

MDG Matters

Localising Millennium Development Goals

Theme : Working with Panchayats



Annual Report 2010

DHAN Foundation

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Madurai

Working with Panchayats

The history of the village-level Panchayat institutions in India goes back hundreds of years. After independence, the Panchayat system was neglected. DHAN Foundation has realised that these institutions need to be vibrant and responsive to the needs of the people to bring about lasting progress, benefiting all. DHAN Foundation has launched a programme 'Working with Panchayats' to promote and strengthen the informal functional groups in the village to get involved in the Panchayat affairs. The programme integrates the existing traditional systems with the Panchayats to enhance the participation of the people and achieve synergy.

- Promoting functional groups and village development forums, strengthening and guiding working committees to integrate with the Panchayat system.
- Facilitating preparation of multiyear micro planning for Panchayat Development by the community and make the working committees responsible for executing those plans.
- Advocating for enabling policies for effective decentralization through studies and publications, seminars and workshops.
- Promoting network of Panchayat Raj representatives at the Block and District level, and building their capacity in good governance.
- Creating awareness among the voters, youths, students on PRI, and ensuring benefits of the development programmes to reach the poor and vulnerable communities
- Strengthening the Gram Saba and making it a forum for performing social audit, and introducing e-Panchayats for open and transparent administrative system
- Enhancing the revenue for Panchayats through building corpus and undertaking income generating activities at village level.



Panchayat Development Associations

The basic purpose of promoting Panchayat Development Association is to integrate people institutions to assist the Panchayats in implementing the development programmes and resist when they violate from their duties, ultimately to ensure the efficiency of the Panchayats. With this concept, all the SHGs and other people institutions in the locations where the Panchayat programme is being implemented have been integrated into PDA. During this year 19 out of 25 working Panchayats, PDAs have been promoted. In 12 Panchayats, separate bank accounts have been opened. Every month PDA meetings were conducted and the executive committee initiated its works with Panchayat governance.

Panchayats achieving MDGs

Each Panchayat was guided to take up any one of the development goals in the line of Millennium Development Goals, such as education for all, electricity for all, employment for all and social security for all. Location teams have worked out to prepare base line information, action plan to achieve these goals for each Panchayat. Regular monthly monitoring of goal attainment was taken up. All the 25 Panchayats have taken up specific goals to attain, of which in four Panchayats, social security goal was achieved almost at cent per cent. The average achievement in other goals was around 60 percent.

MGNREGS Demonstration

In all the working Panchayats, demonstration of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) was given significant importance. In five Panchayats, activities like ensuring work site facilities, enrolling all BPL families, ensuring quality output, work selection and documentation were taken up in association with the local Panchayat. In all the working Panchayats, all the eligible BPL families were enrolled under this scheme. Location teams have extended support for opening of Bank account for MGNREGS workers. Work site facilities were provided in all the working Panchayats. Social security for the workers was

taken up and most of them were enrolled under Janashri Bhima Yojana of Life Insurance Corporation of India.

Microfinance Groups

The Working with Panchayats programme is in the process of organising an exclusive microfinance groups (MFGs) in the working Panchayats to focus on financial inclusion through Panchayat institutions by organising the youth and left out poor families. The MFG of non-poor will have only savings and insurance services. In addition to regular microfinance activities, these groups will get intensive training and orientation on local governance. These groups will also perform for exploring potential leaders for Panchayat governance. Sixty MFGs have been promoted during this year with a membership of 930 families.

Urban governance

Panchayat programme works with the Madurai Corporation to enable urban governance. In four select corporation wards, the experimentation was initiated on solid waste management. A signature campaigns was organised to reach all the households and commercial establishments insisting on pledging to keep the ward clean and green. Developed handbills and pamphlets with a message on Solid Wastes Management with the support of federation and distributed to the entire ward. Exclusive meetings were arranged with sweepers and corporation workers to motivate and get support from them. With the support of the ward councilors, officials and the local community, SWM committees were promoted in two wards with active volunteers. The SWM committee members and the general public, interested in putting dry waste into other uses were provided plastic bags and the collected dry waste sold in the local shops.

Panchayat Movement

Considering the high demand and scope for the community to participate and work for Panchayat development, the Working with Panchayats programme has promoted "Panchayat Movement" in February 10th 2010. This movement would work on

networking of Panchayats, provide techno-managerial services and involve in policy advocacy initiatives. Enrollment for Panchayat movement has been initiated. As part of Panchayat movement activity, the Tamil newsletter on Panchayat development (*Panchayathu Thoodhu*) got regularised during this year.

