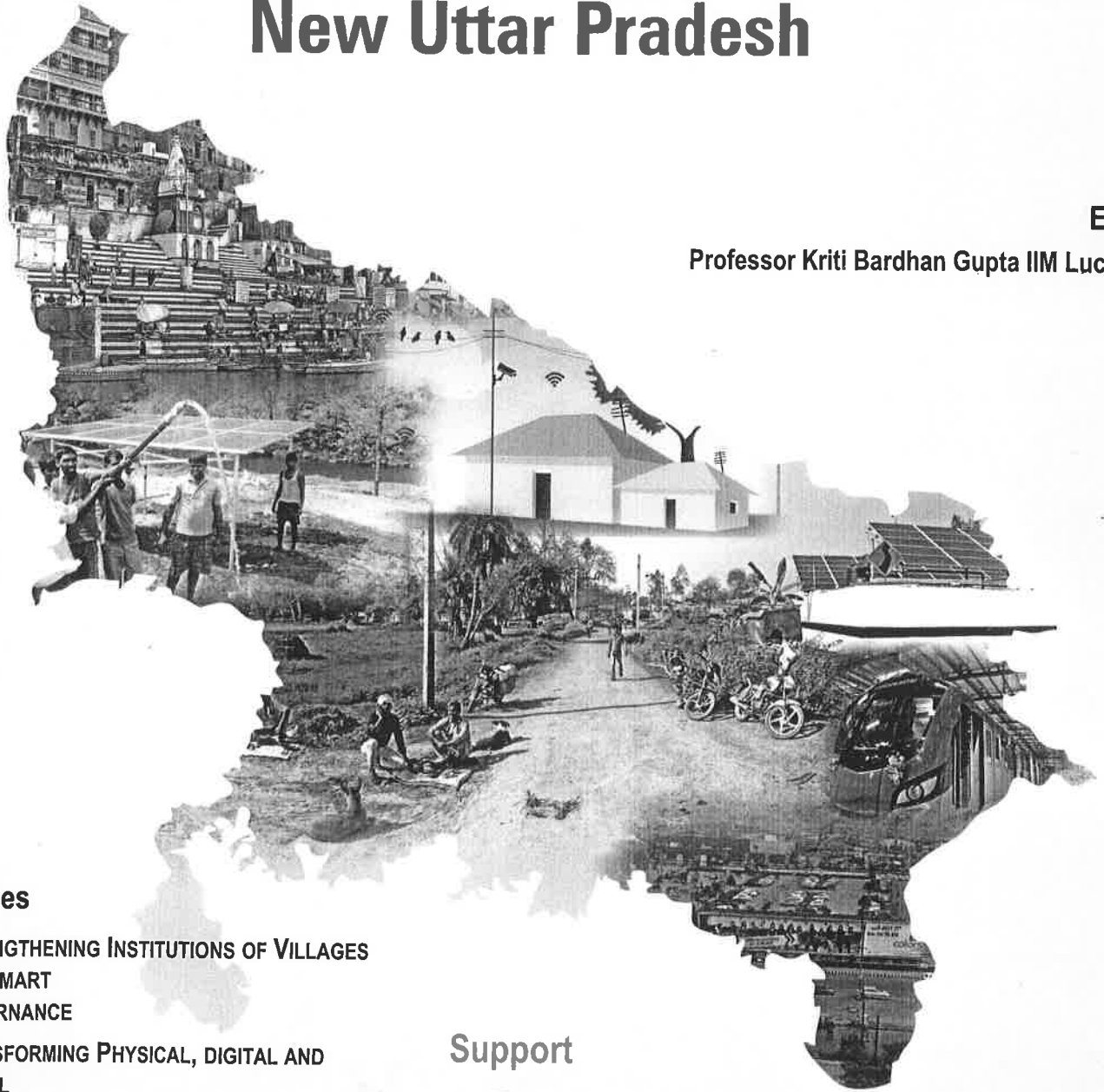




LUCKNOW MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

LMA Convention Journal

Developing Smart Villages as Future of New Uttar Pradesh



Editor

Professor Kriti Bardhan Gupta IIM Lucknow

Subthemes

- STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS OF VILLAGES FOR SMART GOVERNANCE
- TRANSFORMING PHYSICAL, DIGITAL AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE
- PROMOTING AGRICULTURE REFORMS AND AGRIBUSINESS
- GENERATING EMPLOYMENT AND HASTENING SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Support



