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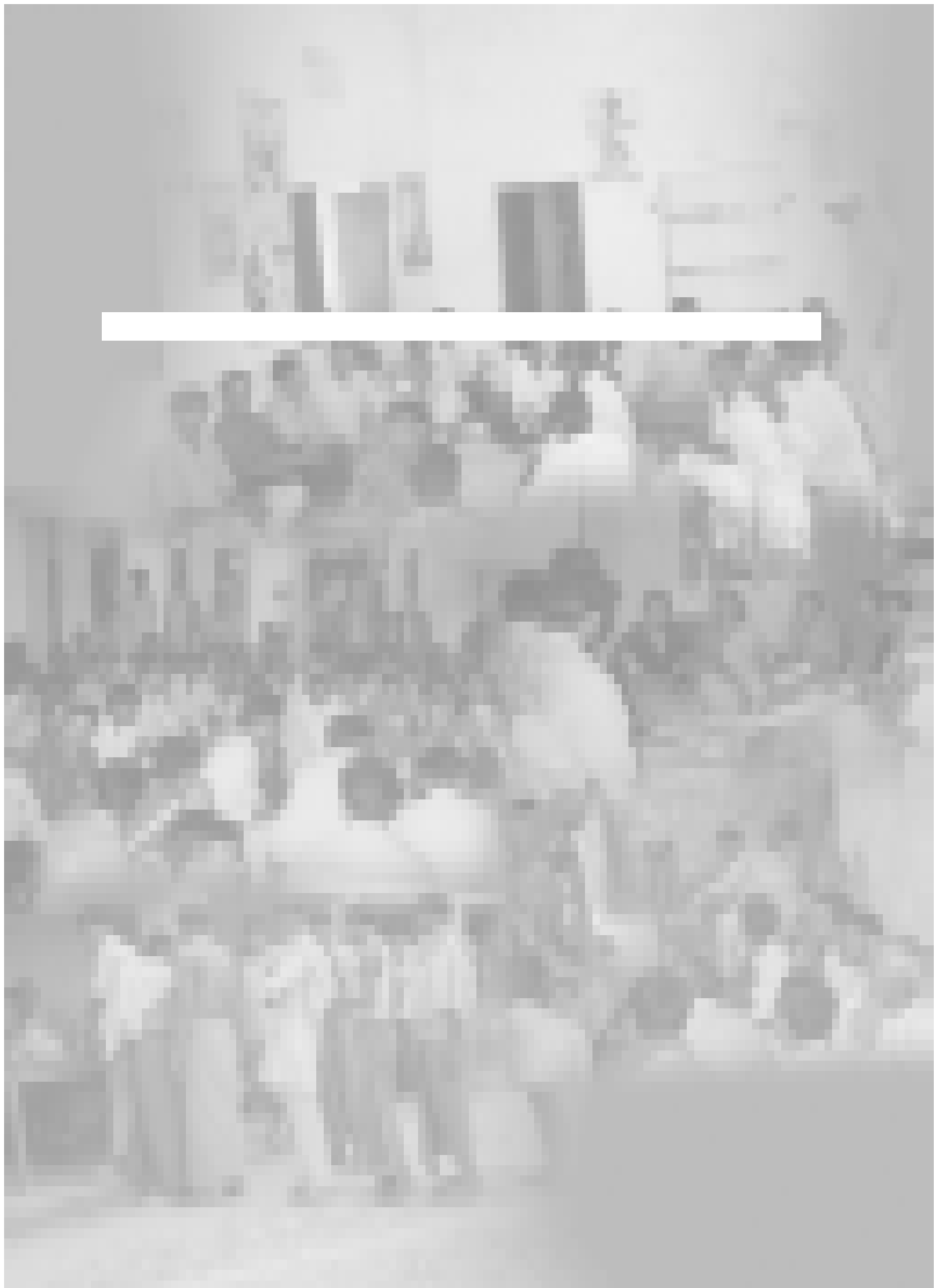
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Foreword

It was hoped that the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act would ensure to the Panchayats a measure of financial strength, which would enhance their autonomy and authority. Accordingly, a number of provisions have been incorporated in the Constitution to strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions in India. Panchayat has been listed as item number 5 in the State list (Schedule 5) of the Constitution. So, giving due consideration to federal structure of our polity, most of the financial powers and authorities to be endowed upon Panchayats were left at the discretion of concerned State Legislatures. Consequently, the powers and functions vested in PRIs are subject to considerable variations across the States. The only mandatory provision dealing with financial aspects of PRIs was Constitution of State Finance Commissions (SFCs) in every State to review financial positions of Panchayats.

The first State Finance Commissions (SFCs) in all States have submitted report to their respective State governments and the concerned governments have already taken action on these reports. Even Eleventh National Finance Commission has made recommendation for financial devolution to local bodies. Theoretically, the process of financial and functional devolution to Panchayats has gained momentum.

PRIs in every state are creation of their State Legislatures and, therefore, have their fluctuating fortunes. But all of them, as PRIA's national study on finances of Panchayats reveals, have one thing in common - their poor fiscal base. The PRIs are supposed to be a vital link in the chain of national development. But higher-level governments view them in terms of local service delivery only. These institutions of self-governance are too dependent on higher governments for their financial and human resources.

Despite all odds, there are a number of Panchayats across different states, which have mobilised resources on their own. They have made innovations in strengthening their financial bases. This booklet is a collection of some cases, which capture the varied experiences of financial mobilisation and management by Gram Panchayats in India.

Rajesh Tandon
President
PRIA

Madhya Pradesh

A RAY OF HOPE

1. Kodaria Gram Panchayat: Social Sector Initiatives

A woman Sarpanch of Kodaria Panchayat took the initiative of organizing the women and forming self-help groups in her Panchayat, to help women facing adverse situations. Before assuming the post of Sarpanch, she was a voluntary worker and had some experience in forming self-help groups aimed at consolidating the economic position of women. She has always believed that the economic empowerment of women is one of the pre-requisites for building and strengthening their capacity to cope with any adverse situations. She mobilized the women of the community to attend a series of meetings, which began with discussions on the vulnerable position of women and their economic disempowerment. She educated them on the rules and regulations concerning the formation of self-help groups as well as the deposit, loan and interest system. She clearly explained the risk factor involved. Her background as a social worker made it easier for the women to trust her. The group was formed, the laws and bye-laws made in a participatory manner and responsibilities distributed. Group members were bound by the ground rule that no money was to be withdrawn until a core fund was formed. The total core fund that was collected was Rs 10,500.

The self-help group continues even though her term is over, with the members more confident of handling their socio-economic vulnerability. Their future plan is for initiating income generating activities, by taking advantage of the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh.

2. Social Sector Initiatives by Women Sarpanches

A few years ago, few rural women would have even dreamt of women governing at the local level. "Women's power" did not extend beyond the defined boundaries of the household and community norms. The 73rd Amendment, with its mechanism of a 1/3rd reservation for women, offered women the opportunity to head Panchayats and participate in public affairs. Some women rose to the challenge, consequently creating and writing history. They took up development initiatives, thereby addressing long forgotten issues of social development. Some women Sarpanches in Madhya Pradesh, received

recognition from the State for their distinct and unprecedented achievements in this regard, giving women's power a major boost. Their Panchayats were termed as "model Panchayats". We present a few success stories of women who, by taking advantage of institutional opportunities, have fought all obstacles. These stories signify the struggle of women against rigid social patriarchal structures.

A. KIRAN KANCHAL

Kiran Kanchal, Sarpanch of Simaroul Gram Panchayat, Indore, is a post-graduate in Political Science. Dissatisfied at the condition of her village, she wanted to work for its development. She refused to be passive or 'silent', instead attempted to go beyond the confines and limitations of schemes or tied-funded schemes, in order to address pressing issues. She displayed enormous initiative and strength in her struggle, and was not deterred or restricted by the lack of resources. Her efforts and contributions are detailed below, providing valuable insights and lessons in the modalities of establishing a Panchayat's role in social sector development.

The Inclusion of Women's Voices in Development

Realising that community participation was crucial for initiating and sustaining the struggle for change, Kiran focussed on the need for participation and developing a sense of ownership. Women, although a prominent section of the village community, were normally excluded. Kiran felt that community participation was incomplete without their involvement and worked on women related issues, so as to organise the women and encourage them to voice their concerns. She called women from the villages within the Panchayat for an exclusive meeting, which resulted in their voicing some issues of concern.

Public Conveniences for Women-An Issue of Public Health (Sanitation)

One of the issues discussed was the need for Public Conveniences for women near the bus stand. The women were doubtful of Kiran's ability to fulfil this need, as it involved getting approval from the men. Kiran however felt that she needed to keep the women's faith, as well as sensitise the men about women's needs and include this issue in the development priorities of the Panchayat. Knowing that she was functioning in a patriarchal society and that she would require a formal sanction by the men folk, she began a dialogue with the men and sought their approval. Through this process, she defined and gave significance to women's voices in the developmental agenda of the community. Using JRY funds to implement the project, a Public Convenience for women was constructed near the bus stand.

