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PRIA

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**Capacity Building of Newly Elected Gram Panchayat
Members
An Overview**

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List of Abbreviations

PRIs	- Panchayati Raj institutions
CSOs	- Civil Society Organizations
PRCs	- Panchayat Resource Centers
TNA	- Training Need Analysis
NYKS	- Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan
MP	- Madhya Pradesh
UNICEF	- United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNDP	- United Nations Development Programme
STOT	- State level Training of Trainers
GoMP	- Government of Madhya Pradesh
SIRD	- State Institute of Rural Development

Introduction:

The second round of panchayat elections (rural self-governance bodies) to the states of Haryana, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh in India were completed by early 2000. While there are panchayat members in the new office, who have had former experience, there is also a whole lot of elected members who have freshly contested and won the elections. Giving the increasing role of panchayats and the responsibilities of the elected members, capacity building becomes the sign for effective functioning of Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs) and holistic development of panchayats. This paper attempts to synthesize the learning of capacity building interventions of elected members in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana and challenges ahead. Based on this a future strategy for capacity building intervention has been planned out. India being a large country with 3.4 million elected members the task is gigantic. Few interventions here and there may not suffice keeping in mind this large number and upscaling is the need of the hour. Following is an overview of the capacity building initiatives of three states- Haryana, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh where second round of elections took place in January, February and March 2000 in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana respectively. As mentioned, upscaling of Capacity Building interventions of elected members was planned and organised in these three States.

Accordingly, the intervention to cover 100 % of each block or minimum of 10% of panchayats of the States in 18-24 months were strategized and planned. Quantitatively it means all elected members of selected 918 panchayats (Total 9185 panchayats) in Rajasthan, 3092 panchayats (Total 30922 panchayats) in Madhya Pradesh and 597 panchayats (Total 5973 panchayats) in Haryana in 18 to 24 months. Reaching to these many panchayats with on an average seven to eleven elected members at each panchayat; capacity building has become a challenging task. However various partner organizations in these three States had initiated the process based on their strengths and opportunities in the environment. The strategies adopted to strengthen capacity of elected panchayat members as follows:

1. The Strategies of Capacity Building

Each partner organizations in these three States have strategized the capacity building intervention to the first-time elected members. Effective interface with Govt. and other institutional efforts (like bilateral and multi-lateral organisations) at one hand and building linkages and developing partnership with other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and other interested individuals for their contributory roles on the other were thought off the foremost challenge to scaling up is maintaining the quality while enhancing the speed of coverage.

1.1 The Training Programs for elected members

Segmentation was done prior to conducting the training programmes like women, Dalits etc. In capacity building of newly elected members, emphasis was given to the intricacies of the training

programmes like the design, the duration, learning materials, methodology and capacity of trainers etc. Care was taken to ensure that the training programmes were designed such that it suited the participants in terms of their level of literacy, needs, regional and socio-cultural diversity (as in a big State like Madhya Pradesh) etc. The overall use of innovative participatory methodologies was beneficial in getting the message across easily to the participants, in enabling them in self-appraisal and in relation to their work. While fixing the duration of the training programmes, the partner organisations have given due importance to residential and non-residential programmes, particularly when training programs were focused on women. In deciding on the location the partner organizations have forced to conduct training programs at the cluster level than at the district or block level. In Haryana, in a cluster of 4-5 villages, the village which was easily accessible was chosen for the purpose of capacity building. Women members were allowed to be accompanied by one male family member. These family members sat all through the training but were discouraged to speak on behalf of women elected members. This has helped in building the confidence among women to ask questions and discuss their problems.

In Haryana woman panch was accompanied by her husband in Rana Block. The trainers adopted ways and means to enhance coverage of their training programs to include the weaker and the marginalized groups. Local resource personnel were also used for the process which further facilitated in conducting training programs. For effective delivery of training programs the partner organizations collaborated with both the government and the local community groups. Collaboration and involvement of government officials have helped in accessing pertinent information which would otherwise have been difficult to obtain, and further in building better rapport between government officials and elected representatives and sensitizing government officials to participatory methodologies. This is indeed a major outcome, given the distant relations between the government officials and the elected representatives. Linkages with CSOs have helped the partner organizations to mobilize both elected representatives and Gram Sabha members for the training programs; this has helped for better coverage. In Haryana, they have also provided support as resource persons by handling few training sessions. These trainings also promoted group solidarity and strengthen social support base of these members. It required great sensitivity and adoption of various methods on the part of partner organisations to mobilise them and facilitate their participation.

