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A Report on Engaging Civil Society in Initiative towards Democratic Governance in AP

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Acknowledgements

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Abstract

The paper aims to highlight trends and innovations in the programmatic interventions undertaken by PRIA- AP, to engage the civil society in improving the functioning of Institutions of local self - governance in Gram Panchayats and Municipalities, in the districts of Visakhapatnam and Mahabubnagar in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The paper focuses on the progress, achievements, gaps and shortcomings of the citizen leadership programme and, networking & partnership initiatives undertaken in the state of AP to engage the CS, with the overall aim of reforming institutions of local governance.

Case studies, situational analysis, supplements and discussions throw light on the progress achieved towards expected/projected outcomes from the citizen leadership programme and networking & partnership initiatives. It gives an idea of the areas to be revisited, to revitalize the interventions. The study attempts to provide insights and learning's for framing future plans and strategy.

This reflective and analytical study is for the span from April 2003-March 2006 and tries to construct the picture of what has happened in context of the topic of this paper at the PRC, DRC and SRC levels1 over the time frame in AP.

I. Introduction

Local Self-Governance institutions include panchayats and urban local bodies constituted under the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment acts respectively. The CAA's of the Indian Constitution enforced in 1993 provide the framework for constituting democratically elected governance mechanisms at the local level. The provisions in these amendments have some far reaching implications with regard to democratic governance and local development. Provision of one-third reservation for women and proportionate reservation for other socially excluded and deprived sections (women, minorities, tribal, dalits etc) gives scope for the use of enormous potential of the community, in accordance with their needs and aspirations. However, only the proper implementation of the system of local governance (three tier system, gram sabha, functionaries, municipal council, regular elections, DPC) and a people-oriented perspective ensure its effectiveness.

The analysis of the functioning of these local bodies in the past 12 years in India makes it clear that effective local governance is an yet to be accomplished goal. In the context of AP, the hierarchies in the government and its agencies have vested interests and exercise their power to manipulate the use public resources. Devolution of Function, Functionaries and finances that ensures the actual effective implementation of PRIs was lacking. Also the community that was passively dependent for five decades now on the state programs and resources, failed to grasp the importance of local self-governance for their development.

II. Concept and role of the Civil Society

Different perceptions, ideas and meanings arise while trying to understand the concept of civil society. Civil society is seen as an intermediary layer between individuals and families on the one hand and state institutions, on the other. In this formulation, civil society becomes an area for expression of common interests of citizens and for empowering them to collectively articulate them vis-a-vis state institutions. Civil society also has its roots in the growing universal acceptance of free market and private enterprise as engines of economic development. In this formulation, non-state actors are private sector, state is the public sector and the third sector is conceptualized as the civil society. Civil society can also be equated to the process of democratization in political structures and systems. Civil society and Governance. (Rajesh Tandon, Ranjita Mohanty. PRIA-2002).

Civil society and citizen engagement are essential to critique the state, ensure accountability, amplify the voice of the marginalized and where necessary support the state in meeting the aspirations of people. The state remains the central actor in governance but needs to be flanked and guarded by a vibrant civil society. It includes the voluntary organizations, small and medium NGOs, educational institutions, media etc. and any form of loose organizations in the community. CSOs also include SHGs, citizen leaders, citizen's collectives, ERs, village committees, women and dalit networks at mandal levels promoted by PRIA in its intervention sites. It is an association of like- minded individuals on an issue, who actively involve in creating peoples/institutional forums to address problems in the larger interests of community. It is one of the pillars of the society along with the Market and the State.

III. Deriving strategies for promoting effective LSG

Governance is defined as the joint responsibility of the state, market and citizens to mobilize public resources and promote public decision making towards the advancement of common public good.

The 73rd CAA has created the Panchayati Raj Institutions in the rural areas and 74th CAA has constituted Municipalities as local bodies in the urban areas where locally elected representatives from those areas can bring forth and address issues through the LSG Institutions. In reality, representation of needs and aspirations of the larger public -'the have nots' fails to translate into participation in decision making, reformative policies, fair implementation of schemes and sectoral development due to power differences, caste, political and class dynamics. There is need for every citizen to be aware of his/her rights, in order to represent his/her/community interests. Only then there is scope for LSG Institutions to work effectively to fulfill needs of the people in their struggle for development.

1. One of PRIA's objectives uses this logic to involve in engaging Civil Society in the form of citizen leadership and various forms of networks, committees towards reforming governance institutions, by the use of participatory mechanisms. Participatory methods, capacity building workshops and training modules for improving people's participation in institutions of local self- governance have been developed at PRIA. These are being implemented through its field level interventions with the community, Elected Representatives (ERs), Citizen Collectives (CCs) and PRI functionaries.

2. Also, in order to create civil society organizations that work actively in the field, there is need for networking and partnership of larger/ experienced NGOs with small and medium NGOs, ERs, VO's, and CCs. This will lead to increasing outreach in the community on issues of democratic governance. Clarity of purpose, perspective, commitment, resource sharing, collaborations and mutual trust are important components in such a relationship.

The representative form of democracy creates a distance between state institutions and their decision making from the individuals who are relatively powerless. Building solidarity and associations across citizens help them to mediate and negotiate their aspirations and interests with the state. This analysis supports PRIA's focus on CSB. The annual plan prepared by PRIA has projects and various interventions under it for Civil Society Building.