Construction of a Maternity Home and Reducing the Incidence of High MMR and IMR

One important issue confronting Panchayats is the problem of land encroachment, which remains unresolved due to the complex interests involved. Not familiar with this problem and its resolution,

Kiran was rather unclear of her role and the ways in which she could effect change. Nonetheless she knew that the purpose was justified and required her untiring efforts. This problem of land encroachment was entwined with the problem raised by the women, of not having a Maternity Hospital.

One of the grave problems in women's health was the rising Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR). Women had to travel long distances to a medical facility, to deliver a child. Serious cases experienced great discomfort in travelling and this, in part, was responsible for the high MMR and IMR. The women asked Kiran to consider the construction of a Maternity Hospital in the area. She was searching for a suitable site when she learnt of the illegal encroachment of Panchayat land.

Convinced that the land belonged to the Panchayat and possessing documents to prove so, she approached the District Collector repeatedly, but without any results. In this instance, she was a little apprehensive because neither she nor her family had any experience in litigation. However with her husband's constant support and guidance, she rose to the challenge and garnered the support of the panches. (Here, she acknowledges that without her husband's guidance and the support of the concerned officials, she might not have been successful.) On her husband's advice, she followed the District Collector to a cricket match and got his signature on an affidavit, formally declaring the land as Panchayat land. This was absolutely necessary to prevent the encroacher from obtaining a stay order from the court. The Maternity Hospital was constructed to serve the interests of the women.

Community Participation in Maintenance

Looking beyond construction and infrastructural development, Kiran became aware that the facility required maintenance, as an asset. She considered strengthening the service component of the hospital and at the same time, working out strategies for maintenance. She believed that the community needed a sense of ownership for the hospital and its maintenance ought to be their responsibility. With the women's consent, she formed a Rogi Kalyan Samiti (Patients' Welfare Committee), wherein a nominal contribution of Rs 2 was charged per patient. A major portion of this core fund was used for the medical treatment of needy women, especially for hiring vehicles for emergency and serious cases. Some amount was utilised for electrification, furniture and medicine.

By involving the community in a structured way, Kiran helped it achieve self-reliance. She also ensured that future maintenance of the hospital would not require external assistance. The dependence of the community on external funding would decline on the one hand while the hospital's "supply" side would continue to remain responsive to the people's needs and demands.

The Maternity Benefit Scheme

Kiran made use of this available scheme to benefit lactating mothers. Under this scheme, expectant mothers who go through regular medical check-ups, are provided financial assistance post delivery, in order to bear the expenses for their nutritional requirements.

The Formation of a Women's Health Group

Conforming with Government instructions for women headed Panchayats, Kiran helped in the formation of the Mahila Swasthya Sangh. This committee comprised of 11 women including some women panches, and was tasked with organising a Mahila Awareness Camp, every three months, for all the villages in the Panchayat. In this camp, they focussed on the importance of health. Games, health shows, baby competitions, lectures on health education and health related quizzes were the main activities. This was an effective way of dealing with the primary prevention of health diseases. Kiran also received the help of an NGO working on health issues, in the organisation of such events and activities.

Additionally, monthly meetings were held with the women, especially with expectant and lactating mothers, to impart relevant health education on immunisation, personal and environmental hygiene, nutrition, delivery, mother-craft, prevention of seasonal diseases etc. Kiran would call Anganwadi workers to these meetings, taking a personal interest in their work and the constraints they faced, with the objective of improving their condition through her own capacities. These interactions helped resolve the issue of frequent shortage of medicines and other supplies.

Supervision and Monitoring of Health Functionaries

Kiran was requested to look into the matter of irregular attendance by the lady health doctor. In this regard she met both the DC and the CMO, requesting them to make it compulsory for the doctor to come at least once a week. She also followed up the matter to ensure compliance. With the permission of the CMO, she procured a refrigerator and installed it in the PHC, so that the potency of vaccines lasted. There were other problems plaguing the health system which could not be addressed completely, but which she hopes to address when she comes to "power" again. One particular issue she raised was of 1 PHC serving 52 villages and the need for financial aid from the Panchayat to ensure a regular supply of medicines.

Land Encroachment for the Conservation of Natural Physical Resource Management

In order to address the issue of land encroachment and reclamation of natural physical resources, Kiran actively sought community participation. Here is an example of 3 intertwined issues and the expertise with which the lady Sarpanch handled them. The issue under consideration was the need to have a regular and constant water supply and for this, it was imperative to reclaim the land wherein a pond existed initially. The pond did not exist anymore and the land was currently in the custody of ten farmers who had brought it under cultivation. The challenge was to help the farmers understand and return the land for use as a pond again, thereby ensuring long term gains for the entire community. In return, they were to be compensated with another piece of unused land. The farmers doubted whether the unused land was fertile and fit for cultivation. Kiran called in 'experts' to allay these doubts. For

Kiran, convincing the men to agree to this proposal was a huge challenge, mainly for three reasons - that she was one woman as opposed to ten men, she belonged to the SC community and was an 'outsider' to the village.

She discussed the proposal and its benefits to the village with the panches, garnered their support and formed a 'pressure group' to back her. With their support, she raised the issue in a Gram Sabha meeting, where she presented the problem to the people and offered the sole solution, by analysing the long term benefits to the village as against the small gains by the 10 farmers. To authenticate her stand, she also invited engineers from the line departments. The people agreed to her proposal and formed a larger 'pressure group' and lobbied with the 10 farmers. The situation did not change dramatically but took a considerable length of time. Once the farmers agreed, digging of the pond started under the supervision of engineers and technicians. The problem of acute water shortage was resolved in part.

B. PREMLATA JARIA

Premlata Jaria, Sarpanch of Kodaria village, is educated up to 10th class and by her own admission is 'self-willed' and 'determined'. Before assuming the position of Sarpanch, she was a social worker, actively involved with a voluntary organisation for 4 years. Her experiences of working with women proved useful in the formation of Women's Self Help Groups and has sustained them, even after the completion of her term.

Social Security for Widows

Premlata used the tied scheme to provide social security to the widows in her Panchayat, thereby consciously working for social justice for women. She organised her schedule for Panchayat activities and fixed the 6th of every month for issuing certificates to the beneficiaries of the Widow Pension Scheme, though she never refused if requested otherwise. The same date was also fixed for the distribution of pension to widows. She worked very hard at getting this scheme implemented for the village and aimed at providing the maximum number of women with economic security in their old age. In her term, 128 women benefited from this scheme. According to her, economic empowerment is crucial, as all women can be rendered completely vulnerable by varied situations in life. This is one scheme for which she is appreciated the most.

Active Participation by Women Representatives in Development

Non participation by women panches in Panchayat affairs was unpleasantly conspicuous and Premlata took up the challenge of changing the situation. Women panches were normally made to sit away from the main group, with their heads covered. During her term in office, she insisted that the women panches sit with her in the meetings. This seating pattern was adopted as the first way of respecting a woman's identity and recognising her contribution. She also spent time alone with them, engaging in

open discussions, to help them shed their inhibitions and encourage them to speak up in meetings where men would be present. She had 8 women panches in her Panchayat and by the time her term ended there was a vast change in these women's personalities, as they grew confident under her leadership.

Women's Economic Empowerment

In her 4 years with the voluntary agency, she tried to strengthen women's status by empowering them economically and providing loans in the event of medical emergencies. In her position of power and authority as Sarpanch, she used the opportunity to involve a large number of women. Being aware of the DWCRA scheme while in the voluntary sector, she saw it as a means to realise her dreams for the women in her community and rallied around the District officials trying to get it enforced. Wanting to have a base ready, she informed the women in her community about the scheme even before it came through. She described the details, explaining how their contribution to it might help augment the household income. She conducted a series of meetings with the women in the Panchayat and asked each woman to make her own decision and only join if she were truly interested. She was faced with doubts and queries which she cleared. The women were also informed of the risk factors involved and were assured of the Sarpanch's help. By the time the scheme came through, a group of 30 women were ready to be a part of it.

Premlata ensured that everyone understood the rules and procedures of the scheme, before loans were granted. Certain women were designated as President and Secretary and given the responsibility of handling the affairs of the scheme. Loans were granted to women for agarbati making thereby generating income. The Sarpanch, being literate, helped to open bank accounts for other women in the community who were relatively less literate. The women trusted her understanding and knowledge and had faith in her integrity. Her previous experience as Social Worker legitimised her knowledge and intentions and could be attributed as a success factor.

Though the scheme was later scrapped, it did make some difference to the lives of these women. This experience was also used as a base for the proposed self-help group.

