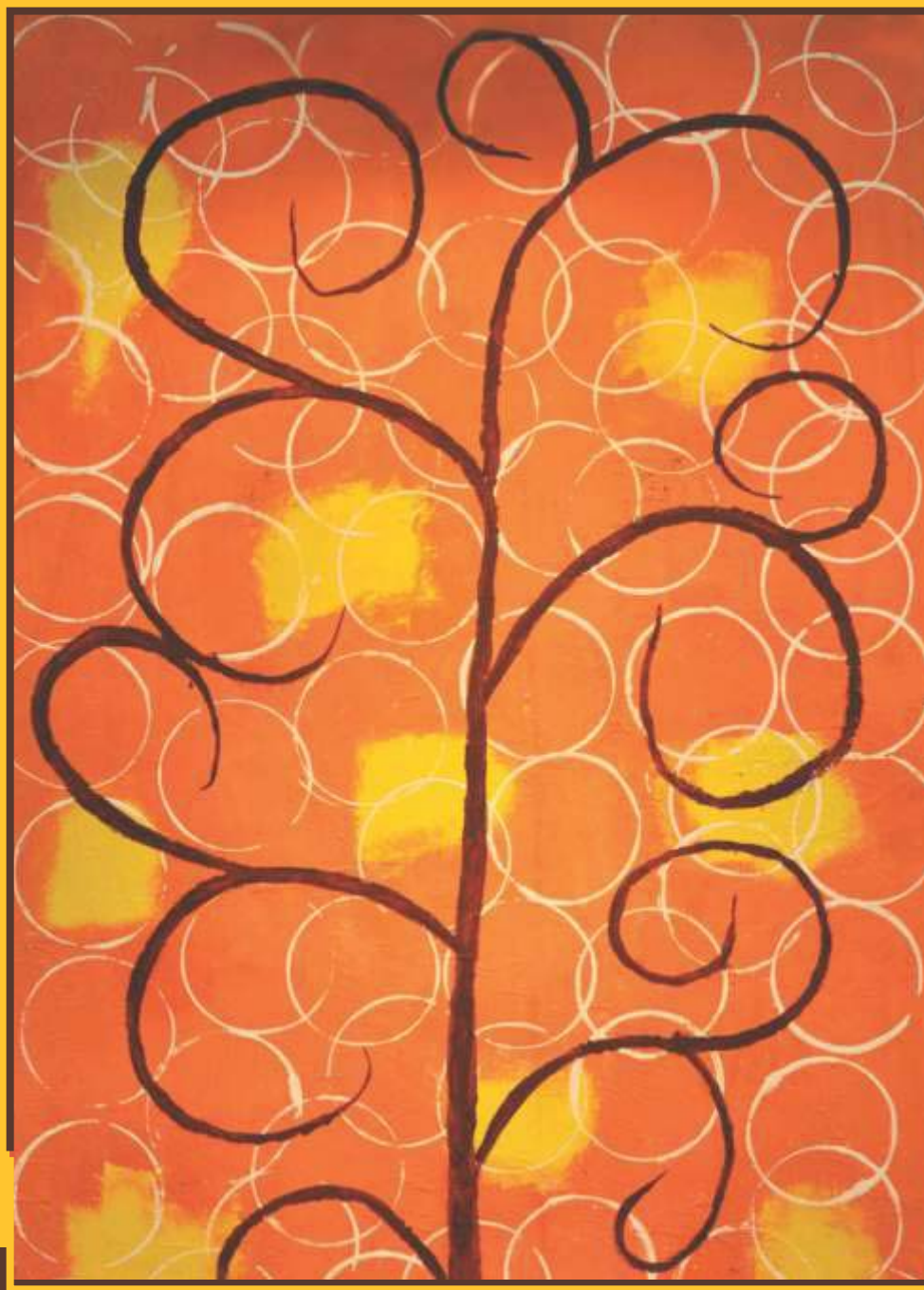


Advancing Livelihoods



Theme : Working with Panchayats

Annual Report 2013

DHAN Foundation

Panchayat Development



Democratising Panchayats was launched as a theme in 2003 to strengthen the grassroots democracy for addressing the issues of poverty. It was started as a pilot 25 Panchayats of seven blocks in five districts. The pilot phase focused on identifying and introducing new practices in Panchayat management, capacity building, and integrating functional groups into Panchayat administration. The experience gained from the pilot during this past one decade was more significant and it could advocate many changes for deepening democratic practices in Panchayats.

The programme evolved new democratic practices like Panchayat parliament, multi-year micro plan for Panchayats, social audit, integrating MDGs into Panchayats, social security to all the families within Panchayats and so on. Its efforts to include SHGs functioning in the Panchayats into its decision making processes brought good results. With experience gained from the experiments, the programme emerged as a resource centre in Panchayat governance. It has provided training to about 4000 Panchayat representatives. A distance learning programme on Panchayat Management was designed and offered to SHG leaders, Panchayat representatives and aspirants. Compiling its experience gained from decade of its engagement, the programme came out with a Working Manual on Panchayat Administration, which is a significant contribution to the sector.

