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PRIA

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Strengthening Local Self-Governance in Kerala Pre-Election Voters Awareness Campaign (PEVAC)

I. Introduction/ Context

The new Panchayati Raj has provided unprecedented opportunities for the re-awakening of the rural communities leading to autonomy and sustainable development. In this the participation of the common people plays the key role. However, mere legislation and the creation of statutory institutions do not guarantee the realisation of the revolutionary potential contained in the new vision of gram swaraj. For this, enabling and conducive processes of information, education, communication, empowerment, etc. have to be initiated and sustained.

A cursory assessment of the progress made by PRIs during the 5 initial years in Kerala has revealed the low performance of these institutions both in the letter and spirit of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment and the State Act. One of the underlying reasons for this is the low level of awareness and motivation of the people and the functionaries as well as the low level of competence of the functionaries and the leaders. This was severed incase of women and SC/ST sections of the population. The remedy, naturally, lies in the direction of human resource development, consisting in improved knowledge, motivation and competence of all the stakeholders, with emphasis on the people and their elected leaders.

It was with this mission in mind that Sahayi - Centre for Collective Learning and Action. with the support of the Ministry Of Rural Development, Government of India, organised a Pre-Election Awareness Campaign (PEVAC) during July - September 2000.

This report contains the processes and results of the pre-election interventions.

2. Objectives of PEVAC

- To help the voters understand the relevance the Panchayati Raj system.
- To make them aware of voters rights and the importance of casting their votes.
- To inform them about the malpractices in the election and the precautions to be taken to prevent it. .
- To motivate them to cast their votes for committed and capable leaders.
- To improve the awareness and motivation level of the leaders in regard to playing leadership roles in Panchayati Raj.
- To enable the selected people with leadership potential to develop their skills.
- To motivate selected leaders to contest in the Panchayat election.

3. Intervention Strategy

There were two types of strategies - intensive and extensive:

- Intensive Interventiom carried out in three Blocks of three Districts, namely: Neeleswar (Kasaragod district), Pattambi (Palakkad district), Pattanakkad (Alappuzha district). In addition to this, Kunnamangaiam block of Kozhikode district also covered under this strategy.
- Extensive interventions consisting in providing support to local partner VOs to undertake awareness generation seminars, jeep kala jatha, public meetings/ comer meetings. padayathra and other similar programmes in the other blocks other than the intensive intervention area.

A. Intensive Interventions

I, Awareness generation seminar

With the main objective of enabling the citizens/voters to improve their understanding of the nature and importance of Panchayati Raj Act and its provisions, 45 awareness generation programmes were conducted in 28 selected panchayats in three blocks (Pattambi, Neeleswar, and Pattanakkad). The content of these orientations consisted of topics, such as the new Panchayati Raj law, the importance

and role of Gram Sabha, election procedures and voter's rights, the qualities of a candidate to contest in the election, importance of promoting women and SC/ST participation and leadership. Altogether 3024 local people participated.

The participants comprised of Anganwady teachers and helpers, SHG leaders and members, members of Mahila Samajam/ VOs and local men and women, particularly under the category of SC, ST, fisherfolk and agriculture and plantation labourers, Most of the participants opined that the programme was very useful to them and many of them requested the team members to conduct PRI related programmes in future as a follow up of the awareness programme. This programme improved the participants understanding on the relevance of the Panchayati Raj system and made them aware of voter's rights and the importance of casting their votes. They were also informed about the malpractices in the election and the precautions to be taken to prevent it ~ a result of the inspiration gained from the orientation sessions all of them used their voting right and motivated several others to cast their vote to elect transparent and accountable people's representatives in PRIs.

Available data show that the voting percentage in the intervention area has increased to some extent. During awareness programme at Kasaragod one. SHG leader said "Now we have got more informations regarding the relevance and importance of GS and PR and till last day we thought as GS members we do not have any roles and responsibilities but this class changed our conventional intentions and now we are more aware of our duties, so we will try our level best to elect committed and capable leaders from our constituencies and then constantly and vigilantly monitor their functioning and performance and would provide all supports from our side to strengthen our local panchayats". One male participant pointed out "This is the first opportunity I got to attend a Panchayat Raj related awareness class; prior to this I was not interested to participate this type orientations because I thought that Panchayat has nothing to do in my day to day life, but now I have got a clear idea with regard to Panchayati Raj and its importance". These responses from the participants are reflections of interest and motivation in regard to participating in the Panchayati Raj.

ii. Jeep Kala Jatha, Padayatra and Public Meetings/ Corner Meetings

a. Jeep Kala Jatha and Public/ Corner Meetings

b.