Self-Help Groups

Premlata later helped to start a Self-Help Group for women and followed the same painstaking process. This proposition was rather different as the individuals involved were economically unstable and this not being a Government scheme, there was no assurance that the money was completely safe. The risk factors were relatively greater and some women were uncertain about investing their money. The group was finally formed, its laws were formulated by the women in a participatory manner and the President and Secretary were nominated.

The women reached a common understanding regarding certain rules. It was decided that the

most needy women should benefit, especially widows with no source of income. Loans were to be granted on low interest rates so that it would be easy to return. A system was worked out of returning the principal amount with the interest amount, so as to help women pay back in easy installments every month after a certain period of time. A striking feature in this system was that the interest would gradually reduce with each installment. In addition, the women also agreed not to withdraw money from the core fund for a period of 1 year and loans would have to be applied for, 8 days in advance. In case of defaulters, the last resort would inevitably be auction. The total core fund that was collected during Premlata's term, was Rs 10,500/-.

Premlata's Approach Right from the Start was to Generate and Strengthen Income for the Panchayat

For this, she formed an income generating plan of benefiting from the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, which she shared with the women of the self-help group. Under this plan, on a deposit of Rs 20,000/-, the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh would contribute Rs 1 lakh for the purpose of income generation. The women in the community made potato chips manually on a small scale. To manufacture economically on a large scale required large input and investment. To produce collectively would be cost effective, economical and the yield would be profitable. With money made available to the self-help group, she hoped to purchase the necessary equipment and set up the infrastructure required to manufacture the chips in bulk. Here she thought of linking the Panchayat to this income generating activity. The Panchayat could provide the funds and employment to the needy for manufacturing. The Panchayat hall could be used for producing and manufacturing the chips and one person could be appointed as distributor. The people would pay the Panchayat back for its investment as well as a little extra, so as to augment the Panchayat's income. The profits were to be shared by all those involved in the manufacture.

Community Health for Women in Marginalized Groups

To address health issues, Premlata was actively involved with the Mahila Swasthya Sangh and the Mahila Jagrukta Shivir. In addition, she would meet with the DC and the CMO thrice a year, to discuss and seek technical inputs on various problems. She also supported the ANM and the Community Health worker in whatever way she could. She was never deterred by an official's refusal or excuses, instead became more persistent in her demands. She would personally inspect all medical kits, medicines and vaccines and if found to be undesirable, would return it to the health department.

Family Planning

Any Government driven and funded program that had relevance in the community, Premlata would be sure to promote. One such program was the Family Planning Camp held every 3-4 months. The Health Worker would survey all potential cases for sterilisation, identify at least a dozen and then, with Premlata's support, would try to persuade them. The SDM had provided a car to facilitate their

movement. The task involved a lot of convincing and dialogue with people, trying to change their mindset and dispel myths and misconceptions. They targeted people who had either completed their desired family size or who suffered the risk of complications in subsequent pregnancies, if any. This list was based on a preliminary assessment by the Health worker and later confirmed by a panel of doctors in the Camp. As for post operative complications, Premlata said that symptoms like backache and exhaustion were considered “normal” and the patient would be advised rest and proper nutrition. She would personally look into “serious” cases and recommend them to the medical care of the lady Health Doctor. And if that was not sufficient then she, as Sarpanch, would write a recommendation to the District hospital, signed by the lady Health Doctor. Such “serious” cases were rare and most patients managed with rest and whatever the doctor prescribed. Besides, follow up would be done in the next Camp, where some women would be re-operated upon to remove the sterilisation device such as the Copper-T. These cases were numerous.

Education for Girls

Premlata was very keen on promoting girls' education. As this was not an important social development issue for the community, she had to use all her communication skills to get community acceptance. She used Rs 2 lakhs from the JRY fund and got the classrooms extended for girls in the existing school. She explained that it was better for girls to avail of higher education within the village, instead of dropping out, and then travelling outside the village for an education. Citing her own example, she described the advantages she possessed as an educated girl who became Sarpanch and now helped in the development of the village community. The girl dropouts and their families were inspired and convinced by the Sarpanch, she was able to inspire better results as well as boost the enrolment ratio in the Higher Secondary school.

Public Health-Cleanliness in the Community

During her term in office, Premlata stressed cleanliness in the lanes as well as proper disposal of garbage. The Panchayat raised a certain amount of money which was used for employing sweepers. The sweepers' salaries were made up of contributions in either cash or kind, from houses in the community. She requested the Public Health Department to ensure the regular clearing of garbage bins. She also hired 6 garbage collection carts at the cost of Rs 7,500/- for the sweepers. The garbage in the community bin was to be cleared once a week. In addition the health department was requested to spray DDT in the area as a precautionary measure.

2

Himachal Pradesh

1. Mandi District

Mandi Gram Panchayat in the Sundarnagar Block of Mandi District, Himachal Pradesh has a population of about 3,000. The total income of the Gram Panchayat during 1997-1998 was Rs 3,09,713/- almost twice of what it was in 1995-1996. During the last 3 years, the grants from the Government have increased. However, the Gram Panchayat's share in its own income (Rs 8,311/- in 1997-1998) has declined over the years. House tax @ Rs 5/- per household fetched only Rs 2,455/- and Rs 1,019/- was received as fees for birth certificates, ration cards and judicial fees. The rest of the income came from bank interest, donations etc. The Gram Panchayat received funds under 3 Central schemes viz. the Jawahar Rozgar Yojna (Rs 12,351/-), the Employment Assurance Scheme (Rs 1,56,300/-) and the Tenth Finance Commission grant (Rs 22,010/-). The State Government provided Rs 45,000/- under the Decentralized Planning Scheme and Rs 35,000/- under the Natural Calamity Relief Fund. These grants were paid in 3-4 installments, but all the installments were delayed by 1-2 months. The Gram Panchayat needed some money to implement its micro-plan but could not use the grant money. It had no choice but to spend the money on infrastructural development as per the conditions imposed by the 'tied' State and Central grants. On paper, it had more than Rs 0.3 million but were unable to spend on implementing its micro-plan which was less than Rs 0.25 million.

Kangra District

The Dagwar Gram Panchayat consisting of 500 families, is situated in the Kangra Block of Kangra District. The same Pradhan has been in office for the last twenty years. The only tax imposed is house tax at the rate of Rs 5/- per family, irrespective of land holdings and structure of the house. During 1997-98, the Gram Panchayat collected a sum of Rs 2,500/- as house tax.

The Jaidevi Gram Panchayat of Sundernagar Block, Mandi District, collected Rs 2,064/- in 1995-96, which increased to Rs 2,184/- in 1996-97 and again to Rs 2,388/- . From this it is evident that the income generated from house tax has increased only marginally over the years.

Section 100 of the Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act states, that a Gram Panchayat shall impose taxes on houses, persons in any profession, trade, calling and employment other than

agriculture, *teh-bazari* from the shop keepers in fairs, service fees, registration fees for animals and water rates. However, data reveals that the only tax imposed by Gram Panchayats is house tax. The fees levied by the Gram Panchayats include judicial fees, certificate fees, marriage fees and ration card fees. Non-tax receipts collected by the Gram Panchayat include rent, interest, proceeds from auctions and fees from fairs and festivals. It was also found that the State Government had not fixed any rate for house tax and it was the Gram Panchayats who decided the rate. Therefore the tax collected by the Gram Panchayats varied. Some of the Gram Panchayats have either a fixed rate or the rates vary for different categories, based on land holdings or structure of the house. The tax collected per household ranges from Rs 5/- to Rs 11/-. Some Panchayats collected Rs 5, 7 or 9 and others collected Rs 7, 9 or 11. Some of the rates fixed by the Gram Panchayats are as follows:

Description	Tax Levied
Landless or Jhuggi	Rs 5 – Rs 7
Land holdings upto 2.5 acres and mud houses	Rs 7 – Rs 9
Land holdings more than 2.5 acres and semi pucca or pucca houses	Rs 9 – Rs 11

Almost all the Gram Panchayats followed the same procedure of collecting tax i.e. by way of issuing ration cards to each household.

Data revealed that the average income of the Gram Panchayat from house tax for 3 consecutive financial years (1995-96 and 1997-98) was Rs 2,676/-, with no significant change. The annual average increase in households per Gram Panchayat was found to be 3. Therefore, if the annual average income from house tax was compared with the rates and increase in the number of households, no significant change in tax collection would be found because of the fixed rate and low increase in the number of households. But, if we look at the recommendation of the SFC (released in November 1996) in relation to house tax, it will be noted that house tax was to be collected at the rate of Rs 22.05/- per household, on the basis of Rs 4.41/- per individual up to a maximum of 5 persons per family, irrespective of family size. The State Government had also accepted the recommendation of the SFC and issued notifications to all the Blocks. But most of the Blocks were indifferent to these notifications and either failed to issue letters to the Gram Panchayats or did not take proper follow up action. As a result, the Gram Panchayats found it difficult to impose that amount at the GP level. The Gram Sabha members also raised their voices against this decision and refused to pay the amount. It can thus be assumed, that due to the indifferent attitude of the Government officials, tax collection at the GP level has remained weak.