NABARD

A Lucknow Management Association Publication

Lucknow Management Association
CONVENTION JOURNAL
Developing Smart Villages as Future of New Uttar Pradesh

CONTENTS

Volume 13, No.1, 2017

Editorial	i
<i>Kriti Bardhan Gupta</i>	
Introduction to Themes and Sub themes	ii
<i>A.K. Mathur</i>	
1. SMART VILLAGES: Indian Realities, Opportunities, Way Forward	1
<i>Y.S. Rajan</i>	
2. National Rurban Mission- Policy Intervention to Develop Rurban Continuums	21
<i>Vineeta Hariharan</i>	
3. Strengthening Gram Panchayats: A Case Study of Integrated Good Practices	25
<i>Anjali Makhija</i>	
4. Smart Andhra Pradesh Foundation (SAPF): A Case Study	31
<i>Dr. B. Gangaiah, and Madhu Gottumukkala</i>	
5. Digital India – Making villages ‘Smart’	38
<i>Amit Sharma</i>	
6. Agrowon Smart Village: A Case Study	41
<i>Vikas Singh and Arvind Gupta</i>	
7. Mobile Media as Changemaker: Growing Trends in Four Centrally Most Backward Districts of Uttar Pradesh	49
<i>Dr. Shirin Abbas and Dr A.K. Singh</i>	
8. A Study on MSMEs to Generate Employment and Accelerate Skill Development in Villages	58
<i>Ravi Chaudhary</i>	
9. Smart Villages Initiative: Findings 2014-2017 (Summary)	70
<i>John Holmes</i>	



STRENGTHENING GRAM PANCHAYATS: A CASE STUDY OF INTEGRATED GOOD PRACTICES

ANJALI MAKHIJA¹

ABSTRACT

Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Rurban Mission aims to develop village clusters by providing civic infrastructure and associate services. Creation of hardware needs to be complimented with software by empowering Panchayati Raj Institutions so that they are equipped with knowledge and skills to run and main the infrastructure. Various good practices need to be implemented in order to build capacities of Panchayati Raj Institutions, especially the Gram Panchayats. Some of these practices are creating women collectives of elected women representatives or Mahila Sangathans, Mahila Gram Sabhas, structured training sessions with Panchayats, micro planning, interface workshops with government departments and Panchayat elections voter awareness campaigns. An integration of these practices will strengthen the Panchayats and prepare its representatives to function effectively, and maintain and sustain the development of the villages.

INTRODUCTION

The Indian state in 1993 approved the 73rd constitutional amendment and accorded constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in India. The basic objective of the amendment was to achieve decentralized and inclusive development. It envisioned that villagers get empowered to manage their development. It further aimed to achieve political inclusion of the disadvantaged sections, particularly women. However, the objectives of establishing PRIs are yet to be fulfilled.

“The Gram Panchayat will be effective only if its aware of people’s needs, functions in a democratic manner, undertakes participative and inclusive planning, executes schemes and

projects effectively and remains accountable to the people” (Ministry of Panchayati Raj-UNDP, 2014). A lot needs to be done to achieve this. There is a need for myriad initiatives to be undertaken by government and civil society organizations so that the Panchayats are able to perform their functions effectively. This case study throws reflection on some of the concerted efforts in the form of integrated good practices undertaken by SM Sehgal Foundation in Nuh (earlier Mewat) district of Haryana for strengthening Gram Panchayats.

