



Knowledge. Voice. Democracy.

**PRIA**

1998

**Activity report of strengthening Panchayati Raj institutions  
(PRIs):  
(Joint Initiatives of strengthening Panchayati Raj institutions  
(PRIs) by PRIA and NCRSOs**

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## List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CENCORED:	Centre for Communication Resources Development
CYSD:	Centre for Youth and Social Development
G.P.:	Gram Panchayat
G.S.:	Gram Sabha
GOI:	Government of India
LSG:	Local Self Government
M.P.:	Madhya Pradesh
NCRSOs:	Network of Collaborating Regional Support Organisations
P.S.:	Panchayat Samity
PEARL:	Participatory Education, Action Research & Learning
PRC:	Panchayat Resource Centre
PRIA:	Society for Participatory Research In Asia
PRIs:	Panchayati Raj Institutions
RSO:	Regional Support Organisation
SC:	Scheduled Caste
SSK:	Sahabhagi Shikshan Kendra
ST:	Scheduled Tribe
TOT:	Training of Trainers
U.P.:	Uttar Pradesh
VAs:	Voluntary Agencies
VOs:	Voluntary Organizations
Z.P.:	Zilla Parishad

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

1.0 Since the 1970s, there has been a major shift in the development paradigm. The bottom-up people centered development approaches steadily started replacing the traditional top-down/trickle-down development models.

An integral part of the new development approach is people's participation or participatory development. In participatory development, emphasis is primarily laid on peoples involvement/participation in decision making, development planning and process. It contends that participation of local people in development activities ensures the sustainability and efficacy of development projects.

1.1 From its inception, PRIA's thrust area has been to promote people centered, people controlled and people managed development as well as to provide support to voluntary agencies and development actors through their capacity building so that people can participate more efficiently and confidently in the development dynamics.

1.2 A widely accepted mode of promoting participatory development is through the institutions of Local Self-Government (LSG) which is represented by people at the grassroots level of democracy. The institution of LSG exists in the form of the three tier (viz., Gram Panchayat or G.P., Panchayat Samity or P.S. and Zilla Parishad or Z.P. at the village, block and district levels respectively) Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in India. Today, there are around 2, 17,300 Gram Panchayats in India covering approximately 96% of the country's 5.79 hundred thousand villages. The 73rd Amendment Act (1992) of Indian Constitution provided for a unique opportunity for promoting grass root local self-governance in rural India. The Act accorded legal and constitutional legitimacy to the PRIs which marked the dawn of a new era in decentralized democracy in the county. The new constitutional provisions also opened up possibilities for strengthening peoples participation in decision making about their own development and this is particularly so for women and weaker sections of the society like, SCs, STs and Dalits.

Towards realising its endeavor to promote participatory development through the PRIs, PRIA along with its Network of Collaborating Regional Support Organisations (NCRSOs) are actively involved in strengthening panchayat institutions in India since mid 1995.

1.3 The perspectives which embody the PRI initiatives of PRIA and its NCRSOs are:

- PRI are institutions of local self-governance and not mere implementors of centrally determined development programmes.
- Bottom-up comprehensive planning based on micro-planning exercise should be the foundation of self-governance.
- PRIs should not be allowed to become the third tier of development administration.
- Emphasis should be laid on active participation in decision making by women and other weaker sections (SC/ST etc.) of society in order to enhance their role, status and leadership in PRIs.
- Interventions should focus on building, promoting and empowering new leadership of women, SC/ST and Dalits.
- PRIs should assert their access to and control over natural, human and other developmental resources available with state and national governments.
- Strengthening PRIs entail developing clarity of their roles, systems of governance, accountability, transparency and inter-linkages.

1.4 With the aid of foregoing perspectives, PRIA along with its partner organisations, better known as NCRSOs, are working towards strengthening PRIs in 9 different states of India. These states are Bihar (CENCORED and PEARL), Uttar Pradesh (Sahabgahi Shikshan Kendra (SSK), Haryana

(PRIA), Himachal Pradesh (PRIA), Madhya Pradesh (SAMARTHAN), Orissa (CYSO), Gujarat (UNNATI), Rajasthan (UNNATI) and Kerala (SAHAYI).

1.5 Presently, the efforts of PRIA and its NCRSOs towards strengthening PRIs revolves around four interrelated programmes. These programmes are:

- **Direct Strengthening:** Field based initiatives
- **Research and Advocacy:** Conducting a systematic study of Panchayats and using study findings for dialoguing at higher levels (district, state and national) for influencing policy changes.
- **Promotional Interventions:** Involving other civil society organisations to make self-governance an issue for others.
- **Networking:** Developing fora, collectives of Panchayat members and community groups for sharing each other's experiences and working together on the basis of collective learning.

1.6 In the subsequent chapters an effort is made to present the different activities of PRIA and its NCRSOs towards bolstering the PRIs during the programme period of April to September 1998. The chapter on 'Direct Strengthening of PRIs' examines in detail the activities and programmes undertaken by PRIA and its NCRSOs in collaboration with local voluntary agencies (VAs) in building capacities of PRIs and its members. The following chapter titled 'Research and Advocacy' is devoted to the research studies (related to PRIs) conducted by PRIA and NCRSOs. And the final two chapters (4 and 5) focus on their activities related to promotional interventions and networking vis-a-vis the PRIs.

## **Chapter 2 Direct Strengthening of PRIs**

### **2.0 Introduction**

The concept of 'Direct Strengthening' of PRIs is intrinsically associated with the issue of 'power to the grassroots' or people's access to decision making and power. The capacity building of local level bodies of governance like Gram Panchayat (GP) and Gram Sabha (GS), undertaken by PRIA and its collaborating NCRSOs is an effort towards this direction.

PRIA envisaged PRIs to be effective bodies of participatory self-governance and not merely executors of centrally determined development schemes. Towards this end, PRIA and the NCRSOs identified some core areas to focus upon which will help in reinforcing the PRIs. These areas are micro planning, empowering and capacity building, the new leadership of women and weaker sections, identifying and asserting people's claim over locally available resources and enhancing people's participation through information dissemination and awareness building.

Under this program, each partner work with a selected number of GPs focusing on at least one block in a district. The block is turned into a field lab and becomes the basis of experimentation, innovation, learning and dissemination of new ideas on strengthening PRIs. The idea is to move gradually from working at the G.S. and G.P. levels to establishing linkages with P.S. and Z.P. at the blocks and districts respectively. Besides, as part of the micro planning exercise, each partner (RSOs) is converting itself into a State Resource Centre on PRIs to disseminate information and build awareness on the issue among the people.

The following sections detail out the activities undertaken by PRIA and each of the NCRSOs in the area of 'Direct Strengthening', across the nine states of India.

### **2.1 SAMARTHAN (Madhya Pradesh)**

SAMARTHAN has been focusing on strengthening collaborations with various actors of civil society who can play major role in strengthening local self-governance in the state. Currently, SAMARTHAN is trying to involve these actors in the process of strengthening PRI institutions.

2.1.1 During the period (April-September 1998) the activities focused on providing intensive support to other civil society organizations working at the grass root level.

To collaborate and build common strategy with the new identified partners, Training of trainers (TOT) was organized for the organizations. A short-term plan was developed with their help and new Panchayats were selected for intervention. As a follow up measure Panchayat level training were conducted by these trained organizations.

As far as direct intervention is concerned a major focus was also on the involvement of the youths in the developmental activities. The local youth were involved in mobilizing Gram Sabha members to participate with the Panchayat in different developmental activities.

**2.1.2 Training Programme:** In all, 5 workshops were organised during the period on various aspects of PRIs and PRI associated activities. The details of these workshops are appended in Annexure-2.

**2.1.3 Micro Level Planning:** The micro planning interventions emphasized on developing Key Resource Persons from various civil society actors and involving them in mobilizing the Panchayat representatives and Gram Sabha members to plan their activities based on the principles of micro planning.

Intensive support was provided to 15 Panchayats, focusing on enhancing the participation of communities in Gram Sabha meetings of Panchayats and proper functioning of the statutory committees. Gram Sabhas were also organised to discuss and analyze PRI issues at length.

In Rajukhedi and Badnagar panchayats, gram sudhar samities were formed. Each samiti comprised of 10 concerned Gram Sabha members of the village. The body discussed on issues at the ward level with the community and placed these issues at Panchayat meetings. It was planned that the samiti will also help statutory committees in implementing decisions.

Besides, regular follow up meetings with the samiti were organised. The samiti met Gram Sabha to prioritize certain issues like the repairing of the school building. The people along with the samiti planned to discuss the issue in Panchayat where they will identify local resources and negotiate with line departments for the repair job. It was also planned that if there is a shortfall in the budget, the community will contribute.

In other Panchayats, mobilisation of Gram Sabha to participate in Panchayat activities is in progress where the selected key resource persons and the youth are involved to take up the responsibility of collecting information and providing the same to the Gram Sabha.

In the process of mobilising Gram Sabha, it was found essential that the information relevant to the Panchayat should reach the Gram Sabha members. Again, it was felt that the community should also be kept informed. It was observed that usually, the Panchayat related information were provided by the Panchayat representatives, Panchayat secretary or the officials and these were invariably manipulated or suppressed to serve their vested interest. Thus, during the discussions with the Gram Sabha and the youth group the need for an information centre emerged.

Till date, suchana kendras (Information Centers) have been established in 8 different villages of Sehore district, namely, Iamonia, Raipura, Rajukhedi, Rola, Badnagar, Bilkisganj, Bijan and Baiyan. The villagers selected local persons to run the kendras. Materials related to the PRIs and developmental schemes, PRI related acts, literacy materials, Newspapers, e-learner guidance magazines have been kept at the centre.

During the discussion sessions the villagers repeatedly pointed out the need for being properly informed. Later, the Panchayat representatives and the Gram Sabha members were mobilised and motivated about the necessity of an information centre. The villagers nominated some young men and women to coordinate the information dissemination process at the Gram Sabha level.

#### **2.1.4 Involvement of the youth In social development activities of the village:**

Subsequently, a creative communication workshop meeting was organised with the youths. Plans were prepared to conduct street plays, focus group discussions in the 10 Panchayats where intensive support programme was on. Plays were written on the issues of Panchayat in general and participation of women in decision making process and Panchayats in particular. These plays were staged at three different Panchayats in the month of September. Several meetings followed with the youths where the importance of information dissemination was reiterated.

The major issue taken up concerning the involvement of youth groups was greater participation of young girls in different activities. Some awareness programmes related to the health and reproductive health of adolescent girls were planned so that they can be involved in different community activities more easily.

**2.1.5 Formation of women representatives network in Sehore:** To initiate the process of women's network, intensive visits to the Panchayats were made. Focus group discussion were conducted among the women gram Sabha members on the problems they face in the day to day Panchayat activities.



**2.1.6 Visits to the Partner NGOs to follow up micro planning initiatives:** Field visits to the Panchayats (of Parhit, Brass and Prayatna) were made in the Bundelkhand region. Discussions with the community and the staff of NGOs have been made. Different meetings at ward level were organised and discussions with different community were conducted to identify problems at their levels. In the first round of meetings with the community problems were identified and prioritized. The community also planned with the organisations the dates for the further meetings.