As mentioned earlier, the fees levied by Gram Panchayats include judicial fees, certificate fees, marriage fees and ration card fees. According to Section 63 of the Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Rule, for civil suits on matters not exceeding Rs 500/-, the Gram Panchayat shall charge Rs 10/-. When the amount exceeded Rs 500/- the fee levied was to be Rs 2/- for every Rs 100/-. For criminal

complaints the Gram Panchayat was to charge Rs 5/- and Rs 2/- for miscellaneous applications. However it was found in many cases, that the Gram Panchayat did not even register the cases. Keeping in mind the time involved and other judicial problems, they settled the cases through discussion or mutual agreement. Only when that failed, did they register the case and collect the fees. As a result, the fees collected were very low. According to the same Rule, the Panchayats were to deposit all monies creditable to the Consolidated Fund of the State for reimbursement, in each quarter. Till date, very little follow up action has been taken to implement this and neither have the Gram Panchayats deposited any money nor do they seem aware of any such decision.

In the case of marriage fees, the Gram Panchayats are left to decide the rates, which range from Rs 10/- to Rs 50/-. For example, the Tatwani Panchayat (Kangra District) passed a resolution in their Gram Sabha meeting to increase the marriage fees from Rs 10/- to Rs 25/-. Similarly, the Rachialu Gram Panchayat (Kangra District) collects Rs 50/- as marriage fees. However, most of the Gram Panchayats only collect Rs 10/- as marriage fees. It can be assumed that Gram Panchayats have made positive efforts in collecting taxes and fees within their jurisdiction.

2. No Control Over Resources

The annual average income of the Dagwar Gram Panchayat, Kangra Block, Kangra District, from its own resources of litchi and mango gardens and *khad*, was Rs 1,40,000/-. This includes Rs 40,000/- from the gardens and Rs 80,000/- from the *khad*. This Gram Panchayat has its own income which is almost half of their total income, only due to their control over natural resources. According to the Pradhan (who has been elected for the 4th time), the Gram Panchayat has within its jurisdiction, 5 acres of *samlat* land and a ½ km long *khad* (or river, in local language). Back in 1967, the previous Pradhan had started a litchi plantation with a grant of Rs 6,500/- from the Block Office. Upto 1969, the Gram Panchayat was not dependant on the Government and were self sufficient due to the *samlat* land under their control. However, in 1970, the State Government passed a resolution in the State Legislature and took control of all the *samlat* land, except the 5 acres on which the plantation was being carried out. In 1996, the Mining Department tried to get control of the *khad* by putting a ban on it's auction by the Panchayat. The Gram Panchayat however, prevented the Mining Department from gaining control. Since 1997-98, they auctioned the *khad* for Rs 80,000/-, but this year the Mining Department decided to enforce its guidelines and asked the Gram Panchayat to issue a No Objection Certificate, which they have not done so far. According to the Pradhan, the *khad* is a good source of income and decreased their dependence on the Government. The money obtained from the auction was used to invest in the plantation, which is now giving good returns.

The elected members of the Gram Panchayat and the Secretary have all expressed concern over the transfer of their resources to the Government. In their opinion, neither will benefit from this process, instead both parties will incur huge losses. They quoted the example of the *khad* in the Kangra Block,

which was auctioned annually by the Gram Panchayat for Rs 50,000/-. When the Government took control over it, they were able to auction it for only Rs 5,000/-. This was due to the involvement of contractors.

They cited another example regarding the transfer of *samlat* land to the Government where all parties incurred losses. Before the Act was passed in the State Legislature granting control over *samlat* land to the State Government, the Gram Panchayats were looking after the land. They used this land either as a nursery, garden or a community asset or they leased it to the poor and landless, imposing a revenue for its use. In this way a revenue of Rs 5,000/- per annum was collected. When the State Government took control, they neither collected the revenue themselves nor did they empower the Panchayats to do so. As a result, the villagers encroached upon the land, leaving hardly any for community purposes. In 1993, the State Government passed an ordinance to transfer the *samlat* land to the poor and landless. So far this has not been implemented. The members of the Gram Panchayat are also of the opinion that should the land be registered in their name, they can then impose taxes.

They cited yet another example regarding the collection of liquor tax from the liquor shop falling within the purview of the Panchayat. It was previously decided by the State Government to transfer to the Panchayat, a sum of Re 0.50/- per bottle on the basis of the total quota allotted to the particular shop. But this has not been implemented so far. The Gram Panchayat wrote to the State Government and asked them to impose at least Rs 2/- per bottle with immediate effect. The State Government recently passed a resolution in the 1999 winter Assembly session, that Re1/- will be imposed as tax on each bottle.

While looking at the above cases it can be summarized that the Gram Panchayats do not have adequate control over their own resources, which are under the control of the State Government.

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Haryana

1. Kalaka Gram Panchayat, Rewari Block, Rewari District (1996-1997)

ALLOCATION			UTILISATION		
Sources of Income	1995-96 (Rs)	1996-97 (Rs)	1997-98 (Rs)	1995-96 (Rs)	1996-97 (Rs)
Chulha tax	247	3,515	616		
Shamlat land	25,525	29,270	91,270		
Others	6,13,229				
IAY	84,000			84,000	
EAS		54,685			

Kalaka is a small village consisting of about 300 households, headed by a woman Sarpanch. The village is dominated by the Ahirs and Brahmins and has approximately 1,150 voters. The Sarpanch is 53 years old and though illiterate, is active in the affairs of the Panchayat and conducts all business related to the Block and District on her own, assisted only by the son of a dalit panch of her Panchayat. The Panchayat has a total of 7 panches, of which 2 are women.

The Gram Panchayat has an annual income ranging from Rs 95,000-1,00,000, from the lease of approximately 30 acres of Panchayat land. Besides, there is also income from the levy of Chulha tax. The Sarpanch and another panch maintain, that the Government refuses to give them any grants because the Panchayat has a healthy income and there is a balance of Rs 15,18,779/- in the Panchayat Fund Account. This money was received from the sale of 24 acres of Panchayat land to the Public Health Department, for the setting up of a water cleaning station for supplying water to the city of Rewari. The land was sold during the term of the previous Panchayat and the payment received in installments of Rs 5 lakhs every year (2 installments remained out of the total amount of Rs 36 lakhs). The Panchayat feels that the Government is unfair to stop funding just because the Panchayat has a good income. It also feels that the Public Health Department failed to keep the promises it had made.

The agreement was that an 8 inch pipeline would be given to the Panchayat for its water consumption, but only a 3 inch pipe had been provided. It also promised employment to the unemployed youth at the pumping station, but did not employ anyone.

The Panchayat meets twice a month to discuss issues relating to the paving of streets, the construction of a boundary wall around the school, the upgrading of the school and construction of more classrooms. So far, the Panchayat has been able to complete the paving of all the streets in the village (except for a 300 foot stretch, which is encroached upon). A boundary wall has also been constructed around the school complex and a couple of rooms have been added to the existing building.

In 1997-98, the Gram Panchayat was allocated a sum of Rs 2,30,000/- for starting a fishery project in the Panchayat pond. As the Block was able to spend only Rs 57,000/- the grant lapsed. The Panchayat felt that it was improper for the Block to spend money executing a project for which the Panchayat was required only for supervision.

The Gram Panchayat has only one primary school for girls and claim that despite their best efforts at upgrading the school, they have drawn a blank from the Education Department. They are willing to provide land for the building as well as the necessary infrastructure, yet they have not been able to get the school upgraded.

The Forest Department is also causing concern to the Panchayat. The District Forest Officer sits in Mahindergarh District. It is therefore very difficult for the Panchayat to coordinate the auction of trees from the village forest. They have been trying to fix an auction for some trees that fell down during a dust storm, but the Forest Department refuses to respond to any of the resolutions passed by the Panchayat, causing the trees to be vandalized gradually.

The Gram Panchayat made a resolution when it took charge in 1995, to install a separate transformer for the supply of electricity to the village. The existing transformer is located 1.5km from the village and is unable to take the load of power supply to both the village and the fields. However, despite repeated follow up and passing of resolutions, this problem remains unsolved causing a lot of discomfort to the residents.

Another problem they face is that the Gram Sachiv does not come to the Panchayat regularly. Should any resolutions require drafting, they need to go to the Block Office to meet him. This is mainly due to the fact that the Rewari Block has 91 Gram Panchayats and only 8 Gram Sachivs, as against the 23 sanctioned posts. This is also why the Gram Panchayat do not get timely information regarding the availability of new schemes in the Block. Gram Panchayat members were disgruntled when they were not informed of the PRI Scheme. They felt they would have been able to take advantage of it, as the Gram Panchayat had a good income. The only way of accessing information is through frequent visits to the Block and DRDA offices in the District.

