anganwadi Level Monitoring Committee is also now chaired by a Ward Member, preferably a woman Member. The Committee will oversee Anganwadi Centre programs, ensure coverage of all eligible beneficiaries, review supply of supplementary food to all beneficiaries for at least 21 days in a month, review nutritional status of children, verify supply of supplementary food, stocks of food and medicines and report about any shortfall to the B.D.O, the CDPO and the Gram Sabha. I bring these developments to your notice so that you may also ensure that these Committee function as envisaged and achieve the purpose for which they have been set up. We hope that the special gram sabha meetings dedicated to 'nutrition' issues are held in the month of August, 2012 as was done last year. Block and Field level functionaries in-charge of Anganwadi Centre, Health, Sanitation, Drinking Water, Public Distribution System, Mid-day Meal, Agriculture, Horticulture, Dairy and Fisheries should be present and participate in these meetings. The Gram Sabha may address three aspects of nutrition in these meetings viz: (a) the government programs of nutrition and food security like Anganwadi, Midday Meal, and public Distribution System (b) Improve sanitation, drinking water and health (c) raise the level of nutrition through increased production of food at local level.

V. Kishore Chandra Deo
Union Minister

*Panchayati Raj and Tribal Affairs
Government of India*



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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 grassroot level self governance

Raheesa Khatoon 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 Panchayat is

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

- **Shri 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 K Rai**
Mellidara-Paiyong,
South District, Sikkim

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

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 Panchayati Raj and Tribal Affairs, 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 Panchayati Raj and Tribal Affairs, 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 practises 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 competence, 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 EUs 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 Melli Dara 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 GP, 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

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



Check dams which have transformed Raj Samadhiyala

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 veg-

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

etable sale has gone 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 Halaqa 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 N-E

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 (P.E.A.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.



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, Noida, UP
- 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, Noida, UP
- Email: newsletter-mopr@nic.in
- SMS: <MOPR> <Y/N> to +91-92200-92200