## **2.2 PRIA (Haryana)**

2.2.1 In Haryana, PRIA's efforts towards direct strengthening of Panchayats were carried out in collaboration with some select voluntary organisations (see Annexure 3), working in the state who continue to receive educational support from PRIA for building their capacities to undertake similar initiatives in their own work areas.

The programmes undertaken as part of direct strengthening were-

1. microplanning
2. village information centre
3. Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat functioning in one block

**2.2.2 Microplanning:** Based on its experiences of carrying out participatory bottom up planning in two Panchayats, Dhana and Khetavas in district Jhajjar, PRIA undertook a similar initiative in District Mahendergarh, Inspired by the process, Jan Sewa Kendra, a voluntary organisation based in Mahendergarh District took the responsibility of replicating it in their work area.

This was viewed as a good opportunity for both replication of the earlier participatory model as well as to build the capacities of the local organisation undertaking this process in collaboration with PRIA.

As part of the process, training was organised by Jan Sewa Kendra and PRIA for elected representatives and other interested Gram Sabha members of Baliacha village to acquaint the participants with the 73rd amendment and its features, impart knowledge on the nature and importance of Panchayat planning and generate awareness about the role of Gram Sabha.

Subsequently, a Panchayat meeting was called by the VA. The participants who consisted of Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat members were shown a film on PRI called 'Sanshodhan' (followed by) a discussion regarding the role and responsibility of different stakeholders involved in planning process, the objectives of participatory planning, importance of small group discussion and the usefulness of participatory meetings.

Some of the insights and ideas that emerged out of the discussion were -

- One-to-one discussions between villagers and Panchayat Representatives can orient the former about the planning process and enhance their general participation.
- Trainings and orientations of small groups within the wards can evoke interest and ensure participation of all sections of the community.

The ward wise meeting was also organised by respective Panch members under the guidance of the VA. Highlighting the importance of people's participation in identifying issues of concern and taking the necessary responsibilities and decisions for the same, the VA representative and Panchayat member asked people for their suggestions and ideas.

The number of people who volunteered to assist was seen as an indication of people's involvement and interest in the process.

Based on the needs expressed by the volunteer group formed at the ward level, an orientation programme was held at the Panchayat premises. The volunteers were explained in detail the overall strategy of the Participatory Bottom up Planning process and their role in making this effective. Discussions revolved around issues of community participation, need for small group discussions in the existing scenario of conflict and indifference between different groups, issues of economic development and social justice. The volunteers were found to give full commitment to their active participation in the initiative.

During the small group discussions and meetings, it was revealed that people were unclear about their exact ward boundaries in the Panchayat area. As a result, they were unable to give suggestions like where the water taps can be installed etc. This led to the organisation of pictorial exercises in each ward whereby the different groups living in those wards could come together and map out a picture of their ward along with the existing resources available in the same. Pictorial Exercises were carried out in two wards (viz., Ward No. 1 and Ward No.2).

Based on the issues/problems identified by the villagers during earlier meeting, the sector specific plan was prepared in the presence of Panchayat members, I.V.G. members, VAs representatives and PRIA's representatives at the Jan Seva Kendra premises. Besides, in order to share the sector specific plans with the entire village and elicit discussions on it, a Gram Sabha meeting was called by the Panchayat. While the VA and Panchayat representatives went about organising the meeting, the Volunteer group played an equally important role by meeting individual Gram Sabha members and motivating them to participate in the meeting. PRIA team members helped to facilitate the process.

The implementation process is in progress with the committee members taking direct responsibility for it. They are negotiating with the respective departments based on the plans formulated. Both Jan Sewa Kendra (the local V.O.) and PRIA continue to play a supportive role in this phase of implementation.

The entire process helped to bring the different sections of the community together and make decisions collectively for the development of the Panchayat. An increased involvement of the marginalised groups was observed as the process moved forward providing an opportunity for their issues and concerns to appear in the emerging plan.

People's knowledge about their own Panchayat and wards was enhanced enabling them to identify the various issues and find solutions with the available resources.

The process provided an opportunity for many people to actively take up responsibilities and assume leadership roles.

The participatory bottom-up planning process helped build knowledge, skills, role clarity and solidarity amongst the Panchayat representatives who played a key role in taking the process forward.

The process helped to enhance the capacities of the local VA and its members and build better relations between them and the community

Finally, it provided valuable insights to the PRIA team involved in the process about the existing dynamics of a Panchayat. New methods and strategies of community participation, leadership development and conflict resolution were learnt through this experience.

However, a few limitations were present in the process. For instance, while the facilitators had a good understanding of participatory methods, they lacked the necessary budgeting and technical skills required for planning. However, efforts are on to seek external assistance as well as to enhance PRIA's own skill and knowledge on the subject.

Government functionaries were conspicuously absent in the whole process. Involvement of government functionaries right from the beginning would have ensured greater authenticity of the process as well as help to bridge the existing gap between the people and the government.

Financial devolution to the Panchayati Raj institutions in Haryana is still a distant dream. Lack of knowledge about the funds available to Panchayats through different schemes and secondly effective ways to utilise their own Panchayat funds makes Panchayats totally dependent on the government machinery. Although the participatory bottom-up planning process enabled the Panchayats to identify their own resources and match it with the need of the area, dependency on the government for implementation of the plan creates a lot of frustration and disillusionment

**2.2.3 Village Information Centre:** After having decided through workshops and meetings, efforts were made by the community, Panchayat, and PRIA to set up the VIC. A one day meeting was organised at the centre to inform people of this and to seek their involvement in developing this information centre.

The main activities of the VIC were envisaged as-

1. Collection and dissemination of information on government and non-government development schemes
2. Organisation of workshops and trainings for the villagers on need based issues
3. Call meetings and conduct large group discussions among the villagers on issues related to their Panchayat

#### **2.2.4 Direct Strengthening of Gram Panchayats and Gram Sabhas in District Rewari, Haryana**

PRIA begun its interventions in Nahar block of Rewari district in collaboration with a local Voluntary Organisation (VO) MRYDO.

MRYDO with PRIA's support initiated the process by organising several workshops both at the PRIA field office as well as in some villages in Nahar block. These one-day sessions were attended by Mahila Manda! women, members of the youth clubs, Sarpanches, Panches as well as other Gram Sabha members. The participants were motivated to get actively involved and make efforts towards strengthening the process through their participation. Several participants volunteered to carry out the work in their own villages.

**2.2.5 Building capacities:** Based on the increasing demand for information and capacity building, a one-day workshop was organised by PRIA at its field office, Kosli. Along with the Panchayat members, Mahila Mandal members, youth groups active Gram Sabha members also participated. After a full day of discussion on the roles and responsibilities of both the Panchayat and Gram Sabha for the development of the area, it was decided that there would be one committee at the block level to provide support, direction and supervision of the work being carried out by the participants for the development of their Panchayats

**Self-Governance (peoples committees):** The Panchayats decided to constitute small committees in each village comprising of the Sarpanch, Panchayat members, members of the Mahila Mandals and youth groups. The purpose was two-fold - to give direct responsibility to a set of individuals and to ensure involvement and representation of different stakeholders in the process. It was decided that these committees will seek guidance and support from the block level committee.

## 2.3 PRIA (Himachal Pradesh)

### 2.3.1 Identification of "field lab" in Rait Block

A few Panchayats around PRIA's field office in Rait block were identified as 'field labs', where intensive activities were undertaken. These Panchayats are namely, Garoh, Chari, Kaliyara, Dadhamb, Lanjhni, Ansui and Bandi. Meetings were organised with the CBOs and Panchayat leaders. Besides, PRIA's field staff regularly attended the Gram Panchayat meetings.

### 2.3.2 Regular visits and monitoring of Panchayat Resource Centres

Regular visits were made to the three Panchayat Resource Centres at Ambadi, Mehema and Tatwani respectively to see to their functioning and closely monitor the progress made.

**2.3.3 District level dialogue:** A one day district level dialogue was organised on 25th August, 1998 at the Zila Parishad Hall, Mandi. The purpose of this meeting was to share the findings of the two research studies completed by PRIA on Panchayat Finance and Women in Panchayats, in Mandi and Kangra districts. The participants were mainly district level officials, Zila Parishad members, Chairperson of Panchayat Samiti and a few Gram Panchayat Pradhans. Discussion revolved around the research findings. Some women members also shared their experience as elected representative's vis-a-vis the male PRI members, government officials and the community.

A few days after the district level workshop, Mr. D.D. Thakur, Chairperson, Zila Parishad, Mandi called a press conference in which he shared the research findings.

**2.3.4 Block level dialogues:** Similarly, block level dialogues were organised during the months of July and September to share the findings of the research studies in the blocks of Sadar, Sundenagar and Rait. Another major objective of the meeting was to initiate a dialogue between the elected representatives and government officials at the block level on scarcity of Panchayat funds and present method of fund allocation.

**2.3.5 Participatory planning:** A member of the PRI-HP team presented the paper on "process of participatory Panchayat level planning in a national seminar organised in Delhi on 15th May on "Strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions in India: Participatory planning towards empowerment of PRIs".

**2.3.6 Training of Pradhman and Up-Pradhans:** The PRI-HP team was invited as resource persons in the training programme of Pradhans and Up-Pradhans, organised by the Government of Himachal Pradesh. Initially this training was undertaken in two districts - Mandi and Hamirpur. Since, PRIA has been working in Mandi district for the past 3 years, it was asked to take a few sessions in all the 10 blocks of Mandi district. The sessions were on various aspects of the new Panchayati Raj system including Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha, issues concerning social and gender justice, role of women representatives etc.

**2.3.7 Preparation of educational materials:** Two educational materials were prepared during this period by PRIA along with SIDT, Shimla. These were:

- Simplified version of Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act
- Poster cum calendar on the structure of Panchayati Raj system in HP

## 2.4 PEARL (Bihar)

PEARL is active in tribal areas of South Bihar specially in schedules V areas.

**2.4.1 Orientation camps/meetings:** The camps (see Annexure 4) were organised with the following objectives in view.

- To disseminate information on Bhuria Committee" report and Extended Panchayat Act (1996) in Scheduled Areas
- To know programmes of the **Bharat Jan Andolan**
- To discuss about the role of women in decision making and participation of other backward communities
- To examine the notification of state Government departments of mines and minerals

#### **2.4.2 Workshops attended by staff**

Overall, the staff attended 8 workshops on varied topics ranging from Tribal Self-rule (Ghatshila) to media and NGO relationship (New Delhi). For details see Annexure S. These workshops enormously helped the participants to update their knowledge base and emerge more confident.

### **2.5 CENCORED (Bihar)**

**2.5.1 Panchayat Bachao Abhiyan:** It was initiated during June-August 1998 in which the following activities were undertaken.