In 1995, the Gram Panchayat called a Gram Sabha meeting in the Panchayat Ghar and prepared a list of 68 people living below the poverty line in the village. This was to facilitate the future selection

of beneficiaries for various schemes. In 1998, they claim that representatives of the Welfare Department came and prepared a fresh BPL (Below Poverty Line) list, consisting of only 6-7 persons, while ignoring BPL list prepared by representatives of the Panchayats. It is also representative of the prevalent attitude among the Gram Panchayats, that the Government must provide funds for it to be able to perform its duty of economic development and social justice, no matter that they possess ample financial and other resources.

2. Kamalpur Gram Panchayat, Rewari Block

Sources of Income	ALLOCATION			UTILISATION	
	1995-96 (Rs)	1996-97 (Rs)	1997-98 (Rs)	1995-96 (Rs)	1996-97 (Rs)
Chulha tax	1,520	895	360		
Shamlat land	26,600	32,420	60,500		
Others	10,920				
DCP			9,400		
EAS	2,50,000	1,31,000		2,50,000	1,31,000
IAY		40,000			40,000
OBB	95,425			1,04,996	

Kamalpur Gram Panchayat comprises of the two villages of Kamalpur and Bhawadi and is headed by a woman Sarpanch, belonging to the dominant Ahir caste. Bhawadi is inhabited completely by the Gujjars and they are represented in the Panchayat by one panch, who does not attend Panchayat meetings as he is not within the quorum. The Gram Panchayat has an approximate population of 2,500 and about 750 voters. The Sarpanch is 37 years old and educated upto class IX, yet the affairs of the Panchayat are handled by her husband, who works in the electricity board and a dalit panch.

The main source of income for the Panchayat is the Panchayat land, which is leased for about Rs 60,000/- annually. Besides this, the Panchayat had received some money from the Indian Oil Company, which bought 2 kilas of land from the Panchayat. This money was utilized to resolve the water crisis in the village, with the construction of 5 water tanks. Besides this, a link road leading to the school, the boundary wall of the school in both villages and a veranda in front of the class rooms have been constructed. In the last 4 years, the Gram Panchayat has been allocated money under the Operation Blackboard Scheme for two rooms in school and a link road, the Million Wells Scheme and 2 IAY (Indira Awaz Yojana) houses. An anganwadi center is currently under construction. The Sarpanch and the Up-Sarpanch (interviewed for the study) felt, that because the money allotted under various schemes was spent directly by the Junior Engineers and Patwaries, a lot of delays in construction and other problems were caused. They claim that the Panchayat members were unnecessarily harassed at the time of payment and if the work was handled by the Gram Panchayat itself, it would be completed

much faster and be of better quality.

The Gram Panchayat also faces problems in conducting its affair, as the Gram Sachiv comes rarely and information relating to various Government schemes (such as the PRI Scheme) do not reach them. They further felt that the Panchayat would be able to conduct its affairs better, if the funds that are to be allotted to them, are announced at the start of the financial year and they are given the freedom to spend those funds.

3. Tatarpur Istmurar Gram Panchayat, Rewari Block

Sources of Income	ALLOCATION			UTILISATION	
	1995-96 (Rs)	1996-97 (Rs)	1997-98 (Rs)	1995-96 (Rs)	1996-97 (Rs)
Chulha tax	549	2,913	415		
Shamlat land	39,917	48,225	66,450		
Others		40			
CD Grant	25,000				
PRI Special Grant			60,000		
JRY 20 %			50,000		

Tatarpur Istmurar Gram Panchayat is a small village of about 300 households with 871 voters. It is dominated by the Ahir caste and headed by a woman Sarpanch belonging to the same caste. She was a panch in the previous Panchayat, so the workings of a Panchayat are not new to her. Despite this the Panchayat affairs are handled by her son and another panch, as she says that she is unable to read or write, so she needs their help. The Panchayat has a total of 7 panches, of which 2 are women.

Gram Panchayat meetings are held on the 8th and 22nd of each month and are attended by all the panches. The issues discussed in the meetings range from paving of streets to IAY (Indira Awas Yojna) houses and upgradation of the village school. The Panchayat has an annual income of Rs 60-65,000 obtained from the lease of 32 kilas of Panchayat land

The Gram Panchayat has its usual share of caste and class conflict in the village, inspite of which the members are united and function as a team. In fact it is the only Gram Panchayat, where Panchayat members and some members of the Gram Sabha gathered of their own accord, to discuss the problems facing them.

The Gram Panchayat shares a watershed scheme with the neighboring Sunaria Asadpur Gram Panchayat. The programme is only an year old, but people claim that it is beneficial. They have so far been able to level the land and plant some saplings, but they feel that perhaps they should be consulted on the types of trees suited to their soil and climate, as well as the timing for the planting of those

saplings. They are of the view that since agriculture is their main occupation, they would be in a better position to decide the needs and necessities of the area. (*Members of the committee had recently attended a 3 day training held at the Bawal Agriculture College and were therefore able to recall the purpose of the watershed programme and its objective.*) However, the programme is only one year old and it remains to be seen if enthusiasm is sustained. Furthermore, the inclusion of women in the committee is at a superficial level, as the meetings are usually attended by the male members of their families. As in the case of other Gram Panchayats, here too, the lead role in the functioning of the committee is taken by the Secretary and the President, leaving open to discussion the issue of responsibility of the other members.

The Gram Panchayat members find themselves helpless in matters related to the 16 line departments and are upset over the fact that the money allocated to the Panchayat, is actually spent by the Block Office. At times they do not even know the amount sanctioned or under which scheme. About a year ago, the Gram Panchayat began the process of fixing a date for the auction of trees in the Panchayat *bani* (forest), but so far they have got no response from the Forest Department. The trees are being stolen by the people belonging to the neighboring Panchayat, as the *bani* is on the border of two Gram Panchayats.

In 1996, a Sanjivani Bhawan was constructed by the Block Office. Today it is lying vacant. The Panchayat has no idea about its purpose or utility.

Three years ago, the Gram Panchayat had deposited Rs 20,000/- with the Telecom Department for the opening of a telephone exchange in the village. Till date there is no sign of any activity on this. The Panchayat continues to pass resolutions yet there is no response. Besides all these, there are problems with public transport, (the state transport bus does not come to this village and the private bus service is highly irregular) which prevents people from going to the Block Office regularly and conducting their daily business.

The Gram Panchayat is representative of the problems most Gram Panchayats face vis-à-vis the functioning and accountability of line departments.

4. Hansaka Gram Panchayat, Rewari Block

Sources of Income	ALLOCATION			UTILISATION	
	1995-96 (Rs)	1996-97 (Rs)	1997-98 (Rs)	1995-96 (Rs)	1996-97 (Rs)
Chulha tax	610	3,295	907		
Shamlat land	54,175	54,500	80,250		
Others			3,960		
DCP		1,05,000			1,05,000
MP LAD	60,000			60,000	
JRY 20 %	30,000			30,000	
EAS		2,80,000	1,26,000		2,80,000
IAY	28,000			28,000	
PRI Special Grant			1,00,000		

Hansaka Gram Panchayat is a relatively large village, comprising 9 wards and 1,100 voters. The village population is dominated by the upper caste Ahirs. The Gram Panchayat is headed by Trupta Yadav, an Ahir from a landowning household. Her husband is a Principal and the President of the Teachers Union of Rewari. The Sarpanch is well educated and aware of the affairs of the Panchayat. She handles the Panchayat work on her own, with assistance from the panches and at times from her son. One of the panches, a 70 year old educated man, is very active in the Panchayat. He is well respected, has the time to devote exclusively to the working of the Panchayat and is able to muster people's support. The Gram Panchayat has a total of 9 panches, of which 3 are women. All the members are educated and aware of the functioning of a Panchayat. Meetings, attended by all the panches, are held on the last Sunday of every month, as it is convenient for all. On a number of occasions, the meetings are attended by interested Gram Sabha members. The discussion normally centers around the availability of new Government schemes, which would benefit the Panchayat and the various works that could be undertaken by accessing them.

The Panchayat has an income of about Rs 55,000/- annually from the Panchayat land that is leased and from the collection of chulha tax. In addition to this, the Panchayat has been able to get access to almost Rs 9 lakhs, under various Government schemes. Though the Panchayat has never prepared a plan for addressing the needs of the people, the Sarpanch believes that if the entire Panchayat wants to 'work', then enough money and support can be generated through the Government departments and various schemes. The Gram Panchayat shares a watershed programme with the neighboring villages of Balia and Mundiakheda. The President of the committee belongs to Mundiakheda, while the Secretary is from Hansaka. Land leveling, planting of trees, construction of water tanks, laying of pipelines and construction of drains are the achievements of this watershed

programme. According to the members of the committee however, this scheme is like most other Government schemes, where the emphasis is on construction but the people involved do not understand the basic reason for the existence of the scheme. As a result, there is a high degree of probability that the work accomplished will be laid to waste, once the money is exhausted and maintenance of the water harvesting structures becomes the responsibility of the people. Minimal participation of committee members, other than the President and the Secretary, is also an issue of concern vis-à-vis the sustainability of the programme.

