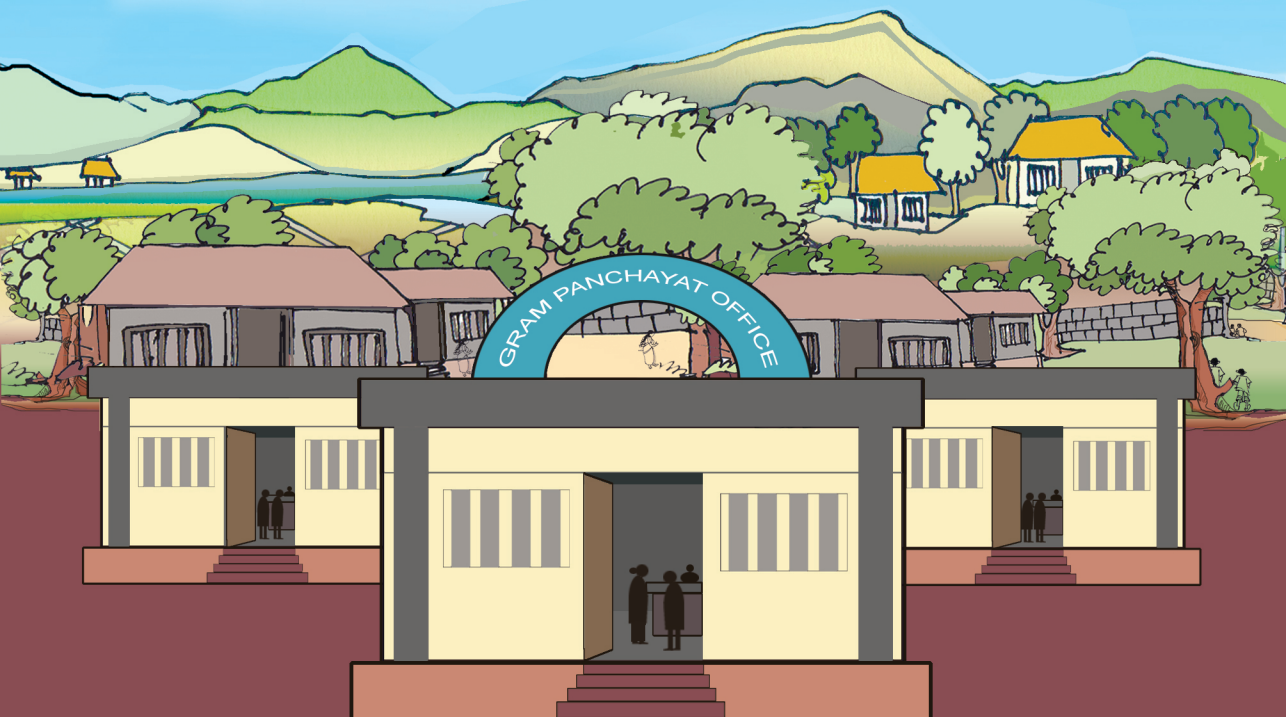# A case study on the practice of Gram Panchayat Organisation Development project for developing a model Gram Panchayat

Dibburhalli Gram Panchayat in SidlaghattaTaluk,Chikkaballapur District, Karnataka

Dr. R. Aruna Jayamani

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A Case Study on the Practice of 'Gram Panchayat Organisation Development' Project Developing a Model Gram Panchayat, Karnataka - Dibburhalli Gram Panchayat in Sidlaghatta Taluka, Chikkaballapur District, Karnataka

by

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1. Background of the Case

In India, Gram Panchayats as institutions of local governance are vested with wide array of responsibilities and the repository of funds flowing in from multiple sources like Central Finance Commission (CFC), Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and also from the State Finance Commission (SFC) and state government projects/schemes, etc. The Eleventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution allows States to devolve three Fs namely Funds, Functions and Functionaries to the local bodies to empower them as institutions of self-government. State of Karnataka is one of the pioneers in decentralisation process and devolved as many as 29 administrative and development functions to the Gram Panchayat.

These include important subjects like health, education, nutrition, rural housing, forestry, drinking water and sanitation, etc. In addition, Gram Panchayats implement many important schemes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Generation Scheme, National Rural Health Mission, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Swachh Bharat Mission including a number of State specific development and welfare programmes along with scheduled works related to administration. Therefore, despite the presence of a constitutionally mandated body at the village level, there is a need to recognise the Gram Panchayat members and create enabling environments and incentives to learn and function effectively with full potential. In this way, developing social capital at the grassroots and bringing rural citizens and their representatives into the participatory decision-making process is essential to bring a coordinated development in the rural areas. Such efforts were attempted sporadically in all over the country by selected few GPs and achieved different rates of success evidently.