The CSB process is being carried out mainly through

1.Identifying, orienting of citizen leaders and formation of citizen leaders networks, ERs Networks, citizen collectives, network of NGOs

2. Building capacities and skills of women, SHGs, CLs, CCs, ERs and CNs.

3. Orienting citizen leaders and ERs and their networks on ways to work on local development issues through panchayats
3. Improving capacities of small and medium NGOs to work better / on issues of governance

4. Fostering partnerships with NGOs, VOs and CBOs to increase outreach

The perspectives behind building civil society and involving other CSOs are

- ✓ The interventions when carried out solely through PRIA will not have its **reach** beyond certain areas where it undertakes direct interventions.
- ✓ **People's representation** can be organized through formation of CNs, CLs, CCs, ERs and **peoples action** through building their capacities
- ✓ There is need for NGOs to act in the interests of the people and **address** local development issues through local bodies to improve functioning of LSG institutions.
- ✓ It has been realized that **expertise and familiarity** of local NGOs would be very beneficial in order to implement these already developed methodologies/programmes (citizen leadership) in their field areas.

At the DRC level planning, the PRC animator, the partner NGOs participates in the making of the periodic plans, where there is a review of activities undertaken and what should follow next. One observation is that the projects are more or less constant over the time span and the interventions are to be developed from time to time. If the interventions in the forthcoming quarter are not the strategic and logical follow up of the previous activities then the overall impact of the project and fulfilling the vision of the programme in the long-term is at risk.

Table 1: Shows the Initiatives towards CSB and engaging CS, that reflect the long-term vision

Approach to engage different actors (urban and rural)	Towards Long-term Vision to be accomplished
At DRC and PRC levels	**Interventions and trends**
Women	**Awarness** about Panchayat functioning and importance of gram sabha, ward sabha and functioning of municipalities. How to address water and sanitation, health, social issues etc through the panchayat. **Participation** in micro plans and MGS to ensure women representation **Information** about development schemes for women (during pregnancy) elderly
Citizen leaders (in village and ward level)	**Role** of citizen leaders in LSGI **Awarness** about Panchayat functioning and imp ortance of gram sabha, ward sabha and functioning of muncipalities. **Information** about development schemes like NFFW, SWAJALDHARA, RTI APREGP and whom to approach **Participation** in micro plans and GSM How to address water and sanitation, health, social issues etc through the panchayat **Capacity building** to motivate them to raise issues and address them through their participation in gram sabha **Building their capacities** to interact with officials at mandal and zilla level. **Vision building exercises, conflict resolution, sustainability** for CLs and networks

SHGs networks (in village and ward level)	**Orientation** to women on Panchayat functioning, provisions for women and importance of gram sabha, ward sabha and functioning of muncipalities. **Capacity building** to motivate them to raise issues and address them through their participation in gram sabha **Engage** them in GSM, preparation of micro plans **Building their capacities** to interact with officials at mandal and zilla level. **Providing them information** on different schemes they can avail through the panchayat **Forming networks** to increase out reach for information dissemination

	Strengthening networks through vision building, conflict resolution and exposure visits
Dalits (men and women) Networks	Orienting them about the **provisions for the SC, ST populations** in the panchayat and functioning of muncipalities, importance of ward sabha and gram sabha. **Building their capacities** to interact with officials at mandal and zilla level. **Providing information** about the special provisions for dalits under development schemes and their rights Building their capacities to **raise and address their issues** through gram sabhas and by meeting officials. Strengthening networks through vision building, conflict resolution and exposure visits
ERs (Sarpanchs and Ward Members, ward councilors) Networks	Awareness about Panchayat act and functioning (3 tier system) and importance of gram sabha, ward sabha and functioning of muncipalities. Involving them in GSM and implementation of Micro plans Orienting them about their roles and responsibilities **Building their capacities** to attend panchayat meetings and interact with officials at mandal and zilla level **Providing them information** on different schemes in the panchayat Building their capacities to **raise and address their issues** through gram sabhas and by meeting officials Strengthening networks through vision building, conflict resolution and exposure visits
Community	Awarness about Panchayat functioning (3 tier system) and importance of gram sabha and functioning of muncipalities and importance of ward sabha. Involving them in GSM and implementation of Micro plans **Providing them information** on different schemes in the panchayat
Advisory committee	An Advisory committee was formed to provide advice towards the activities of PRC at Padmanabham To mobilize and motivate people to attend meetings

NGOs (rural and urban)	Awarness about dealing with GOVERNANCE ISSUES Panchayat act and functioning (3 tier system), importance of gram sabha and the functioning of muncipalities Building partnerships and networks with other NGOs Establishing PRCs at partner NGO locations and Involving them in PRI, CSB and URBAN **Building their capacities** to interact with officials at mandal and zilla level Building their skills, capacities through workshops/trainings, providing technical
At the SRC level	Conduct of workshops in each quarter, relevant to build skills, capacities and perspectives of the partner NGOs and other NGOs. Thematic and material support towards the CSB workshops being held at DRC, PRC. C B workshops for panchayat/muncipal functionaries at the state level Preparation of material and training modules for CSB workshops at DRC level Conduct of research studies and documentation that helps in preparation of CB and training Modules. Creating a CSO platform for PEVAC through liasoning and resource sharing Identifying and interacting with various local NGOs at state level Attending workshops and trainings conducted by local NGOs and familiarizing with their work. Providing Thematic support regarding CSB initiatives at DRC, PRC Building partnerships and networks with NGOs at state level Organizing talks, conferences, lectures and panel discussions governance issues at the state level with participants from NGOs, Universities, institutions and state.