- Protest day was observed in a rally before Patna High Court and a memorandum was submitted to the Chief Justice to be passed on to the Chief Justice of Supreme Court, appealing for early disposal of pending cases related to Panchayat election in Bihar.
- A meeting of Voluntary Organisations was organised at state level to discuss on the future of the agitation programme. It was resolved to adopt a policy of agitation right from village and Panchayat levels and make the villagers aware about the need for an early Panchayat election.
- Voluntary Organisations also Organised numerous meetings, rallies and protests in their respective areas and successfully observed "Panchayat Bachao Pakhawarft" (Save Panchayat Fortnight).
- Signature campaign was organised at the village level for the same cause.
- A rally was organised in Patna on 14th August 1998. Different slogans in favour of state Panchayat election were raised.
- Another rally was organised at Rajghat, New Delhi which was attended by B.M.Tarlcunde, Rajni Kothari, George Mathew, along with representatives from various Voluntary Organisations of Bihar.
- A meeting of MINO partners and Regional Resource Centres was held in which progress of various activities was reviewed, the emerging needs were discussed and future action plan was prepared. Mind partners have also been making concerted efforts at Panchayat level to collect data for information centres.

#### **2.5.2 Efforts undertaken by the Voluntary Organisations of CENCORED Network:**

- Different organisation like UJALA (West Champaran), JAGRITI YUVA SANGAM (Nawada} and SAMTA (Khagaria), adopted various activities like empowerment of women programme (Param Shakti) and other activities in the last three months.

- UJALA succeeded in involving government officials at the district level in activities of Param Shakti, Kishori Panchayat and Mahila Samakhaya.
- SAMTA, Khagaria, organised meeting of Voluntary Organisations of three districts--Saharsa, Madhepura and Khagaria and resolved to organise women for Param Shakti activities, and improve the collaboration among the Voluntary Organisations of Koshi region. It also established rapport with government officials for better co-operation in future.

### 2.5.3 Output:

- Intensive advocacy efforts at the Patna High Court and the Supreme Court is making visible impact both in the field and intellectual fora. The efforts received moral and legal support even at the Supreme Court level.
- Rallies at panchayat, district, state and national levels have succeeded in creating a conducive environment for the cause of Panchayat election in Bihar.
- Involving "Panchayati Raj Samiti" both at the state and national levels proved to be a good strategy as the documents provided by the state level organisation was used as a solid base for building the legal case.

**2.5.4 Constraints:** During the period, most of CENCORED's PRI partners, especially in the north Bihar, faced one of the worst floods in recent times. They ran the PRI activities at a low key to pool in their resources to help the flood victims.

## 2.6 SSK (Uttar Pradesh)

**2.6.1 Direct Strengthening:** In Rae Bareilly district, SSK's partner VA, Lok Mitra prepared the ground in three Panchayats of Ahal, Kachhnawa and Garhwa in Deeh Development Block of the district so that the process of microplanning can be initiated. .

Efforts were on to regularise Gram Sabha (GS) and Gram Panchayat (GP) meetings. to ensure that GS and GP meetings were actually held to transact their business as envisaged in the UP-Panchayat Raj Act. Through informal talks, door to door visits, group discussions among the GS and GP members they were motivated to participate in the meetings.

The endeavor lead to regular organisation of the GS and GP meetings in which women, scheduled castes and backward classes and local actors like Mahila Mandals, Nehru Yuva Kendra, Yuva Mangal Dal and other functional groups in the villages participated to discuss their problems and come up with probable solutions.

Trainings for GP members was organised with the objectives of making them aware of the PR Act, rules, regulations, government orders and the need to prepare microplan of the Panchayat.

The trainings made the GP members aware of the PR Act, rules, regulations. They are also expected to spread the learnings from the training programme among the GS members.

Volunteers were identified and trained to make them active members of GS, GP, Yuvak Mangal Dal and Mahila Mangat Dal so that they can help in GP related working general and microplanning activity in particular.

**2.6.2 Preparation of Educational Material:** SSK simplified the PR Act and prepared two booklets: Haman Panchayat Vyavastha and Panchayati Raj Apka Apna Raj. The booklets were extensively used in training programmes. There is a plan to bring out a Sandarbh Pustika (Reference Booklet)

in two parts; the first dealing with the provisions of the PR Act and the second with the Rules, Regulations, Notifications, Govt. orders issued from time to time after the enactment of the Act.

**2.6.3 Regional Bulletins:** The PRCs published their regional quarterly bulletins.

**2.6.4 Exposure Visits of VA Members:** Experience sharing and exposure are some of the most important things in the work related to Panchayats. To meet this objective, three exposure visits for members was planned for 1999.

### **2.6.5 Kishan Gosthi:**

This was organised in collaboration with Gram Panchayats to make the villagers/Gram Sabha members aware about appropriate agricultural practices and new cultivation methods.

During visit and informal meetings with the community members, information on appropriate agriculture (i e., how to improve their crop, mixed cropping etc.) was imparted. As the community expressed their need for more information on agricultural practices, a 'Kishan Gosthi' was organised on August 19, 1998 in which 10 female and 35 male members participated. The resource person was from Krishi Vigyan Kendra.

#### **Output:**

- Villagers became aware about appropriate agriculture, mixed cropping, cultivation, etc.
- They wanted more programmes on the subject.
- Other villagers showed keen interest to participate.

## **2.7 UNNATI (Gujarat)**

**2.7.1** The major developments with regard to PRI were:

- On July 1, 1998 the Gujarat Panchayati Raj Act was amended as per the provisions laid down by the Parliament to the Schedule areas. This will be applicable to 4964 tribal villages.
- Five Gram Panchayats (Shijal, Dharaji, Devadthal, Zamp and Rasam) were taken up for direct strengthening activities. The Panchayats were asked to meet the DRDA to get access to a housing scheme named Sardar Patel Avas Yojana. In all the five Panchayats Social Justice Committee have been received. Once the Committee knew about their rights and responsibilities, they went to meet the Taluka Social Justice Comminee Chairperson. Every month the Committee members are holding meeting.

In Poshina Tribal Cluster in Khedbraluna Taluka of Sabarkanta District, many rounds of meeting were held with villagers informing them about the amendment of the Panchayat Act which gives rights to Gram Sabha on management of natural resources. During May, a meeting was held with the traditional leaders (Mulchis) to inform them about the advantage of the new amendment and how they can involve in local democratic process. Followed by this, a rally was organised during May 11-15, 1998, covering 36 villages of the region to inform about the new amendment.

### **2. 7.2 Educational Support:**

- Presented a paper in Panchayati Raj workshop organised by Gujarat Vidyapeet (April 30--May 1, 1998)
- Joined in a discussion conducted by Bhal Nalkantha Prayogik Sangh on April 18, 1998

- Participated in meeting on tribal governance organised by Centre for Social Justice at Vyara in Surat district on June 21, 1998
- Gujarat Vidyapeeth's, MSW students were oriented on Panchayati Raj
- Provided educational material to IGNOU on women empowerment and governance
- Helped planning of the WGWI meeting of women Sarpanches of six districts
- Vikas Adhyan Kendra, Yuvak Vikas Trust and AKJRSP used our published material for their training with PRI members
- Participated as resource persons in the training of SIRD (August 5-September 23,1998)

## **2.8 UNNATI (Rajasthan)**

**2.8.1** In Rajasthan, UNNATI was engaged in Panchayati Raj strengthening activities in three different regions.

### **• Panchayat Strengthening in Pugal Block of Bikaner District:**

This cluster of Panchayat has been undertaken to derive lessons on Panchayat strengthening in desert areas. Subsequent to the Padyatra on Panchayat awareness building and consultations among PRI members and villagers, a core group was formed. During this process efforts have also been made to educate women and women PRI members on Panchayati Raj.

### **Formation of Sattarkata (Vigilance) Committee:**

The formation of Sanarkara Committee is a mandatory body under Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act to monitor, supervise and build transparency in Panchayat functioning. However, in most Panchayats either this committee has not been formed or dummy candidates have been put without people's consent. Efforts have been made to revive Sattarkata Samiti by conducting village meetings. In four Panchayats, Makeri, Gangajali, Aduri and Tharusar twelve meetings were organised. This year it was planned that along with June Gram Sabha meeting in all the Panchayats Sattarkata Samiti will be formed. However, the government had postponed, the Gram Sabha meeting twice.

### **Developing new Women Leaders:**

Since Panchayat election is due in one and half years of time, UNNATI have been educating the potential women leaders on Panchayati Raj. This educational process will build confidence of the women to directly contest in Panchayat elections with better understanding of PRIs.

For the orientation of PRI elected representatives, monthly meeting was held at all the five Panchayats. The meetings covered the issues of formation of Sattarkata Samiti, Gram Sabha, Micro Planning, government programmes and village development.

### **Micro Planning:**

Gangajali Panchayat was selected for Micro Planning. In this Panchayat PRA was done in four villages. This exercise set up a methodology for village level planning. The villagers have already taken up the issue of canal management. They planned to take up the issue of child education.



## • Panchayat Strengthening in Jawaja Block

In Jawaja Block four Panchayats Naikala, Devara, Sarvena and Nagarkheda were taken up with the active support of UNNATI's local counter part NGO, MMVS. The activities undertaken were -

### Training of Mahila Jagrut Dal:

In the four Panchayats ten women's group were formed. These groups attend monthly training programme on Panchayati Raj issues. At the end of this meeting each women's group write a letter about their own difficulties to the Sarpanch. The issues taken up were construction of road, installation of hand pump, soil erosion, sanitation facility, widow pension and maternity benefit. The exercise instilled confidence in these women and in the long run it will help to develop women leaders.

### School Education and Panchayat:

A special effort was made to develop an understanding of Panchayati Raj among the students of high school (12 to 16 years of age). For this a teacher's training workshop was organised to develop an activity-based curriculum. The teachers showed keen interest.

### Panchayat Resource Centre:

A Panchayat Resource Centre was set up at Jawaja Block. Official gazette in which all notifications get published were placed at the centre. The block office and elected representatives were invited to use the information base of the centre.

## • Panchayat Strengthening in Jhadol Block

With local VO Ankur Sansthan, tribal Panchayat strengthening activities was initiated. The Rajasthan government is yet to amend the Panchayat act in the line of the parliament amendment to extend Panchayati Raj Act to Scheduled areas. To develop a draft tribal Panchayat bill, Panchayats were motivated to adopt the central act and give feedback on its application. At present, three Panchayats are practicing the central act.

## 2.9 SAHAYI (Kerala)

### 2.9.1 Training/Orientation/Workshop

#### • Setting up of Resource Centre at the field office at West Kallada

In order to ensure the accessibility of relevant information to the people and PRI members, SAHAYI set up a block level resource centre at the PRI Field Office located at West Kallada Panchayat in Kollam district. A news board has been placed at Karali Junction, a central place where people assemble regularly. Information like the financial statements of 1997-98, details of the projects implemented by the Panchayat during the period etc. have been displayed in the news board. It has been seen as an innovative method for information dissemination to the public. Now most of the local people can get informed through this notice board. This information services even motivated them to reflect on certain issues like Panchayat plans, selection of beneficiaries, etc. and to participate in the activities of the Gram Panchayat.