Scaling up of Panchayat Programme

The focus of the year was to expand the program in another 553 Panchayats headed by women. The support from the European Union sponsored project for empowering women Panchayat representatives was timely to accomplish this plan. From these Panchayats, basic orientation has been organised to 553 women Presidents, 1167 Ward members and 247 SHG leaders. The focus was on



assessing the capacity needs, organising capacity building programmes, planning and introducing development interventions, mobilising peoples' participation in the Panchayat governance. Support extended by the district administration in all the working districts was encouraging.

Efficiency of administration at the Panchayat level has a direct bearing on the poverty reduction among poor and vulnerable families. The programme undertook to reach at least 200 poor families who are in desperate need of support. By way of organising various entitlements meant for them, the programme would work with them closely to address the issues of poverty specific to each of these families. The programme has reached to 40,300 poor families.

Deepening Democratic Functions of Panchayats

Mandated functions

All the Panchayats are expected to perform their basic functions like organising gramasabha, Panchayat council meetings and other democratic practices. Constant steps have been taken in the existing 25 Panchayats for strengthening those democratic functions, which could bring positive changes among these Panchayats. The Mandatory meetings have been regularised in all the Panchayats.

People Planning

People plan was one of the good democratic practices advocated by the programme in all the working Panchayats. They have been given

sufficient hands on training in conducting people planning processes. All the working Panchayats were motivated to follow up with their annual plan and monitor them. As a result, the Panchayats have accomplished more than 50 per cent of their plan. Out of Rs. 142 million plan outlay, the Panchayats could ensure works worth of Rs. 78 million during the year.

Panchayat education to the community

Providing Panchayat education to the community was expected to promote democratic practices at grassroots level. Steps were taken to enrol potential people into DPM course to provide formal Panchayat education and 301 persons have been enrolled in DPM course during this year. Secondly the focus was on SHG leaders, for whom structured training programme on functioning of Panchayats was provided. Around 1870 persons attended those trainings; thirdly the village youth were given attention. Around 760 youth and 1142 school students were trained on Panchayat system. This programme is arranged in their school itself.

Social security initiatives

Social security programmes have been introduced in all the Panchayats. The JBY of LIC of India was promoted in all the Panchayats, which has been availed by the local communities continuously over the past five years. In this insurance programme 7631 members have been enrolled and 49 deaths occurred this year and 46 cases were compensated. More than 1000 school going children have got scholarship benefit to the tune of Rs. 1.25 million in all the 25 Panchayats.

Ensuring Employment Guarantee

One of the largest and centrally sponsored programmes for the grassroots - Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) was seen as an entitlement for the poor and vulnerable sections of the local population. Panchayats have a greater role in implementing this programme. Panchayat programme initiated experimentation in five Panchayats and various steps were taken for improving the quality of the programme. During the year, nearly 8000 people were enrolled or renewed. It could ensure work

for all; especially it provided employment for the women and aged. The average working day per person in this year was ranging from 28 – 87 days and the average wage earning per person per day was Rs. 68 – Rs. 100.

Voter list updation

Voter list is an important document that ensures democratic rights of all the people to participate in the elections. Since it is being used once in five years, the voter list is not properly updated in most of the places. The programme took initiatives in all 25 Panchayats to update the voter list regularly with the participation of the public. The Panchayats took responsibility and facilitated additions and deletions of voters. By this effort, in all the working Panchayats, the polling percentage was maintained above 90 per cent.

Entitlements support to needy people

Panchayat as formal institution at grassroots level, it has a role to ensure the entitlements to the needy people. All the working Panchayats were motivated to focus on it. During the year, efforts were taken in all locations to access entitlement services to the needy. 135 persons got Old Age Pension, 42 women got marriage assistance and 28 families got other supports like family cards.

Mainstreaming Micro Justice

With the experience gained from Vellaiyampatti Panchayat, where a legal aid clinic was initiated on

an experimental basis, the programme has planned for mainstreaming it in 90 new Panchayats. Three clinics have already opened in Madurai district. Every month, hundreds of people took part in the clinic and got benefit out of it.

Publishing of Panchayat Manual

Bringing Panchayat Manual for Tamil Nadu Panchayat Administration was a significant contribution by the programme. This manual has all the basic information about the Panchayat act, rules and procedures for day to day functioning of the Panchayats. It can be used as a reference material for all the Panchayat representatives and staff. This manual has been distributed all the women headed Panchayats, where the programme has been expanded this year.

Mainstreaming Youths in Panchayat – an experiment

With the support of RGNIYD, the Panchayat programme initiated an action research project on mainstreaming youth in Panchayat institution in Pillaiyarkuppam Panchayat, Villianur commune of Puducherry state. Through this project, the youth in Pillaiyarkuppam Panchayat were organised, series of events were organised for them to bring good understanding on youths role in Panchayat. The programme resulted in promotion of a youth club, updation of voter list, promotion of a reading room and tree plantation. This would be emulated in other Panchayats as well.