IV. Profile of SRC-Hyderabad, DRCs and PRCs in AP

SRC-Hyderabad

The State Resource Center located in Hyderabad is at the meso level and renders itself to CSB activities with local CSOs and urban Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad and also builds linkages with state level panchayat and municipal functionaries. The feedback of the already held workshops is encouraging, and PRIA is recognized as a provider of quality & comprehensive trainings on various development sector related issues and local governance.

A series of **4 Capacity building programmes** per each quarter of the annual plan are taken up for small and medium NGOs from various locations in AP and partner NGOs in order to orient them to a wide range of latest developments in the sector. For e.g. workshops on gender mainstreaming, and process monitoring, networking, partnership building and advocacy. Training programmes to improve the skill base and provide technical inputs to the NGOs are also initiated. For e.g. training workshop on Proposal writing, process documentation and maintenance of accounts.

The linkages with **various departments in the Panchayati Raj** at the state level have been established in a collaborative, partnership and facilitative manner. Innovations in the form of informative Posters, radio programmes, videocassettes, publications, pamphlets, IEC material have been developed at the SRC level in some level of linkage with the various departments like APARD, SEC, SFC, CPR etc. the level of rapport built is being improved through regular consultation with the members from these institutions. PRIA-SRC will have to take up more of such initiatives in publication of resource material, posters and innovations. The next stage will be when PRIA will be able to influence, collaborate closely with the state level functionaries in real sense and spirit.

The linkages with **academicians** from various departments of Universities have been built to undertake their help in research studies and consultations. These academicians are invited to relevant workshops as resource persons, for panel discussions to obtain feedback and gain visibility for PRIA and its participative methodologies.

The linkages and liaison activities are in progress at the state level through interactions with the functionaries in the municipality like the municipal chairman and commissionaire and ward councilors. PEVAC platforms are built at the municipality to ensure free and fair elections in the ward in collaboration with few departments of the state, which is useful at the district levels. An observation is that an intervention like SWM and Birth and death registration can also be conducted at state level as part of CSB-urban.

As we know, the state and NGOs are like the two sides of a coin and the role played by PRIA at the state level should be very strategic, to gain acceptance from the state functionaries to a certain extent.

DRC-Visakhapatnam

In the Visakhapatnam district of AP, PRIA works through 4PRC's located at Padmanabham, Anandapuram, G-Madugula mandals on the development issue of health & water and sanitation, and in Anakapalle and Bheemli Muncipalities on water and sanitation, solid waste management and birth and death registration. In each of the PRCs, the interventions are carried out intensively in 5GPs and extensively in 5GPs. **The interventions carried under the three broad themes of PRI, CSB and urban effectively lead to engaging CS in governance issues.**

The PRC located in Padmanabham started off in the year 2002 and the initial CSB efforts were towards creating a database of the profile of GPs in Padmnabham mandal and respective sarpanchs, panchayat secretaries and ward members. Subsequently, the 5 GPs of Potnuru, Chinnapuram, Redipalli, tunivalasa, Padmnabham were selected, as intensive areas for PRIA's interventions and the other 16 GPs are the extensive areas.

In Anandapuram, the PRC location is in the organization SANJEEVANI (Adavivaram) and work was started on governance issues in partnership since April 2004, when PRIA identified this NGO working in the Anandapuram mandal. PRI and CSB activities were started in the 5 GPs of Cherlapalem, Mavidilova, Mukundapuram, Mucherla and Kusulavada where the partner NGO was already carrying out its activities.

In G-Madugula the PRC is in the field office of the partner organization VIKASA and works in 5 Padas in the PESA areas on documenting the working of traditional panchayats and identifying probable intervention areas for PRIA.

The work in Anakapalle town is carried out in 22nd ward intensively and extensively in the 31st ward. The Urban PEVAC-2005 was carried out in an innovative manner with the support of a network of local NGOs, ward members and citizen leaders. The main highlight was the setting up an information booth during the municipal elections for clarification of queries.

DRC- Mahabubnagar

PRIA has started work through the PRC located in **Khillaghanpur in the year 2002** and has contemplated phasing it out by the end of the 2nd quarter of the 2005-06 and hand it over to the citizens network. The phasing out is yet in progress at the location. Interventions had been carried out in the Gram Panchayats of Mohmadhusseinpalli, Mavidimada, Mannajipeta, Rukkanapalli and Khillaghanpur for holding MGS, conducting micro plans and building linkages with mandal and district officials. PRIA staff carried out interventions directly with the community through formation of citizen leaders and working towards development issues at the panchayat level.

PRC 2 ECO CLUB, located in Mahabubnagar has its field office in Shadnagar in Kondurg Mandal and is working in the Gram Panchyats of Srirangapur, Chinnaelkicherla, Parvathapur, Chegireddiganpur and Tekulapalli. The interventions related to identifying citizen leaders is being carried out and capacity building programmes are in progress.