#### • Management Training at Palakkad

With the aim of developing/ enhancing the management capabilities of the PRI members and other development actors, SAHAYI conducted a four-day intensive training programme. It was attended

by Gram Panchayat and Block Panchayat members from different Panchayats of Palakkad district. Thirty-six participants attended the programme and of them 20 were PRI members.

Lecture, group discussion, sharing of experiences, case analysis, practical exercises, games, debriefing were the major methods used. The topics discussed in various sessions included various aspects related to development, current issues and challenges of development, decision making process, communication, leadership, programme planning, budgeting and project development.

One of the immediate effects of this four-day training programme was that there was a positive change in the participants' perception of training and its relevance to cope with the responsibilities in the role they have to undertake as a development actor.

#### • **Leadership Training for PRI Members at Perumkadavila**

The objective of the leadership training programme was to help the PRI members enhance their communication abilities and leadership styles. It was attended by 30 PRI members and resource persons of people's campaign of which 12 were women.

The subjects discussed were organising and group dynamism, decision making, cooperation and collaboration, communication, leadership and leadership styles, need assessment and programme preparation.

It was highlighted by the participants that the practical sessions and structured experiences were very useful to understand the subjects in detail. They further commented that the training was effective to understand the new problems related to their communication and leadership styles. Moreover, most of them stated that they will try to practice the lessons learnt from the training. Some of the participants mentioned that they need more intensive training programmes on programme planning and budgeting.

### **2.9.2 MICRO-PLANNING**

#### • **Grass-roots Level Planning**

**1. Data Bank of West Kallada Panchayat:** As part of its microplanning exercise, SAHAYI felt the need for generating a reliable data bank on the socio-economic profile of the area for the formulation of micro plans. Based on this assessment it was decided to develop a data bank at the Panchayat level. It was discussed with the Panchayat Samithy members, officials and general public and finally based on the suggestions and requirements specified by various actors SAHAYI prepared a draft questionnaire. It was then supplied to different development actors at the Panchayat level and collected their comments for improvements.

Later, the draft questionnaire was finalised and an intensive two-day training programme was organised for the women who were selected from the Panchayat for data collection. The PRI members also extended co-operation in data collection.

Around 3000 families were covered in the survey. SAHAYI PRI team members and other staff members facilitated and closely monitored the whole process.

The programme gave a whole new direction to SAHAYI's micro planning process. In fact, it was also an educational and learning process for all those who were actively involved in the activity. The data generation process is still on and compilation and analysis will begin once the data collection is over.

**2. Promotion of Integrated Farming:** As the next step of the microplanning process, the generated data regarding issues on agriculture, possibilities of integrated farming etc. were widely discussed with farmers, agricultural labourers Panchayat Samithy members, and officials of agriculture and animal husbandry departments. SAHAYI team members visited Pattambi Krishi Vinjan Kendra at Palakkad, Regional Agricultural Research Station at Kumarakom, Regional Research Station at Kottarakkara, Agriculture Development Agency (ADAK), at Thiruvananthapuram and made intensive discussions with the senior officials and scientists about the various issues of the local ecology including the acidic nature of the soil in the paddy fields and the possibilities of integrated farming and availability of support from the government agencies.

On the 30th of September, 1998 a one-day consultative meeting of the farmers, Panchayat Samithy members, VO members and technical experts from ADAK and Krishi Vigyan was organised. The experts and the Director of SAHAYI facilitated the discussions.

The major objectives of the meeting were to examine the possibilities of integrated farming in West Kallada and to help them take collective decisions on experimenting/ implementing the integrated farming methods.

The technical experts responded to some of the queries raised by the farmers. Later, it was mutually decided to organise an exposure visit for selected farmers to places like Kuttanad where integrated farming had been successfully implemented. The facilitators agreed to help the farmers in developing and sustaining the process.

**3. Promotion of Other Activities:** SAHAYI successfully mobilised the women of the area to form an informal group called NATURE CLUB. The group under the guidance of SAHAYI planned and implemented some action oriented programmes like vegetable cultivation, planting of trees etc. The women also constituted a monitoring committee to monitor the activities.

One of the major outcomes of the programme was the generation of enthusiasm and interest among the women in vegetable cultivation and tree planting which in future will help them to improve their health and financial status.

**4. Skill development training programme:** SAHAYI in collaboration with SAHAYI Educational Trust started a leather bag making training programme at West Kallada. At present, 10 women selected under DWCRAScheme are undergoing the training.

#### • EXPOSURE VISIT

SAHAYI team visited Mandore island in Kollam district where prawn farming is being done successfully. The purpose of the visit was to observe the operations and conduct discussion with the Cannerson the socio-economic aspects of the activities. Based on these discussions and understanding, the economic viability and technical feasibilities of prawn farming were later discussed with the farmers in West Kallada Panchayat.

It was a mutual learning process both for the SAHA YI team and the farmers of West Kallada. One of the immediate outcomes was that some of these farmers visited Mandore and held discussion with the local farmers and later expressed their interest in experimenting the programme in West Kallada.

#### • RESOURCE SUPPORT TO SELECTED VO PARTNERS

During the period SAHA YI provided technical as well as nominal financial support to the partner local VOs working for Strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions. They were Anamritha Prasthanam (Triruvananthapuram), West Kallada Social Welfare Society (Kellam), Anaswara Vanitha Samajam (Emakularn), B.P. Moideen Seva Mandir (Kozhikode)

## • PANCHAYAT LEVEL INFORMATION CENTRES

SAHAYI already set up five Panchayat level information centres in collaboration with local VOs at Wayanad, Kasaragod, Trissur and Thiruvananthapuram. In these places the Panchayat Samithy members and local people entirely depend on the resource centres for FRI-related information.

In order to upgrade the utility of the PRCs, symposia and discussions on Panchayati Raj and Rural Development were organised in collaboration with youth and women groups. SAHAYI collected latest government orders, circulars and other relevant information such as anti-defection ordinance from government secretariat and Panchayat Directorate for the PRCs. SAHAYI team closely monitored the functioning of the PRCs and provided necessary guidance and support for their smooth functioning.

### 2.10 CYSD in Orissa

#### 2.10.1 Training

CYSD conducted a six-day training programme on People Centred Planning which was held from 18-23rd May 1998. 13 participants from CYSD's PRI partners attended the training.

The purpose of the training was to orient the VO members on the process of preparing 'People Oriented Planning' and assist them to transfer these skills to the Gram Sabha and Palli Sabha members.

At the end of the programme each participating VO promised to conduct at least two micro planning session in their operational areas.

PRI cell of CYSD also organised a training programme on Panchayati Raj for Ward Members, Sarpanches and Gram Panchayat secretaries with the co-operation of PRAYAS, Sundargarh and PRAYAS Karanjia. On an average 23 participants attended these programmes.

The purpose of the training programme was to orient the Panchayat level staff, members on the PRI acts and the role of PRIs in grass root leadership development.

#### 2.10.2 Documentation

During the period CYSD collected and classified PRI related news cuttings and prepared abstracts from them to disseminate the same among its PRI partners.

## **Chapter 3 Research and Advocacy**

### **3.0 Introduction**

Research is an integral aspect of the programme on strengthening of PRIs. While working on the latter, basically a programme to facilitate social change in the form of democratic decentralisation, empowering institutions of local self-governance and developing leadership skills among the weaker sections of the community, a number of research queries are thrown up. Addressing these research questions does not necessarily imply a mere addition to the existing piles of theoretical knowledge but fulfils some practical purposes too.

In the first place, research findings enable the Panchayati Raj practitioners to strengthen and consolidate their activities in the field. Research also helps in demonstrating and understanding the factors behind exemplary cases of PRIs through case studies. Another significant contribution of research is facilitating the creation of a congenial and enabling ambience so that policy changes can be brought in more smoothly.

In this reporting period two core areas were selected for intensive research, namely, Panchayat Finance and Women in PRIs. Each RSO including PRIA conducted the research within a common framework at the state level. Simultaneously, national level synthesis of research outputs was undertaken by PRIA to consolidate the state level findings. Besides, to promote wider public education and advocacy, dissemination of research findings were undertaken by the NCRSOs through state level seminars and workshops.

### **3.1 SAMARTHAN (Madhya Pradesh)**

In this period, two studies were undertaken namely, 'Panchayat and Finance' and 'Women in Panchayat'. The final reports of these studies are being prepared presently.

Two short term local studies were also taken up:

1. Profile of the women Panchayat representatives of Sehore block.
2. Profile of the youth of Sehore block.
3. Profile of representatives of the Sehore block.

Currently, the data processing of these studies is on.

The main aim of these studies was to assess the situations prevailing in the Panchayats and to identify the potential key informants & resource persons in carrying out the PRI activities.

### **3.2 PRIA in Haryana**

PRIA Haryana team conducted the following research studies in its areas of direct intervention:

- Finances of PRI's
- Training Programmes for PRI Members
- Women in Panchayats

#### **3.2.1 The Study on Finance of PRIs**

The study tried to elicit both quantitative and qualitative information on financial aspects of PRIs. The respondents included chairpersons, vice chairpersons and members of all three tiers of PRIs, Panchayat Secretaries, Block Development and Panchayat Officers, CEO of DRDA, heads of various line departments in the district and at times Gram Sabha members.

The study was undertaken in Jatusana and Rewari blocks of district Rewari. The reason being that the field office of PRIA is located in the close vicinity of the area and there is an established relationship with the people and officials of that area. In each Panchayat Samiti a sample of 12 Gram Panchayats was chosen for the study.

### **Findings:**

- Most of the funding received by the gram Panchayats is available in the form of 'tied' funds. They have many conditions that need to be fulfilled vis-a-vis supply of materials, contracts, and most often the gram Panchayats are required to play only a supervisory role.
- The gram Panchayat has powers to levy some taxes like house tax, tax on: local markets, use of the natural resources within its jurisdiction like clay, water etc. but in most cases the gram Panchayats do not exercise this power thus making themselves more and more dependent on government funding.
- There is a great deal of expenditure taking place in the district directly by the various line departments of the state government but the decision-making power in these cases lies with the departments not the Panchayats.
- The block office controls information on availability of finances and management of finances. The information of income and expenditure of Panchayats is not maintained systematically by the accounts department.
- The gram sachivs are too few in number in each block to be able to discharge their duties properly and moreover they are also not adequately equipped in the matters of finance management or planning for Panchayats.
- Contrary to popular belief men and women headed Panchayats are fairing equally well or equally badly as the case may be. Women are as aware about the finances of their Panchayats as the men.
- There are no working linkages between the three tiers of Panchayats vis-a-vis PRI finance. The focus and agenda of each tier is different.
- The term resource is interpreted as finance both by the elected representatives and the administration with the result that very little information is available on what natural and human resources are and how they can be properly utilised.

### **3.2.2 Study on Trainings**

The study examined the content, methodology and impact of training programmes so far conducted for the PRI members.