Social security

In all the working Panchayats, the programme provided social security coverage to all the poor and vulnerable families with the LIC's JBY group policy. Over 4000 families have been covered with the scheme and so far, 26 claims have been processed and settled for deceased families.

Regular Panchayat affairs

Apart from above special initiatives, monthly Panchayat council meeting, meetings of working committees, Gramsabha meetings have been conducted regularly and the micro planning exercise has been continued without much effort and about 40 percent of the plan realisation was observed. The field teams focused on training and orientation of community and Panchayat leaders and as a result 86 training events were conducted in the locations covering around 3000 participants.

Policy workshop

Preparation of community based micro plan documents was one of the key components of the Panchayat programme. The programme views micro planning as not just an annual event, it is a process in which local people get ownership and vision for their village development. The programme has also attempted micro planning on the thematic areas such as tourism based micro planning, micro planning for disaster risk reduction, and micro

planning for coastal resource development and so on. In association with Tamil Nadu State government, under the IFAD assisted Post Tsunami Sustainable Livelihoods Project, DHAN has served as resource institute for developing participatory micro plan documents for about 50 coastal village Panchayats during this year. The outcomes and experience from this exercise was quite enriching.

To advocate the importance of micro planning and mandate the Panchayat institutions to prepare micro plan every year, first policy workshop was conducted at Chennai. In this event, select Panchayat leaders took part and shared their experience relating to Micro planning. This initiative would be further taken-up to next levels to change the approaches of the government towards participatory processes.

Considering the present need and scope, the advisory committee was restructured with the addition of Dr.Sivaramakrishnan, Former Secretary to Gol (Urban Governance), Dr.Meenakshi-sundaram, Former Secretary to Gol (Rural Development), and Prof. Ramakandhan, Director, Kerala Institute of Local Administration.

As part of Madurai Symposium 2009, the Working with Panchayat programme has organised a sectoral workshop on Social Audit and Leader's convention on 'Role of Panchayat institutions in attaining MDGs'. These two workshops have paved way to build contacts with more number of leaders and also it has provided good insights on the content. The programme in association with the Rural Development Department of Tamil Nadu Government has organised training to 12 batches of Panchayat leaders. Also in partnership with Buddhist University, Japan, the programme has taken up a 'Leadership development' at Kovalam.



Illuminating lives...

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that every nation has committed to achieve by 2015 call for partnership and sharing responsibility among all the stakeholders including governments, donors, NGOs, civil societies and corporate to share knowledge, resources, expertise, explore joint ventures and develop solutions. To join this global commitment, DHAN Foundation and the localised institutions of poor communities built by it, rededicate to localize the MDGs and achieve them in partnership with like minded institutions.

The main goal of the MDGs is the Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. The revelations of Thirukkural on poverty and suffering of poor are relevant even today. The following couplets depict the plight of poor.

What is more painful than poverty?
The pain of poverty itself! (Kural: 1041)

The demon of poverty takes away
The joys of this life and the next. (Kural: 1042)

A poor man's words carry no weight,
However meaningful and profound. (Kural: 1046)

One may sleep even in the midst of fire,
But by no means in the midst of poverty. (Kural: 1049)

That misery called poverty brings with it
A diversity of sufferings. (Kural: 1045)

Thiruvalluvar does not stop with portraying only the issues of poverty, he calls for humane response from the fellow human beings. The following couplets enlighten us on what is to be done to alleviate poverty and hunger.

To give the poor is charity
The rest is loan and vanity. (Kural: 221)

All the wealth that toils give
Is meant to serve those who deserve. (Kural: 212)

Duty demands nothing in turn;
How can the world recompense rain? (Kural: 211)

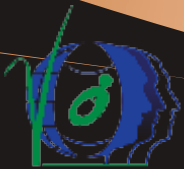
The wealth of a wise philanthropist
Is a village pool ever full. (Kural: 215)

Those known for their duty will not slacken to help
Even during times of poverty. (Kural: 218)

Strong is the strength of enduring hunger,
But stronger still is the strength of relieving it. (Kural: 225)

Brevity is the soul of wit. Thirukkural is brief and to the point. Though written 2000 years ago, the views expressed in the couplets by Thiruvalluvar, a Tamil sage poet are still relevant today. There is hardly any subject, be it Virtue, Wealth or Love, which Thiruvalluvar has left untouched. He has condensed a world of thoughts in each of the 1330 couplets. The wisdom of the Thirukkural's is universal and it has been translated in over 60 languages of the world.

The picture on the opposite page signifies the role of every person, either rich or poor in relieving the hunger and poverty of fellow human beings.



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