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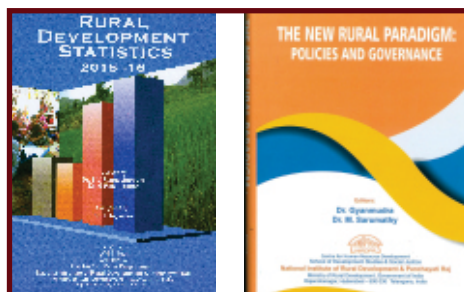
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Cover Story

Local Governance in India

The Institutions of Local Governance or Panchayati Raj Institutions with constitutional backing grounded on April 24, 1992 complete silver jubilee of their existence. The annual Devolution Index report guides us to the status of three important factors i.e Funds, Functionaries and Functions. The repeated performance of a couple of States which are trying to achieve the highest performance without major changes across the States remains a mere academic exercise with no impact.

A school of thought tacitly states that “Panchayati Raj” as a subject is mentioned in the State List with all the 29 items identified and handled partially or fully by the respective line departments in the State. Hence, the structural and administrative support services extended to around 3 million elected representatives across three tiers do not seem to have an impressive presence of their functioning at the grassroots level. It is observed that even the award winning Beacon Panchayats at times have no impact on the neighbouring Gram Panchayat.

Policy-makers, Practitioners, and Institutions rendering capacity building programmes need to seriously introspect and change the game plan and ensure that these institutions do justice in delivering basic services as per their mandate. The PRIs function as an agency to implement programmes/carry out activities, with skeletal staff and least convergence of resources. Documented studies continue to narrate chronic issues highlighted with no remedial measures taken up over the years. In the given backdrop, attempts need to be made to formulate certain work plan to mitigate certain issues across the country.

A set of non-negotiable points need to be drawn up and closely monitored:

- i) The State needs to ensure qualitative capacity building programmes with thematic relevance as per the level and tenure of elected representatives in the first six months of their tenure
- ii) The respective capacity building institutions need to maintain a set of registered trainers list with details



related to domain expertise, qualification, and contact address

- iii) Networking and sharing of generic material, successful initiatives, films, etc., across States to understand, appreciate and customise as per respective State's needs
- iv) States need to design a Training Policy on Panchayati Raj to equip the elected representatives as per their election cycle by designing modules and ensuring both a qualitative and quantitative reach.



The next set of issues which are related to the functioning of the two or three tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions:

- a) The committees constituted at all the three levels including District Planning Committee (with few exceptions) are more ornamental with minimum functional utility
- b) Organising the Gram Sabhas continues to be a routine task for the sake of documentation with least people's participation
- c) The State Finance Commission's report is a mere documentation on local body finances with no follow up related to Action Taken Reports
- d) Database of PRIs related to aspects on own source revenue, grants, cess and assets, etc., needs to be improved across the country
- e) The programmes of National Informatics Centre - Panchayat Suite is underutilised and reasons for States to slow peddle needs to be addressed; At this juncture one needs to highlight on the efforts taken up under BharatNet to connect 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats through Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) to set up a network infrastructure by December 2018 under the government's Digital India Programme
- f) Issues related to Accounting and Auditing are pretty grim

- g) Panchayat Extension in Schedule V Areas (PESA) State Acts comply with Central Act, but a majority of the States have not clearly framed rules viz., minor forest produce, excise, money lending, mining, minor water bodies, forest land, etc.
- h) A mismatch between the human resource deployed at the Gram Panchayats and the assigned mandatory tasks related to service delivery to be carried out get neglected.

Apart from these organisational, administrative and support service issues haunting the PRIs, certain serious issues are observed but efforts need to be addressed:

- a) The 14th Finance Committee has devolved all its funds to GPs and all the States have designed Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPD) with a greater degree of nativity in its name but the larger issue remains regarding people's participation and converging resources, etc.
- b) A sustained effort is not taken up by States to pay minimum honorarium, perks to all elected representatives as per their level and a huge variation exists across States
- c) There is a skewed representation of Self-Help Group (SHGs) members in PRIs at all the levels, with an exception to Kerala which has an inbuilt design to integrate. Probably this integration may enable elected representatives to adopt acceptable community mobilisation strategies, leadership skills, interface with

officials, and conflict resolution mechanisms. Most importantly they are trained to work with a collective identity and an expression of solidarity.