Mahila Sangathans

The 73rd amendment has reserved one third of seats in Panchayats for women. It calls for active participation of women in the political sphere and challenges the political system,

¹ Director, Strengthening Village Level Institutions, Sehgal Foundation

which so far was dominated by men. "The representation of women in these spheres of governance has not necessarily led to their sufficient participation. They are largely figureheads and the work related to their roles and responsibilities is being done by their husbands, sons or other male members of the family. Various factors such as patriarchal societal norms and culture; lack of education and awareness among women; restricted mobility; and financial dependency inhibit women representatives from actively participating in the affairs of gram panchayats, gram sabha (village general body meeting) and other village level institutions" (Makhija.A, 2017). One of the initiatives of S M Sehgal Foundation has been in setting up Mahila Sangathans or women collectives. These sangathans comprises women members of Gram Panchayats, School Management Committees and Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committees (VHSNCs). The sangathans are imparted structured trainings on functioning of the institutions of which they are members. They are also trained on perspective building, gender equity and improving their communication skills. The sangathans bring the women together and provide them strength for collective action. The members have undertaken various projects and tasted success such as undertaking immunization drives, getting access to Below Poverty Line (BPL) plots, undertaking sanitation drives, constructing toilets under Swachh Bharat Mission, getting electricity to their villages, facilitating repair of water tanks by government departments, and many others. This initiative in the form of a powerful practice can be replicated in other districts and states.

Mahila Gram Sabhas

Another initiative relating to women participation is Mahila Gram Sabha. In

Maharashtra, Mahila Gram Sabhas are held prior to holding Gram Sabhas. The Mahila Sabhas provide a safe space to women to express themselves, share their concerns highlight development issues and plan for the development of villages. Ideally, the proceedings of these meeting are taken to the Gram Sabhas and integrated into the proceedings of Gram Sabhas. "The all women meetings help women improve their communication skills, and give them confidence to express their views and opinions in public gathering. Once aligned, women us this platform to collectively advocate and demand their rights" (Srivastava S. et al). S M Sehgal Foundation has facilitated many such sabhas. Many states issue orders from time to time to hold Mahila Gram Sabhas. If such sabhas are held regularly and if it becomes mandatory to hold Mahila Gram Sabhas before the Gram Sabhas, it will provide a sustainable platform to women to participate in village governance.

Capacity Building of Panchayat

"If PRIs are here to stay as prime holders of development projects, it is necessary that they are adequately capacitated and strengthened" (Deshpande R, et al). S M Sehgal Foundation conducts structured trainings of members of PRIs with a special focus on building capacities of elected women representatives. The sessions include building their perspective on gender equity and village development, roles and responsibilities, gram sabhas, composition of PRIs and decentralized planning. This is followed by providing support to Panchayats so that they can prepare plans, create synergy with district administration, leverage funds for development projects and implement them in a transparent manner.

In a monitoring study conducted on capacity building of PRIs by Sehgal foundation in Mewat, it was found that "PRI members

have improved awareness levels on its functioning, better in experimental villages. Various government schemes are found to be functional, experimental villages performing better mostly" (Mangala, B et al, 2016).

The state government and civil society organizations can collectively or independently build capacities of PRI members. This will go a long way in building their confidence and improving their efficacy.

Decentralized Planning

There is a need for creating an enabling environment for democratic participation of villagers as citizens in democracy. "Pachayati Raj Institutions are institutions of local governance and not mere implementers of centrally determined development programs. They should not be allowed to become the third tier of development administration" (PRIA, 2013). The participation of citizens and Panchayats in developing village development plans is imperative. Micro planning is a comprehensive planning approach wherein the development plans are made by the community for the community. Inclusion and participation of all sections of the community is central to micro planning approach, thus making it an integral component of decentralized governance. For village development to be sustainable and participatory, it is imperative that village development plans are made following micro-planning approach. This will not only build community ownership in the development process but further ensure that development is in consonance with the needs and requirements of the community. During the interactive process of micro planning, the history of the village is discussed, social and resource maps are prepared, needs are identified and prioritized and village plans are developed and approved by the Gram Sabhas. S M Sehgal Foundation has conducted micro

planning exercises in many villages, facilitated preparation of development plans which were approved by Gram Sabhas and submitted to the district department. Subsequent follow up by Panchayats with the administration yielded leveraging of funds for activities envisaged in the plans. As a result, many development works were undertaken by the Panchayats in the village.