The study was undertaken in Ambala and Jhajjar districts of Haryana. It was spread over four blocks in the two districts and included interviews with 150 elected representatives, 20 gram sachivs and 6 BDOs.

## Select Findings:

- The learning materials given after or during the course of trainings need to be looked at critically specially if it is meant for the elected representatives. Timely production and a steady flow of updated training material is essential so as to sustain the learning process.
- The training institutes pointed out that without the active support from the policy and decision makers in the organisations from which the trainees are drawn, the training programmes cannot be organised in a more creative manner.
- The training programmes for elected representatives need more planning and follow up in order to be effective and sustainable.
- Follow up mechanism after the training programme is almost nonexistent. Perhaps, the idea of newsletters and journals can be explored for the purpose.

### 3.2.3 Women in Panchayat

In order to gain insights into the status and functioning of women elected representatives in Haryana, a study of women Panchayat members was carried out in two districts namely Mahendergarh and Rewari. Having completed the data collection, the study is still in the process of being finalised.

## 3.3 PRIA in Himachal Pradesh

The following two research studies were carried out as a part of the joint collaboration of PRIA and NCRSOs in the state:

- Panchayat Finance
- Women In Panchayats

### 3.3.1 Panchayat Finance

The study was conducted in 26 Panchayats of Sundenagar and Sadar blocks, Mandi district and it attempted to explore the financial dynamics of Panchayat in Himachal Pradesh.

#### Findings:

- Revenue of the Gram Panchayat can be broadly classified as tax revenue, fees and non-tax receipts. At present, the Panchayats were able to raise their revenue from house tax and land revenue in the form of taxes. In terms of fee the Gram Panchayat collects judicial fee, certificate fee, marriage fee and ration card fee. In form of non-tax receipts, it collects rent, interest, proceeds from auction, fees from fairs and festivals.
- The Gram Panchayats have neither made any serious effort to raise resources by their own nor did they take any initiative in identifying new areas for raising resources.
- Significantly, the elected representatives do not take initiative and hesitate to collect taxes at various levels because they have a feeling that they might lose the forthcoming election if they impose tax on the villagers. Moreover, they do not want to disturb their vote banks.
- Lack of knowledge and awareness among the elected representatives regarding various types of taxes to be imposed, the effort of tax collection has been nullified.

- Lack of initiative by the Gram Panchayat to understand various forms of taxes and also inability to understand the ways and means to collect tax.
- The elected representatives have perception that the people living in the rural areas are poor and they are not in a position to pay the taxes.
- There is no system of reward and punishment for tax evaders.
- There has been no provision of incentives or rewards for those panchayats who collect the maximum amount of taxes.
- The Panchayat Secretaries are not interested and hardly take any initiative to collect taxes because of the overburden of work and assignments.
- Political interference and influence at the grass root level nullify the efforts made by the representatives as well as the Panchayat Secretaries to collect taxes.
- The records related to tax, fees etc. have not been maintained properly at the panchayat level to find out the defaulters and to take further action.
- Neither any action has been taken nor any follow up done by the block officials or the district administration to collect taxes in a systematic manner.
- Even though the State Government has made certain provisions for tax collection but hardly any review has been taken place to know the issues and problems for poor performance. Though in some cases the review has taken place and reports and recommendations are made but seldom any action has been taken on the recommendations.
- The Gram Panchayats are totally dependent on the government grants.
- The grants received by the Gram Panchayats are gradually increasing over a span of three years especially after the enactment of the 73rd Amendment Act. The fund allocation has grown at a rate of 87.5% per annum. Seeing the requirement and needs of the Gram Panchayats it seems that that fund allocation is not adequate.
- The funds received by the Gram Panchayat from the State or Central Government has not been utilised for the purpose it is meant for. Even a large proportion of the fund has been diverted or utilised for other purposes, such as to meet the committed expenditure.
- Most of the funds released from the State Government for the Gram Panchayat do not reach in time.
- Since most of the funds released by the Government are tied in nature, the Gram Panchayat face difficulty in utilising that funds as per their needs and requirement of the Panchayat.
- Most of the Gram Panchayat members were not aware of the financial status of the Gram panchayat i.e. source of income, sanctioning agencies, types and purpose of the fund received. But it is interesting to note that majority of the ward members were aware of the income and expenditure of their respective wards.
- The Gram Panchayat members are lacking skill in effective management and utilisation of available resources.



- There is lack of information dissemination within the Gram Panchayats regarding the financial status of the Panchayats i.e. the Pradhans or the Panchayat Secretary hardly inform the members regarding the income and expenditure, amount of fund received.
- There exists a high level of political and bureaucratic interference in the allocation and distribution of funds.
- In the process of distribution of funds at the Gram Panchayat level it seems that the Pradhan plays a crucial role. In most cases, funds are given to those wards who are members are the close associates of the Pradhan.
- Significantly, 81% of the funds are being utilised for the construction of roads, school buildings, waterways, ferries, culverts, bridges and maintenance of community assets.
- The Panchayat Samiti and the Zila Parishad have no source of income by their own.
- In the light of the 73rd Amendment Act, PRI is a state subject and state should be involved in allocation and distribution of resources. But the state is playing the role of a facilitator between the Centre and the Zila Parishad in distributing and monitoring the funds allocated to the latter and, it has no say in the process of fund allocation.
- The basic principle of the 73rd Amendment Act is to strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions to act as an institution of local self-governance. However, while analysing the data vis-a-vis the state Panchayati Raj Act, it is found that the Zila Parishad is acting as an agent of the state government,

### **3.3.2 Women in Panchayat**

The study focused on elected women members in which a total of 130 women representatives were interviewed in Kangra, Rait, Nagrota Bagwan blocks in Kangra district and Sundernagar and Sadar blocks in Mandi district.

#### **Select Findings:**

- Overall, the women members get support and co-operation from the other PRJ members in her panchayat, whether male or female. In case of co-operation from government officials, like BDO, JE, extension officers, line department officials, it was seen that besides the Pradhan, the ward members hardly get an opportunity to visit government officials.
- Majority of the women were eager to contest the next elections.
- The women mostly interact with the local Mahila Mandal of the village.

Some of the needs (for being a more effective PRI member) as identified by the women are listed below:

- Increase knowledge base and awareness level through trainings, educational materials and by exposure visits
- Literacy
- Financial resources, especially for ward members and direct financial assistance
- Greater public support and co-operation
- Better linkage with government functionaries
- Greater devolution of power especially for the ward members.
- Good relationship with local politicians
- An increase in the honorarium received by the PIU members especially the Ward members.

- Skills to analyse problem situation and taking the right decision

### **3.4 PEARL (Bihar)**

Two research studies namely, 'Traditional System of Governance Among the Tribes of Bihar' and 'Participatory Development of Traditional Democratic Institutions' were undertaken. The preparation of final reports is in progress.

### **3.5 CENCORED (Bihar)**

CENCORED undertook the documentation of the following activities:

- Work on Kishori Panchayat
- Work and experience of Paramsakti Programme (Women's' empowerment programme in neglected areas)
- Experience of Panchayat Information Centres
- Documentation of Participatory micro planning experiences
- Documentation of critique of state Acts.

### **3.6 SSK (U.P.)**

The study on Women in Panchayat: Work on this study is in progress. At present, the analysis of the data is being done.

Panchayat and Finance: The data collection and analysis of this study was completed and the preparation of the draft report is in progress.

### **3.7 UNNATI (Gujarat)**

The studies on 'Finance and PRIs' and 'Women in PRIs' are in progress.

Another research study on status of Panchayats in Gujarat was conducted in this period. Presently, the content analysis of Government gazettes and newspaper reports are being done.

Some of the documentation work completed by UNNATI in this period were as follows.

- Developed a training kit on PR issues.
- Prepared a leaflet in response to the Finance Commission interim report
- Prepared a new edition of the leaflet on government schemes relevant for Panchayats
- Prepared a note for the school teachers as how to teach children about PRI

### **3.8 UNNATI (Rajasthan)**

The data collection of the study on Panchayat and Finance was- completed in this period.

### **3.9 SAHAYI ( Kerala)**

Some of the major studies undertaken by SAHAYI in this period were as follows.

### 3.9.1 Study on the Finance of PRI

The study was conducted by collecting data from selected Panchayats in Thiruvananthapuram District.

SAHAYI staff members including PRI team members were engaged in the data collection process and its analysis.

Findings:

- The PRI members were least aware of the financial matters such as the financial position and financial management of the Panchayats.
- Almost all of the PRI members interviewed were not aware of the financial powers of different actors. Almost all the PRI members did not know how to prepare a budget, how to prepare a statement of accounts and how to analyse a balance sheet.
- It was observed that in some of the sample Panchayats the annual financial statements for the year 1995-96 to the state government was yet to be submitted.

### 3.9.2 Study on Women in Panchayats

The study examined the various aspects of women PRI members, such as their personal profile, participation, accountability, transparency and self-reliance etc.

The study area consisted of five district Panchayats, twelve block Panchayats and forty two gram Panchayats. In all, data was collected from 150 women PRI members including presidents, vice presidents and standing committee chairpersons.

**Select Findings:**

- Most of the female members are the proxies of their husbands or political leaders.
- Majority of the women PRI members have only basic educational qualification and little exposure in this field; so, they are entirely dependent on their male counterparts or Panchayat staff.
- Majority of the women PRI members are not willing to improve their knowledge or skill. This is due to the fact that after household chores they hardly find any time to learn and attend the training programmes.
- Instead of empowering the women PRI members, most of the male PRI members are trying to weaken their interest in PRI related activities by unnecessarily criticizing them.
- In certain gram Panchayats there exists a clash of interest among the women PRI members for president-ship of the Panchayat.

### 3.9.3 Study on People's Campaign

SAHAYI made a study on people's campaign initiated by the Kerala State Government in connection with IX Five Year Plan. It was a rapid assessment among the members of the Gram Sabha, especially Cannors, farm labourers, fisherfolk, Panchayat presidents, secretaries, media personnel, teachers, government officials and voluntary activists. Nearly half of the respondents were women and both rural and urban communities in the two districts of Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam were randomly selected for the purpose.

**Suggestions:**

- Capable people should be promoted as PRI members
- People should be continuously educated. Their awareness level should be improved

- Effective monitoring system and procedures should be evolved
- Effective monitoring system and procedures should be evolved and followed
- The Panchayat presidents should have adequate qualification and competence
- The Panchayat functionaries and officials should be given more training
- Gram Sabha should be convened more often
- Socially committed people should be identified and encouraged to play active role in PRI activities
- The ward member should visit each and every house
- The participation of women must be promoted
- Participatory evaluation/impact study should be conducted on every year's performance and the evaluators should be impartial persons and voluntary activists.

### **3.10 CYSD (Orissa)**

#### **3.10.1 Study on PRI finances**

In order to understand the present situation of the State PRJ resources base, income and expenditure pattern of each tier in relation to the 73rd Amendment, CYSD initiated a study in Khurda District of Orissa,

The data generation process is still on.

#### **3.10.2 Study on women PRI members**

A second area of research commenced during the reporting period on women PRI representatives, which has been initiated in two districts of Orissa, namely Khurda and Jajpur.