PRC 3 SPARSHA Rural Development Society has been identified as a partner NGO in the year

2002 and works in collaboration with PRIA on PRI and CSB themes in 5 intensive Panchayats of Kodair, Nagulapalli, Tigalapalli, Konravpalli and Pasupula in Kodair mandal. Here, the citizen leaders network and ERs network have been formed but constraints are faced while taking the next step i.e. using the capacities in actually identifying and addressing issues. According to coordinator of SPARSHA, voluntarily taking forward the networks without a monetary compensation is not seen as a popular idea. Or one may surmise that the foundation orientation, perspective and ongoing motivation to the networks is lacking.

PRC 4 CONARE is a partner NGO with its field office in Achampet Mandal and is working in the Gram Panchyats of Ramajipalli, Ananthavaram, Godal, Lakshmipalli and Banala. Here the activities are not gaining momentum because of the threat of naxalism. It is very difficult to organize gram sabhas, networks or meetings due to this reason. The DRC staff is exploring the option of shifting the PRC location to Banala whe re the situation is more conducive to work on governance related issues.

PRC-2, 3,4 are the partner NGOs to whom PRIA provides thematic support, resource material, financial support and pays to maintain a local animator. In turn they work on governance issues in collaboration with PRIA and follow documentation, accounting and administrative systems. The interventions are undertaken according to the quarter plan developed by PRIA, in discussion with partner organizations.

V. Focus on the process of engaging Civil Society in the AP Context

I.The first focus in **the intervention areas was on identifying and creating citizen leaders and then Networks of CLs, women, SHGs, ERs, Sarpanchs** . In each of the GPs 10--15 CLs were identified and workshops were carried out to orient them on the 1993 CAA and PRIs. At the same time SHG women (CCs), ERs and Sarpanchs were also identified and rapport was built with them. Later, workshops to build their capacities and leadership skills, to interact with officials by provision of information about the various developmental schemes and procedures for the implementation was undertaken.

Supplements:

In the intervention areas **CLs, women and SHG networks** were formed so as to involve them in monitoring the panchayat functioning. CB workshops were conducted with them to build their capacities and educate them about the 3-tier GP and the development schemes available to women and children through the panchayat. They were encouraged to participate in microplans and follow it up in the

mandatory Gram sabhas. Also the need for women to come as a pressure group to influence the spending of panchayat funds was focused in the meetings. Meetings are held to orient regarding any new scheme, act enforced by the state and how they can avail of the benefits.

With regard to **Capacity building workshops for ERs**, they mainly focus on making them aware of the provisions under the panchayat/municipal acts and what are their roles and responsibilities. One has to note that these workshops catered to women ERs, ERs belonging to SC/ST, sarpanch networks, councilors network, panchyat secretaries of the GP individually or as a group meeting based on the agenda of the workshop. The information dissemination is on importance of Gram sabha, ward sabha, preperation and follow- up of microplans, use of panchayat/muncipal funds, existing development schemes and their implementation, who are the officials at mandal and district level to be approached.

In case of ERs belonging to SC/ST they are informed about the provision for reservation exclusively for them in PRIs (to increase their partcipation in the political arena and decision making) and various special development schemes for the SC/ST. Capacity Building and awareness about their roles and responsibility helps them to overcome their suppression and represent the SC/ST sections in their locality.

In Mahabubnagar and padmanabham, Sarpanch networks were formed on demand in the year 2003 to provide them inputs on the 73rd CAA and their roles and responsibilities, to share and address their problems in discharging their duties.

Case studies of vibrant Citizen Leaders

a) Chinnapuram GP of padmanabam mandal, in Visakhapatnam district has given a seething proof of what committed, confident CLs can achieve. This GP was considered as one of the backward areas in the mandal. For the past two years, the people were not aware of the panchayat meetings and only the sarpanch and panchayat secretary did the village planning.

Over the two years after PRIA had taken Chinnapuram as an intensive GP, the citizen leadership programme was initiated, meetings and workshops orienting about the 73rd CAA, the three-tier panchayat system, the importance of gram sabha were carried out with ERs, CL, CCS and information was disseminated on the schemes available through the panchayat. The citizen leaders who were identified in this process were made an active part in all the meetings (CD shows, micro plan, peoples forums) and they were empowered on the governance issues. They realized the importance of people's participation to ensure that panchayts function effectively.

Mr Pentayya is an active citizen leader identified by PRIA, who believes that information and knowledge of what is happening around us, outside the village is essential to make proper use of resources. He obtains information from the sarpanch of the village on the panchayat plans and allocation of funds and disseminates information to others in the village. He also regularly visits the mandal office at padmanabham and updates himself on the new schemes being initiated and what could be his/community role in its proper implementation. But he still faces some constraints – for E.G. During his visit to the mandal office, he had known that, through an ICDS project there was provision for building an Anganwadi center in their GP. He had enquired with the sarpanch, secretary and mandal officials but he got no response from them at all in this regard. Also during selection of women from the GP for the helper post (ANM) he had informed eligible, experienced women to apply for the post, but the it was given to a woman who was not eligible and inexperienced. Never the less he has taken on the spirit of the citizen leadership programme and moves on with same energy.

This is a stage where he feels that there is need for people to come together as pressure groups to address such issues on a continuing basis. Maybe it's the time to involve him to facilitate the formation of such a network.

Mrs. Pydithallamma2 (Chinnapuram) is a dynamic woman citizen leader, who is very resourceful and believes that group efforts can achieve a lot. She contributed a lot to ensure proper implementation of the midday meal scheme in the local school by motivating the parents and teachers to form informal monitoring committiees and making surprise visits to ensure quality food is being provided.