The 74th constitutional amendment envisages the role of District Planning Committee (DPC) to consolidate the plans at the district level and prepare a district plan for the entire district. "Planning at the district and sub district level must integrate people's perception about local problems and local needs with the demands of optimal utilization of scarce resources for reaching agreed development goals within a time frame" (Gosh, 2009). However, many states lack the spirit of participation in preparing plans. There are gaps in functioning of DPCs in many states. Making them effective and functional requires tremendous will and openness. Decentralized planning from the Gram Panchayat level to the district level needs a complete overhauling.

The preparation of Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) in 2016 is a step which incorporates various aspects of micro planning. However, in many Panchayats, the process involved in preparing GPDP was not followed and there was a lack of understanding and capability to undertake the exercise in preparing GPDP. There is a scope to simplify the process, make it user friendly and undertake capacity building of Panchayats to undertake this activity

Interface Workshops of Elected Representatives with Government Functionaries

"The most serious limitation of the Panchayati Raj Institutions has been that their

creation was basically in response to the challenge or the problems which the State was facing in the arena of so called development. The initiation did not come from the political motive of broadening the base of our democracy" (Sharma, B.D, 2004). Even though with the enactment of 73rd amendment, the Panchayats got a constitutional recognition, the devolution of funds, functions and functionaries has not taken place in many states. In many states, Gram Panchayats are merely implementers of government schemes and not involved in the planning process. Access to funds and implementation process also has many bottlenecks. To address this problem, S M Sehgal Foundation regularly organizes interface workshops which serve as a platform for interaction of elected representatives with the government department. These workshops provide an opportunity to the government officials to explain about various governments and to address the concerns raised by the Panchayat members. District and states level officials are invited to these workshops; synergies are created so that the Gram Panchayats implement the government programs with comprehensive knowledge and a bottom up approach is followed. Such interface workshops need to be organized periodically to identify gaps and rectify them both at administration and Panchayat levels.

Bimla is ex-sarpanch of village Sarai in Nuh district of Haryana. In 2013, she stepped outside her village to participate in the trainings organized by S M Sehgal Foundation and undertook micro planning in her village. As a result of this she was able to prioritize the issues in her village, and apply for funds. She also participated in interface workshops held by S M Sehgal Foundation with government officials. Thereafter she undertook various

projects after accessing government funds. She organized mahila gram sabha in her village so that women participate in the planning process. As a result of these endeavours, she was able to implement projects in her village such as construction of road, toilets, water tank, school beautification and others. She proudly says that now she can visit any government department on her own and continue to work for development of her village.

Pre-election Voter's Awareness Campaign

The Panchayat elections are held once in every five years. However, most of the community members already have an affiliation to a particular group or person and the votes are not influenced by the election manifesto of the candidate. Women in general are pressurized by the male members to cast their votes for particular candidates. Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) has an experience of organizing pre-election voter's awareness campaigns. "The aim of the campaign was to make the people aware of the value of their votes and how the votes can help them in electing the right candidates" (Rai. M et al, 2003). S. M Sehgal replicated this endeavor in 2015-16 prior to Panchayat elections in Haryana. The campaign was organized to create awareness within community to vote for the development agenda. The community was motivated to seek information on the election manifesto of candidates. Platforms were created to invite the contestants to the community meetings and share their vision for the village. The citizens sought answers to the questions regarding plans for village development. Though it was started as a pilot project in Nuh district, it yielded productive results. In many villages, the citizens realized the power of their votes and made an informed decision to vote for the candidates of their

choice. The civil society organizations can play an imperative role in creating such awareness and promoting democracy in true spirit.

Other Assorted Initiatives

There are several other good practices which need to be integrated to strengthen the Panchayats. The Digital Panchayat Citizen Services of Government of Andhra Pradesh is aimed to develop a digital corridor by digitizing the Panchayats so that many services such as birth and death registrations, house tax collection, property valuations, tap collections, mutations, and other services are automated. The computerization of three tier PRIs is underway. This is a good practice, which has tremendous scope for replication. The technical sites are developed and maintained by National Informatics Services.