The aim of the programme was to enhance citizens' perception on new Panchayati Raj Act and to increase the level of motivation of the electorate to fully participate in the democratic process of election and cast their votes in enlightenment, fearlessness and civic responsibility. Sahayi organised Jeep Kala Jatha of two day duration in Pattanakkad, Pattarnbiam Neeleswar block covering almost all comers of the panchayats in each block. Along with the Jatha 104 public meetings comer meetings in 28 selected panchayats were also organised.

This programme was attended by a total of around 23,475 voters, majority of them were women. This is the number of people who were present in the centres at the time of the meeting, but many more people got the message through the awareness songs and announcements along the route which came around another 5000 people.

In Patranakkad block the programme was organised on the 17th and 18th of Sept.2000 and covered all the eight Panchayats (Aroor, Thuravoor, Kuthiyathode, Ezhupunna, Kodenthuruthu, Vayalar, Patranakkad, Kadakkarapally). The Kala jatha team travelled around 300 Kilometers in these Panchayats and organised 24 public meetings in two days. Altogether 6870 people participated in the meetings.

In Pattambi block the programme was organised on the 17th and 18th of Sept. and it covered all the ten Panchayats (Koppam, Pattambi, Kulukkallur, Mwhuthala, Nellaya, Ongallur, Parudur, Thiruvegappura, Vallappuzha and Vilayur). In Pattambi block the kala jatha team travelled around 320 Kilometers and organised 36 public meetings and it was attended by 6330 people. The programme in Neeleswanun

block was held on the 21st and 22nd of Sept and 5th and 6th of November, 2000 and it covered all the ten panchayats in the block (Cheruvathoor, Kayyur Cheemeni, Nileswar, East Eleri, Pilicode, West Eleri, Kioanor Karinthalam, Thrikkarippur, Padne, Valiyaparamba). The team travelled around 400 Kilometers and organised 44 public meetings and 10,275 people were covered under this programme. The jeep jatha organized in Kunnamangalam block on September 22nd and November 18th_ Eight panchayats were covered under the programme. In the two day programme 33 corner meetings were organized and more than 10000 people attended.

For the jatha/march two or three jeeps were commissioned and fitted with sound systems. A pilot jeep would go in front about half an hour ahead of the other jeeps, making announcements and playing songs on the themes of Panchayati raj, the approaching election etc. As soon as the second jeep's have arrived at the pre-determined spot for the meeting, the group in the pilot jeep would move on with their mission of preparing the population for receiving and participating in the meetings that would last from half an hour to one hour depending on the need. During the meeting art forms of folk dance, action songs, skits would be staged. This served not only to attract crowds to the spot, but also to imprint the message vividly in the minds of the participating people through visual and auditive images. The art performance, done by a trained troupe of local artists, mainly women, would be followed by a speech by one of the accompanying resource persons, on relevant themes like the importance of the new Panchayati Raj system, the role of the Granta Sabha, the rights and duties of the of the citizens, importance of elections and choosing the right representative, women's participation, relevance of casting votes, malpractices in connection with election etc. etc. In addition to the aforementioned activities distribution of pamphlets among different categories of people and pasting of posters at public places were also conducted during the padayatra/ public meetings.

The strategy of the Kala Jatha was flexible which was adapted to suit the needs of the particular area and audience, extending the time in places where the audience showed greater interest, adjusting the number and duration of the folk art performances etc. The element of folk arts made palpable difference, attracting more people, enlivening the programme and heightening people's interest. It also helped catch the attention of the media, which gave prominent coverage to the programme. For instance, in Kollam, the Mathrubhoomi daily (one of the largest circulating news paper in Kerala) widely covered the Jeep Kala jatha programme with photographs and disseminated the message to wide strata of the society. Similarly in Kottayam all the leading Malayalam dailies have given due importance to this programme.

b. Padayatra. Public Meetings/ Corner Meetings

The padayatta organised at Cheruvathoor panchayat of Nileswar block on November 5th of 2000 was a new experience to both participants and local community members and it served a lot to imprint the message of Panchayati Raj in the rural community. One hundred local leaders including women, SC/ ST, representing Vos, citizen's organizations, SHGs, etc. participated in the padayatra and several others joined with them at important junctions. The Padayatra team walked around 25 Kilometers through the interior areas of the panchayat and organised 11 public/corner meetings. This program directly covered 2600 people at the meeting places and indirectly passed the message to another 2000 people along the route of the padayatra.

In short, the activity comprised of passing message through announcement during the travel, performance of folk art forms and short speeches during corner/ public meetings, pasting posters, distribution of pamphlets etc have enriched the PEVAC activities of Sahayi and motivated a large number of people living in different strata of society to participate in election process and Panchayati Raj activities.

iii. Leadership Development Training for Prospective Women Contestants

To develop the leadership potential of women and to motivate them to contest in the panchayat election, Sahayi conducted 4 leadership development trainings, one each in the 3 intensive intervention blocks

(Pattambi, Neeleswar and Pattanakkad) and one in Athiyannoor block, Trivandrum. The period of each programme was two day and it was non-residential in nature. The women leaders and women and SC/ST contestants were invited on the basis of their interest. Altogether 354 women leaders participated in the programme and the majority were from Athiyannoor block.

