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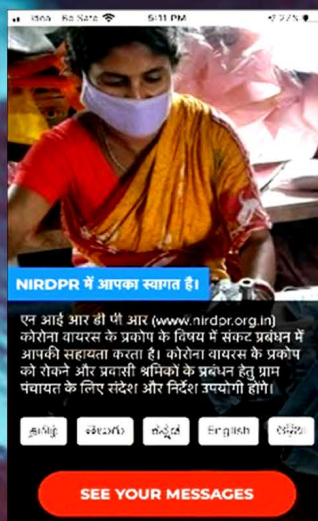
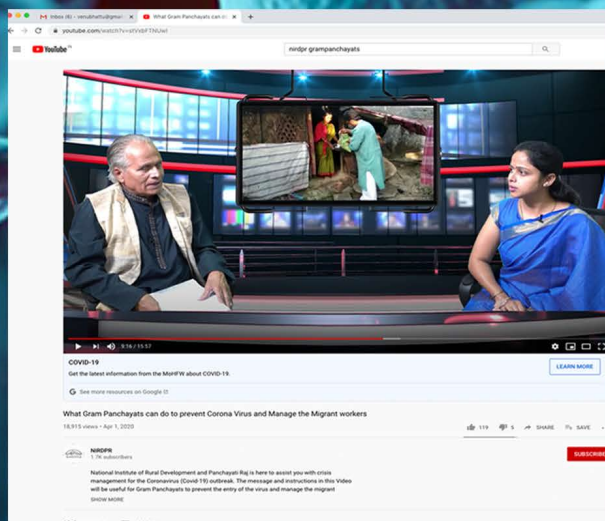
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# PRAGATI

Newsletter  
March 2020



## Mahila-Sabha : A Silver Lining for Gender-Biased Society



## Coronavirus crisis: NIRDPR reaches out to Gram Panchayats





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### WHEN TO USE A MASK

For healthy people wear a mask **only if you are taking care of a person with suspected 2019-nCoV infection**

Wear a mask, **if you are coughing or sneezing**

Masks are effective **only when used in combination with frequent hand-cleaning with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water**

If you wear a mask then you **must know how to use it and dispose of it properly**

### HOW TO PUT ON, USE, TAKE OFF AND DISPOSE OF A MASK

Before putting on a mask, **clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water**

Cover mouth and nose with mask and **make sure there are no gaps between your face and the mask**

Avoid touching the mask while using it;

To remove the mask: **remove it from behind (do not touch the front of mask); discard immediately in a closed bin**



### Reduce the risk of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection

#### Follow these important precautions

- 1** After coughing and sneezing
- 2** Clean your hands before and after caring for sick person
- 3** Before cooking, after cooking and before eating food
- 4** After using toilet

Remember to wash hands with soap frequently

**Stay protected! Stay safe from Coronavirus!**

For more information, or if you have questions or concerns, please call the number below.

**24x7 Helpline number 104**

If you have cough, fever or difficulty in breathing, contact a doctor immediately





*A session from Foundation Day workshop held at NIRDPR*

## Mahila-Sabha: A Silver Lining for Gender-Biased Society

As the International Women's Day is celebrated all over the world, the Gender Social Norms Index 2020 released by United Nations Development Programme revealed that nine out of ten people are biased against women. UN Women Review of Women's Rights states that progress on gender equality has remained slow. Given the long history of women's rights movements and policies towards women empowerment in India, reports such as these motivate us to reflect on India's journey towards gender-equality. India has ensured equal rights to all men and women since its birth as a Republic via the Constitution. The participation and inclusion of women in the electoral process was spearheaded by 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) that ensured women's representation through affirmative action reserving 33 per cent of seats.

This inclusive devolution was further strengthened by the Fourteenth Finance Commission (FFC) recommendations and Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) that increased allocation to Panchayats and made participatory planning a regular process. Today,

46 per cent of the elected representatives are women, making India the only country with the largest absolute number of women in grassroots politics. Yet, the level of participation remains highly concentrated in some States and there are challenges to gender equality everywhere that continue to hinder women's input in any strategic decision-making.

In terms of share of the State Elected Women Representatives (EWR) to total EWRs, only 10 States account for more than 75 per cent of all EWRs in India (Figure 1). A 2018 PRIA report revealed

Women's role in decision-making remains low due to discrimination, lack of access to information and skills, etc.

- UN Women Study

that as high as 85 per cent women in Rajasthan's Banswara and Talwara blocks were unaware of the roles of PRI and unwilling to participate. The UNDP report reveals that 98 per cent of Indians have at least one gender-

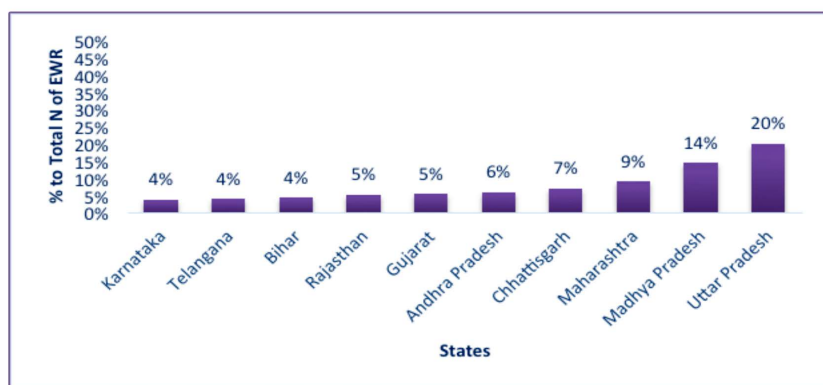
bias against women. As per UN-Women study, despite a high representation, women's role in decision-making remains low due to discrimination, lack of access to information and skills, the double burden faced by women at work and at home, and socio-political barriers that run deep in the society.

There are several barriers or exclusionary conditions that hinder women's participation in formal electoral politics of Panchayats.

**a) Societal backlash against progressive initiatives:** A major barrier to true inclusion of women in decision-making is continuing dominance of patriarchal values in society that refuse to allow women in leadership positions.