She explains her strategy behind this, that these committees are informal groups of parents and teachers who are the primary stakeholders for the issue and they have a stake i.e. their children's nutritional needs. It is obvious that she helped them to build stake and hence make them sustain the committee. She hopes to make it a tradition to have mid day meals monitoring committee constituted year after year.

Mrs. Ramanamma (chinnapuram) is active member of a DWACRA-SHG at GP level and Mahila samahya at the mandal level and attends the meetings regularly as she understands that mutual sharing of ideas, information and motivation takes place through discussions. She acts as a connecting link for the SHGs in the GP and the mandal level officials.

This link helps her to disseminate information regarding the various developments happening with regard to SHGs at the mandal level, any loans that can be obtained etc. the SHG women show interest to attend informal meetings called by her out of interest. The information she provides is useful for them immediately and they are ready to fight for it. Hence a learning for PRIA that whatever information we provide, it should be in a way that it is easy to understand and is useful act on. Our strategy should change accordingly without compromising on the information we want to provide on governance issues.

Mrs. Kondamma (chinnapuram) exudes leadership among the women in the SHG and the GP. She attended all the meetings organized by PRIA and says she has found another way to move her group forward i.e. use the women's 'group pressure' to handle Social issues. In order to address livelihood issues of women in the village, she gave a call to the women to coordinate and pressurize the Sarpanch and mandal officials to start a milk center at the village. This ensures that SHG women can sell the cattle's milk, earn a livelihood and contribute to savings. In order to prevent any corruption at the milk booth, they appointed an educated woman to maintain the accounts and showed her a source of livelihood within the village. These women have attended the two Women's Day Celebrations held at Visakhapatnam and shared their experiences.

b) Anakapalle is a town in Visakhapatnam district where the DRC started its urban initiatives in the year 2004.

The citizen leaders identified have played a pro-active role in the Urban PEVAC 2005 in the mobilization for the various interface meetings, information dissemination meetings on importance of free and fair voting. The citizen leaders played their role in the respective wards by motivating the community to decide among themselves who was fit to contest from among themselves so as to ensure a good leader and hence better leadership. However no follow up was done on a regular basis through CSB initiatives in urban (CLs or initiatives to start a network) to sustain them once PEVAC ended. A relevant observation is that the huge event of PEVAC-2005 that can be seen as an entry point was not fully utilized in this location.

Mrs. Lakshmi is a vocal, educated citizen leader who involves herself in all the meetings organized by PRIA at anakapalle. She participated in the death and birth registration rally and the information booth during PEVAC. She has attended the IWD celebration-2006 and interacted with the guest speaker, Vizag entrepreneur Ms Indira and expressed desire to start an enterprise of her own through her SHG.

Ms Padmaja is a 17- year-old, studying intermediate in a local college in Anakapalle. She is also the young girl who created history in the Anakapalle municipality as the youngest ever to file the nominations as a candidate for the municipality elections-2005. She is a resident of Ward number 34 in Anakapalle municipality. It is a slum consisting of over crowded shacks and huts; most of the people

are from the Scheduled Caste community. PRIA carried out a series of meetings, interactions and interface meetings with the community as part of PEVAC.

During PEVAC, Padmaja took time from her studies to actively take part in the meetings organized by PRIA in the ward. She also joined meetings taken up by women leaders with the SHGs, and was motivated by their commitment. At the time of the nominations, Padmaja decided to contest in the elections. Her young mind expressed that she wanted to develop the ward with all the facilities like water, sulabh complex, good school etc. She gave a call to the youth in the community to contest for the up-coming elections to rule out the inefficient and non-performing politicians and to bring in new leadership.

A factor that contributed to padmaja's dream to represent her community through the elections was that most of the women voters in the ward supported in canvassing and voted for her. This shows that new leadership is emerging in the ward level/municipalities and that more women want to elect the representatives whom they trust without compulsion or other vested interests.

c) **Mrs. Meera Bai** from mahabubnagar was actively involved in rendering services to the community and helped many families in availing benefits under different schemes of the government at the village level. She disseminates information about new schemes towards helping the needy and the poor at the ward level to improve their conditions. She is dynamic and outspoken in various matters relating to the municipality level functioning. During PEVAC meetings focusing on need to elect a deserving candidate the women actively discussed regarding the matter. The women groups and the community in general saw in Meera Bai a leader who understood their needs and could do much to improve their conditions. Mrs. Meera Bai has wide support in the ward and particularly women want her to contest during the election and promised full support to her.

This is an encouraging achievement of PEVAC and recognition of meera bai's commitment. The CL programme initiated in Mahabubnagar and the PEVAC was a combination that brought a deserving candidate out of meera bai. Considering that she has involved herself in voluntary activities for over 25 years and for 3 years as citizen leader with PRIA she is referred to as a senior citizen leader in recognition of this fact.

II. The partnership building and networking initiatives at the DRC level are mainly required to involve CSOs into dealing with governance issues in rural and urban areas along with their area of work. Creating and updating of CBO, VO, NGO lists and making efforts to find areas, where work on governance can be carried on as collaborative efforts is attempted as part of networking. Partnerships are built at the PRC level in order to increase the reach to the grassroots community. PEVAC is one platform where the partner NGOs have been able to participate effectively at SRC, DRC and PRC. These associations are now going to be used during rural PEVAC 2006.