This is an attempt to study and document the process, strategies, people participation and success, impact on the delivery of basic services through a model called GPOD. The study focused few specific areas namely, strategies and initiatives of the GPOD, citizens' participation towards GP activities, GP management and administration process, people response and support. It also covered the process of people's participation and decision making, sources of resource, status of implementation of rural development programmes. The study team further interacted with the people to understand the effect of the development model on the service delivery, transparency in administration and benefits accrued to the local community.

This case study was conducted in Dibburhalli Gram Panchayat in Chikkaballapur District, Karnataka. The study was carried through personal visit, observation, interaction and focus group discussion for collection of required information especially on satisfaction of the people on Panchayat performance. The purpose for which the study conducted was, capturing the successful change when all components of a Gram Panchayat are aligned, i.e. the vision, skills, incentives, resources, action plan and results in participatory manner. Studying such models / frameworks will give immense academic importance and also as the case of best practices which will motivate to develop other Gram Panchayats.

2. The Model base for Development

Ambrose Model - Managing Complex Change: Diagnostic Approach

This model of development incentivises the various factors essential for bringing change in a complex society or institution. The first row of above table presents clarity of factors' presence in the process of change or development. It shows vision handhold with skills, incentives with adequate resources creating an action plan and implementation will lead to change. Further, this model explains presence of all other factors without vision will result in confusion similarly options of skills will lead to anxiety. Without incentives in various forms may have gradual change but not at desired level. The next level rely on need of resources adequacy; in its absence other factors will not get materialised finally and result in frustration among the institutions as well as with end users. The last row vitalises the importance of having an action plan which is very important to bring change or development and result in false starts. Therefore, any process of development has to start with visioning followed by required skill building coupled with some forms of incentives. Identification and mobilisation of resources along with preparation of viable action plan will lead to development without fail. This model has been experimented in this Gram Panchayat by the Government of Karnataka with the handholding support of people's organisation for cleaning this region.

Source: Ambrose D. 1987; Managing Complex Change. Pittsburgh: The Enterprise Group Ltd.

Vision	Skills	Incentives	Resources	Action Plan	Change
X	Skills	Incentives	Resources	Action Plan	Confusion
Vision	**X**	Incentives	Resources	Action Plan	Anxiety
Vision	Skills	**X**	Resources	Action Plan	Gradual Change
Vision	Skills	Incentives	**X**	Action Plan	Frustration
Vision	Skills	Incentives	Resources	**X**	False Starts

3. Implementing Agency

Avantika Foundation an NGO in the State of Karnataka developed an experimental strategy called 'Gram Panchayat Organisation Development' (GPOD Framework) and experimented the strategy in two Gram Panchayats namely Dibburhalli Gram Panchayat, Chikkaballapur district and Oorkunte Mittur Gram Panchayat, Kolar District in Karnataka. It is called the Mulbagal project. It was a two-year partnership between the Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR), Government of Karnataka and Avantika Foundation, with the financial support of the Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan (RGPSA), a scheme of Government of India.

4. The basics of GPOD Framework

Organisation Development (OD) is a planned, step by step approach towards increasing organisation effectiveness by focusing on creating enabling environment through developing structures, systems and processes. However, underlying OD are humanistic values, which include providing opportunities for each member of an organisation or an institution to develop ability of leadership and skills for full potential and recognising each individual as beneficiary as well as contributor of development and act within the purview of institution or society. The rationale for using the OD process to develop a framework to strengthen the GP is its focus on the organisation as a whole, and not on standalone components. The premise is that successful change occurs when all components of an organisation are aligned, i.e., the vision, skills, incentives, resources, action plan and results. This base model helped the implementing agency to design the GPOD steps, which was aimed at social and economic change.

The GPOD is a framework towards strengthening the institutional capacity of Gram Panchayats to enable them to deliver their mandate as per the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. The GPOD framework is based on Organisation Development (OD) principles. The rationale for using OD framework is its focus on the organisation as a whole, and not on standalone components. The stages of GPOD strategy include: developing a vision and mission, process mapping, developing Gram Panchayat Organisation structure, perspective and annual planning, handholding implementation of plans and strengthening citizen engagement with the Gram Panchayat. This approach is a unique experiment based on the 'Theory of Change', i.e. Strengthening of Gram Panchayat and Community driven participatory planning initiatives under the GPOD project.