Trainings were conducted at different centres

Sl. No.	Venue	Date	Block/ District	No. of Participants
1.	Pattanakkad	7,8, Sept.2000	Pattaokkad/ AJannuzha	42
2.	Koeeam	7, Sept 2000	Pattambi, Palakkad	10
3	Neeleswaram	5,6, Sept 2000	Neeleshwaram,	47
4.	Kanj.i.ramkulam, Kottukal, Karinkulam	4,5, Sept 2000	Athiyannor, Thiruvananthapuram	255

a. Selection of Participants

The candidates were selected mainly on the basis of their interest in participating in the programme and their motivation in contesting in the election. The local collaborating voluntary organisations, political parties etc. suggested/ identified the contestants for the programme. Members belonging to weaker sections were given special consideration.

Some of the participants had a history of playing roles of political leadership, either as members of political parties or as independent candidates, in election. Others were new to the field, but had a conducive background and the required aptitude. It was not coincidental that the bulk of the participants came from SHGs/ women organisations.

b. Topics:

Topics/ themes treated in the training sessions included: 73rd Constitutional Amendment, Kerala Panchayati Raj Act, Gram Sabha, Roles and responsibilities of elected members, Panchayati Raj election procedures and code of conduct, election procedures, leadership, communication - communication styles and methods of effective communication, public speaking, etc.

c. Methods Used

Several participatory methods such as: Lecture, Group discussion, Experience sharing, Case analysis, Games, Role-play, Structured exercise were used in the training in addition to lecture method. These Participatory methods were primarily used to help the participants change their attitude and improve their motivation.

The resource persons included G.Placid, P.M. Dev and G. Jose of Sabayi and Adv.M.P. Varkey, Retired Deputy Director of Panchayats.

During the training it was observed that the participants were really interested in the topics and were active during the session, asking for clarification, raising issues, suggesting alternative perceptions and approaches. Paucity of time was a limiting factor. But it was made clear that this was only a beginning, serious training would follow after the election results are announced for the elected representatives. Even those who were not to contest, they were benefited from the training in as much as their perception improved on Panchayati Raj and their leadership skills were strengthened and they became more

interested in effectively playing their roles of leadership in the Gram Sabha, Neighborhood Group, SHG etc. On the whole the training was a success.

The participants evaluated that the programme helped them develop a clear perception on Panchayati Raj and importance of participating in the PRIs. Further they opined that the sessions on leadership and communication was very useful which will help them improve their communication abilities.

Among the participants 20 contested in the election and out of that 8 won the election.

B. Extensive Intervention

Extensive interventions consisted of activities of Consultation, Orientation/ Workshop for civil society organisations, Kala Jatha, face-to-face programme, Padayatra, publication and distribution of reading materials and posters etc. Such activities were conducted for/with collaborating VOs in other panchayats other than the blocks under the intensive intervention. Following is a summary narration of such activities.

I Awareness~ Programmes

1, Orientation for other Civil Society Organisations (State Level Seminar/ Consultation)

Sahayi conducted a. two day state level VOs consultation with the objectives of:

- Enabling the participants to analyse the theoretical and practical dimensions of Panchayati raj in Kerala and to enquire into the possibilities and opportunities of strengthening the Panchayati raj/ Nagarapalika institutions
- Arriving at consensus regarding collaborative action for PRI strengthening
- Working out concrete action plans for interventions during the pre-election period.

The consultation workshop conducted on 22nd and 23rd of July at the Renewal Centre, Kaloor, Kochi was attended by 35 representatives of 25 voluntary organisations from 13 districts of the state. We shall briefly describe the process and outcome of the consultation

Review of the Panchayati raj System in Kerala.

The first session in a group review of the status of the PRIs in Kerala, Initiating the discussion, G.Placid provided an input on the performance of PRJs in Kerala since their inception in 1995. Some of the views of conclusions by the participants were:

- One of the maladies of the present Grama. Sabhas is over politicisation.
- The needs, views and aspirations of the Grama Sabha are not given due consideration by the Grama Panchayat.
- The place and timing of the Grama Sabhas is not convenient for women.
- The 33% reservation has led to a general improvement of women's status and power.
- People attend Grama Sabha only in the hope of getting benefits.
- The focus of the Grama Sabha discussions should be the integrated and sustainable development of the village.
- Panchayat funds have not been utilised appropriately, Projects programmes should be fixed according to the priority of local needs. Priority should be given to productive programmes.
- Panchayat leaders and functionaries have no competence in implementing managing projects.
- The young generation is not interested in the Panchayat activities. They should be brought into the stream of local ~elf-governance