The enabling inclusive indicator to usher in SCs, STs, Women and Backward Castes in PRIs gets eclipsed due to a conscious effort to enable and promote candidates of their choice, or kith and kin, into the decision making system, thus scuttling the very election process by spending huge largesse. It is often narrated in a hush-hush tone the amount spent by elected representatives to get elected both to key positions and also as members across levels. It is often narrated as ‘Small Elections - Big Money’, as elections continue to be an event wherein the candidates shell out huge amount to be part of the decision making process and winning with very thin margins or more a photo finish leap. Such elected representatives who have invested dearly to enter the system obviously make attempts to plough back resources from the available opportunities or rent seeking commences from the time one assumes office. One often comes across families running into debt trap. Officially, the State Election Commission (SEC) of Uttar Pradesh sets a cap of ₹ 75, 000 for a gram pradhan candidate, apart from ₹ 75,000 as security deposit and ₹ 300

for filing nomination. One reason why expenditure goes unchecked during panchayat elections is the lack of uniform legislation for village polls, say experts. “State Election Commissions do not enjoy the kind of independence and authority which the Central Election Commission does. The State governments are happy to maintain the status quo because it benefits them politically. It is of utmost necessity that there is a uniform law governing SECs” (Live Mint, April 5, 2016).

There is a dire need to usher in certain electoral reforms which are practicable in order to put a check to electoral spending in PRIs. Also, it is often stated that pre-voter awareness campaigns (PEVAC) mostly organised by NGOs and activists may put forth candidates who are acceptable to the community and have abilities to function effectively. Unlike other levels, PRIs are visualised as units of Governance with a possibility of high level of interaction between the voters and the elected representatives. Promoting Transparency by enabling citizens to access information put up in the public domain and facilitating through Help Desks; grievance redressal mechanisms is needed.

**Dr. K. Jayalakshmi, Prof. & Head
Centre for Panchayati Raj**

Training Programme on Results-based Management of Rural Development Programmes

The importance of continually managed development programmes has gained momentum in order to ensure the delivery of positive change. In view of new policy to implement output and outcome-based budgeting, the need of capacity building for ensuring that the public resources are well utilised for intended purpose and the expenditures on a programme for delivering the desired results are very important. To meet this purpose, a training programme on Results-based Management of Rural Development Programmes was held from April 11 to 13, 2017 at BRAIPRD, Kalyani,



West Bengal. A total of 21 officials from fourteen districts working in M&E wings of Zilla Parishads which includes three from ETCs had participated. The main purpose of the programme was to equip the officials working in the M&E divisions with capacity of effective management and monitoring performance indicators intended for results with specific focus on the following objectives:

- To introduce tools, techniques and processes for RBM
- To discuss and understand the issues and concerns in RBM of RD programmes and
- To equip the participants with management skills in achieving the results intended for RD programmes

This programme broadly covered RBM in development context, results chain, matrix, indicators, risk management and reporting of results through monitoring in intended manner. Examples of NRLM and PMAY context were discussed by guest speakers in pertinent manner. Every session was followed by group exercises for which, four groups were formed with focus on understanding the dynamics of RBM in the context of NRLM, MGNREGA, PMAY and Sanitation Programmes. Participants have developed results of the programme chosen and analysed through open discussions. The programme was coordinated by Dr. G Venkata Raju, Associate Professor, course coordinator, CPME, NIRD&PR and Dr. Anirban Mazumdar, faculty, BRAIPRD, Kalyani.

Training Programme on 'Behaviour Change Communication for Rural Sanitation Professionals'

The Centre for Rural Infrastructure (CRI) conducted a five-day training programme on 'Behaviour Change Communication for Rural Sanitation Professionals under SBM'. It was conducted from April 17 to 21, 2017 at SIRD, Nongsder, Meghalaya. The programme was attended by 24 participants from 3 States including Meghalaya (13), Sikkim (7) and Nagaland (4). The participants consisted of State level SBM staff (10), officials of SIRD, Meghalaya (1), District-level SBM coordinators (5), Block-level coordinators (6) and representatives of NGOs (2).