5. Mirpur Gram Panchayat, Rewari Block

Sources of Income	ALLOCATION			UTILISATION	
	1995-96 (Rs)	1996-97 (Rs)	1997-98 (Rs)	1995-96 (Rs)	1996-97 (Rs)
Chulha tax	616	1,442	832		
Shamlat land	37,800	4,800	4,425		
Others	270				
CD Grant	20,000				
Maintenance/ repair of Dalit Chopal			14,000		
JRY 20 %			17,300		
EAS	75,000		1,19,000	75,000	
M.P.LAD	60,000			60,000	
PRI Special Grant			90,000		

Mirpur Gram Panchayat is a large Panchayat of over 1,750 voters, 9 panches and a Sarpanch who is well educated. The Gram Panchayat meets on the 7th and 22nd of every month. The meetings are attended by all the panches except one woman panch, who is disgruntled about the fact that the Panchayat took action against her for encroachment.

The Panchayat has an annual income of only about Rs 5,000/- as it has no Panchayat land. The Panchayat used to have about 100 acres of *shamlat* land which was given to the Government for use as a regional center (University). This was during the time of the Bhajan Lal Government. Now the prospect of a regional center seems bleak as the present Government is not inclined to pursue it. As a result, the land is lying waste and is of no use to anyone.

After much follow up with the Telecom Department, the Gram Panchayat has been able to get a telephone exchange in the village. The Sarpanch believes, that financial allocations to any Gram Panchayat are based on political considerations. Therefore it is very difficult for those Panchayats,

who do not support the Government in power, to function. He also says that the officials are fairly supportive and given an opportunity would like to help the Gram Panchayats, but are unable to do so, due to political pressures. Given this background, one would think that the Gram Panchayat has not received any assistance under the different Governments. But the truth of the matter is, that this Gram Panchayat is part of a watershed programme and has received funds under the MP/MLA LAD Scheme, the EAS and the PRI Schemes and for the maintenance/repairs to the dalit chopal. The Sarpanch says that Rs 50,000 would be enough to serve the basic needs of the Panchayat. Yet the money received under the various schemes, far exceeds that amount. Why was it not enough? The persons interviewed felt that for the amount to be of use to the Gram Panchayat, it must come as an untied grant, which can be spent by the Gram Panchayat on the things they feel are useful to the people. They also feel that the Gram Panchayat should be informed about the resources available, at the start of each financial year, so that they can plan for it.

6. Karnawas Gram Panchayat, Rewari Block

Sources of Income	ALLOCATION			UTILISATION	
	1995-96 (Rs)	1996-97 (Rs)	1997-98 (Rs)	1995-96 (Rs)	1996-97 (Rs)
Chulha tax	895	353	592		
Shamlat land	35,340	33,345	68,220		
Others	20,816	13,300			
DCP			63,000		
MP LAD	40,000			40,000	
EAS		97,600			97,600
IAY		60,000			60,000
PRI Scheme			10,000		

Karnawas Gram Panchayat is a village of approximately 350 households, 8 wards and 1,275 voters. The Gram Panchayat has 8 panches (3 women and 5 men) and is headed by a woman Sarpanch. She comes from an affluent Ahir family. Her husband was Sarpanch twice previously and she was Sarpanch once earlier. One of her sons is a Panchayat Samiti member of the Gram Panchayat. Today she is 70 years old but active in the affairs of the Panchayat and the village, though assisted by a panch and one son.

Gram Panchayat meetings are held on the 1st and 15th of every month and issues relating to construction, Government schemes and sometimes family disputes within the village, are discussed. The Panchayat has an annual income of about Rs 45,000/- from 15 acres of land and the village pond leased out for fish rearing (The GP receives Rs 13,300/- as the annual installment). The Up-Sarpanch was removed from his post after due procedure, but continues to attend meetings as a panch and is active in the affairs of the Panchayat. *(He came to the Sarpanch's house to participate in this discussion.)*

In the last four years, the Gram Panchayat has received minimal assistance from the Government, as they were seen to support a person no longer in power. It received funds under EAS, IAY, MP LAD and the Decentralized Planning Scheme, totaling about Rs 2,00,600/-, as well as 3 IAY houses (Rs 60,000/-). The Panchayat also submitted a plan for the streets and roads in the village, totaling Rs 26,35,000/- to H.R.D.F. Chandigarh on 31.03.98. A response is awaited.

The Gram Panchayat faces severe problems with the Forest Department. Repeated resolutions of the Gram Panchayat asking for the auction of 'kikar' trees that have fallen and need to be disposed off, have been ignored. The trees were planted on 45 acres of Panchayat land by the Forest Department, on the request of the Panchayat. Now the Department is ignoring all requests to set a date for the auction. As a result, the trees are being stolen and the Panchayat is losing income.

The village Primary Health Center has not had a woman health worker for the past 4-5 years. Repeated requests to the Health Department have fallen on deaf ears. The Panchayat fails to see how they can provide health services, if the concerned departments do not respond.

The Gram Panchayat shares a problem common to the entire Rewari Block, viz. irregular attendance of Gram Sachivs, leading to delay in information and follow up of resolutions, made by the Panchayat.

The Gram Panchayat feels that a total of Rs 2,00,000/- annually will be enough to meet the needs of the Panchayat, provided it comes directly to the Gram Panchayat and not spent by the Block Office functionaries. They would also require that the information regarding the amount be provided at the start of each financial year, thus facilitating better planning and execution.

7. Bhatsana Gram Panchayat, Rewari Block

Sources of Income	ALLOCATION			UTILISATION	
	1995-96 (Rs)	1996-97 (Rs)	1997-98 (Rs)	1995-96 (Rs)	1996-97 (Rs)
Chulha tax	622	55	570		
Shamlat land	10,100				
Others	101		4665.88		
Indira Awas Yojna	28,000			28,000	

Bhatsana, located approximately 8 km from Dharuhera and 25 km from Rewari, is a small village inhabited primarily by members of the Scheduled Caste communities. The dominant and affluent Ahirs live in their fields (*dhanies*) or in neighboring towns. Land and trade is mostly controlled by them. Prior to the present Panchayat, the Sarpanches were also by and large Ahirs, with the result that development of the village is biased in the favor of this community.

Prior to the partition, Bhatsana was a Muslim village. (*At the time, Punjab and Haryana were one state.*) After the partition, this land was allotted to refugees from Pakistan. With time and the creation of Haryana, the land was sold to wealthy people in the area (in this case, the Ahirs). The new owners

began living in *dhanies* or the neighboring towns, yet controlled the political and economic power. With the 73rd Amendment and the new Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, the Panchayat, elected for the first time, had a Scheduled Caste Sarpanch who actually lived in the village.

The present Panchayat is made up of 9 panches (6 men and 3 women) and 1 Sarpanch. The Up-Sarpanch, an Ahir, died recently. By-elections are due soon. The village has 1 primary school, 2 anganwadies and a Post Office. There are no other facilities. Houses belonging to the Scheduled Caste are made of mud (*kuchcha*), the streets are unpaved, there is no electricity and the availability of drinking water is also a problem.

Gram Panchayat meetings have not taken place for 2½ years, as 7 panches submitted their resignations to the BDO almost 1½ years ago. They claim that no Government official visited the village since the elections. Besides, the panches and other Gram Sabha members claim, that the elections for Sarpanch were rigged. *“The votes were counted four times. Some votes were eliminated, till a tie could be reached between the two contestants. Thereafter both men were called to the Block Office and the Sarpanch was decided by a draw of lots. The present Sarpanch is controlled by the ex-Sarpanch. He has allowed the people of his community to encroach upon Panchayat land, with the result that we are losing out on income from the land. So why should we support him?”* say the disgruntled members of the Panchayat.

In the last 3½ years, the Panchayat has only received money for 2 IAY houses and income from the Panchayat land has come down from Rs 10,823/- in 1995-96, to Rs 570/- in 1997-98. The official argument is that the Panchayat does not have quorum, therefore it is not entitled to any Government funds. However, members of the Panchayat ask why the administration has not accepted the resignations of the 7 panches? Additionally, the Gram Sachiv is aware that neither Gram Panchayat nor Gram Sabha meetings are being held. Then why has the Block administration failed to take any action?

The stalemate continues and the people of Bhatsana feel that the only way out is the next Panchayat election. That is a long wait for justice and what guarantee is there, that the next Panchayat will be capable of resolving these critical issues of control and power facing the present Panchayat?