Priority Areas of Interventions

The next item was a group discussion on the possibilities and initiations of VO intervention in Panchayati raj. The ideas expressed by different groups included:

Area of Possibilities

- Empowerment of Grama Sabha
- Awareness generation for making the neighborhood groups effective
- Information dissemination on scheme available etc
- Helping in the identification of genuine beneficiaries
- Getting into the Committees and energising them from within
- Providing training in leadership etc
- Forming pressure groups and lobbying
- Ensuring transparency and accountability
- Identification and mobilisation of internal and external resources
- Preparing projects, which can be implemented with available resources
- Facilitating monitoring and evaluation

Limitations

- lack of effective leadership in the Panchayats
- Lack of interest and co-operation among VOs
- lack of financial resources
- Over playing of party politics
- Corruption
- Problems and disadvantages of women members
- Lack of general awareness among the citizens

SAHAYI's Views on Possibilities and Constraints

Sahayi team spelt out its views on the possibilities and constraints of intervening in Panchayati raj

Possibilities

- Working towards making the PRIs as institutions of self-governance
- Ensuring proper utilisation of funds
- Improving transparency and accountability
- Ensuring that the right to information is properly exercised
- Promoting bottom up micro-level planning
- Promoting the leadership of women and SCs and STs

Constraints/ Limitations

- Grama Sabha has no power to take independent decision
- The community of voters is seldom represented in the Grama Sabha
- Low state of human resource development in Panchayats
- Undue influence of party politics
- Low level of awareness among people
- Apathy of the bureaucracy
- Low level of own resource mobilisation

Sahayi's Strategy

On the second day among the consultation continued with G. Placid presenting a summary of Sahayi's strategy of action. With the use of a diagram he explained Sahayi plan of action

Local Self governance Project

Strengthening Municipalities

Strengthening PRIs		
Intensive Intervention	Extensive Interventions	Research & Policy Advocacy

In the area of strengthening PRIs the following steps are contemplated:

- Awareness generation about Panchayati Raj and Election process and procedures
- Pre-election Awareness
- After election Orientation and Training for G.S members
- Capacity Building Training for Women
- Training for elected SC/ST representatives
- Micro-planning experiment

Plan of Action by Groups

This was followed by the preparation of action plans in district wise groups. The plans were later shared with the others. Elaborate preliminary plans of action were outlined by groups from the districts of Patbenamthitta, Kallam, Idukki, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kannur, Palakkad, Kottayam, Wayanad, Kasargod, Trivandrum, Emakulam and Alappuzha.

The Organisers evaluated the consultation programme as highly successful in that it served revive a dominant interest of several VO groups and provided additional theoretical and practical clarity to the participants, leading to the formulation of tentative realistic plans of action. This programme helped the participants understand the relevance of strengthening PRIs in Kerala, As a result they committed their involvement in PEVAC programmes initiated by SAHA YI.

ii. District Level Consultative Meetings of VOs

As agreed during the State Level Consultation in Emakulam, District Level Consultations were held in Trivandrum, Pathanamthitta, Idukki, Palakkad, Kozhikode, Kasargod, Emakulam, Kannur and Wayanad districts for finalising plans of action for the districts. These regional consultations, organised by the respective partner VOs in each district and was attended by the members of interested local VOs. Sahayi team members were also present in those meetings to provide more inputs regarding Panchayati Raj and intervention strategies. #Eleven meetings were organised in this regard and altogether #538 VO members participated in the programme. Participants opined that these meetings helped them to improve their understanding on different aspects of Panchayati Raj and motivated them to formulate concrete action plans for interventions during the pre-election period. The meetings were concluded with forming an organising committee in each place to co-ordinate and facilitate follow-up activities in their localities. One of the immediate result of these consultations was that almost all the district co-ordinating team have organized pre-election voters awareness campaign activities in their respective areas in collaboration with Sahayi. One SHG leader pointed out " I have participated in the Panchayat Raj orientation organised by Sahayi at Thodupuzha and it was a turning point to me. During the orientation I wholeheartedly participated in the sessions and the classes motivated me to do some

innovative programme for strengthening Panchayati Raj. So our Self Help Group organised padayatra and corner meeting in our panchayat and we would continue similar efforts in future".