A paper by Dr. Rajesh Sinha (2018) pointed to the multiplicity of challenges to women's participation such as patriarchy, caste, inadequate training, lack of coordination and exclusionary norms among others.

There are several studies and cases that have revealed how men still take all the decisions irrespective of reservations through informal positions such as "Sarpanch-Pati" and so on.



**Figure 1: Share of EWRs in the State to Total EWRs in India: Top Ten States 2019**

Source: Graph by author. Data from Answers Data of Rajya Sabha Questions for Session 248 (data.gov.in).

A workshop on 'Women Empowerment through Local Governance' with around 200 EWRs across the country conducted in NIRDPR (8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> November, 2019) revealed a problem running much deeper than influence of husbands.

In the focus group discussion at the workshop, several EWRs shared how working against issues such as against child marriage or female foeticide remains a major challenge as households tend to resist change. As soon as the work of the Panchayat challenges the deep-rooted patriarchal beliefs and norms, elected leaders tend to face violent backlash from their own constituents despite winning the elections. Gender-bias continues to plague women's participation in taking progressive initiatives and policies and EWRs, despite winning find themselves alone against the society.

#### b) Barriers to mobility, autonomy and skill development:

Indian women, especially in the adult age-group in rural India, have limited access to skill-trainings that are required to run offices such as Panchayats and interact with government officials in line departments. Moreover, autonomy in terms of freedom to visit any place at own will is severely limited. NFHS 4 data show that around 17.9 per cent women in reproductive age group still face problem in getting permission for something as

basic as visiting a doctor outside home for treatment. A quarter of women in the same age group has no exposure to any form of media, be it newspaper, television or radio. This percentage having no access to media monotonously decreases with the level of wealth, but proves that women of less-wealthy background have little opportunity when it comes to taking leadership positions in rural India as they require autonomy of movement, access to the knowledge of current affairs and information, confidence to visit and interact with different stakeholders.

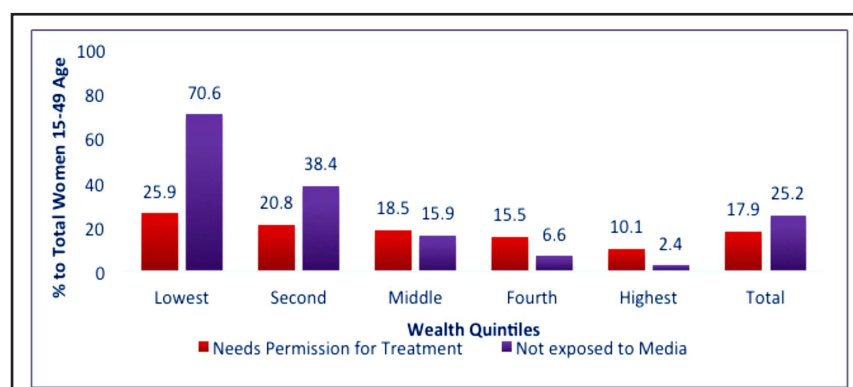
**c) Exclusion Pathways at State-level:** Even within the Panchayati Raj system, certain basic criteria to contest elections, which are put up to bring candidates of good quality into the system, have also been

observed to exclude candidates from marginalised background (UN-Women).

#### Mahila Sabha: A way around the barriers to formal electoral representations:

Although the list of challenges is huge, all is not lost for women to take control in governance and policy. Evidence around the world has shown that the most effective way to fight patriarchy is to organise into collectives and strengthen community bonding. An effective measure to do this by collective decision-making without any micro-credit or financial implication to organise Mahila-Sabha on a mandatory basis. Mahila-Sabha, i.e., village-level meetings exclusive for women have been promoted in recent years to ensure women's role in decision-making and encourage women to speak about their problems without hesitation. The special Sabhas primarily work to ensure that women's concerns are integrated in the local discourse, and eventually feed into the process of local planning and resultant decision-making.

Although the concept first emerged in Maharashtra (2003 Circular for conducting Mahila Sabha before Gram Sabha), the idea to regularise it was firmed up by several non-government agencies by research and advocacy. In 2012, the State governments of



**Figure 2: Percentage of Women Facing Challenges to Autonomy by Wealth Quintiles 2015**

Source: By author using NFHS 4 Data.



Conditions	Exclusion Pathways
<b>Education</b>	According to Census 2011, hardly 10% women have education till 8th Standard in India. Therefore, majority of women, especially from poor background remain outside PRI system.
<b>Functional Toilets</b>	The condition excludes landless and poor households that have none to low access to functional toilets.
<b>Two Child</b>	As per studies, women who have been disqualified are young, illiterate, poor, and vulnerable caste categories (UN Women 2018). In India, women hardly have any choice regarding reproductive health. Moreover, NFHS IV revealed that the contraceptive prevalence rate among currently married 15-49-year-old women decreased slightly, from 56 per cent in 2005-06 to 54 per cent in 2015-16. Thus, a strict two-child policy excludes women over decisions that are hardly controlled by them.
<b>Loan Repayment</b>	Although in India, SHG-based loan repayment rates are high, there are studies from Bangladesh that raise concerns about the social cost of burdening women with debt. The loan is used by the household in general, but the duty for repayment remains on the women -exposing them to debt and violence. A study by S Banerjee and L Jackson in 2017 found that micro-finance loans were even used for dowry payments in some households of Bangladesh.
<b>No Confidence Motion</b>	The UN Women report reveals cases of gender-discrimination by Men against Women Leaders using the No Confidence Motion. The scope for appeal is low even if the Motion is rooted in patriarchal bias against taking orders from a woman.

In general, women find it difficult to work against social norms as the scrutiny for women is much stricter than men not only by the constituents, but also by media

Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh made a constitutional provision to organise Mahila Gram Sabhas mandatorily.

Later in 2013, the State governments of Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Gujarat issued circulars for organising Mahila Sabhas – but did not make it mandatory.