#### **Findings:**

- It seems if the seat could not be reserved for women, the women would not participate in the election.
- Sometimes only the husband of the women candidate used to attend the meetings. Even when the wife goes to attend the meeting, the husband accompanies and take all major decisions on her behalf
- Majority of the women members are illiterate.
- Out of the 69 members (women) interviewed, hardly 9 know about their roles and responsibilities.

#### **Suggestions:**

- Orientation is required periodically to all the elected body of 3 tier (GP, PS, ZP) regarding the govt. scheme, programmes, grant etc.
- Information has to be specially communicated to the women elected members at 'Panchayat level
- Monthly meeting of Panchayat has to be regularly organised.
- Gram Sabha and Palli Sabha should be conducted regularly.
- Special effort should be taken to eradicate gender bias from the functioning of the PRIs at all the three tiers.

## **Chapter 4 Promotional Interventions**

### **4.0 Introduction**

Promotional intervention is the fourth thrust area of the PRI programme. In this activity, the objective is to share the experiences of PRI related activities with concerned groups like elected representatives, government officials, NGO workers, media and other interested individuals through seminars, workshops, formal and informal meetings.

The moot purpose is to facilitate deliberation, dialogue and discussion on PRI issues among a heterogeneous group of actors so that a larger section of civil society, government and policy making bodies can be involved to promote the cause of participatory self governance and decentralisation.

### **4.1 SAMARTHAN (Madhya Pradesh)**

#### **4.1.1 Workshop for Voluntary Organisations:**

A 7-day workshop on process documentation was organised for the government officials and Danlep. Danlep has invited SAMARTHAN to impart trainings to the NGOs so that they can sensitise the Panchayats on health issues and the latter's role in providing health services.

A one-day orientation workshop was conducted on report writing for YUVA (Pune), in the month of September. YUVA invited SAMARTHAN to orient new NGOs and individuals linked with them on the importance of proper reporting skills.

The Child environment project in Sehore district, was funded by UNICEF and SDI. The project was implemented by the district administration. SAMARTHAN had taken up the role of a supporting NGO by mobilising community participation in the project.

#### **4.1.2 Regional newsletters**

Two issues of regional newsletter DONDI were published. The issues featured were the development schemes, right to information and other local issues related to PRIs. About 800 copies were printed and circulated in all the 482 Panchayats of Shore, government departments, co-operatives, PRCs and partner organisations.

### **4.2 PRIA (Haryana)**

#### **4.2.1 District level workshop**

PRIA in collaboration with DRDA and the Zilla Parishad organised a one day District level workshop in September at Rewari, Haryana. The main objective of this workshop was to share the findings of a study on Panchayats and Finance undertaken by PRIA in Jatusana and Rewari Blocks of District Rewari. The workshop brought together elected representatives from all the three tiers of Panchayats, government functionaries, representatives of local NGOs and interested individuals to deliberate on the subject.

The PRIA team presented the study findings which provided the base for further discussion on the issue of decentralised devolution based on the experiences of the participants. The discussions revolved around the following issues -

- Involvement of elected representatives in the decision-making processes
- Strategies for dissemination of information to Panchayats and people
- Preparation of need based planning at all the three tiers.

## 4.3 PRIA (Himachal Pradesh)

### 4.3.1 Meeting Voluntary Organisations

A one-day meeting was organised for voluntary organisations in the month of April. The venue of this meeting was the office of Samaj Seva Parishad at Rait, Kangra district. In all, sixteen VO workers attended the meeting. They were mainly from Kangra and Chamba districts. The purpose was to discuss with the VOs about their possible collaboration with PRIA to work on strengthening PRI

### 4.3.2 Meeting the Press

A one-day dialogue with the media was organised at Hotel Dhauladhar, Dharamsala on 12th April, 1998. The purpose of this meeting was to share with the press, PRIA's work on strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions in Himachal Pradesh. The latent objective was to sensitise the media personnel about Panchayati Raj Institutions and to motivate them to give more coverage to the issue.

Representatives from the newspapers like Divya Himachal, Ajit Samachar, Punjab Kesri, Indian Express, The Tribune, Vir Pratap, Dainik Tribune, Jansatta were present.

The second one day meeting with the media took place on 6th September at the Conference Hall of Hotel Dhauladhar, Dharamsala. A total of 10 press correspondents from different newspapers attended the meeting. PRTA was represented by Chandan Datta., Sohini Paul, Ajaya Mohapatra and Naval Kishore. The purpose of the meeting was to share the findings of two research studies undertaken by PRIA on Panchayat Finance and Women in Panchayats so that these issues get disseminated through the media and generate public awareness.

### 4.3.3 Visiting new areas

#### • Palach Panchayat, Kullu district

PRIA team visited Palach Panchayat, Banjar in Kullu district in May on a request from the Mahila Mandal Pradhan of Palach Panchayat Mrs. Kiran Sharma to visit their Panchayat and survey the area. The purpose was to meet the Panchayat members as well as the members of the Mahila Mandal and ascertain their demands (viz, pucca road for their Panchayat, a mini secretariat building and drinking water supply). The first visit was followed up by a second one on 25th August in Mandi.

The visits were made to study the Panchayat's problems and write a detailed report along with the prioritised needs of the people. The members of CBOs, Panchayat leaders. Gram Sabha members and other important individuals of the Panchayat area were consulted for the purpose.

There is plan to present the report to the district administration, concerned government departments and NGOs in order to incorporate their valuable inputs.

### 4.3.4 Meeting government officials

A meeting was held with Mrs. Sudha Pillai, Jt. Secretary, MORD and Mrs. Rajwant Sandhu, Secretary, Rural Development in Krishi Bhawan on 22nd April 1998. PRIA was represented by Sohini Paul. The purpose of the meeting was mainly to discuss about the implementation of the plan developed by the people of Kehar Panchayat. It was decided that a certain amount of money will be sanctioned by the government for implementation of some schemes as prioritised by the local people.

#### **4.4 PEARL (Bihar)**

PEARL organised a few workshops and meetings with community members to share their study findings and to get the community's feedback on governance issue in the tribal areas. It interacted with AAG Group members (a local network of NGOs), local academicians and local media to share the study findings with them and sensitised them about the issue.

#### **4.5 CENCORED (Bihar)**

During this period, CENCORED continued and expanded their work on Kishori Panchayat and organised training/orientation programmes for NGOs working towards promotion and strengthening of people's organisation.

A collaborative link was also established with local UNICEF office and Nehru Yuvak Kendra. Through their Panchayat Bachao Andolan, (a movement for holding Bihar Panchayat election) they involved a large number of diverse groups and organised meetings in Patna and Delhi.

CENCORED along with some other organisations filed a petition in the Supreme Court and mobilised individuals and organisations to support the cause.

#### **4.6 SSK (Lucknow)**

##### **4.6.1 Meeting district level government officials**

This activity was undertaken in all the 18 districts of the state where SSK is working. Attempts were made to sensitise the concerned government officials at the district level on the issues related to PRIs and request their co-operation in the PRI activities.

##### **4.6.1 Meeting with other actors or the civil society**

Apart from the VOs associated with the PRCs, there are other organisations and individuals who can facilitate and catalyze the development of PRIs. Attempts were made to contact them with the objective of sensitising and perspective building of these actors. Information collected from various sources were disseminated among them.

#### **4.7 UNNATI (Gujarat)**

##### **4.7.1 Training Programme for NGO staff on PRI**

It was organised during May 27-30, 1998 at GIDR, Ahmedabad. In all, 28 participants participated in the programme. The objectives of the training were to develop an in-depth understanding on PRI and develop skill to work on Panchayats among the NGO staffs.

##### **4.7.2 Meeting on Tribal Act**

A meeting was organised on September 23, to discuss about the various features of the new amendment or the act for the schedule areas. It was felt that despite various efforts, the government has not included UNNATI's suggestions in the Act. In order to put pressure on the government to declare the schedule district village wise/Gram Sabha wise rather than Panchayat-wise, clarify the role of Panchayat in redressing local conflict and management of natural resources, a post card campaign was also planned.

## 4.8 SAHAYI (Kerala)

### 4.8. 1 Regional Level Consultation with New Partners

With the intention of involving more groups in the PRI strengthening activities of the state SAHA Y1 conducted consultative meetings with the various groups such as Karshaka Raksha Samithy in Kannur on the 6th, 7th and 8th of July 1998 and with the Self-Help Groups promoted by the Kuttanad Vikasana Samithy on the 13th and 16th of July, 1998 at Champakkulam and Ramankari. Fifty participants from Karshaka Raksha Samithy and 60 participants from Kuttanad Vikasana Samithy attended the meetings. All these groups expressed their willingness to work in their Panchayats in a co-operative and collaborative manner.

These programme were intended to improve the VOs understanding on Panchayati Raj and formulate some collaborative programme for strengthening their capacities.

With these Consultative meetings SAHAYI could convince the VOs of the need and relevance of people's participation, role and responsibilities of VOs and SHGs in the developmental activities, future challenges and opportunities, importance of collaborative work and need of advocacy and lobbying. SAHAYI succeeded in motivating the participants to take some bold initiatives in their operational areas.

It was further decided to do some follow up action and collaborative awareness generation programmes later.

### 4.8.2 Regional Level Dialogue with District Level PRI Functionaries

In this activity period PRI team consulted and discussed with district, block and Panchayat level functionaries of Trivandrum, Kollam Emakulam Palakkad and Wayand districts. The common issues and concerns regarding the functioning of PRIs such as the relationship among the three tiers, fund allocation and its utilisation, beneficiary selection procedures, drawbacks existing in the programme planning and its implementation, necessity of social and performance audit, relevance of people participation, transparency, accountability and commitment of PRI members were discussed in detail.

Besides, the PRI team could convince them some of the above issues and invited their immediate attention and action to solve these issues. The PRI functionaries shared their ideas to strengthen the system and also put forward the constraints in programme planning and implementation. Nearly all of them emphasised the need and relevance of monitoring committees. Some of them even suggested that separate committees should be constituted at government level and people's level for the purpose.

### 4.8.3 Support to Microplanning Exercise

As part of promoting participatory microplanning initiative in Kottukal and Ambalavayal Gram Panchayats, the collaborating VOs conducted semi-structured dialogue in their intervening Panchayat.

For instance, in the Arnhalawayal Panchayat, Arshabharath, the collaborating organisation during their primary data generation process identified scarcity of drinking water as a major problem which requires urgent attention. They took initiative with local people's support to solve the problem by constructing a public well.

This process also demonstrated to the villagers, especially the marginalised sections like scheduled tribes, scheduled castes and women how to identify a problem and initiate collaborative action programme for solving it.



## **Chapter 5 Networking**

### **5.0 Introduction**

In order to strengthen and reinforce the PRIs, PRIA and NCRSOs collaborated with the existing network of voluntary organisations, PRI representatives, women leaders and other concerned groups at the village, block and district levels. Similarly, efforts are on to put the network of mass media into use for greater coverage and creation of mass awareness on the PRI related issues,

### **5.1 SAMARTHAN (Madhya Pradesh)**

SAMARTHAN organised a few meetings of Gram Panchayat members across the Gram Panchayats to share their experiences and learn from this sharing exercise.