Details of regional consultations are given below;

S. No	Venu e	Date	District	No. of participants
1.	Pathanamthitta	29, Julv, 2000	Pathanamthitta	45
2.	Centaur Tourist Home, Kannur	5, August, 2000	Kannur	19
3.	Gandhi Bhavan, Thiruvananathanura	8, August, 2000	Thiruvananthapuram	50
4.	Charlil Hall, Thodueuzha	9, August, 2000	Idukki	61
5.	A.U.P.School, Agastianmuzhy	12, August, 2000	Kozhikode	120
6.	Pattambi block auditorium, Pala.kkad	3, August, 2000	Palakkad	100
7.	New Happy Tourist Home, Nileshtar	10, August, 2000	Iwaragod	52
8.	Club auditorium Sultanbarterv	5, September, 2000	Wayanad	32
9	Ariaswara Mahila Samajam, Athani, Aluva	26, August, 2000	Ernakulam	25
			Total	504

iii. Awareness Classes

This programme was aimed at increasing the knowledge of the citizen on PRIs, election procedures and related aspects. This was organised by Sahayi in collaboration with partner VOs. Altogether 2105 people participated in 24 programmes covering 17 panchayats in 6 districts.

Orientations

S.No	Name of District	No. of Panchayats covered	No. of Programmes	No. of Participants
1	Idukki	3	3	200
2	Pathanamthina	3	6	725
3	Wavanad	5	5	500
4	Thrissur	2	5	300
5	Malaenuram	3	3	300
6	Kollam	1	2	80
	Total	17	24	2105

iv. Jeep Kala Jatha and public/corner meetings

Awareness classes were followed by organising Jeep Kala Jatha, Three Jeep Kala Jathas were conducted in four districts. Twenty five panchayats were covered under this programmes and the population coverage was 19100. There were 72 public meetings and in each meeting there were performance of folk arts and short speeches. Such innovative educational endeavours undertaken in different panchayats attracted the rural folk. This was also a joint programme of Sahayi and its partner VOs.

Jeep Kala Jatha and Public Meeting

S.No.	Name of District	No. of Panchayats	No. of Programmes	No. of Participant
1	Kollam	11	16	5750
2	Kozhikode	10	34	10400
3	Wavanad	1	.	450
4	Pathanamthitta	3	21	2500
		25	72	19100

v. Face-to-face programme

In two districts - Pathanamthitta and Thiruvananthapuram, the local collaborating VOs with the support and involvement of SAHAYI conducted an innovative programme of holding face-to-face programmes of the contestants. The aim of this interesting exercise was to educate and sensitise both the people/voters and the candidates, so that on the one hand the candidates know the aspirations of the people and on the other the people have a chance to get to know the candidates capacity, commitment etc. so as to help them choose the right person. The two VOs that took the initiative to organise these events are: Kodumon Grama Vikasana Samithy, Pathanamthitta and Santhigram, Thiruvananthapuram.

The Pathanamthitta programme was organised with the collaboration of 12 local people's organisations/movements such as SHGs and it was attended by 13 candidates and 150 people in the Ranni locality. It was on 23rd September which started at 10.00 am and over by to 2.00 pm which was facilitated by the Director of Sahayi. Prior to the meeting, the candidates were given the following set of questions to be reflected in front of the audience.

- What services have you rendered to the village till now?
- Why do you want to contest?
- How many of the promises given by you/ your party during the previous election were fulfilled?
- In case you win this time, what do you propose to do?
- What is your response to the idea of complete prohibition?
- What action will you take to end corruption in the Panchayat?
- What are your solutions to solve the problem of unemployment?
- Do you propose to take active part in the committee meeting and the common issues of the panchayat and stand with the people in the matter of ensuring their rights?
- Are you prepared to rise above party politics for the common good of the panchayat?
- Are you prepared to implement programmes for the benefit of the people avoiding the contractors?
- How much money have you spent up to now for election purpose? How much are you going to spend hereafter?

After introductions each candidate spoke 5.10 minutes reflecting up on the relevant questions. It is worth noting that the independent candidates were more forthright and clear in their sharing than the party candidates. Obviously the party candidates had to safeguard the interests of their parties and coalitions. With regard to the sensitive question related to prohibition, the general tendency was to be evasive,

saying that even the state government has not succeeded in this area and that instead of harping on total prohibition, one should emphasis the aspect of awareness building among the people. However, everybody declared that he/ she would take a bold stand against corruption.

Some of the participants, especially the VO activists, responded that they did not get satisfactory answers from the candidates. The facilitator in concluding, remarked that the candidates did not succeed in projecting a clear and coherent picture of their vision and plan of action

The face-to-face programme in the Kottukal Panchayat of Thiruvananthapuram district was conducted at Chappath at 3.30 p.m. on 23rd September. This programme organized by Santhigram in collaboration with a number of local people's movements and groups was structured in the same way as the Programme at Pathanamthitta, with more or less the same questions posed to the candidates. It was attended by 7 candidates contesting at all the three levels of Panchayat. A specialty about the programme was that it received wide media publicity.