#### Steps to conduct a Mahila Sabha

Although the concept seems simple, due to the history of exclusion and marginalisation women have faced, conducting a successful Mahila Sabha takes far more effort than to just ensure participation. There are several

documents on the steps to conduct a successful Sabha. The required preparations vary from one State/society to the other. But some principles can be generalised for the entire country.

#### a. Before the 'Sabha'

(i). Mobilising women: Through home-visits and meetings with women and anganwadi and ASHA workers, the community should be prepared for the Sabha. Women also need to understand how this Sabha is special and not a regular women's group meeting.

Since there is no financial gain involved, thorough sensitisation of citizen's role in governance is required. Women also need to be sensitised to

give space and secure environment to other women who may belong to extreme margins of the society and have grievances which they are not able to share fearing consequences.

(ii). Mobilising community: The entire village should be prepared to cooperate with women coming out in large numbers and sharing their opinions and grievances. The Ward level leadership (e.g. Ward-Panch) must be included in the community mobilisation process. A cluster level meeting should be set according to the availability of community members.

Before the Sabha, Ward meetings or SHG meetings should be encouraged to fine-tune women's inputs and opinions in smaller groups.

(iii). Thorough campaigning: Continuous follow-up and campaigning is required to bring out women in large numbers for a common purpose. Every means of disseminating information should be used to create curiosity among women.

(iv). Liaison with government officials: Even though the Mahila Sabha are not mandatory by Constitution, inviting the government officials at various levels to attend the Mahila Sabha or keep the minutes of meeting and even to create mass awareness will bring legitimacy and confidence in the Sabha.

#### b. During the Mahila Sabha

Even with high level of participation, community discussions have the risk of deviating off topic and creating tension and chaos. Therefore, the discussion must be facilitated either by a community



*Foundation Day Workshop in progress*

volunteer, a woman Panchayat member/elected representative, woman school teacher or a frontline health worker.

The facilitator's role is also to ensure creating a safe space for women to speak, especially those from poor and marginalised communities. The facilitators should ensure that enough time is given for women to express their problems. Women often shy away from expressing strategic and important needs. To that end, the minutes of the pre-Sabha Ward meetings or SHG meetings should be read out in the Mahila Sabha as resolutions and put to vote for inclusion in the minutes of Mahila Sabha meeting.

#### **Performance of Mahila-Sabha**

Although very few States have been able to conduct Mahila Sabhas on a regular basis, there are studies and evidence from NGOs that found a higher enthusiasm and participation from women after regularising the Sabhas. A 2016 study by S N Biswas and Debiprasad Mishra (IRMA) in Gujarat found that the Mahila Sabhas have helped ensure time-bound completion of government programmes and increase awareness, knowledge and participation among women. Several other case studies from Rajasthan show change in women's attitude towards participation in outdoor meetings after the regular conduction of the Sabha's.

These forums of free-speaking and collective thinking are a silver lining to the stronghold of patriarchy in governance and policy. The Mahila Sabhas are not restricted to the educated, loan-repaying mother of two children or less. The Sabha's have the tremendous potential to overcome the exclusionary conditions set by PRI and give equal opportunity to women from all backgrounds to influence policy.

Inclusion of all the voices is ensured if the meetings of the Sabha are mandatorily included in the Gram Sabha and later incorporated in policy. Despite the provision to include everyone, ensuring a high level of participation in the Sabhas remain a challenge due to the timing of women's availability, venue, availability of basic amenities, etc.

Also, the presence of government officials may hinder women from speaking up and pose challenges to inclusion of Mahila Sabha resolutions in the Gram Sabha. Till now, the Mahila Sabhas are not a constitutional mandate in majority of Indian States. Only in Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra, there are Acts that make them mandatory.

Since the Mahila Sabhas have great potential to bring women into mainstream governance and policymaking, NIRDPR has taken up the

initiative to develop a specialised resource pool on gender and tools of gender responsive governance. At the State level, more than 200,000 PRI functionaries, officials and motivators will be trained. Innovative and convergent model of governance such as the Gender-Friendly Panchayat drafting of guidelines and protocols for conducting Mahila Sabhas and the organisation of more than 200 Mahila Sabhas and 1000 Gram Sabhas in 16 districts of five States have been taken up by NIRDPR in partnership with various State and non-government agencies.

With the power to create a safe, equal and free space for women to organise against social barriers, the Mahila Sabhas are a revolutionary platform for ensuring gender equity in governance. Constitutional mandate for conducting the Mahila Sabha in all the States may result in a major leap towards gender inclusivity in local governance and ensure true empowerment of women.

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**Assistant Professor,**  
**Centre for Gender Studies and**  
**Development, NIRDPR, Hyderabad**  
**Cover Page Illustration: Shri V. G. Bhat.**



## Coronavirus crisis: Centre for Panchayati Raj (CPR), NIRDPR reaches out to Gram Panchayats with relevant information

The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj constantly monitored the nationwide developments on coronavirus outbreak and proactively initiated various measures in reaching out to the rural areas with relevant and timely information on a daily basis. Following are the key initiatives undertaken by the Centre for Panchayati Raj (CPR) in reaching out to Gram Panchayats with timely and critical information.

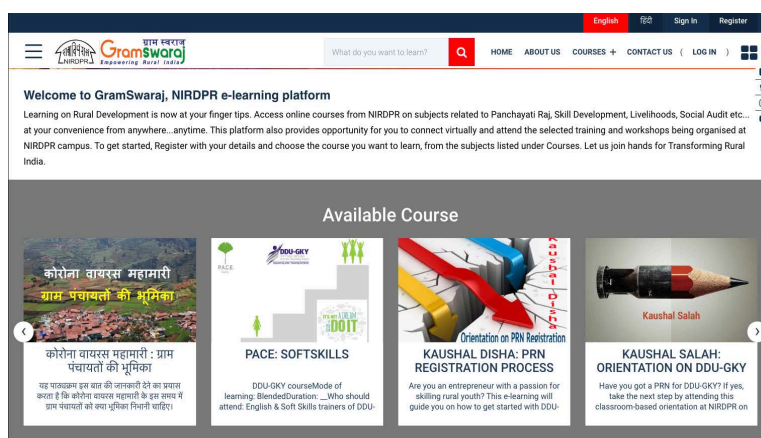
### Awareness videos for PRIs:

The Centre for Panchayati Raj, NIRDPR produced the following videos on what role Gram Panchayats should play during Corona crisis. These videos are being widely published through YouTube, NIRDPR Messaging App, WhatsApp Groups, Gram Swaraj e-Learning Portal and NIRDPR website ensuring timely and maximum reach to Gram Panchayats.