Case study 1:

SPARSHA, Kodair is an NGO managed by Mr P.Narsimha Rao who is a local journalist and a self-confessed communist. He attended a training workshop organized by PRIA and showed keen interest to work in collaboration with PRIA on governance issues and the partnership came alive in the year 2002. The NGO started work on people's issues characteristic to his village like poverty, illiteracy, migration, drought, hunger deaths of farmers, child labor and fight for minimum wages. Now SPARSHA works in 5 intensive locations ward wise with women, elders, youth and elected representatives and disseminate information about PRI. ERs, SHG women and CLs are motivated to involve in GSM, preparation of microplans and meetings on proper implementation of NFFW programme in their area.

Through the CSB interventions, CLs were identified and networks are formed in few GPs to discuss issues and supervise implementation of the schemes. The SHG groups also attend the orientation workshops on PRI issues. The prioritized problems have been addressed at the panchayat level

through the involvement of ERS and CLs in case of issuing of ration cards, grants for pucca houses and payment of old age pension.

It is interesting that Mr Narsimha uses conventional wisdom and enterprising ideas to pressurize the panchayat and mandal officials to discharge their duties. In an instance he had advised a group of villagers and citizen leaders who approached the mandal office to obtain caste certificates but were facing difficulties, to set up their makeshift cooking stoves in front of the mandal office and let out smoke into the place. The mandal officials relented and processed the certificates by taking the hint. In another instance the women folk were facing water shortage and repeated pleas to the water works department did not yield a result. He advised the women to go as a group and break earthen pots in protest. The visibly shaken Assistant Engineer made quick arrangements for the bore repair. An interesting observation is, Mr.Narsimha pointed out that there were 1 or 2 women among the group who were daring and so could take the group forward.

On the other hand, during interaction with partner NGOs (Sajeevani, CONARE) and attending a partner's assessment (SPARSHA, Kodair) it was observed that the there are some pitfalls in their functioning like

1. Not maintaining proper records of meetings held and documentation of the meetings

2. Time lags in conducting microplans, GSM, CB workshops, meetings of ERs, follow up with CLs and Networks.

3. Lacking understanding of the perspective behind the programme/activity

4. Not submitting the accounts on time

5. In some locations where they are unable to carry out GSM, meetings and discussions due to naxile threats, political pressures, they need to think of alternative strategies.

6. Facing time constraints, as they have to carry out the activities in PRIA plan along with their core activities.

These assessment points can be used to assess their performance and work towards improving the partnership functioning or exploring new partnerships.

Case study 2:

During the interaction with Mr. Sanyasi Rao- animator (SANJEEVANI) one could feel that there was vagueness in what was proposed in the quarter plans for the PRC and what was actually done at the field towards CSB. Ms Santoshi explained that in the initial year and half of partnership, due to financial constraints of the partner NGO, there was no animator designated exclusively for PRIA to work on PRI and CSB issues in the GPs. Hence the PRI and CSB interventions were carried out by the staff of Sanjeevani itself, along with their work related to Vana Samrakshana Samitis and environment issues. It is clear that where the intervention activities were facilitated by staff from PRIA-DRC there are documents of what has been done and the follow up required. In case of the other interventions which Sanjeevani as a partner organization had undertaken like Gram Sabha Mobilization, preperation and presenting of Micro Plans, information dissemination, identification of CLs seem to be fragmented, with time lags, no proper follow up, lacked perspective and proper documentation reports.

To remedy the situation, a local animator has been appointed in the month of January to work exclusively on PRIA related interventions. The DRC staff has realized that they have to make at least monthly visits and provide them thematic support and help them maintain the basic systems (reports, documentation and maintenance of accounts) to improve the situation.

VI. Reflection analysis (Annexure Provided)

Engaging Civil Society (2003-2006) aims at:

1. Promoting the concept of citizen leaders at GP level to work at the grassroots level and formation of Citizen leaders network at mandal and district level for influencing mandal and district panchayat officials on PRI issues was envisaged.

2. At a parallel level, training and capacity building of Elected Representatives of PRIs and UGIs was carried out to improve the capacities of the representatives of PRI and UGIs so that they are aware of their duties and responsibilities and are also equipped with skills to discharge them.

3. Also, capacity building of small and medium NGOs and citizen collectives (SHGs, Youth groups etc) was done to strengthen the skills and capabilities of CSOs and create partnership ties.

Each of the three activities mentioned above are interlinked and contribute to each other's output, but can be demarcated to a certain extent. The first two activities correspond to sensitizing the community on governance issues and capacity building of Elected Representatives in PRIs and UGIs respectively. The third activity aims at partnership and network building (increasing outreach) and to strengthen and engage civil society organizations (CCs, CBOs and VO s) actively in working towards development issues. But in order to do the first two activities that form the field interventions of PRIA the third activity is essential and is an ongoing process.

If we look into the current status (2005-2006) of the various networks formed and the statistics of active CLs and the partners assessments, the situation is apprehensive. The networks that were envisioned to develop stronger ties and move towards sustainability over the years are moving ahead in some areas but disintegrating, falling apart and far from the goal of sustainability in some of the intervention sites.