People's Vigilance Committees

Another innovative action initiated by the voluntary organizations/ movements, led by Santhigram, was the constitution of-people's vigilance committees in the panchayats of Kottukal, Karumkulam and Kanjiramulam, with a view to educating, counseling the people on the choice of the right candidates and to prevent election malpractices. These committees did a good job and the results became visible during the election

vi. Padayatra and Public Meetings

To improve citizens' understanding on Panchayati Raj, Gram Sabha and Election procedures and to motivate them to participate in the election processes, the District Youth Club, Idukki, Navajeevan SHG, Mankuva, Idukki and Gram Vikasana Samithy, Idukki organised three padayatras in Thodupuzha Taluk area and another one panchayat on 14th of Sept., 20th of Sept. and 21st of Sept. respectively and organised public meetings at main junctions/places. Altogether 13 public meetings were organised and it was attended by a total of 2500 people. In addition to this, around 1000 people were covered indirectly along the route.

There were 60 participants (exclusively women) in the Navajeevan SHG's programme, 75 participants in the Grama Vikasana Samithy's programme and 150 participants in the youth club's programme. Panchayat Raj songs and folk art forms were widely used in padayatras. These padayatras have aroused a keen interest among citizens to learn and understand more about Panchayati Raj, Gram Sabha and Election process and procedures. An ordinary citizen said " It is a bold initiative taken by Sahayi and its collaborative organisations to aware people in such a situation whereas even political parties are not interested to do similar programmes for people".

II Preparation of PEVAC Materials

In order to enhance/ improve citizens perception/ understanding on Panchayati Raj, election processes and practices, good leadership in PRIs, nature and relevance of local self-governing institutions etc. thereby motivate them to participate in the election processes and PRI strengthening activities, Sahayi has prepared and published 7 pamphlets. Of them 15000 copies were printed for S pamphlets and 3000 copy for one and 4000 copies for another one. In addition to that two posters (5000 copies each), one calendar card (3000 copies) and an year planner (6000 copies) were also printed. Each of the pamphlet contained a detailed description of different themes as shown below:

Considering the demand for the pamphlet most of them were reprinted again.

The activity of distributing reading materials was properly done. More than 200 panchayats have benefited under this activity. Sahayi prepared the pamphlets on the topics of:

- Gram. Sabha
- Panchayati Raj Act and its Special features
- Voters rights and responsibilities and details voting violations
- Voting procedures - points on which one should be vigilant
- Criteria for electing your representative
- Code of conduct of political parties
- Information for contesting candidates

The posters contained themes on relevance of Gram Sabha and local self-governance. The calendar and year planner contained messages on good governance.

In addition to the above pamphlets, poster, etc. folk art songs were also prepared and printed and cassettes were produced/ reprinted. All these were distributed among different categories of people. At present programmes developed on the basis of the Panchayati Raj related songs contained in these cassettes are widely used by several people during different occasions like Keralolsav, block level competitions, school and college youth festivals etc.

The educational materials (Pamphlets) have been distributed among more than 1000 contestants in the intensive and extensive intervention areas. More than 25000 people benefited through the distribution of the reading materials.

The reading materials were well received. Many people came up to ask for the handouts. Some took extra copies to be shared with their friends. One sitting member of a Panchayat said: "I had no clear idea of what the Grama Sabha is about. After reading your literature now have got a clear idea."

Many organisations, with minor modifications, have used the Sahayi material for preparing their own study notes and handouts. Some contestant widely used the theme developed by Sahayi in their posters and some others purely copied the sentences and figures from Sahayi's posters.

III Process Documentation

All the process starting from initial visits and rapport building with PR! members, officials, local political leaders, Vos etc. were recorded and documented through a variety of methods, including video, still photography, written notes, In addition to this, the campaign activities were recorded in the videotape.

RESULTS

The pre-election programme has been well received and it has produced a number of immediate positive results. Initial reports reveal that there has been appreciable increase in voter turnout.

First of all, this was an occasion for the citizens to witness an election-related campaign without partisan motives/interests. Some were initially confused about the real intention and the possible political affiliation of the Organisers. A few youngsters openly asked: "To what party/coalition do you belong?" They of course got the reply that this programme had no orientation of party politics.

It was purely an education programme, not a political propaganda, it was clarified. The way the programme was conducted and the message delivered convinced the people about the true nature and intention of the Organisers. The novelty of the programme, enlivened by folk art performances enshrining the themes and interspersed with short and apt commentaries and talks, earned the attention of the audience, whose appreciation was evident in their smiling faces and approving nods. Several expressed their appreciation openly by making comments like, "This is what we want to hear", 'we fully agree with you', 'well said'. Some congratulated the team and Sahayi for doing a much neglected and highly needed work.