- 1) What Gram Panchayat can do to prevent Corona virus and manage the migrant workers?
- 2) How to make hand sanitiser in Gram Panchayat for bulk use?
- 3) How to make cloth-based masks at Gram Panchayat level through SHGs?
- 4) What precautions should be taken in villages while buying vegetables and grocery items?
- 5) Ayurvedic and Home remedies for preventing coronavirus infection
- 6) Awareness on Social Distancing and Contract Tracing. (Link - <https://www.youtube.com/nirdpr>)

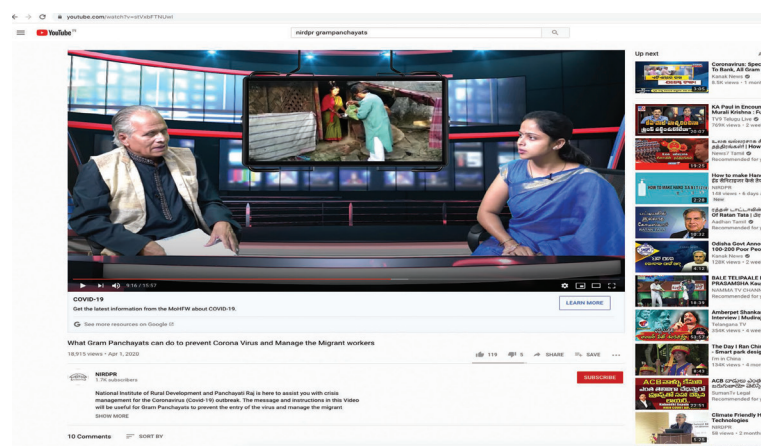
### Online course hosted on NIRDPR e-Learning Portal – 'Gram Swaraj':

Relevant information and training modules related to COVID 19 management at Gram Panchayats level, including best practices adopted by few GPs, is made available as online course (Corona virus Pandemic: Role of Gram Panchayats).



*Gram Swaraj - NIRDPR e-Learning Portal (<http://gramswaraj.nirdpr.in/>)*

**NIRDPR App:** Important messages and awareness videos were shared with Sarpanch and Panchayat Secretaries of nearly 30,000 Gram Panchayats across India, through the NIRDPR instant messaging application. This application has option to interact, also for two way interaction. Sarpanch and Panchayat Secretaries are coming up with their queries and our faculty are responding with required information.



*NIRDPR YouTube Channel*

### Nationwide reach through print media:

An article on how Gram Panchayats can monitor migrant workers and prevent COVID 19 spread in their Gram Panchayats, was published in 14 newspapers across India in English and Hindi. Through this article Dr. W. R. Reddy, IAS, Director General, NIRDPR stressed upon the important role to be played by Gram Panchayats in preventing the spread of COVID 19 and managing migrant workers reaching the villages.

Apart from the above, relevant information and content were shared with all PRI related WhatsApp groups and other social media handles of NIRDPR (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). The same is being forwarded/tagged further by Ministry of Panchayati Raj and other stakeholders.



*NIRDPR India App (Android & iOS)*

## Standard bookkeeping for FPOs in local language- a novel initiative of NIRDPR in collaboration with NABARD-RO, AP



*Launching of Standard Books of FPOs*

Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) are emerging as community-based institutions supporting the last mile farmers in building value chain for their products and getting them remunerative markets. In Andhra Pradesh FPOs are registered either as cooperatives or as Farmer Producer Companies in the form of limited liability corporate bodies. Proper bookkeeping is the felt need of many upcoming Produce Organisation Development Fund (PoDF-FPOs) including those PRODUCE FPOs which are doing sizeable business in the State.

The system of standard bookkeeping though is well placed for the institution of SHGs in the country, it is yet to evolve among the FPOs. Meanwhile, some of the good performing FPOs have been maintaining registers on their own, the practice of bookkeeping is to be standardised so that it is going to be one of the effective indicators for tracking the performance of an FPO and for obtaining bank linkages.

In this context, the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), the lead Resource Support Agency (RSA) of NABARD-AP, has identified 11 books to be maintained by each and every FPO, mandatorily. NIRDPR with the support of NABARD-AP has developed and published these 11 books

in the local language.

As a follow up, a workshop on 'Orientation of Book of Accounts' was conducted by NIRDPR and NABARD-AP on 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2020, at NIRDPR, Hyderabad. In the workshop, the books were launched by Dr. W. R. Reddy, IAS, Director General, NIRDPR and Shri Selvaraj, CGM of NABARD-AP. Around 50 CEOs and accountants of FPOs across all districts of AP participated in the workshop along with their designated RSAs, i.e., CSA, APMAS and NIRDPR.

Dr. Radhika Rani, Associate Professor, Centre for Agrarian Studies welcomed the participants and explained the importance of bookkeeping and presented briefly how proper bookkeeping can enhance the bankability of FPOs.

Shri Selvaraj, CGM, NABARD emphasised the need for timely and up-to-date bookkeeping for FPOs that can leverage bank and government financial resources.

Dr. W. R. Reddy delivered the keynote address. He emphasised the need for deepening and widening the ownership of farmers in the FPO governance and management. He highlighted the ways of catering to the needs of FPOs through establishment of rural BPOs that can deliver seamless solutions in

bookkeeping, statutory compliance and other governance related issues regarding FPOs.

Shri Das, DGM of NABARD, made a presentation on how FPO initiatives have taken shape and how 300 FPOs in the State are taking roots and leveraging government and bank services.