For e.g. in Padbhanabham, the members of the women, sarpanch, ER network formed in 2004 have met formally only two times with DRC staff facilitation. Later on they have met informally and the attendance is low and the content of discussion and follow up action is meager. The reasons are migration of members due to marriage and employment, constraints of time and wage work and threat from political sphere. Here there is scope for rethinking strategies and creating alternatives to continue in that direction.
In the Balamoor mandal (PRC-4, CONARE) villagers do not come forward to be citizen leaders or form networks, as there is a threat of naxalism.

In anandapuram (PRC1 SANJEEVANI) the absence of an animator who could work exclusively on PRI and CSB issues and due to time constraints of the staff at the PRC created a situation of vagueness and meager outputs are seen even after a year and half of work with PRIAs partnership.

Supplement 1:

In the 5 GPs, citizen leaders have been identified and oriented on the concept of citizen leadership and they are given information on the 73rd CAA and other schemes of the government. The CSB activities chalked to be carried out by DRC at the PRC like capacity building workshops for CLs, ERs are being handled. But proper coordination between the DRC interventions and PRC interventions in CSB themes are lacking. For e.g. the various Capacity building workshops are carried on at DRC level but the animators in Sanjeevani and DRC staff are unable to ensure that citizen leaders involve in bringing

forth issues, hold CLs meetings, link with mandal and district levels. They are unable to fulfill the goal of all the interventions i.e. to build and engage citizen leaders to be pro active.

To address this gap, while implementing the Citizen leaders programme in Dumbriguda, conducted

2-4 meetings for the process of identification of citizen leaders Programmes for CB of citizen leaders have been initiated and rounds of meetings are being held to orient them about formation of networks and addressing development issues/water and sanitation issue through it. Here, the CSB interventions implementation process has been done keeping in view the aim that ultimately the CLs and network should voluntarily work for the community. Motivation of SHG women has also been initiated to form network to address women's issues. In this case, the participation levels of the tribals is good because the perspective was conveyed to them clearly and follow up is done promptly.

Supplement 2:

In Ganpur mandal, Mahabubnagar it was realized that due to reasons of migration, political influence and fading of motivation levels, the women, CL and ER networks were disintegrating and not meeting regularly. The CL network will have to monitor proper functioning of panchayat body and create linkages with mandal and district levels through raising and addressing issues in meetings. Once the network ceases the essence of the work is lost.

In order to rejuvenate the CL programme and citizen networks, vision-building exercises, conflict resolution exercises were taken up with the main objective of making the network members visualize why they have come together and what they can achieve as a group. If they are convinced of the positives of carrying on as vibrant group, then how they can contribute to the group's sustainability was discussed. These exercises bring back the focus of the CLs, ERs and women, SC/ST groups to work towards the goals set by them through the exercises.

The partner's assessment reports for (2004-2006) providing feedback and information on the various dimensions of the working relations have to be studied to be able to provide relevant instructions to the partner organizations and the DRC. This will bring some positive changes in the way of work and perspective of the partner NGO and PRIA.

This also points out to the need for increasing liasoning and linkage building with local NGOs at DRC-level in order to understand and familiarize with their work, systems and also to explore probability of new partnerships.

Supplement :

Database of local NGOs and NGOs in the DRC locations are maintained at the SRC -Hyderabad in the process of holding a series of Capacity Building workshops (process documentation, gender main streaming, proposal writing, maintaining accounts etc) for small and medium NGOs from Hyderabad and DRC locations. The linkages are built by inviting them to workshops and interacting with them.
In a recent 3- day workshop held in Ramanthapur with resource person from NRC on networking, partnership building and advocacy the members from various NGOs showed interest in PRIAs worked shared their desire to work with PRIA in future.

Also during pre PEVAC -2005 efforts, an NGO platform was created to actively participate in working with the community. These associations are strengthened and renewed now and used to make the forthcoming rural PEVAC-2006 a success.

VII. Conclusion

Overall, it is observed that where the programmatic interventions lacked perspective or long term vision, there the CLs, CNs, ER networks, CC networks are slowly disintegrating and fading away despite the efforts and resources invested. Here it is worth mentioning that the vision building exercises, conflict resolution techniques and discussions on visions of sustainability that are being taken up with CLs and various networks in Mahabubnagar are addressing this trend being observed. In Visakhapatnam the process seems stuck at still trying to sustain the networks without taking any steps towards trying to help the people to do so through relevant exercises to motivate and rejuvenate the associations.

VII. Recommendations

➢ Through field visits to both locations to understand the progress and functioning of CLs, ERs and networks, it has been realized that the progress is at a stage where the initial enthusiasm is fading. Hence it is time to rejuvenate and strengthen the CLs, CCs, ERs and their networks to help the community carry it forward to the next stage of sustainability. Vision building exercises, conflict resolution exercises and focus on sustainably of networks have to be carried out in this direction.

➢ Referring to the learning from the case study of Mrs. Pydithallamma there is need to build stake among the CLs, ERs, Women who are part of networks, so that they own the network and make moves to sustain it. The DRCs have to play an active role in identifying issues and placing them before the network and build their stake on a continuing basis.

➢ With reference to the case study of Mrs. Ramanamma, a learning fo r PRIA is that whatever information we provide, it should be in a way that it is easy to understand and is useful act on. The DRC/SRC strategy should change accordingly, without compromising on the information we want to provide on governance issues.