Stages of GPOD

The crux of this framework is working towards developing the organisational capacity of Gram Panchayats and building effective leadership skills amongst elected representatives, officials and other stakeholders in decentralised governance through Panchayati Raj Institutions. In this context GPOD has various stages in the process which starts from 1.Environment building and context for change, 2. Preparation of GP Vision and Mission, 3. Activity Mapping, 4. Developing of GP Organisation Structure, 5.Building accountability, ownership and shared leadership, 6.Preparation of Perspective Plan and Annual Plans, 7. Imparting skills of prioritisation, knowledge of resources, 8.Handholding in Implementation of Plans, and 9. Strengthening Citizen Engagement..

This process had started with 'Preparation and Design Phases (Vision building, Process mapping and design of GP organisation structure)' during Jan - December 2011, the second phase started with the 'Implementation of the organisation structure, Perspective and Annual planning, implementation of plan for 2012-13' during Jan 2012 - March 2013, third phase 'Planning and implementation for 2013-14, MIS development and enhancing citizen engagement' was initiated in April 2013 to March 2014.

5. Factor of Motivation

The strategy of GPOD is having a unique approach of development not striving on the traditional way of implementation of basic needs satisfaction or addressing the sectoral problems but focus on the strengthening of organisations, leadership, role clarity and citizen engagement. The issues related to the sectors were understood and acted upon to the extent they were a part of the GP's priorities. Rather, it aimed at strengthening the GP institution which could play a key role in social change. The premise is that a weak GP body cannot become strong due to external pressure. Once the foundation was laid down to strengthen the GP organisation, we focused on citizen bodies to simultaneously encourage citizens to support the GP through initiative and leadership as well as for them to perform the role of oversight of the GP.

6. Pre-conditions for Implementation of GPOD

- The GP has to have interest to work with and in concurrence to develop good relationship with facilitating agency (NGO partner) and already putting in some efforts to function well and members who were keen to learn and contribute
- GP must be interested in an organisation strengthening process, basic willingness and risk-taking abilities of the members to incorporate new structures and systems. It is also important to have interest in good governance, service delivery and good administration

- Willingness to provide and update data required for understanding status of development, problems of people, resource potential of the GP and ultimately planning with vision and mission with better interventions
- Showing of interest by GP members in functioning of the GP and citizens' participation and interest towards GP activities.

7. Process followed in the Gram Panchayat

The GPOD project was executed to pursue four key objectives:

- **Understanding Function:** The implementing agency made people to understand the actual role and responsibility given to the Gram Panchayat as an institution of local governance as provided in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment of the Indian constitution
- **Initiate Change:** Strengthening the GP as an organisation or able agent of development working with result-oriented commitment and enthusiasm

- **Develop Framework:** Enabling the GP to prepare a framework of action plan to make a strong GP organisation

- **Capacitating of Elected Representatives (ERs):** The capacities and motivations required for building a better and developed society for elected members and functionaries of Gram Panchayat

- **Differential Compensation System among Elected Representatives (ERs):** The project introduced differential compensation system among elected members, primarily to enable those members, who assumed the responsibility of Heads of committees, as compensation for their time and effort with the motto of spending more time in addition to their personal profession

- Most methodologies and aids developed for planning and budgeting in Gram Panchayats do not necessarily aid effective decision making at the GP level. Instead, they appear to be designed primarily for monitoring the activities of the GPs. Even an effective decentralised participatory planning process focuses on engaging Panchayat members and citizens for seeking their inputs in preparation of plans

- The Planning, Budgeting and Review systems under GPOD framework aim to be GP-centric and details the processes to arrive at outcomes that the GP wants to achieve, and the activities which are required to achieve different outcomes

- The GP-MIS is designed to present the plan in a simple format and to aid a monthly review process. Monthly review meetings were held with the Heads to share status of achievement against monthly plan, and diagnose the reasons for delay or inability.