8. Saharanwas Gram Panchayat, Rewari Block

Sources of Income	ALLOCATION			UTILISATION	
	1995-96 (Rs)	1996-97 (Rs)	1997-98 (Rs)	1995-96 (Rs)	1996-97 (Rs)
Chulha tax	2,653	1,990	768		
Shamlat tax	30,340	30,400	45,650		
Others	2,460	1,960			
CD Grant	5,000	5,000			
C D		5,000			
Grant					
(Education)					
Decentralized					
Planning			70,000		
PRI Special					
Grant			57,000		
JRY 20%	30,000			30,000	
IAY	14,000			14,000	

Saharanwas is a large village of approximately 600 households and 2,000 voters. A majority of the population is Scheduled Caste, but the Sarpanch is controlled by the members of a particular Ahir household. Since independence, the Ahirs primarily control most of the land in the village, including a large portion of Panchayat land and common village land (streets, lanes).

The present Gram Panchayat consists of 9 panches and 1 Sarpanch. The Sarpanch, a Scheduled Caste, is well educated (B.A., B.Ed.). He is very proud of the fact that he polled a record 75% of the votes in the elections but says that he has not been able to do anything for the people because the Panchayat has very little income of its own and accessing Government funds requires a lot of political influence. The Panchayat has 8 kilas of *shamlat* land, which fetches an annual income of Rs 30-35,000/-. In 1994-95 when the new Panchayat was formed, there was only Rs 54/- in the Panchayat fund and a pending electricity bill of Rs 30,000/-. The tubewell motor of the Panchayat farm had burnt down. They had to take a loan to pay the pending bill and get a new motor for the farm, so that it could be given on lease. The Sarpanch is very bitter about the status of the Panchayat and says that all the money is spent by the J.E.s and the BDO and all the Panchayat does is to say that the work was done, even though they are not aware about the scheme under which a particular job is undertaken nor have any knowledge of the amount sanctioned. Even for accessing Panchayat funds, they need the signatures of the BDO. For every Rs 10,000/- that they withdraw, an additional Rs 500/- is spent, because at times the BDO is not available or the Gram Sachiv is not available etc.

Panchayat meetings are held as and when required i.e. when any development work needs to be undertaken or when the Gram Sachiv pays a visit. Records of the meetings are duly maintained by the Gram Sachiv, as per the rules of the new Panchayati Raj Act. On an average, 7 panches attend. 2 of the panches have not attended a single meeting since the new Panchayat came into being. The Sarpanch explains that the 2 panches belonged to the camp of the previous Sarpanch. Besides one of them stays in Rewari.

The Gram Panchayat has an Ayurvedic Dispensary which is manned by a Compounder. The previous doctor was transferred and the new one refused to join because of a shortage of staff. Besides this, the people do not believe in ayurveda and do not avail of the facilities available in the dispensary.

The method of billing for electricity is also a major issue for the Panchayat. The bills are prepared on an average basis, as the meter reader never comes to the village. There were a lot of complaints, so the Panchayat took the matter up with the HSEB. A new person was appointed for taking meter readings in the village, but visited only once. Bills continue to be calculated on an average basis and arrive irregularly, causing inconvenience to the consumers. The Panchayat is helpless in this situation, thus raising valid queries regarding the transfer of powers to the Gram Panchayat, as far as line departments go.

The Panchayat caught the local depot owner selling 50 sacks of wheat. Since then they have been desperately trying to get his license cancelled. Applications were submitted to the Food and Supply Department, the BDO and the DC, with no success. The matter has been dragging since April 1996. Rations come once in six months or not at all. The Panchayat finds itself absolutely ineffective in resolving the situation.

On being asked whether he would contest the elections again in 1999, the Sarpanch said that he had won this election with 75% votes. The people had so many expectations of him but he was unable to do anything for them. He had to put his business on hold to devote time to the Panchayat, yet nothing came of his efforts. Once this term is over, he would return to his business or become a teacher.

9. The Effective Generation and Utilization of Funds

Bodia Kamalpur is a small village, with approximately 400 households and 1,200 voters. The Gram Panchayat has 8 panches, headed by a woman Sarpanch. The Sarpanch belongs to the Ahir caste, is 69 years old and illiterate. All the Panchayat related work is done by her son, a retired Air Force officer. The family owns land in the village and a shop and a house in Rewari. The lady stood for elections only because the seat was reserved for a woman and the family wanted to do something for the village. Her pre-election manifesto made some promises to the people, which have been methodically fulfilled.

Gram Panchayat meetings are held once a month and attended by all the panches. Sabha meetings are held twice a year, as per the rules and regulations laid down in the Act. The Gram Sachiv comes

to the Panchayat once in a while. (*The Block has 62 Gram Panchayats, 14 sanctioned Gram Sachiv posts, but only 6 Gram Sachivs.*) The Up-Sarpanch is an old man, well respected and very knowledgeable about the problems and needs of the people in the village. He is very active and continually supports the Sarpanch in her efforts for the betterment of the Panchayat. The women members are not very active but they do come for the meetings and support the Sarpanch in the works undertaken.

The Panchayat has 15 kilas of land that fetches Rs 50-55,000/- annually. There is also an income of about Rs 5-6,000/- from the chulha tax (*house tax*). In addition to this, the Panchayat has been extremely effective in accessing funds available to Panchayats under the various Government schemes and programs. It has also been able to gather money through community contributions and has collaborated with the Education Department for undertaking various works in the Gram Panchayat. This has all been done mainly due to the constant efforts of the Sarpanch and panches, who visit the Block Office and the DRDA office in Rewari regularly for information on available schemes and programs. Since the Gram Sachiv comes to the Panchayat only once a month, the only way of obtaining current and detailed information on Government schemes is through frequent visits to the Block and District offices.

"When the new Panchayat took over on 16th January 1995, there was a balance of only Rs 35/- in the Panchayat account", said the Sarpanch. The Panchayat has come a long way since.

Construction of a Boundary Wall for the School

This project started with a meeting of the teachers and parents in the school and with their consent and collaboration, work on the boundary wall began with money from the PTA fund. Thereafter, Rs 50,000/- was received under E.A.S., Rs 1,00,000/- was taken from the building fund of the school, with the permission of the head master, Rs 1,25,000/- was given by a visiting minister, for the construction of class rooms, Rs 60,000/- was given by the D.E.O., one room was constructed through contributions by the community and the remainder was given by the Panchayat. The boundary wall of 2,800 feet was completed, the necessary number of rooms were added so that the school may be upgraded and on 5th September 1997, the school was upgraded to 10+2.

Today the school has a total of 1,600 students and the Panchayat is working towards securing a separate building for the primary school. There are also plans to convert the Panchayat Ghar into a primary school, with necessary modifications.

Water Supply

The Panchayat, through its untiring efforts, was able to get Rs 40,000/- from the 18 (MLALADS) fund and added another Rs 10,000/- from the Panchayat fund, for the construction of 2 water tanks. An additional Rs 50,000/- was received under the MP/MLA fund from Col. Ram Singh, which was used to

lay a pipeline to supply water to the school. The Panchayat has 6 water tanks which supply water to the village, but the pipeline laid by the Health and Public Works Department to supply water to 100 tap connections, does not have any water. In addition to this, there was a sum of Rs 40,000/- that was available to the Panchayat under the Million Wells Scheme and was deposited in the Block Office from the time of the previous Panchayat. This was utilized for digging a tubewell near the pond, for sweet drinking water.

Paving of Streets

According to the Sarpanch, this is the only Panchayat in Jatusana, that has not received any Government grant for streets since the Government schemes came into existence. Therefore, the Gram Panchayat called a Gram Sabha meeting and prepared a map for the laying of streets. Detailed estimates were made for a total of Rs 9,55,000/-. The plan was submitted to HRDF, Chandigarh. After numerous visits to the District and Chandigarh, Rs 3 lakhs have been sanctioned. Work on the streets will begin shortly.

Future Plans

The Sarpanch has collected resolutions from 8 neighboring Gram Panchayats, for rectifying the water problem common to the area, because of non availability of water in the canal made by the Government, for irrigation. The Sarpanch wants to follow this up with the appropriate authorities.

The Panchayat also wants to complete the laying of streets and the construction of a separate building for the primary school in the village.

In addition to this, there are plans for the setting up of a PHC for the village and neighboring Gram Panchayats.

In contrast, there were a number of Gram Panchayats that were unable to generate resources either because of factionalism within the Panchayat or because of official and political apathy.