### **5.2 PRIA (Haryana)**

Efforts were made to collaborate with already existing network of NGOs and VOs in the region for strengthening PRI's. In the coming period PRIA team will study and monitor Gram Sabha meetings held throughout the state in collaboration with Nehru Yuva Kendra, Haryana. Similarly, efforts were made to network with the media for greater awareness and coverage of PRI issue in the state. The team continued to consolidate its network of voluntary organisations (see Annexure 3) in the state by providing valuable education support as and when desired by these organisations.

### **5.3 PRIA (Himachal Pradesh)**

PRIA invited Panchayat members, especially, women members of a cluster of Gram Panchayats to share and discuss the experiences of PRC and the plan to set up the same in new G.Ps.

### **5.4 SSK (Lucknow)**

#### **Media Workshop**

A one-day workshop was organised on 11th July 1998 at Ganna Sansthan, Lucknow. The participants were NGOs, media personnel and members of SSK.

The purpose was twofold - to sensitise media about the ground reality of Panchayati Raj Institutions, its importance, its rationale and its functions in strengthening the Panchayats ; and secondly, to enhance better linkages between NOOs and media

SSK shared its field level activities and findings from the research studies conducted on various topics like the present situation of Gram Panchayats and Gram Sabha, functioning of Gram Panchayats, women's leadership in Panchayat.

In the workshop SSK urged that the media should take more initiative in giving coverage to Panchayat issues and the NGOs on their part should make greater effort to contribute PRI based features to newspapers. The significance of reinforcing the linkage between the media and the NGOs was unanimously agreed upon by the participants.

## 5.5 UNNATI (Gujarat)

The following Networking activities took place in the reporting period.

- A meeting with Western India Forum for Panchayati Raj (WIFPR) was held on May 10, 1998 to finalise the suggestions on tribal governance issue to submit it to the government.
- A meeting with Deputy Chief Secretary of Rural Development, Mr. Joshi took place to explain UNNATI's suggestions on tribal bill, before forwarding the bill in the Assembly on June 29, 1998. The team met Mr. Amar Singh Chaudhary, tribal leader, President of opposition party for the same purpose.
- UNNATI participated in a national level seminar on Micro Planning during May 12-16, 1998 organised by PRIA (New Delhi).
- The women's political empowerment day celebrations were held in the month of April in New Delhi by Institute of Social Science. This year's theme was "Women, Panchayats and Poverty Eradication". UNNATI along with nearly 500 elected women representatives and delegates from different voluntary organisations participated.
- Regular meetings were held with Secretary Development Commissioner. UNICEF, Panchayat Parishad on issues concerning strengthening of Panchayats.

## 5.6 SAHAYI (Kerala)

### • Participation in meetings

During the reporting quarter PRI team members attended some meetings I seminars organised by Government, Panchayat Samithies and other voluntary organisation in the state. This helped the PRI team to share Sahayi's experiences and views regarding the functioning of Gram Sabha and Panchayat Samithies and put forward its suggestions for improving the system.

### Publication of news Bulletin

SAHAYI has been regularly publishing a quarterly news bulletin (Swayambharanam) to disseminate information regarding the Panchayati Raj activities, changes brought in through laws and regulations etc.

The bulletin was widely circulated among selected Panchayats, VOs and other development actors in the state. It could be understood from the response of the readers that the bulletin helped them to up-date their knowledge on issues related to PRIs.

Again, publication of the news bulletin exclusively on PRI themes and circulating the same among various actors and participating in meetings and events organised by other organisations and groups went a long way in promoting Sahayi's networking activities among individuals and groups engaged in PRI strengthening activities.

## **Chapter 6 National Team's Activities and Coordination**

### **6.0 Facilitation visit to UPWARD Project. CARE, Bangladesh (April 1998)**

UPWARD (Union Parishads Working to Achieve Total Development), a project under the aegis of CARE Bangladesh, invited PRIA to provide technical support to identify stakeholders, power structures, community assets and mobility of female members of the local elected bodies (Union Parishads) through social mapping exercises.

During the eight-day visit, PRIA staff organised a one-day orientation workshop at CARE Head Quarters, Dhaka with UPWARD and other project staffs. The aim was to relate the UPWARD project in Bangladesh with the Indian situation in the context of Panchayati Raj and to make the participants understand the participatory approach to sustainable development.

PRIA organised a few field level orientations cum exposure programme at the clusters (Jessore, Goibandha districts and a couple of Union Parishads) with cluster level UPWARD project staffs, Chairman and members of Union Parishads and concerned government staffs. The purpose was to develop a common understanding about the project's objectives and plan for its operationalisation with active participation of various people and to orient the participants on conducting social mapping exercise at the village level to identify stakeholders, community assets and power structures.

PRIA team member facilitated a few village level social mapping exercises and de-briefing sessions following the exercises. A report of the facilitation visit was prepared.

### **6.1 One day dialogue with the media on PRIA's work on strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions (April 12, 1998)**

A dialogue with the media, mainly press reporters of eight newspapers (both Hindi and English) and the PRIA team took place at Hotel Dhauladhar, Dharamsala, the district headquarters of Kangra. The meeting was an excellent opportunity for PRIA staff to interact with the local media personnel. The purpose of holding this dialogue was to sensitise and inform the media about the process of strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions, (PRIs) and to encourage them to write on the major issues.

During the course of this dialogue, PRIA's PRI programme perspective and strategy was explained to them with emphasis on activities that have been undertaken in Himachal Pradesh and particularly in the Kangra district. After PRIA's initial presentation, discussions took place on the major issues affecting the functioning of PRIs such as, the role of government functionaries, utilisation of funds at Panchayat level, attitudinal change among women elected representatives and level of political interference.

The following newspapers were represented in the dialogue-Divya Himachal, Dainil Tribune, Jansatta, Punjab Kesri, Indian Express, The Tribune, Vir Pratap and Ajit Samachar.

### **6.2 Visit to Mandi to follow up Micro Planning work of Kebar Gram Panchayat (May 7-10, 1998)**

PRIA team members visited Mandi to participate in a district level dialogue on PRI issues on May 8, 1998.

PRIA conducted a study on perception of community on urban governance issue. A half day discussion was organised at Mandi on 9th May with Mandi Municipal Counsellors, Municipal staff, concerned citizens and media. During the meeting PRIA team shared the study findings and facilitated the discussion to understand the problem and identify the action plans.

### **6.3 Visit to Kangra, Himachal Pradesh for Panchayat and Finance Study (April 6-9, 1998)**

PRIA team members visited some identified villages with HP-PRI team to conduct pilot surveys on Panchayat and Finance study and Women's leadership study. The team members discussed the findings with HP team and oriented them about the survey procedures and techniques.

### **6.4 Visit to SSK (Lucknow) for Panchayat and Finance Study (April 22-27, 1998)**

PRIA team members visited Lucknow and Behraich district with PRI staffs at SSK to understand the field reality and orient die SSK team for survey procedures.

### **6.5 Workshop on Participatory Planning towards Empowerment of PRIs (May 12-13, 1998)**

The above workshop was part of PRIA's ongoing efforts in strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions in collaboration with NCRSOs. Thus, the participants were mainly staffs of PRIA and RSOs.

The main objective was to consolidate the participatory planning exercises undertaken by each RSO in their respective states and to draw some lessons from these experiences. The workshop centred around three main themes, the process of participatory planning, impact of participatory planning and issues and concerns regarding participatory planning.

The workshop was designed in such a manner that each RSO had an opportunity to share the experiences and issues of concern regarding participatory planning. Among others, Dr.Lohiya from Manavlok, a voluntary organisation in Maharashtra and Ms.Seema Khot from BAIF shared their experiences of working with local communities.

Towards the end of the workshop, papers were prepared by the participants based on the foregoing themes. The papers were a synthesis of participatory planning exercises carried out in the different states.

### **6.6 Seminar on Strengthening Panchayati Raj institutions in India.**

#### **Participatory Planning towards Empowerment of PRIs (May 15, 1998)**

The seminar was organised by PRIA and NCRSOs as a pan of their ongoing programme of strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions. The purpose of the seminar was to share with a wider audience, the lessons learnt and the major issues and concerns related to participatory planning exercises which were undertaken by PRIA and NCRSOs in the nine different states of India.

Three papers were presented:

- Process of participatory Panchayat level planning
- Impact of participatory planning
- Panchayat level planning and implementation; issues and concerns

The seminar was chaired by Dr.N.C.Saxsena, IAS, Secretary, Rural Development, Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment, Government of India.

Some of the major recommendations included in the presentation were that the concept of participatory planning be promoted through the ward-level meetings, flexible funds needed to be made available to Gram Panchayats, collection of taxes by all the three tires be made mandatory and opportunities of learning through sharing be encouraged among Panchayat members.

In his address, Dr. Saxena described the "Gram Sabhas" as the critical unit of development and emphasised the need for empowering Panchayati Raj Institutions throughout the country. He said that the Gram Sabha should be made an independent decision-making body, particularly in the rural areas, for identification beneficiaries from government schemes. He also emphasised the need for collaboration between the government and NGOs for strengthening panchayats. Dr. Saxena also felt it necessary to conduct more studies and share the findings with the government. Other than this, a need was expressed to work intensively in tribal panchayats as well.

Dr. Rajesh Tandon concluded the seminar by reaffirming PRIA and NCRSOs commitment to the cause of strengthening PRIs. He spoke about two research studies that will be undertaken very shortly at the national level, namely, "Women in Panchayats" and "Panchayats and Finance". The findings of these two studies will be shared in a similar seminar.

### **6.7 Visit to UNNATI (Jodhpur) for Panchayat and Finance Study (May 3-6, 1998)**

PRIA team member visited Jodhpur to discuss the Panchayat and Finance Study with UNNATI staff and facilitated the planning for this study. He also visited some Gram Panchayats along with UNNATI staff to experience the field reality and explain the staff about the various possible hurdles in the study process and ways to overcome the same.

### **6.8 Visit to Hyderabad, Pune (July 2-11, 1998)**

PRIA team member visited NIRD and a few NGOs (Lok Sana, CEC, DDS, CDF, BASIX) and individuals who are working on governance issue in the tribal areas.

At Pune, meeting was held with BAIF staff to discuss the possible areas of collaboration. Planning was done on 'Women's Leadership in Panchayat' study in Pune and Thane districts with local organisations at Pune. The Indian Institute of Education (IIE) was visited to discuss their work on Panchayati Raj.

This visit was undertaken as part of PRIA's PRI programmes to expand the work in the new states, build the linkage with new institutions etc.

### **6.9 Visit to CENCORED, Patna and CYSD, Bhubaneswar (June 7-22, 1998)**

PRIA team member visited Patna to provide support in their documentation work on Kishori Panchayat, Paramsakti Programme (women's empowerment programme) and micro planning initiatives.