Shri Ramanjineyulu, CEO, Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, Hyderabad addressed the participants and emphasised the need for transparent and up-to-date bookkeeping. He urged the NABARD- AP, to initiate an accredited course to groom young professionals to serve the FPOs. He also informed that their FPO Hub, dedicated software, can help FPOs in all spheres of up-to-date account keeping.

In the technical sessions, Shri Ramakrishna Rao, Company Secretary gave the conceptual clarity on each of the books and explained the methodology of writing these books.

The participants critically analysed formats of each book and clarified their doubts from experts. Participants assured that they would maintain accounts up-to-date and accurately and meet the expectations of NABARD.

**Dr. Ch. Radhika Rani,**  
Associate Professor and Head,  
Centre for Agrarian Studies, NIRDPR.



## Enhancing Skills of Rural Youth in North Eastern States through Rural Technologies



*Smt. Radhika Rastogi, IAS, DDG, NIRDPR, Dr. S. Ramesh Sakthivel, Associate Professor & Head, CIAT, Shri Mohammad Khan, Sr. Consultant and Shri Karthikeyan, RGNIYD along with the training coordinators, RTP and participants from North-East*

The North Eastern Region (NER) has a share of over 1.07 per cent of the youth population of the country and a relatively higher proportion of unemployed youth (57.37 per 1000) indicates that the challenge is paramount. Studies have emphasised that skill development in North-East India is imminent for harnessing the demographic dividend by providing employable skills to the youth. Enhancing employability is a major task ahead in the development paradigm of NER.

For skill development of youth in North East, a holistic approach seems more desirable taking into consideration the intra-region differences on account of topography, farm and non-farm sector, literacy and education level, skill training infrastructure, job preference, traditional and modern occupations, self-employment and regular wage/salaried employment potential, rural and urban, etc. Those young people who do not possess any skill find it hard to enter into the world of work. It is necessary to provide them the minimum employable skills and upgrade the skills of those who possess some skill for self-employment.

In order to realise the Priority Area Employment and Skill Development of the National Youth Policy 2014 and create

a productive youth workforce in the North East of India, the Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development and the Rural Technology Park, National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj have jointly undertaken the task of providing skill training on various rural technologies to the youth of North-East India to enhance their employability and enable them to take up self-employment.

### Objectives:

- To provide training in entrepreneurship skill development programmes in various sectors for the marginalised youth of North-East using rural technologies based on the need in each North-Eastern State
- To equip participants with relevant knowledge and skills

### Target Group:

Youth from eight North-Eastern States of India are being trained in batches during the financial year 2019-20. Preference is given to SC/ST youth in the North-Eastern region.

Jointly with NYKS/SIRDs/SRLM, Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development would identify the potential unemployed youth to undergo training in entrepreneurship and the specific sectors for entrepreneurial and skill

development training. Accordingly, six batches of skill training for the identified youth of the North-East India were organised as follows:

The first batch consisting of 30 youth from the districts of West Imphal, Thoubal and Kakching of Manipur were trained on 'Leaf Plate and Cup Making' held at NIRDPR, Hyderabad during 9<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> December, 2019.

The second batch consisting of 30 youth (24 males and 6 females) from the districts of Mamit, Champhai and Aizawl of Mizoram were trained on 'Leaf Plate and Cup Making' at NIRDPR, Hyderabad during 21<sup>st</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2020.

The third batch consisting of 26 youth (22 males and 4 females) from the districts of West Sikkim and South Sikkim of Sikkim were trained on 'Conversion of Handmade Paper into Value-added Products' held at NIRDPR, Hyderabad during 10<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> February, 2020.

The fourth batch consisting of 22 youth (2 males and 20 females) and one coordinator from the districts of Mamit, Lawngtlai, Siaha of trained on 'Preparation of Herbal Beauty Care Products' at NIRDPR, Hyderabad during 18<sup>th</sup> -22<sup>th</sup> February, 2020.

The fifth batch consisting of 19

Youth (16 males and 3 females) from the districts of Kohima, Peren and Phek of Nagaland were trained. Eight youth (5 male and 3 female) on 'Preparation of Soya and Millet Products' and 11 youth (11 male) on 'Solar Lights Assembling Installation and Maintenance' were trained at RTP, NIRDPR, Hyderabad during 22<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> February, 2020.

The sixth batch consisting of 25 youth (11 males and 14 females) from the districts of Siaha, Champhai, Lawngtlai, Kolasib of Mizoram were trained on 'Conversion of Handmade Paper into Value-added Products and Natural Dying'. Eighteen youth (6 males and 12 females) were trained on 'Conversion of Handmade Paper into Value-added Products' and 7 youth (05 male and 02 female) were trained on 'Natural Dying' held at NIRDPR during 07<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup> March, 2020.

Besides hands-on training, the youth were given input on entrepreneurship, viz. 'Introduction to entrepreneurship;

Importance & relevance: Emphasis on self-employment'; 'Advantages of being an entrepreneur'; 'Characteristics of an Entrepreneur; Entrepreneurial qualities; Business Orientation, Problem Solving Orientation; Business ethics/ Business etiquettes; Identifying a project opportunity; Fundamentals of enterprise launching and management; Starting a Micro, Small or Medium enterprise; Statutory and mandatory requirements; Overview of marketing, Digital Marketing; Preparation of detailed/ bankable project report; Support system to pursue entrepreneurship; General concepts about the Govt. formalities; Statutory requirements; Incentives & Concessions for MSMEs; An interface with a successful entrepreneur – experience sharing; Support and financial assistance from Govt. agencies, banks/financial institutions.

#### Outcome:

- Reduce unemployment of

youth in the North-Eastern Region of India

- Youth of North-East India gained knowledge about bank loan, funding opportunities from State, Central government schemes to set-up enterprises

- Understanding of parameters to assess opportunities and constraints for new business ideas

- Guidelines for setting up entrepreneurial ventures

The programme was coordinated by Dr. Vasanthi Rajendran, Professor & Head, Centre for Training Orientation and Capacity Building, RGNIYD, Shri David Paul, Training Officer, CTOCB and Shri Karthikeyan, Training Associate, CTOCB. On behalf of RTP, NIRDPR the training facilitation was coordinated Dr. Ramesh Sakthivel, Associate Prof, CIAT, Shri Mohd Khan, Senior Consultant, RTP and Shri Ragavendra, Young Professional, Rural Technology Park, NIRDPR.

## Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and Rural Livelihoods



*Unemployed youth being trained in livelihoods by Tata Strive Extension Centre & HCL Foundation at HarDOI, Uttar Pradesh*

Rural India is home to over 65 per cent of India's population, but economic policies in the recent past have excluded a majority of rural society from partaking in India's development journey. To address the deprivation and dissatisfaction among a large percentage of people in the Indian villages, it had become imperative to boost the agrarian economy to pull the maximum number

of people out of subsistence farming and give them a much more remunerative role. Although there is thrust on improving rural livelihoods by the Government of India, not really much has been achieved in this area. In this article an attempt has been made to know how the CBOs can improve/enhance the rural livelihoods.

#### Rural Livelihoods

The rural sector includes a wide and diverse array of stakeholders including large and small landholders, landless workers, non-agricultural entrepreneurs, public institutions, private firms, providers of inputs and services, farmer organisations and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs). Hence, rural livelihoods reflect this diversity and



therefore comprise a mix of agriculture, allied activities, forestry, mining, tourism and a wide variety of non-agricultural enterprise activities involving interactions among several different classes of rural and urban economic actors. Improving rural livelihoods, therefore, needs to take rural diversity into account.

The effectiveness and profitability of these diverse livelihood systems will vary depending on the general development environment, each household member's access to and control of the asset base, their productive and reproductive roles and responsibilities, their capabilities and their linkages with other rural and urban actors.

#### **Improving rural people's livelihoods in a sustainable manner needs:**

- To view rural poor as primary actors in the development process
- To generate a favourable macro environment for rural and agricultural development in accordance with specific comparative advantages
- To promote positive micro and macro linkages
- To promote participation at the grassroots level in a practical and democratic way
- To improve access by the poor to different forms of capital (human, social, financial, physical, natural) to enhance their livelihoods
- To increase the flexibility and dynamism of responses and projects
- To adopt an interdisciplinary approach, and
- To implement only those interventions, promoting sustainable activities.

The government of India supports sustainable rural livelihoods in various ways; some of them are summarised and presented below:

NRLM focuses on stabilising and promoting existing livelihoods portfolio

of the poor through its three pillars –

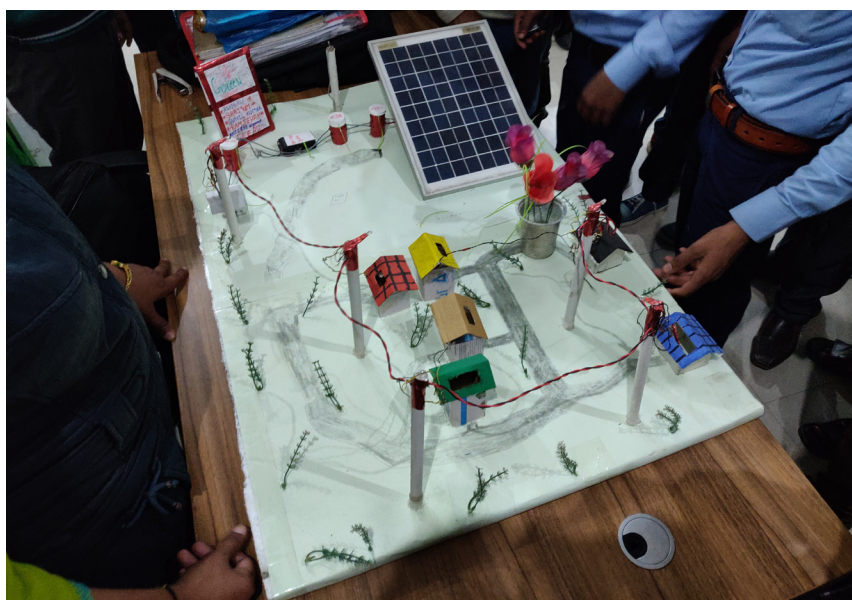
1. 'Vulnerability reduction' and 'livelihoods enhancement' through deepening/enhancing and expanding existing livelihoods options and tapping new opportunities in farm and non-farm sectors
2. 'Employment' - building skills for the job market outside, and
3. 'Enterprises' - nurturing self-employed and entrepreneurs (for micro-enterprises)

The Deendayal Antodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) is aimed at alleviation of rural poverty through building sustainable community institutions of the poor.

that work to generate improvements within a community. They are locally formed, locally staffed, and their actions are specific to the location they operate in. Most CBOs are mainly volunteer organisations with few paid positions as most of their funding is delegated towards completing the group's objectives. Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and Cooperatives are the best examples of these CBOs, especially those play a vital role in improving rural livelihoods.

#### **Self-Help Group Moment and Rural Livelihoods**

SHGs create opportunities for the poor who cannot individually secure



*A model Solar Power grid for a village prepared by trainees at Tata Strive Extension Centre, Hardoi, Uttar Pradesh*

It seeks to mobilise about nine crore households into SHGs and link them to sustainable livelihood opportunities by building their skills and enabling them to access formal sources of finance, entitlements and services from both public and private sectors. It is envisaged that the intensive and continuous capacity building of rural poor women will ensure their social, economic and political empowerment and development.

#### **Community-Based Organisations (CBOs):**

Community-based organisations, or CBOs, are local non-profit groups

financial services such as credit from formal credit sources and other financial services. Several studies across the world show that SHGs positively affect the livelihood development activities of members and their communities. According to several studies SHGs play critical roles in the contribution of microfinance to poverty alleviation through improvements in the asset base, employment, and income level; reduce dependence on money lenders and diversification of occupation.