The main subjects covered included:

- ODF Sustainability and ODF +
- IEC and BCC -
- Resistance to Change – how to deal with resistant community
- Social Norms / Behavioural Norms – How to bring about a new social norm
- Triggering exercises
- Solid waste management -

Waste Survey – DPR preparation

- Action Plan

Learning from this Training Programme:

- The ODF sustainability and post-ODF programming strategies were found to be very useful. In Sikkim and Meghalaya, the main problem is sustaining the ODF status in many villages. Therefore, the strategies and



bundle of activities suggested gave the participants tips to continually engage the community

- The triggering exercises practically conducted in classroom situation flared up their imagination to use such exercises during community level meetings
- As part of this programme, the participants were taken to Mawlynnong village - Asia's cleanest village, as

discovered by National Geographic Journal. Participants could understand that rural tourism could be well promoted, provided villages especially in the North Eastern part of the country are kept clean.

The programme was coordinated by Dr. P SivaRam, Prof & Head, CRI and Dr. Ramesh, Associate Professor, CRI.

Interview

Interview with

Prof. G PALANITHURAI

Rajiv Gandhi Chair for Panchayati Raj Studies, Gandhigram Rural Institute – Deemed University, Tamil Nadu about the Project on

'Transforming India through Strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions by Constant Training and e-Enablement'

Q: *You are involved in this exercise of Strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions for quite long time. It's more than 25 years now, after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act came into being, where, in your opinion, do the Gram Panchayats in India stand today?*

A: To answer this question, I think I shall draw the matter from two recent research reports. Despite all the limitations and constraints, Panchayats have performed and it is proved that they got capacity to deliver. For instance, now service delivery has become effective compared to how it was earlier; the quality of service is improved; the community finds a responsible person [Panchayat President] in every Gram Panchayat to take responsibility to meet many of the basic needs of the community to lead a decent and dignified human life. Earlier, it was almost customary for rural people to submit petitions to any officer who visits village. After the Panchayats came into existence, the deliberative capacity of the people has been improved. There are two more achievements I must mention: assertiveness of the Dalits has been improved and women's participation in development discussion has been enhanced.



Q: *What is this Project about 'Transforming India through Strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions'?*

A: NIRD&PR found an opportunity to work for strengthening panchayats to continue the good work and to mitigate the weaknesses through a process of building the capacity of the stakeholders. The existing arrangement with government or any NGO conducting training on Panchayat functioning is restricted to elected Panchayat functionaries only after they get elected. Whereas this project has opened up an opportunity, for any individual / youth – men or women interested in rural development-to enroll, and expand his/her understanding of Panchayat functioning - and to get a certificate as well. This project gives ample opportunities for the youth to become informed by equipping himself / herself to assist the Panchayat, or rise to the level of contesting the Panchayat elections with clarity. If you are in a position to build the capacity of one genuinely interested individual in a particular village, it's possible to identify a transformative leader who can provide traction to rural transformation. This is the need of the hour, which this project enables. NIRD&PR, through this project is standardising the whole training and capacity building process for Panchayat functionaries and others who are interested in Panchayat development, which is first of its kind. I am happy that I am a part of this exercise.

Q: *As a youth in a village, how do I enroll myself in this programme, and what do I get / how do I benefit?*

A: Learning is enabled through ICT. Enrolment is free. If you want to learn anything about Panchayats/Panchayat functioning, you can enroll in this programme. In the absence of this, you hit google and get some junk. It could be opinionated, substandard or even trash that got uploaded. Here, NIRD&PR has standardised the materials. Learning is systematic and modularised. The materials have been prepared and vetted by subject specialists, who are well versed in Panchayat functioning. This does not aim at just providing a compendium of standardised materials but presented for

systematic learning in modular form in various levels. The certification is done by the University of Hyderabad. Not necessarily, everyone who undergoes this programme should contest in elections and become a Panchayat functionary. You can be an advisor, mentor, trainer, guide and a responsible citizen who provoke discussions in Gram Sabha for common good.