Personal visits, continuous interaction and sensitisation of both women members and their family to ensure their participation in programs, in this respect, it was found that CSOs could play an effective role. The need for horizontal linkages in terms of intra-village and inter-village linkages has been stressed by the PRIA-Haryana team for strengthening PRI interventions. Within the village, informal groups or active community based organisations may be linked for strengthening PRIs. Similarly, common problems across villages can be addressed through inter-village linkages. It has stressed that at the national and state levels, institutional efforts supporting capacity building initiatives,

both in terms of financial and human resources should be linked to the grass roots efforts. This challenge needs to be taken in right earnest by the organizations. Organizing and conducting such training programmes, however, were not devoid of major challenges to the organizations. Given the various constraints of women and other marginalised groups ensuring participation of these sections was a foremost challenge to the organizations. It required great sensitivity and adoption of various methods on the part of partner organisations to mobilise them and facilitate their participation.

In Rajasthan a series of ten capacity building programmes for women elected members of Jodhpur districts were done. The programme was three days duration and was residential, it was conducted at block level it was hoped that residential programmes will enhance the confidence of women elected members. Another strategy of capacity building was done through Panchayat Resource Centers (PRCs). Separate programmes for women sarpanches and ward panches at the block level was done. Similarly, sarpanches of panchayat Samiti and Dalit elected members were done separately. Although the training needs of all these three categories are very similar yet distinct to each other. In Haryana cluster approach for capacity building for Sarpanches were done at Ratia Block, it was one day nonresidential programme. The media coverage of these events has made space to positive initiatives like creating demand for capacity building efforts in other areas. It has helped in building pressure for capacity building needs of PRI members. The youth groups developed by Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) at village level have started to work for the awareness generation on the role of PRIs. In some places conscious efforts to promote such processes have been made and some youth groups are working for the same.

1. 2 Impact of the Capacity Building Intervention

- Networking with the organization helped in Scaling up.
- Building partnership with Govt at different level especially at District level.
- Availability of readymade resource materials for capacity building.
- Maintenance of quality of learning materials.

2. Given below are some of the activities and pretraining preparations in brief which has enhanced the impact.

2.1 The Training Need Analysis (TNA):

No capacity building intervention is appropriate unless the need of the participants is assessed and based on this, the training design is developed. For TNA, UNICEF and Govt of Rajasthan carried out a joint TNA of PRIs in January 2000 for the purpose of their capacity building.

In MP, Samarthan had conducted a series of thirty 'Training Need Analysis Meet' to understand the need of the training and incorporate realities in the training sessions. This has helped in preparation of learning materials which are simple to understand and more need based.

In Haryana prior to Ratia block which has sixty-one panchayat's personal visits were done. During these visits a profile Performa of elected member of each panchayat was filled. This has helped in Training Need of each elected members along with getting their profile. In brief, TNA is based on local language, custom, gender division, strengths of Community based organizations, local resource availability, specific information for each location.

2.2. Pre-training preparations

Pre-training preparations has helped in enhancing the impact of trainings. Some of the pre-training preparations are given below:

2.2.1 Participants Preparation for Capacity Building Event

Through letters and in some cases by personal visits the participants were prepared by training programme.

In Haryana prior at Ratia block which has sixty-one panchayats personal visit has done to each panchayats to meet and orient Sarpanches for attend training programme.

2.2.2 Material Preparation

In Rajasthan with the help of Govt. of Rajasthan and UNICEF, manuals for Trainers and training modules based on the TNA were prepared and printed. Rajasthan Act was also simplified by this endeavor. Similarly, in MP with the help of Govt. and UNICEF the learning materials were prepared. After the series of workshops in Madhya Pradesh (MP) training modules were prepared. These were finalised and subsequently printed by the UNICEF.

In Haryana Govt has prepared audio cassettes on schemes implemented in the particular districts for the elected panchayat members. In ratia block the video cassettes were distributed.