According to NABARD (2019), from an alternative credit delivery channel,

SHG became a vehicle for social engineering, a development paradigm and finally a pathway to better life and livelihood. Today, there are more than 10 million women Self-Help Groups for whom the movement has become a way of life. It has given them an identity and an opportunity to engage with the outside world. The programme brought them in contact with mainstream financial service providers to initially meet their emergent needs and become entrepreneurs subsequently. And it also spawned a dream! Most of these women had very little by way of resources but the SHG movement gave them the courage to change the course of their destiny.

Graduating SHG members to the next stage of taking up livelihood activities is an important task and NABARD has been supporting skill and entrepreneurship training of SHG members through the Micro Enterprise Development Programme (MEDP) since March 2006 with the goal of development of sustainable livelihoods/micro-enterprise ventures by matured SHG members. Around 26,452 members were trained through 870 MEDPs during 2018-19 for enabling them to start micro enterprises. Cumulatively, around 4.94 lakh SHG members have received training through 17,276 MEDPs. NABARD is also implementing Livelihood and Enterprise Development Programme (LEDP), with a view to create sustainable livelihoods among SHG members and to create maximum impact of skill up-gradation. Cumulatively, 61,033 SHG members have been supported through 532 LEDP programmes with grant sanction of Rs. 2,283.86 lakh from NABARD up to 31 March, 2019.

#### **Farmer Producer Companies/ Organisations and Rural Livelihoods**

The Indian farming community encounters a wide range of challenges, the most important of them being smaller landholdings on account of division and fragmentation, non-availability

of quality inputs and technology at affordable cost and lack of remunerative and assured markets for their produce. The Government of India is promoting contract farming and formation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) in order to promote farming in an organised manner. It also, through Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC), has been promoting formation of FPOs



*Community Sewing Training Centre,  
Community Sakti Sewa Committee, formed by  
SHGs in and around Hardoi, U. P*

with technical handholding and financial support to leverage the collectivisation from pre-production to post-harvest marketing. These FPOs provide a proven solution to overcome the challenges of the farming community through social communication, mutual trust, collective strength and bargaining power.

The Government has formulated and released the progressive and facilitative Model Act "The ---State /UT Agricultural Produce & Livestock Contract Farming and Services (Promotion & facilitation) Act, 2018" in May, 2018 for its adoption by the States/Union Territories (UTs). Theafore said Model Contract Farming Act provides that Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO) may enter into agreement with the contract farming sponsor to draw all the benefits of contract farming all along the agri-food

value chain. Self-Help Groups (SHGs) as part of FPOs can avail the benefits. This provision further enhanced the capacity of SHGs to be part of livelihood creation and promotion.

By virtue of the government's Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO) initiative, numerous collective and farmer-owned companies are now helping small and marginal farmers earn stable livelihoods. Though the members of FPOs are usually small and marginal farmers, they have been empowered to trade in agricultural platforms.

Strengthening FPOs and making them successful would enhance the robustness of the Agri Entrepreneur model since vital complementary roles of AEs can be carved out. A comprehensive, multi-pronged approach encompassing a series of interventions can significantly strengthen the collectivisation ecosystem in the long run. Introduction of a dedicated technical support facility can help build transition FPOs from a production-oriented model to a more value-addition and agribusiness focused model. Then the member - farmers will have access to a range of services, including training, sourcing of inputs, mechanisation, value addition, market information and linkages. The potential role of aggregation models in strengthening SHGs is widely acknowledged. However, there is also a consensus that the collectivisation ecosystem in the country is currently weak and fraught with challenges. FPOs need to be professionalised to make them more effective and successful.

#### **Role of Co-operatives in improving Rural Livelihoods**

A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise. Agriculture continues to be the engine of economic





*Activities of Hardoi Farmers Producer Company at a glance*

growth in most of the developing countries. Strong cooperatives are able to overcome many of the difficulties faced by the farmers; wherein in a country like India 85 per cent are small and marginal farmers. Cooperatives work on the set seven principles, among these principles the seventh principle - Concern for the community- derives cooperatives to work for the sustainable development of the community. A number of successful cooperatives in India itself like IFFCO (Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Ltd.) and KRIBHCO (Krishak Bharti Fertiliser Cooperative Ltd.) in the fertiliser sector, institutions like AMUL in dairy sector and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) formed by various institutions have immensely benefitted farmer members in increasing crop productivity and overall income by generating support in various programmes related to agriculture. Suitable Farming Systems to generate year-round employment and sustainable income through crops, vegetables,

fruits and livestock have been achieved by the members of the cooperatives. Initiative was taken for agro forestry by combining plantation of fruit trees, fuel trees and forest trees to improve the overall climate on wastelands by cooperatives like IFFDC (Indian Farm Forestry Development Cooperative Ltd.). This has helped ecological resilience and rural livelihood enhancement among the community. The farmer members were immensely benefitted by increased efficiency of various agro inputs and overall crop productivity and finally making better profit through the efforts of cooperatives.

Cooperatives can mobilise their members and help them to organise for their sustainable livelihood. However, cooperatives need additional support to adopt the successful model for ensuring livelihoods of the members. There is also a need to look at the rules and regulations of the cooperative to facilitate flexibility to suit the local requirements and

promote various activities required for improving rural livelihoods. Since, the India is one of the largely populated countries, dependent on agriculture for livelihood security and hosting over 25 per cent of the world's poor, therefore; any such successful development initiative by the cooperative in India may be instrumental for other developing countries for wider replication. Hence, a successful cooperative movement in India will not only ensure livelihood security in rural India but will also help to enhance rural livelihoods of the other similar countries.

The diversity of livelihood activities in rural India and the complexity of challenges like smaller land holdings, lack of social communication, poor collectivisation, result in low productivity of rural livelihoods. Community-based organisations (CBOs) like SHGs, FPOs and Co-operatives provide a solution to most of the challenges of rural livelihoods. CBOs improve and also create the social capital which enhances the mutual trust, social communication and ultimately collectivisation among rural entrepreneurs. CBOs also create the social collateral which enables the lending institutions to sanction hassle free collateral free loans to rural entrepreneurs. Thus, these two inherent strengths of CBOs will undoubtedly increase or improve the rural livelihoods.