Q: *It seems SIRDs are also involved in this exercise. You are from Gandhigram, which is a known name for extension in rural development; similarly, KILA - again a big name in Panchayati Raj related training programmes and several other institutions are involved in this exercise. How do you look at your involvement in this exercise?*

A: NIRD&PR has rightly identified several support institutions in order to make this project effective, which is a very wise thing. This has a double advantage: (i) You are bringing in the expertise available in other national and regional institutions that will bring their expertise for sharing in this platform; and (ii) By doing this, NIRD&PR has multiplied its hands in carrying out this project, enabling better reach, grounding and effectiveness. Yes, this is not just about SIRDs alone; it is about several other institutions including universities, reputed NGOs, etc. The same goes with SIRDs as well, meaning each SIRD must multiply their hands and rope in institutions within the State. NIRD&PR must view SIRDs as a big strength to this project. SIRDs must view that this programme is going to improve the quality of the capacity building exercise that the SIRDs and ETCs are involved in. So, in a way the SIRDs are also getting strengthened and becoming more vibrant through this process.

Q: *Is it really possible to provide a programme at all-India level, when each State has its own Panchayati Raj Act, and State-specific G.Os, schemes and programmes? Are we attempting something generic?*

A: NIRD&PR is bringing in the best from each of the partnering institutions, from various States of India.

In fact, two important strengths of this programme are:

- (i) The materials produced are going to be made available in local languages, embedding in each module, State-specific cases, and success/failure stories, etc.
- (ii) These modules are to be imparted by trainers identified from within the State so that they offer it with State-specific Acts, G.Os, and cases. Thus, a person enrolling from anywhere in India does not lose sight of the particularity that one must learn about a given State. It is not something generic about 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act; It is about State-specific Acts, schemes and programmes, in a broader perspective and operable framework.

Q: *How do we address the issues like non-availability of computers and internet connection in rural areas?*

A: The current government has committed that all the GPs will get computers with internet facility. To bring about

e-governance at the grassroots level, this is a good beginning. The type of planning, MIS and accounting system that the 14th Finance Commission demands availability of computers is very essential. In States like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, invariably all GPs have computers, with or without an internet connection, plus a telephone connection also. Many things like e-chalan, e-payment, e-receipt, e-remittance, on-line reporting, on-line monitoring and so on are catching up these days. So, unavailability of computers or net connection will become a non-existent problem very soon. I am very optimistic that this is going to catch on, and contribute greatly in transforming rural India.

Contributed by

Dr. Pratyusna Patnaik | Dr. R Ramesh | Dr. S N Rao

Faculty Members, NIRD&PR

National Seminar on Changing Perspective of Rural Finance and Financial Inclusion of Rural Poor

S.R. Sankaran Chair (Rural Labour) at NIRD&PR, Hyderabad organised a two-day National Seminar on 'Changing Perspective of Rural Finance and Financial Inclusion of Rural Poor' on April 28 and 29, 2017. The main objective of the programme was to understand and analyse the recent developments relating to the rural credit markets structures, crop insurance, and inclusive finance as well as related issues, including, access to microfinance and financial literacy in rural areas.



The inaugural session was chaired by Dr. W.R. Reddy, IAS, Director General, NIRD&PR, Hyderabad. Shri G.R. Chintala, Chief General Manager in NABARD delivered the inaugural address. The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Arvind Mayaram, IAS, Chairman, CUTS (Consumer Unity & Trust Society) Institute for Regulation and Competition and ex-Finance Secretary to Government of India. Kailash Sarap, Professor, S.R. Sankaran Chair has briefly conversed about the themes of the seminar. The inaugural session concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by Dr. Radhika Rani, Head In-charge, Centre for Agrarian Studies, NIRD&PR.