However, PRIA in Harayana and Unnati in Rajasthan and has developed own materials for effective capacity building interventions.

Informative booklets with pictures for clear messages, Games and news letters were published in this phase by Unnati. Beside the video cassettes prepared in previous phase were also used.

2.2.3 The Trainers Team

In collaboration of Govt. of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh with bilateral agency like UNICEF has built a cadre of Master trainers at District level. Three representatives from each block in Rajasthan were selected and prepared for the training of elected members as Master trainers. The training was imparted at the cost of twenty-six lakhs rupees. Similarly, in Madhya Pradesh series of training has built a cadre of trained facilitators for the capacity building intervention at panchayat level by GoMP and UNICEF. Partner organisation Samarthan in MP were involved in conducting Capacity Building of trainers from Gwalior - Chambal area and Bhopal - Hoshangabad area. The irony is that the entire effort was to develop a trainer's team in Rajasthan and MP to build capacity of elected members but now the facilitators are ready but no fund is available for imparting the training of elected members through these facilitators by product of this collaboration.

In Haryana the mix group approach of building trainer's capacity was strategized for the new and experienced facilitators conducted the capacity building intervention to save the resources and helping in 'tanning out' approach. In Rajasthan to spread out in entire Rajasthan a State level Training of Trainers (STOT) at Jaipur from 17th to 20th October 2000 was organised to orient and build the capacity of trainers to work on this issue. Similarly, in MP partner organization Samarthan, a Workshop was organised from 18th to 21st October 2000 at Orcha, Tikamgarh to cover the organisations in Gwalior• Chambal and Hundelkhandregion.

Uniqueness in STOT at Rajasthan is that the resource persons were invited for the session on Acts, who have framed the State Act and critic of State act for giving both the views to the participants and enhancing critical questioning of the act while functioning as writ of local self-governance by elected members.

In MP they have also developed links with youth of 127 panchayats in Sehore block to have direct and indirect efforts for capacity building of elected members and aware community members.

3. Challenges Ahead

The major challenges faced during the capacity building programs have been given below:

- *Incorporating seasonality* - Women roles and burden (specific to locality) changes or increases according to seasons. The challenge is how incorporate seasonality in standardised design or module while designing or implementing capacity building interventions.
- *Convergence* - The training machinery of the state governments to impart training to the 3.4 million elected representatives is inadequate. State Institutions like State Institute of Rural Development (SIRDs) have resources like human power and infrastructure. Other institutions like bilateral and multilateral institutions have trained facilitators and resources for sector specific projects like WATSAN, Watershed in panchayats. The challenge is how to converge these resources to use in Capacity building intervention for elected members.
- *Lateral learning* - Systematic lateral learning through interface with successful case studies or role models, live experience sharing and learning through exposure visits had a lasting impact in capacity building. The challenge is how to explore and incorporate this systematically in capacity building intervention.
- *Engage Academia* - There is a need to engage proactively with academia (e.g. Association of School of Social Work in India. Indira Gandhi National Open University etc.) to offer structured opportunities for students to engage in capacity building interventions. Although there is positive mindset for this approach of individuals in academia but the challenge lies in how to incorporate it institutionally as an ongoing endeavor by this sector.
- *Horizontal Networking* - There is a considerable body of knowledge, expertise and skills existing in the field of capacity building endeavor of elected members all over India. There is a constant need to share these learning among facilitators inter district, interstate, national and Inter region levels. The challenge lies in how to structure the learning on Capacity building on PRIs.
- *Emergence of parallel bodies* – The emergence of parallel homes undermining PRIs has emerged in the State of Haryana, what stand should be taken in the change context. Challenges lies here how to build the capacity of elected members to work together or fight against these parallel bodies.

4. Lessons Learnt

Although these trainings were useful however with limited resources both in terms of materials and human, we need to reach more elected members quickly before they get disillusioned after being elected.