➢ The CLs and Networks have to realize that after the initial capacity building and trainings their potential is at a higher level and they have to use the potential. Factors that improve and increase the consistence in the performance of the CLs or Networks have to be explored. These factors (monetary compensation, recognition, appreciation, commitment, patriotism, semi-formalisation) then have to be implemented to rejuvenate the CSB initiatives.

➢ Need for better coordination between the DRC staff - PRC animators. From the experiences of the citizen leadership programmes, it has been observed that there is a gap in the coordination between the DRC staff and the PRC-animator. There is a change in the animators' role from what it was 3 years ago, as the interventions are progressing. Hence, the role of animators needs to be re- looked into and changes made. The change in role and new responsibilities of the animator has to be oriented to them.

For E.g.

1. The animators are not maintaining reports of the activities they are undertaking with the CLs, CCs and the community.
2. Need for the brief field notes of daily activities, apart from monthly reports

3. Maintenance of time diaries is important for noting down reminders and appointments

4. Need to provide regular feedback/follow- up at the DRC and the community end

5. In order to help them understand the focus of the activities being undertaken, they may be asked to provide regular feedback at the DRC

6. They might be having various assumptions and biases regarding the local people, which have to be worked at through appropriate sensitizing workshops.

7. In certain instances the animator limits his work to reporting and coordinating with the DRC only. He also needs to make regular visits across the 5GPs to maintain the continuity of work.

➢ At the DRC level, prompt and periodic support to the partners for their interventions is lacking. This may be due to time and accessibility constraints and proper mechanisms have to be adopted to remedy this situation.

➢ In cases where partnerships are not functioning properly despite thematic support and financial support from PRIA s side, efforts have to be made to assess the problem areas, degree of compatibility and work at it. In case the partnership compatibility does not improve after efforts it is better to terminate and explore new partnerships. For this purpose, ongoing liaisons and networking with NGO, VOs and CBOs are essential.

➢ May be due to time constraints, the documentation of interventions, yearly & biannual plans and the reviews of the same, case studies and other interesting clippings are not filed and maintained at the DRC. There is need for improvement in this trend, as documents are useful as references and provide ideas and innovations for use in future situations. They also provide clarity of what level of work is being taken up till then, even to complete new entrants at the DRC.

➢ There is also need for formal mutual sharing of experiences, workshops and interfaces with regard to CL programme, trends in social issues, progress of networks and other innovations taken up to act as a means of increasing interactions between both the DRCs.

➢ At the DRC level in AP, the liasoning and networking initiatives with local NGOS, CBOs and VO s is very limited. They limit it to the partners at the PRC locations. At the DRC Vizag, they do not have a database of NGOs as yet and same is the case at mahabubnagar. The interaction with other NGOs in the area and attending meetings and workshops organized by them is essential to build networking ties and gain exposure for PRIAs activities. The liasoning with CBOs, VO s and small and medium NGOs in the locality in the urban locations is limited to PEVAC interventions only.

➢ The DRC staff mention that frequent change of staff, burden of reports and fieldwork hamper their desire to make innovations in the way they work. Proper mechanisms (workshops on time management, scope for use of creativity) have to be set in place to encourage their contributions.

Annexure

DRC-Mahabub nagar	PRC 1 Khillaganpur	PRC 2 Kondurg mandal ECO-CLUB	PRC 3 Kodair mandal SPARSHA	PRC 4 Achampet mandal CONARE	URC Mahabubna gar municipality
Networks forme d	CL network, ER network	CL network, CC network (SHG)	ER, SHG, women's network	Fragmented, time lags in follow-up.	Active CLs, municipal councilors network
Current status	Networks are not meeting regularly Many CLs have migrated	Networks are being strengthened. Are active in addressing local issues	Women, SHG, ERs are being motivate d. Are using conventional wisdom to address issues through Panchayats	The CL have been identified There is no movement forward as there is threat from naxalites.	CLs are active and participate in meetings They have undertaken vision building and conflict resolution exercises to rejuvenate networks.
Partners progress	Is not yet phased out in 3rd quarter as planned	Good outreach in the community Maintaining records and accounts	Good outreach in the com mun ity Not maintaining proper records, accounts and systems	No out reach in the community Not maintaining proper records, accounts and	---

DRC-Visakha patnam	PRC 1 Padmanabham	PRC 2 Anandapuram SANJEEVANI	PRC 3 G-Madugula VIKASA	PRC 4 Dumbriguda	Anakapalle Ward 34
Networks formed	Sarpanch networks, ER networks, Dalit networks, SHG networks, advisory	Initiated identification of CLs. No proper GSM, conduct of Micro plans and no rapport with sarpanch and ERs	C leaders have been identified. GSM are undertaken. Work for GSM with CCs.	Rigorous exercise is being taken up for proper identification of CLs Gram sabha are forums for discussions	CLs are identified Networks are to be formed
Current status	Networks are disintegrated except dalit network. Few CLs are active	The identification of CLs lacked perspective. Lack in conduct and follow up of micro plans	The intervention area is far off and no easy access to means of travel. hence regular visits are not possible for DRC. The partner NGO is unable to make regular follow-ups.	The CLs are in formative stages The next step is attempt to form networks MGS are being held	The urban PEVAC was undertaken with CSO platforms The Councilors take part in meetings and interfaces
Partner progress		Not much reach in the community Not maintaining proper records, accounts and systems	No out reach in the community		
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