There were five technical sessions in the programme. Prof. D.N. Reddy, former S.R. Sankaran Chair Professor, Dr. P. Satish, Executive Director of Sa-Dhan, New Delhi, Dr. K.G. Karmakar, Professor, S.P. Jain Institute of Management Research, Mumbai and former Managing

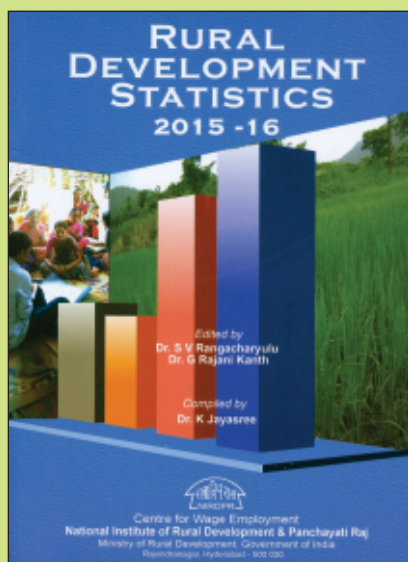
Director, NABARD, Prof. Tara Nair, Professor, Gujarat Institute of Development Studies, Ahmedabad and Prof. Indrakanth, RBI Chair Professor, Council for Social Development, Hyderabad chaired technical sessions.

The valedictory session was chaired by Dr. P. Satish. Shri Vijay Mahajan, renowned social entrepreneur engaged in livelihood promotion of low income households, delivered valedictory address. Dr. W.R. Reddy, IAS, Director General, NIRD&PR gave concluding observations. The seminar concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by Professor Kailash Sarap.

The two-day National Seminar was graced by more than 30 delegates including, civil society organisation members working and practising on issues relating to rural finance and financial inclusion. The seminar was conducted by Professor Kailash Sarap, S. R. Sankaran Chair.

New Publications

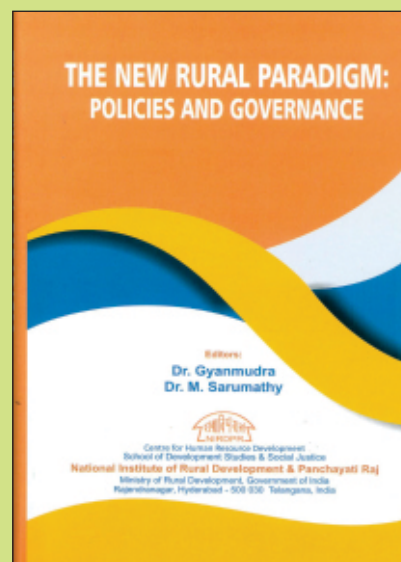
Price: ₹ 750.



Rural Development Statistics 2015-16

This issue, 27th in the series of Rural Development Statistics is an annual publication of the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj. The publication presents State-wide data on host of parameters concerning various facets of rural development. In addition, the allocations of the Ministry of Rural Development on its various programmes and schemes are given. For issues including poverty, estimates based on different Committees for different time points are presented facilitating both temporal and spatial comparisons.

Price: ₹ 450.



The New Rural Paradigm: Policies and Governance

This book is a compilation of papers written by scholars, academicians and professionals. The book mainly focuses on four themes viz., achievement of human development in concurrence with millennium development goals, good governance, re-engineering public service delivery in contemporary India and psycho-social dimensions.

NIRD&PR Events



Ambedkar Jayanti Celebrations at NIRD&PR

*Former RBI Governor
Dr. Y V Reddy, Delivering
Lecture at NIRD&PR*



*MoU Signed between NIRD&PR and CIRC
to Build Capacities of Officials Working in Rural Areas*



*MoU Signed between NIRD&PR and University of
Hyderabad for Offering Certificate, Diploma and
Advanced Diploma for
Rural Development Functionaries*





Update for JRD

- The Journal of Rural Development, a quarterly journal published by NIRD&PR has gone online with regard to the submission of papers. Henceforth, the contributors are requested to follow the procedure given in Online Journal Management System (OJMS). One can access the OJMS site on the link <http://nirdprojms.in>.

OIGS

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