Digitization of Panchayats however has a huge challenge of equipping the PRI members with skills. Unless the PRI members are themselves familiarized to e governance, they will not be empowered in true sense and the whole purpose of digitization will be lost. In many states the PRI members are illiterate or semiliterate, especially the women. The disconnection between their capacities and digitization of Panchayats is a reality which will take years to bridge.

This brings us to the issue of educational qualifications of PRIs. In Rajasthan and Haryana, there is a minimum educational qualification to fight PRI elections. However, bridging literacy gaps cannot be achieved overnight. PRI members with some qualification may have a broader understanding of issues, and may seem to be more confident to perform their functions. There is however a need for preparedness within the community so that the contestants aspiring to fight Panchayat elections endeavor

to improve their education levels. This will promote literacy and will go a long way to develop knowledge and reading skills among PRI members.

The 73rd amendment reserves one third of the seats for women. Many states such as Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Bihar, and others have gone a step further and raised this reservation line to 50%. There has been an indication from the present government to ensure 50% reservation in the whole of the country through a constitutional amendment. This will be positive mandate for women participation in village governance. There is a need to motivate women to realize their self-worth and the power they have with such a large mandate. This confidence needs to be instilled and their capacities strengthened so that they can perform their functions as members of PRIs productively.

CONCLUSION

"Casting your vote once in five years is not democracy. Real democracy takes place when power is delegated to the people and they take their own decisions in the villages. Real democracy would be that in which women folk take decisions with dedication and in the larger interest of the masses" (Bhasin, K, 2010). Gram Panchayats are gradually emerging as agents of social change. While on one hand there is a need for devolution of powers to Panchayats in terms of funds, functions and functionaries, on the other hand there is need to integrate other good practices which will empower them and provide them platforms and skills to perform their function effectively. It is imperative to strengthen PRIs to create and maintain smart villages as soft skills are needed to manage the infrastructure and services envisaged in Rurban Mission. This is necessary to ensure sustainability lest the mission's endeavor will yield only short term impact. PRI

members hold the key to make Rurban Mission a success.

REFERENCES

1. Retrieved on October 4, 2017 from [http://www.arthapedia.in/index.php?title=Shyama_Prasad_Mukherji_Rurban_Mission_\(SPMRM\)](http://www.arthapedia.in/index.php?title=Shyama_Prasad_Mukherji_Rurban_Mission_(SPMRM))
2. Srivastava, S and Makhija, A (2014). "Mahila gram Sabha, the Mewat experience" published in *Geography and You*, volume 14, issue 82
3. Ministry of Panchayati Raj (2014). *Governance in Gram Panchayat, Active Panchayat Book III*, developed under the Ministry of Panchayati Raj-UNDP-Strengthening Capacities of Panchayati Raj Institutions (SCPRI) Project
4. Makhija, A (2017). "Creating leadership through Mahila Sangathans in Mewat", *Women's Link*, Vol23, No. 2, April-June 2017.
5. Ghosh, B (2009). *District Planning in West Bengal; District Planning: Report of the conference on District Planning Methodology and Agenda for Action*, Institute of Social Sciences.
6. *Microplanning and Panchayats*, PRIA, 2003
7. Deshpande, R and D'Souza, M, 2009. *Panchayati Raj on the Ground: Issues in village level Panchayat Raj Operation*.
8. Mangla, B; Guru, S and Saxena, R, 2016. *Monitoring of Strengthening Village Level Institutions (SVLI) interventions in villages of Mewat*.
9. Bhasin, K, 2010. *To end violence against women: Role of Panchayats*; Institute of Social Sciences. Edited by Dinoo Anna Mathew.
10. Sharma, B. D, 2004. *50 years of Anti Panchayati Raj*.
11. Rai, M; Nambiar, M; Sohini, P; Singh, S.U and Sahni, S.S, 2003. *The state of Panchayats: A Participatory Perspective*.
12. Retrieved on October 20, 2017 from <http://mpanchayat.ap.gov.in/>