5. The New strategy

A campaign mode capacity building intervention has been planned in selected blocks of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. Here the focus is one day orientation meet where the elected members are oriented to the concept of PRIs as units of

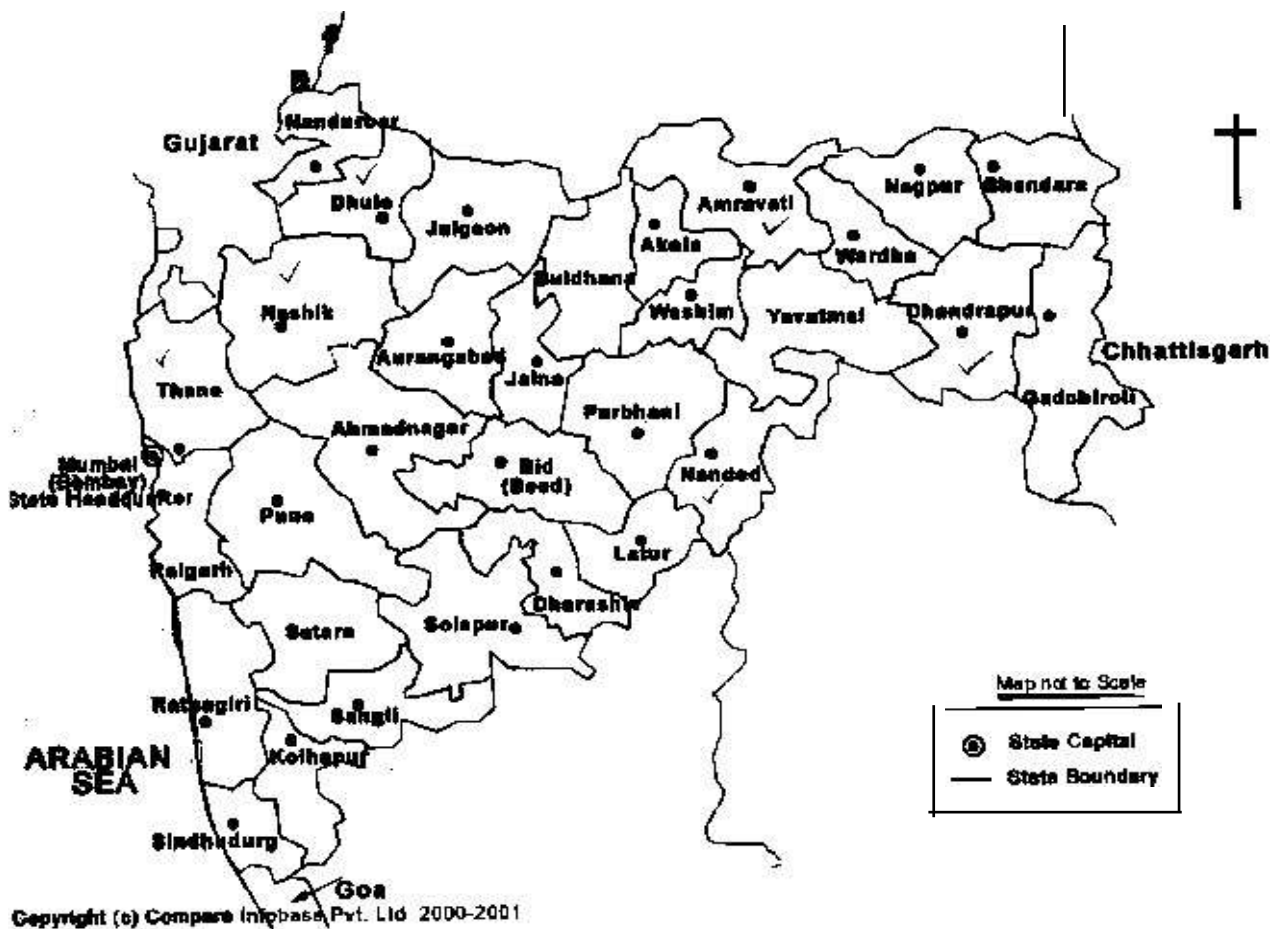
self-governance. Although each State and within States different blocks have developed different modules but expected outcome are as follows:

- Orientated newly elected members
- Database on elected representatives for follow up and networking
- Innovations used in methodology
- Demonstrable and cost-effective model

Annexure

Annexure: 1

Map of Districts of Maharashtra, India



Source: Maps of India

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Participatory Research in Asia
42, Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi-110062
Ph:+91-011-29960931/32/33
Web: www.pria.org