8. Process of Vision and Mission

Stage 1: Capacity Building – A two-day ToT classroom training was conducted by the HR consultants to the personnel of Implementing agencies, on the process for vision and mission development. It imparted skills on various PRA tools and other various exercises through experiential learning. The training enabled the project staff to prepare a road map on how to involve people in the visioning process

Stage 2: **Develop and finalisation of methodology for Visioning-**With a number of sittings and detailed discussion with the NGO partners, GP specific methodologies for developing vision and mission were arrived with the help of the HR consultants. It ensured the standardised visioning processes specific to the different hamlets contextual issues ultimately to bring holistic development

Step 3: Orientation of Elected Representatives –the facilitating team conducted one-day pre-workshop for the ERs of the GP for orientation and rapport building. This workshop had given basic idea of the GPOD and attitude development to work towards GP prosperity. It also explained on, what GP members should focus on, their aspirations and the priorities of people rather than think about schemes and projects. A number of success stories and experiences were shared such as Bhutan's Happiness Index and Constitutional values. Roles and responsibilities of the ERs were also discussed and finalised

Step – 4:Vision and Mission Processes in the Two GPs –the facilitating agencies conducted number of workshops, focus group discussions and meetings of citizen forums in each ward of the GP and collected inputs from the all households. Based on the information collected from various forums and exercises, GP developed the base for the vision and mission

Step 5: Consolidating vision, mission process –The vision, mission process was concluded with an internal documentation of focus areas, which emerged from the PRAs/FGDs and the vision workshops. This list was an input to the process of mapping exercise.

9. Modalities of strengthening Standing committees and citizen engagement

After strengthening the GP's organisational structure by creating strong heads to each committee formed to discharge various functions and roles, initiating the efforts to enable and motivate other members to participate more actively in the GP activities. GP heads started making quarterly presentations to their respective Standing Committees, with a view to providing them with updates as well as to get their views. In turn, the members have started providing more support to the Heads. Enhancing citizen engagement with focusing simultaneously on creating an oversight mechanism of civil society, as well as creating leaders in villages who could support the GP in performing its duties, some of whom could subsequently join the GP formally. In addition, Dibburhalli Panchayat felt the need to build on the momentum of change in the GP and to manage expectations set by intensive interaction with citizens. Based on the participatory exercises, short term projects were identified by each GP member, which could be implemented with ease and did not require additional funds. These included areas like resolving encroachment issues, provision of transport and cattle pond desilting, etc.

10 .Roles and Functions of Gram Panchayat Functionaries

Name of the Process and related roles			
Type of Function (RACI)	Adhyaksha/	WM	PDO/
R=Responsibility, A=Accountability, C=Collaboration, I=Providing Information	Upadhyaksha		Secretary
Piped Drinking Water supply			
Collecting Estimates from Zilla Panchayat	R		A
Quality Assessment & Monitoring	A	R	R
Survey of quantity of water available		C	A
Get information on population density.		C	A
Survey for installation of additional tapes		R	A
Discussion in ward about water related expenditures		A	
Formulation of Bye-law/Decision about deposits and tariff	R	R	R
Estimate preparation for pipes and taps	C		C
Procurement	R		R
Installation		A	R
Appointment of waterman with ZP sanction for new connection	A	R	R
Waterman's orientation to the GP		C	A
Water supply in the ward (Full time waterman)		A	R
Testing water quality		A	R

Revenue Generation			
Projection of GP Expenses and Income to raise additional Revenue	A	R	R
Identify revenue generation avenues.	A	R	R
Detail process for collection	R	R	A
Print handouts & display on notice board regarding rates, dates etc	R	R	A
Conduct ward meetings & allocate responsibility for collection	A	R	R
Periodic collection of tax	R	A	R
Track plan vs. collections and take corrective actions	A	R	R
Implementation - road renovation	R	A	R
Implementation - de-weeding	R	A	R
Payment	A	R	R
Street light maintenance			
Collection of data on street lights		A	R
Registration of information/complaints from citizens		R	A
Problem analysis in a GP meeting	R	R	A
Depending on the problem, address within GP (procurement, installation)	R	R	R
If not, contact department		I	A
Follow up for execution with department	R	R	A
Monthly awareness forums for usage		R	A
Installation of meters for Street Lamps (for every ten one meter)	R	R	A
Housing (Support Construction and distribution of sites)			
Preparation of homeless people's list in Ward Sabha	R	A	C
Collect information on gram thana and identify vacant public lands	R	R	A
Preparation of list of people with sites but less fin cap	R	A	
Ward wise assessment of houses required	R	A	R
Finalise housing list in the Grama Sabha after publicizing the same	R	R	A
Send housing proposal to TP for finance under different schemes	R		A
Approval from TP and release of money	R		R
Marking land for housing sites		R	A
Release of money to beneficiaries s	A	R	R
Distribution of sites to site-less beneficiaries	R	A	R
Proposal to govt for additional grama thana land	R	R	A
Once approved, distribution of sites to beneficiaries	A	R	R