10. What can the Administration do?

Perkhotampur Gram Panchayat is situated at a distance of barely 1 km from the Block Development Office in Jatusana. It is a relatively large village with approximately 375 households and a total of about 1,500 voters. Even though the population of dalits and backward castes are dominant in the village, traditionally the land, resources and political power have been controlled by the upper castes i.e. Ahirs and Punjabis. As the Gram Panchayat was reserved, in December 1994, a Scheduled Caste woman was elected Sarpanch of the Panchayat. Today, the Panchayat has 8 panches, of which 3 are women. The post of Up-Sarpanch is also held by a woman, but from the upper caste. The Gram Panchayat is plagued with severe problems of division based on caste rivalries, with the result, that in the last 3½ years hardly any work has been accomplished. The Sarpanch is not able to muster the

quorum required for undertaking any development work in the Panchayat, though the Panchayat fund has a balance of almost Rs 6 lakhs in the bank. Accessing funds under various Government schemes and programs is also a problem, as the Block Office contends that the Panchayat is unable to utilize the money already available to it. The Panchayat has an annual income of about Rs 1.5 lakhs, from the lease of 22 kilas of land. It has seen 6 Gram Sachivs come and go in the last 3½ years. The Block Office knows of the situation in the Panchayat but is unable to intervene, the people stand divided along caste lines and the Sarpanch finds herself alienated and unable to function. The panches want that each of them should be given funds for undertaking work in their respective wards. Under the existing rules and norms this is not possible, so the Panchayat suffers and important issues of water, paving of streets and drainage remain unresolved, despite adequate financial resources.

There are a number of Panchayats suffering from severe caste conflicts, where funds are minimal and their utilization even less.

4

Uttar Pradesh

JRY Leads to Voting Out of Pradhans

In the year 1997 as many as 18 Gram pradhans in the sleepy district of Sonbhadra in eastern Uttar Pradesh were voted out of their positions, leading to confusion among the villagers and insecurity among the pradhans. According to the reports published in the newspaper (2) there are 469 gram pradhans in the district and a majority of them are illiterate. Under these circumstances, the panchayat secretaries play a major role in utilization of Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (JRY) money .

As each Panchayat member tries to avail the benefits of JRY for his followers it leads to the rift between the Panchayat members and Pradhan. This, in turn results in the no-confidence motion against the Pradhans.

Spate of such removals led many people move the High Court challenging the provisions about their removal. However, the High Court held up the validity of the provisions. The Pradhans lost their case before the Supreme Court too.

Resource Mobilization by Panchayats

CASE 1 In Sonali village of Purola block (Uttarkashi), there was only one teacher for 127 children in the primary school. In addition to this, there were no toilets, drinking water facility and proper school building. Here the Gram Pradhan with the help of VEC took initiative and from Panchayat's fund and contribution from parents, basic infrastructure was provided in the school. They sent proposal for additional teacher to the administration but when no step was taken by the administration, they appointed one teacher. Salary of Rs.700/- per month is now paid to the teacher and this money comes from people's contribution.

5

Kerala

CASE 1 The Madappally Government L.P. School, is one of the three Lower Primary Schools in the Onchium Panchayat in Vadakara Block in the district of Kozhikode, Kerala. The school has played an important role in the education of the fisher folk, who are the main inhabitants of this village. Until 1995, when the Panchayat took over the management, the school used to function in an old rented building. When the building eventually crumbled the school was shifted to another building. The number of children being very low (52) the school was declared 'uneconomic' by the state government.

The school was about to be wound up when the Panchayat took over its management. The first thing the Panchayat did was to set up a committee for the renovation of the school. The committee made a thorough study of the issue, including a survey of children of primary school age in the vicinity. Consultations were held with the parents. It was found that the parents were reluctant to send their children to school, which was conducted in a dilapidated building, with no essential facilities and no regular teachers. At a cost of more than Rs.12,00,000/- of which 50 percent was contributed by the local people, a pucca school building was constructed in a plot of 50 cents transferred to the Panchayat by the Fisheries Department. Facilities like toilet, drinking water were provided. Essential pieces of furniture including benches and desks, shelves, tables, utensils for noon feeding etc. were also arranged. With regular monitoring and supervision by the Panchayat functionaries and the members of the various committees, the atmosphere in the school steadily improved. It was ensured that teacher vacancies were filled in at appropriate time.

As a result of all these measures, undertaken by the Panchayat with the full participation of the people, the strength of the school dramatically improved. Today there are 90 students, only 10 short of the minimum for an economical school. Also the learning standard of the school has significantly improved, so much so that District Institutes for Education and Training has decided to put this school on the model school list. The parents too had very high opinion about the atmosphere and functioning of the school. They were all agreed that devolution in primary education has been a very positive step. Now they have the feeling that the school really belongs to them and they are responsible for its continuance and improvement.

6 Orissa

Towards Sustainability: Weekly Haat-Angarpada Panchayat

Angarpada panchayat is part of the Raruan block of Mayurbahnj district. Prior to its emergence as its own entity, Angarpada was part of the Raruan panchayat. In 1970 Mr. Debaraj Mahant became the first Sarpanch of the newly formed Anapada panchayat. This was a crucial period for the panchayat, as it needed to establish a financial base from which it could undertake developmental activities in the villages coming under its jurisdiction. At this time the idea of establishing a market, to assist in the generation of funds was raised. Under the leadership of Debaraj Mahant the panchayat member decided to proceed with this suggestion and from this the (market) was born.

Every panchayat has its assets – here it was the tremendous natural resources in the form of forest and a group of young people who brought with them a great deal of fresh ideas and enthusiasm. The sarpanch saw the tremendous potential in the youth and mobilised them for starting the haat. They formed a youth federation called “Angarpada Yuvaka Samiti”, which was later registered (1985). The federation was formed under Mr. Prafulla Raath, who was elected as president. Their first step was to organise a meeting for the village youth in the panchayat with the help of Purushottam Mahant, the village Pradhan. In the meeting they decided on the location of the market and that it should run once a week. The location decided upon was an area of wasteland in the village consisting of paddy fields and thick bushes. They managed to develop the area with the participation of people from Angarpada and nearby villages.

The first weekly haat of Angarpada was held on 22nd February 1971. At first the village people used the haat to mainly market vegetables, cattle and other essential commodities. People from few villages in the panchayat also used to attend. The committee realised the need to publicise the market and so the youth began going to other nearby markets, villages and common meeting places to inform the people about their weekly haat. This was just the beginning. After one year two people (Purushottam & Nilakand Mahant) from Angarpada village donated their own land for the expansion of the existing haat. For the next two years the panchayat refrained from collecting revenue from the people selling their goods in the Market and during this time it began to flourish.

On the 9th March 1973, the panchayat decided to offer the market for tender at the rate of Rs 2,060/- for one year. The growth of the panchayat was tremendous, and by 1999 the market's tender was worth Rs 6,10,000/- (six lakhs ten thousand). This revenue has been flowing into the panchayat fund, which is being used for various developmental activities. The market is particularly profitable during the festivals of Rajjo and Makar Sansdranthi, where thousands of people from different regions come to visit the area.

Over the last 20 years the panchayat has undertaken the development of a range of infrastructure for the community. This includes the establishment of Angarpada Panchayat College, Angarpada High School and Streetlights erected on the main roads. At present the Government has undertaken the running of high school but the people of the Angarpada consider it as their own asset. This is clear from their commitment and continuing contribution to the development of the school building. Just recently two additional classrooms and the boundary wall were established with the help of Angarpada villagers.

The Angarpada weekly market is the biggest haat in the Mayurbhanj district with 12 acres of land of its own. In addition to this, people owning land near the market also lease their land to the business people coming to the market. They have even constructed facilities such as storerooms and rest rooms on their land for this purpose. Traders from Calcutta, Bihar and Nepal come here during the winter season to assess demand for woollen products.

The Impact

The establishment of weekly haat has enhanced the financial status of the people in the panchayat. The people operating the market come from eight different villages in the panchayat. The haats are places where they can easily come to market commodities. Prior to the establishment of this market the nearest one was in Raruan. This required a great deal of travel and effort for people to sell their products. On the other hand, to purchase the essential items/ the DW CRA group initiated by Gram Vikas in Angarpada village, (the biggest village in the panchayat comprising of 175 hhs) feels that the haat plays an essential part in the success of their rice and paddy business. They are able to collect the rice and paddy from local farmers and easily transport it to the market for sale. Since the market attracts people from different areas, the group members say that they make a good profit out of the activity, earning about 1.50 to 2 Rupees per Kilo. They were even able to access Government funds for establishing store and market rooms, in the market itself. These are currently under construction.

The establishment of this market has brought about many positive and constructive changes in the people of this area, both in a direct and indirect way.

The main changes have been:

- 1 Increase in the financial status of the people of the panchayat
- 1 Development of a more entrepreneurial flair especially among women's groups
- 1 Infrastructure development in the panchayat
- 1 Emergence of more local leadership and initiative for undertaking developmental activities in the Panchayat
- 1 Decreased the drudgery of the people in carrying goods to far away markets for selling of their products
- 1 Collection of considerable revenues that in turn aids the growth of the panchayat fund
- 1 Feeling of ownership in the people for the assets they established out of the fund
- 1 Sustainable and constructive development in various sectors of the panchayat
- 1 Special emphasis in the field of education through establishing the panchayat level school and college and ensuring the smooth running of the school through periodic monitoring of the panchayat members and village executive committee established with the assistance of Gram Vikas.