PRIA team member also visited CYSD, Bhubaneswar to provide on-site support on the Panchayat and Finance study.

### **6.10 Visit to CYSD, Bhubaneswar (July 22-23, 1998)**

PRIA team member visited CYSD to review the PRI programme with PRI team of CYSD and plan for further work. More emphasis was given on the analysis of the reality, in-depth research, studies, documentation and link the study findings with dialogue for formulation of effective rules, procedures, systems for Panchayat bodies. Also discussed were the relevance, purpose and use of participatory planning.

### **6.11 SIDA-Rajasthan Study on the present status of Panchayat members and to identify the training needs for them**

SIDA formed a team of four persons, three from VDO sector and one from Government of Rajasthan and PRIA-PRI coordinator became the team leader of this mission. The team visited six districts in Rajasthan, 15 PS and 35 GPs and interacted with over 500 members of PRIs and many other individuals, organisations, government staff at various levels. Two visits were undertaken for this study; June 23 to 30 and July 28 to August 6, 1998. The report submitted to SIDA.

### **6.12 Visit to West Bengal (August 21-25, 1998)**

To prepare a note on West Bengal Panchayat system, PRIA team member visited West Bengal during this period. Meetings were held with the officials of Panchayati Raj Department and State Institute of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development (SIPRD). The report will be prepared with Prof. Prabhat Datta, Professor of Political Science, University of Calcutta and Advisor to SIPRD. This will be a useful document for PRI members and NGO workers of other states who are active on this issue. They will know both positive aspects and shortcomings of West Bengal Panchayat system. So that they will try to incorporate positive experiences in their activities and learn from the shortcomings.

### **6.13 Media Workshop, Dharan1sala (September 6, 1998)**

As part of our promotional intervention to involve media, PRIA (HP team) organised a one-day meeting with the media, on PRIA's research studies on Panchayati Raj Institution (PRIs). PRIA's research studies on Panchayat Finance and women in Panchayats were discussed with correspondents of ten newspapers. The objective was to sensitise the media about the existing reality of PRIs, with emphasis on the issues mentioned above and to encourage them to disseminate the information to a wider audience. The following newspapers were represented in the workshop - Divya Himachal, Jansatta, Ajit Samachar, Indian Express, Vir Pratap, Punjab Kesari, The Hindustan Times, Times of India, Himachal Kesari and The Hind Samachar.

Major issues that emerged from these studies were- there is very little functional linkage between the three tier of PRI bodies; there exists excessive political interference in fund distribution and dependency of PRIs on government for funds is still very high.

This study also reflected that in almost all the panchayats the funds received by the PRIs were mostly spent on two or three infrastructure facilities. The findings showed a change in the perception, confidence and awareness levels of elected women members since they came to power. However, they still lacked the necessary knowledge, awareness and skills to effectively and independently carry out their roles and responsibilities as PRI members.

### **6.14 One day Workshop on Monitoring of Gram Panchayat by Gram Sabha (September 14, 1998)**

PRIA organised a one-day workshop on issues related to how a Gram Sabha can monitor the functioning of a Gram Panchayat. Experiences were shared by RSOs. The objective of the workshop was to identify a few common, practical and achievable indicators which could be the basis for monitoring the Panchayat functioning. Dr. John Gavanta of IDA, Sussex, Sanjeev Lingaiha of New Economic Foundation, UK and Ms. Kripa, Assistant Programme Officer of IDS project in Karnataka shared their experiences on this issue.

### **6.15 Six-monthly PRI Programme Planning with RSOs (September 15-16, 1998)**

PRIA organised and facilitated two-day PRI programme planning of its joint programme of strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions. During the meeting each organisation prepared six

monthly plans (October 1998--March 1999). Some new systems, procedures regarding accounts, activity reporting were also discussed.

#### **6.16 Visit to SSK, Lucknow (September 23-30, 1998)**

PRIA team member visited SSK to help PRI team to analyse the data and information related to Panchayat and finance study and plan for sharing the findings in district level and state level workshop.

#### **6.17 Workshop with Gram Vikas staff, Orissa (September 21-26, 1998)**

Many VDOs are working towards promoting, strengthening of peoples organisations. Some of them are interested to link these POs with PRIs. Gram Vikas is one such organisation which is interested to link POs with PRIs. All senior staff; project coordinators attended the workshop. In the workshop some theoretical and conceptual discussion took place which helped to build the perspective. Then plan for each project was prepared. PRIA will facilitate and support this process. A report of the workshop was also prepared. .

#### **6.18 Panchayat and Finance Study**

To understand the state of financial devolution to PRIs, a systematic study was undertaken in 5 states (U.P., M.P., H.P., Haryana, Rajasthan, Orissa and Kerala). One district, two Panchayat samiti and couple of Gram Panchayats in each PS were selected for this study. District level dialogue were organised with the study findings. Our findings show that in most of the states PRI were not given adequate financial power/allocation.

Plan for state level workshop were also prepared during the period (state level workshops were held in Kerala on November 24th, Lucknow on December 7th, Bhubaneshwar on December 11th, Bhopal on December 18th and Shimla on December 22nd). State specific draft study report were also prepared. PRIA also undertook a study to understand the status of financial devolution in the states of Karnataka, Maharashtra and West Bengal.

#### **6.19 Study on Decentralised Governance in India**

PRIA team completed the study and submitted the report to UNDP. The study focused on three major areas namely decentralisation as providing the enabling environment for a holistic people centred developmental approach, related institutional mechanism, methods, procedures and systems as promoting sustainable human development and partnership with various stakeholders and their crucial role for the overall success of decentralised governance.

The study was conducted in Madhya Pradesh. The Gram Panchayats of Jamonia Tank (Popularly acknowledged as a success story) and Raipura in Sehore district were intensively case studied for the purpose. A comparative study of the two Panchayats centering around the process of participation and collaboration was undertaken, The need for Capacity Building of various stakeholders (including NGOs and the government) to give thrust to rural development, of elected representatives to take on leadership roles, the empowerment of Gram Panchayat standing communities and making ward level meetings compulsory and also formally regulating these meetings, were some of the major findings.

#### **6.20 Study and Documentation of Participatory Micro-Planning efforts**

Micro-planning was one of the key areas of national support as part of the capacity building efforts. A national level workshop was organised to share the experiences on micro planning with PRI members. NCRSO's experiences of carrying out intensive micro planning exercises with the committee contributed immensely to the process of providing clarity on critical issues in bottom up

Panchayat planning and bringing forth issues that needs to be raised with the government to bring about policy changes. A consolidated document on the subject is Wider preparation.

### **6.21 National Resource Centre on Panchayati Raj**

As regards national support linked to information dissemination, PRIA is working to establish a National Resource Centre. PRIA acquired a number of publications related to panchayats from the government and other sources and disseminated the same to over thirty organisations working on the issues of Panchayati Raj.



## List of Annexures

### Annexure I

#### Trainings/orientation programmes attended by SAMARTHAN staff:

- One day workshop on the Child Environment Project held by UNICEF at Delhi was attended by Leena and Navin.
- Two days workshop on WEEL project at Delhi and exposure visit to Nepal WEEL Project was attended by Leena
- Two days convention by VANI held at Delhi was attended by Amitabh.
- Creative communication workshop was held in the month of August where Bhavana and Narendra attended as resource persons.
- Mahilya Samalchya organised a training on 30<sup>th</sup> November for the Sahiyogini (village workers) and Panchayat representatives. Bhavana and Satyaprakash attended the training as resource persons.
- PRA workshop organised by Shramik Bharti Kanpur was attended by Narendra and Sandeep as resource person.
- Six monthly review meeting of Smile Centres of all over country was organised in Bhopal for three days from 3-4 November. The meeting was coordinated by SAMARTHAN and Bhavana attended the meeting.
- WEEL meeting for the project partners were conducted by PRIA for two days in the month of October, SAMARTHAN co-ordinated the meeting and Leena attended the meeting as resource persons.

A four-day workshop on Marketing management for the rural areas organised by XIDAS, Jabalpur was attended by a staff, Narendra Sharma.

### Annexure 2

#### Trainings conducted by SAMARTHAN:

S.no	Trainings	Number participants	Duration	Objectives
1	Creative Communication workshop	20	3-10 days	To build perspective of the youth on development communication. To enhance their capacities in the area of creative communication.
2	Regional workshop on PRI and participatory development in Vindhya region	40	4 days	To build the perspective of the participants on Panchayati Raj institutions and Participatory development.
3	Process Documentation	30	7 day	To create a common understanding on process documentation. To build the capacities of the participants in documenting process.
4	Mahila Samakhya Sahiyogini Training	55	2 days	To orient the Sahiyogi and the Panchayat representatives on LSG
5	Panchayat and Health	62	1 day	To orient the representatives on leprosy. To plan strategy for health and leprosy awareness in Panchayat

**Annexure 3****List of Collaborating Voluntary Organisation in Haryana:**

- Jan Sewa Kendra: Village Baliacha, P.O. Budin, Block and District Mahendragarh, Haryana
- Mahila Mandal Welfare Society: 2/4 B.C. Bazar, MES, Ambala Cantt., District Ambala, Haryana
- Model Rural Youth Development Organisation: RZB-28, Kamala Park, Najafgarh, Delhi
- Centre for Advancement of Village Economy (CAVE): Village Dhana, Block Salawas, District Jhajjar, Haryana
- Society for Rural Economy and Technical Advancement (SRETA): Village Tehnadipalpur, P.O.: Mastput, Block Jatusan, District Rewari, Haryana
- Chetna Shiksha Samiti: Village and Post Office: Sehlang, Block Kanhina, District Mahendragarh, Haryana.
- Haryana Nav Yuvak Kala Sangam: 443/30 Dev Colony, Rohtak, Haryana

**Annexure 4****Camps organised by PEARL:**

Name of Camps	Date	Venue	No. of Participants	Remarks
Adibasi Swasasan Avm Santhal	8.4.98	Ghatsila	72	Report of the meeting attached
Bhumi Adibasi Avm Paramparagat Swasasan	3.5.98	Nimdih	251	Report of the meeting attached
Pathargadi and meeting on TSG among Munda	6.9.98	Pioskra (Jaldega)	180	Report of the programme and meeting attached

**Annexure 5****Meetings/Workshop attended by PEARL Staffs:**

April 26-27	Ghatsila meeting on Tribal Self Rule
June 5-6	Bihar State Forestry Workshop for setting research priorities organised by forest department sponsored by IEFRE, Dehradun
June 20-21	Media and NGO relationship organised by AGG, Sponsor by VI, New Delhi
July 1-12	Meeting of Jan Andolan at Sisai
August 31-Sept 1	Adivasi Swasasan aur Mahila
September 17-19	National Workshop on "Forest Workers in India: Status, problems, Law and Policies and Movement" at SKIPA, Ranchi
October 9	Seminar on The World Bank Consultation on Approach Paper for revision of operational directive 4.20 indigenous people, organised by BIRD, Ranchi and sponsored by World Bank, New Delhi
	Delli;

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