**G. Anjaneyulu,**

**Project Consultant, CFIE, NIRDPR.**



*Participants of the training programme on Role of CBOs on Rural Livelihoods, conducted by NIRDPR at SIRDUP, Lucknow during 9<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> December, 2019.*



## Training on providing solutions/technologies for safe drinking water held at NIRDPR



*Dr. W. R. Reddy, IAS, DG, NIRDPR, Dr. S. Ramesh Sakthivel, Associate Prof & Head, CIAT, Shri Lalit Mohan Sharma, Director, Sehgal Foundation, Shri Mohammad Khan, Sr. Consultant and other dignitaries at the inaugural session of the workshop*

Sehgal Foundation's Water and Waste Water Resource Centre, in partnership with Centre for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology (CAWST), Canada and in Collaboration with Rural Technology Park, National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Hyderabad came together to build capacity of those working or intend to work on providing solutions/technologies for safe drinking water to communities in need.

The three-day training was organised on "JalKalp Biosand filter Technology" from 24th to 26th February, 2020. The main sessions of the training included relationship between water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and health in developing countries and role of household water treatment with emphasis on the biosand filter technology, in improving health, as well as effective ways to implement WASH projects. The training provided an opportunity to all participants for hands-on experience on the installation, use and monitoring of the JalKalp (stainless steel biosand filter). The hands-on topics included checking the steel shell, installing filters and conducting follow-up/monitoring visits and troubleshooting.

The training was inaugurated by Shri Lalit Mohan Sharma, Director, Adaptive Technology-Water, SM Sehgal Foundation, Gurugram. Twenty technical professionals,

social workers and Agriculturist from five states including Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra attended the training. The training offered technical know-how and opportunity to learn about the low cost and sustainable solutions for treating household water.

### WORKSHOP

Sehgal Foundation's Water and Waste Water Resource Centre also organised a two-day learning exchange workshop on 'Household Water Treatment and Storage' for WASH professionals, NGOs, universities, research institutes, companies and entrepreneurs working on the subject at NIRDPR Campus during 27th and 28th February, 2020.

Dr. Ramesh Sakthivel, Associate Professor & Head, CIAT welcomed all the participants and started the introductory session. Dr. W. R. Reddy, IAS, Director General, NIRDPR and other eminent

professionals from the sector and experts from Sehgal Foundation's and CAWST, Canada were present at the inaugural. Dr. Reddy urged that we need to critically assess the available household water treatment technologies suitable for last mile beneficiaries. He emphasised that the technology needs to be robust, low cost and sustainable.

The workshop provided a platform to developers of technology, providers of technology, practitioners and organisations interested in implementation of safe drinking water. And to share their experiences, learn from each other and discuss strategies for scaling up and advocacy. More than 50 participants attended two day deliberations. The workshop also witnessed an exhibition cum demonstration of several treatment technologies and water quality testing options.



*Demonstration of water purification technology developed by Sehgal Foundation, RTP partner*



## Rammed Earth Walling: an eco-friendly construction technique



*A demo wall constructed using rammed earth technique at Rural Technology Park, NIRDPR*

Rammed earth walls are constructed by ramming a mixture of soil, sand and cement in layers between flat panel formwork to make walls. The mixture of earth and stabilizer is similar to the blend/composition used in the CSEB technology. Rammed earth has high thermal mass and thus should be used in places with hot-dry or cold-dry climate. These walls are more durable as they are around 2-3 times stronger than the conventional bricks and more environment friendly as less energy is consumed in its production.

Houses built using rammed earth walls provide good thermal comfort and aesthetic finish. The thickness of the wall made of rammed earth varies from 6" to 10". Moulds of required shapes can be

used to get the desired design such as vaults and curved walls. Different colours and textures of soil can be used in layers to enhance the appearance of the wall.

### THE PROCESS

A variety of tests are conducted to determine the suitability of the local soil for construction. The soil mixture used should ideally contain clay, sand and gravel. Sand and gravel provide structural strength while clay holds the mixture together.

Formworks are made out of wood and metal and can be used to build up walls 2 ft (0.6 m) at a time. After the mould are filled and thoroughly compacted with the soil-cement mixture, it would be removed and reset to form the next section of wall.

A layer of moistened soil is placed inside the form and a worker uses the tamper repeatedly for compression.

The process of mud wall construction is being heavily researched and as part of this effort Rural Technology Park at NIRDPR has constructed rammed earth walls of different types using a conventional mould. The experiment aims at developing an optimised form work system to reduce the cost and increase ease of construction. This will help many people who have no access to materials and labour, build their homes independently. Workshops and training programmes to promote knowledge and awareness on rammed earth construction process will be organised as part of this initiative.



*Various stages of rammed earth wall making*



## National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj

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### POST GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT (ONE YEAR FULL TIME RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMME) MANAGEMENT (PGDRDM) 2020-21 BATCH-18)

### POST GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN MANAGEMENT - RURAL MANAGEMENT (PGDM-RM) 2020-22 BATCH-3 APPROVED BY AICTE (TWO YEARS FULL TIME RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMME)

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**RESERVATION:** Reservations for the students of the SC/ST/OBC(Non-creamy layer) EWS and Persons with Disability (PWD) will be made as per the Government of India norms.

**LAST DATE :** Last date for online submission is 10-05-2020. Applications received after the last date shall not be accepted.

**ELIGIBILITY**

- Minimum 50 per cent marks (45 per cent marks for SC/ST and PWD candidates) or equivalent in Graduation.
- Valid Score in CAT / XAT / MAT / CMAT / ATMA / GMAT for admissions (or) Selection of candidates will be made through a process of All-India Entrance Test which will test the verbal, quantitative and analytical competencies of the students including English Language
- Students, who are in the final year and expect to complete all the requirements before 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020, may also apply.

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**Mode of Selection** Apart from eligibility conditions group discussion and personal interviews will be conducted for the short-listed candidates at NIRDPR, Hyderabad.

**Course Fee** Rs.1,80,000/- per annum

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Sd/  
Prof. & Head (CPGS&DE)

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