That the message of enlightened voting, responsible choice of their representative went directly home was clear from observations like 'so far I never seriously reflected on whom to vote, I did it as a matter of civic habit, but now I am starting to seriously reflect on it'. One man after listening to a talk said: 'So whom shall I vote?' A lady in one of the Panchayats confessed: 'Last time I did not vote. After listening to you I am getting convinced that this time I should vote'.

In one place members of prominent political parties, who were initially apprehensive about the intention of Sahayi, after they saw and understood the real intention and impact of the programme, invited the team to perform the folk arts and conduct the meeting on the dais they had prepared for their campaign meeting. "You are delivering the message we want to deliver to the people and you are doing it more effectively", said one of the political activists. A school master in Pattambi block after the talk was over came to us and congratulated the team for doing an excellent work. "First I was prejudiced. I thought it is one of those customary political speeches at the time of elections. But later I realised there is something new here. So I listened to the talk intently". A newly elected panchayat member opined "I could get an opportunity to participate in the awareness generation programme organised by SAHAYI, it was an encouraging and eye opening experience to me and this would empower and equip the local people in the rural areas".

In all places local people treated it as their own programme. For instance, in some places local people made all necessary arrangements for conducting the corner meetings and folk art forms and in some other places local political leaders and media persons invited the team to conduct the meetings in their areas and made arrangements.

Some political leaders accompanied the team to gain more ideas regarding Gram Sabha and Panchayati Raj etc. with a view to using them in their party fora. One senior politician said: "Eventhough I am a politician, my knowledge of Gram Sabha and Panchayati Raj was very limited. After hearing you, I have got innovative ideas. Now I feel I like going deep in these aspects". A tribal woman pointed out "we got more clarity regarding the relevance of Panchayati Raj and people's participation in election processes through these orientations and corner meetings".

The reading materials were well received. Many people came up to ask for the handouts. Some took extra copies to be shared with their friends. One sitting member of a Panchayat said: I had no clear idea of what the Gram Sabha is about. After reading your literature now I have got a clear idea."

In order to assess whether Sahayi's massive PEVAC activities have made any significant change in people's perception on Panchayat Raj and election Sahayi's Programme Associates visited some of the polling stations at Chittumala block and held dialogue with citizens. People responded differently to the queries of Sahayi Associates.

Three Ladies said: "Last time we had made use of our voting right in favour of Left Democratic Front (IDF), but this time we will make use of our voting right in favour of efficient and committed candidates". One representative of younger generation said: "I must make use of my voting right to bring a good administrative set up in Panchayat". Three old men pointed out: "Last time we did not utilise our voting right. but now we think it is very necessary to make use of our right" and added: "We got this motivation by reading the literature published and distributed by Sahayi". Three women Gram Sabha members said: "We are in favour of good and efficient candidates and we would vote for them".

The programmes received wide coverage in media, both in the electronic and the print media. What attracted their attention was the novelty of the programme, both in its direction and its methods. The folk art forms captured the imagination of one and all.

Conclusion

The entire exercise was a very good learning experience not only for the participants but also for the Sahayi team members. Since this was the first attempt of such kind of intervention it helped the team learnt the relevance of using different strategies/ approaches applicable in each area. The same process is continuing in few panchayats in which the election is due in January 2001.

Considering the odds, like the paucity of time and the politically charged atmosphere in the Panchayats, the programme can be evaluated as highly successful. This novel attempt has served to break fresh grounds in the consciousness of the people regarding the real goal and uses of the new Panchayati Raj, the importance of Grama Sabha, roles and responsibilities of the voters, importance of casting one's vote in full responsibility, the need for promoting women's participation and leadership etc. etc. There were of course shortcomings, especially in the matter of getting sufficient number of women leaders to attend the training. But the negative impact of these have been effectively offset by the programme which has prepared the way for more in-depth interventions in the days to come. We are thankful to Ministry of Rural Development (MORD) Govt. of India for joining us in this noble nation building endeavour. Once again we express our sincere thanks to MORD for their financial support and PRIA and NCRSOs for their guidance and moral support.

Pattambi Block : Date – August 13rd - September 24th

Coverage: Ten panchayats in Pattambi block
 No. of Awareness generation programmes : 20
 No. of Participants :1380

S. No.	Centre/ Venue	Date	Block/ District	No. of Participants
1.	Thiruvegappura	3.8.2000	Pattambi, Palakkad	65
2.	Ongallur	3.8.2000	"	65
3.	Vilayoor	3.8.2000	"	60
4.	Pamthoor	3.8.2000	"	68
5.	Muthuthala	3.8.2000	"	70
6.	Nellaya	3.8.2000	"	65
7.	Vallappuzha	3.8.2000	"	68
8.	Kulukkalloor	3.8.2000	"	65
9.	Pattambi	4.8.2000	"	71
10.	Koppam	5.8.2000	"	69
11.	Abhayam Mahila Samajam	7.8.2000	"	75
12.	Kayyalamkunnu Colony	25.8.2000	"	69
13.	Pandakkalan Colony	26.8.2000	"	67
14.	Mavilakadappuram	27.8.2000	"	71
15.	Manjappatta Colony	28.8.2000	"	70
16.	Pallippuram UP School	13.9.2000	"	75
17.	Kodumala Reading Room	19.9.2000	"	73
18.	Nellaya	22.9.2000	"	68
19.	Panakuttiparambu	23.9.2000	"	71
20.	Vadanamkurichi	24.9.2000	"	75
		Total		1380