11. Actual Planning Process

- Planning process and the resulting plan has to enable the GP to articulate its priorities, translate them into an actionable plan and track its achievement vis-a-vis plan in periodic intervals. The most comprehensive document for Gram Panchayat planning is the Planning Commission's 'Manual for Integrated District Planning', which details the 'Village Panchayat Planning Process':
- Identification of issues by Gram and Ward Sabhas, based on the vision of the Panchayat, which has already been prepared, or is discussed simultaneously with the Gram Sabhas
- Determination of solutions by working groups and standing committees of the village

Panchayats

- Prioritisation of solutions and fund allocation by Standing Committees of village Panchayats resulting in the preparation of the first draft of village Panchayat plan
- Reconsideration of the draft plan in the second Gram Sabha meeting
- Finalisation of the sectoral plans by standing committees/working groups
- Finalisation of village Panchayat plan by the full meeting of the Panchayat.

12. Impact of GPOD in Basic Services Delivery

- The impact created by the GPOD are visible, result oriented having higher scores on the parameters developed to achieve change in the organisation, peoples representatives and also on services delivery. The GP plays its role as given in the Constitution accomplishes the responsibilities and functioning as the local self-governing body
- It ensured the greater people participation as the citizens having equal role in participating development initiatives with the GP
- The Sarpanch and ward members of the GP were motivated and realised to work with the GP and people
- It created a responsive governance and transparent administration with increased people participation
- The GP has been skilled to mobilise the various sources of funds and optimal utilisation. It has ensured timely grievances and better service delivery
- The participatory issues identification, drivers of development, citizen involvement in visioning and plan preparation made them to commit to join with the holistic development initiative of the GP
- Responding to the citizen' problems and mapping of citizen related processes such as complaint handling, step by step mapping of activities makes the functions alive in minds of GP members and helps to identify and resolve implementation issues and also builds deeper understanding of GP functions
- The GP formed a number of sub-committees in which interested and volunteered individuals were taken on-board with role clarity along with ownership and accountability. Decentralised leadership lead to coordinated joint decision making and functional specialisation. This realisation process enabled for prediction of funds and mobilisation of various sources of funds for tapping appropriately
- The system also provides Honorarium for Elected Representatives by recognition of time and effort provided which in turn harness the potential of role players and dedicate their time and motivation for further engagement

- People participation in budgeting and review processs ensitised the importance of preparation of perspective and annual plans with detailed activities, deliverables (outcome and process metrics). People also understand through continuous learning during implementation of clear deliverables on most service delivery functions and monitor for corrective measures during implementation

- The strategy has modalities of strengthening citizen participation by sharing plan with actual achievements in all wards which enabled Keeping momentum and building credibility among citizens. Various forms of people's institutions provide support to the GP in all efforts of intended change. On-going tracking and comparing budget with utilisation by citizens enables continuous feedback and leads to members becoming more answerable to citizens.

13. Conclusion

Gram Panchayat seem to be the best institutions for last mile delivery of service and governance, but not everyone agrees on their potential. It could be said that one of the intentions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment was to find a solution to deliver core services to the last mile of the rural population, in which the government machinery has had limited success. The alignment between extensive responsibilities and the meagre staff (functionaries) in the Panchayats is acutely imbalanced. There is an immediate need for a practical solution which leverages and builds local capacity, to address the manpower issue. Over the last few years; financial allocations to the GPs have been on the rise. This is in the context of increasing pressure to empower Gram Panchayats on one hand, and challenges faced by the line ministries to deliver rural development programmes lack of financial discipline as well as weak procedures for budgeting, spending and accounting results in conditional, funding from the government to the GPs. As a result, there is shortage of funds to meet organisation and administration expenses, weakening the GP further. Improving the financial management capacity of the Panchayats will help break this vicious cycle. Given the weak structural and systemic organisation within the GP on one hand, and strong powers and financial allocation being provided to them on the other, GPs have become a platform for the 'strong men'. There is a risk of misuse of powers. While formal leadership may lie with the Adhyaksha based on the election process, informal leadership lies with politically strong 'king makers' resulting in opaque and distorted decision making processes. The need is to focus on the Panchayat itself to become a strong organisation.

Data collection in progress at Dibburhalli Gram Panchayat, Chikkaballapur District, Karnataka

Gram Panchayat Development Officer demonstrating the use of water pump at Dibburhalli Gram Panchayat in Chikkaballapur District, Karnataka

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