SUMMARY OF THE DRAFT REPORT OF THE STUDY ON IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF PRE-ELECTION VOTERS AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

With the intervention of bringing about a positive change in the attitude and behaviour of people towards Panchayat Raj Sahayi undertook an intensive Pre-election Voters Awareness Campaign (PEVAC) in the 6 blocks selected for intensive intervention and several other blocks in the extensive intervention areas. This campaign conducted in September, 2000 and consisting of the four major components of:

1. Awareness generation seminars for the voters. with focus on women
2. Jeep Kala Jatha and Public Meetings
3. Leadership training for prospective women contestant
4. Distribution of reading materials and Posters

The,,: activities had the following objectives:

- Enabling the voters to understand the relevance! importance of the new Panchayati Raj system
- Raising the awareness level of the voters in regard to their rights and responsibility in the matter of voting
- Making the electorate informed of the election-related malpractices and motivating them to take necessary precautions in this matter
- Motivating the voters to cast their vote for committed and capable leaders
- Educating the voters to cast their votes in favour of worthy candidates
- Inspiring and motivating the potential/ prospective women leaders to contest in the election
- Helping the participants to improve their basic leadership skills, communication and public speaking abilities.

Objectives of the Study

This evaluation study had the following objectives:

- To assess if the PEVAC succeeded in realising the set objectives/goals
- To learn from experience and share the learnings with others
- To find out if the strategies employed by Sahayi have been effective

Methodology

The methodology followed in the study consisted primarily of semi-structured dialogue, conducted with the help of a checklist, with randomly selected respondents, mostly women, who had participated in the programmes. The dialogue was conducted after a break of 5 months in the 6 blocks where Sahayi conducted the programme. Direct observation by field staff is another method used in the study. Filed reports have supplied secondary data

Some of the major study findings are given at appropriate sections

1, Awareness generation seminars for the voters

Every one has affirmed that Sahayi's Awareness generation seminars for the voters were helpful in deepening their understanding on Panchayati Raj, election etc. The insights they gained points they understood better have been identified as:

- Importance of responsible participation in the election processes
- Provision and schemes for the development of women and SC/ST
- importance of Gram Sabha, in ensuring people-centered development
- importance of electing proper candidates
- Election processes and procedures
- Points to be borne in mind while electing proper candidates
- How to promote people's participation in Panchayati Raj, Gram Sabha and Ayalkootarns
- Ci1izcn 's voting rights
- Importance of Ayalkottams
- People's/participatory/ bottom up planning
- Responsibilities of G.S. members

It is clear that the programmes of Sahayi have been helpful in widening as well as deepening the knowledge of the voters on various aspects of Panchayati Raj. It is remarkable that the participants could clearly recall the topics and points dealt with during Sahayi's programmes.

Again, every one is affirmative that Sahayi's programmes have motivated them to better participate in the various processes/ programmes of the panchayats. Those, who have deeply understood the positive implications of Panchayat! Raj would no doubt be inclined to participate in its processes. Thus this corroborates the finding that Sahayi's programmes were relevant and effective.

Were SAHAYI. programmes helpful for electing a good member? To this question all have said 'yes'. which may be interpreted to mean that this time their choice of their representative was more deliberate and enlightened than in the previous elections. This certainly is a very positive outcome and is an indicator that the quality of the representatives. has at least marginally improved.

All except 14 have attended the special G.S. meeting convened recently (in April, 2001) for discussing matters related to the formulation of projec1s based on the new concept of watershed development for incorporating into the next S year plan. This naturally was a very important meeting of the G.S. and it is found that the vast majority of the respondents attended it.

2. Jeep Kala Jatba and Public Meetings

Almost all have stated that Sahayi's Kala Jatha bas motivated them to vote. Out of 385 only 4 people have given a negative impression ii may be more accurate to say that Sahayi 's programme has strengthened their already existing motivation.

How useful are programmes like this in motivating people to vote and participate in G.S." To this question the vast majority of the respondents have clearly mentioned that such programmes are very useful for that purpose.

Using kala Jatha technique for educating and mobilising the masses in the context of election for the first lime in Kerala goes to the credit of Sahayi. This novelty is something that captured the attention of the audiences.

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