

Minutes of the Meeting held on 23.03.2021 under chairmanship of Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj with States on “Making Gram Sabhas vibrant”.

A meeting was held on 23.03.2021 through video conferencing under chairmanship of Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj to discuss on the subject of “Making Gram Sabhas Vibrant”. Representatives of State Panchayati Raj Departments and Senior Officers of Ministry of Panchayati Raj attended the meeting. List of participants is attached at **Annexure 1**.

2. Joint Secretary (KSS), MoPR welcomed all the participants and made a power point presentation on the subject. The presentation covered the following broad features:

- Constitutional provisions related to Gram Sabha, no. of meetings of regular and special Gram Sabhas, quorum required, powers and functions of Gram Sabhas etc.
- Present status regarding functioning of Gram Sabhas in the States in respect of no. of regular and special occasion meetings being held, participation in the meetings by women and SHG members, involvement of line departments in the Gram Sabhas etc.
- Proposals towards making the Gram Sabhas vibrant and the suggested action plan for the same, namely,
 - Holding monthly meetings of Gram Sabhas
 - Scheduling the meetings on pre-fixed dates/times on cluster basis
 - Active involvement of District administration officials in the meetings
 - Monitoring progress on key performance parameters in National focus areas of Water, Sanitation, Health, Education and Nutrition through the mechanism of Gram Sabhas
 - Monitoring progress in infrastructure works and verification of beneficiaries for welfare schemes.

After the presentation, the representatives of State Panchayati Raj Departments were requested to express their views and suggestions on the subject. The suggestions/remarks made by the various State PR Department officials are given at **Annexure 2**.

3. Joint Secretary (KSS), MoPR, while thanking the members for the various suggestions, requested all the participants to also send their views/comments/suggestions in writing to the Ministry within the next 2-3 days.

4. In his final remarks, Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj thanked all participants for sharing their views/suggestions in the meeting. He commended the participants for the very good suggestions made by them for making Gram Sabhas vibrant. As, Gram Sabhas are local Government institutions, if they are to be made effective, their credibility needs to be strong and efforts in this regard should be made by all stakeholders. It is seen that in almost all the States, on an average six Gram Sabha meetings are being held, and in certain States, even 10 Gram Sabha meetings are held. Mahila and Bal Sabhas are also being held. In some States like West Bengal and Kerala, Ward Sabhas are held prior to the Gram Sabha. There is a need for making Gram Sabhas more Vibrant and in this regard, the need to increase the frequency of these meetings may also be considered, as there is flexibility available with the States to conduct special Gram Sabha meetings other than the mandatory ones.

5. The suggestion for holding thematic Gram Sabhas is timely as it would serve the purpose in identified and focused areas like health, education, water, sanitation, environment, nutrition, women empowerment and child development etc.
6. Presently, different Ministries approach Ministry of Panchayati Raj from time to time to organize Gram Sabhas on various occasions like International Days and National days on different themes. One such example is recently held the International Water Day which was observed for creating awareness for water conservation. It can be considered to prepare in advance an annual Calendar of the meetings for Gram Sabhas which may include Gram Sabhas, Special Gram Sabhas, Thematic Gram Sabhas etc. Such an effort will facilitate better awareness generation as well as improve participation of all Stakeholders including Gram Sabha members, State Government nodal officers, line Departments representatives etc.
7. After compiling the various suggestions received from the States, and after consulting the various Central Ministries, Ministry of Panchayati Raj would consider drawing up a broad advisory to be circulated to the States on the subject. The States would however be given sufficient flexibility for implementation, suiting to the local needs.
8. SPR also emphasized the need to leverage modern technology like the present use of VC Conferences for convening meetings during COVID times. He cited the example of the State of Haryana, where participation in Gram Sabha has been enabled through webex platform on mobile phones and the participation was quite encouraging. Such provisions should be adopted wherever it is possible and permissible.
9. It was also emphasized by SPR, the need for the Minutes of the Gram Sabha meeting to be uploaded in the websites for wider dissemination and promote transparency. He promised to look into creation of such a possibility in the eGramSwaraj Portal
10. SPR also exhorted the participants to work towards various means through which the attendance in the Gram Sabha meetings can be enhanced.
11. In the end, Secretary, PR mentioned that 27-28 years have already passed since the time Panchayati Raj System has come into force, there is now a need to set agenda for next 10-20 years and also in this regard, work on various policy formulations. After receiving the written responses from the participants, the Ministry will have wider consultation in the next 2-3 months with all stakeholders and come forward with the workable line of action in this regard.

The meeting ended with vote of thanks to the chair.

Annexure 1

List of Participants

1. Sh. Sunil Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj (in the Chair)
2. Sh. Khushwant Singh Sethi, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj
3. Ms. Seema Jain, Additional Chief Secretary, Panchayati Raj Department of Punjab
4. Sh. Sachin Sinha, Secretary, Panchayati Raj Department of Madhya Pradesh
5. Sh. Kewal Sharma, Additional Secretary, State Panchayati Raj Department of Himachal Pradesh
6. Sh. B. P. Singh, Joint Secretary, State Panchayati Raj Department of U.P.
7. Sh. Prashant Mathur, State Project Manager, Panchayati Raj Department of Haryana
8. Representative of SIRD Karnataka
9. Representative of State Panchayati Raj Department of Andhra Pradesh
10. Representative of State Panchayati Raj Department of Telangana
11. Representative of State Panchayati Raj Department of Rajasthan
12. Representative of State Panchayati Raj Department of Bihar
13. Representative of State Panchayati Raj Department of Jharkhand
14. Representative of State Panchayati Raj Department of Tamil Nadu
15. Representative of State Panchayati Raj Department of Manipur
16. Representative of State Panchayati Raj Department of Jammu & Kashmir
17. Representative of State Panchayati Raj Department of Gujarat
18. Representative of State Panchayati Raj Department of Chhattisgarh
19. Representative of State Panchayati Raj Department of Sikkim
20. Representative of State Panchayati Raj Department of Uttarakhand
21. Representative of State Panchayati Raj Department of Tripura
22. Sh. Vijay Kumar, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj
23. Sh. Tara Chandar, Under Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj
24. Sh. N. P. Toppo, Under Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj
25. Sh. Ajay Kumar, Section Officer, Ministry of Panchayati Raj
26. Sh. G. S. Krishnan, Consultant, Ministry of Panchayati Raj

Annexure 2

Suggestions/ Observations made by State Representatives

Andhra Pradesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provisions in place in Andhra Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act for mandatory and special Gram Sabhas(GS) meetings. • Govt. Order issued for compulsory presence of district officials in the GS meetings. • Women participate substantially in the GS meetings. • Volunteers have been appointed who create awareness for various welfare schemes and also mobilise participation in GS meetings. • PR Department officials always participate in GS meetings apart from other line departments. • Agree to suggestions like increasing the frequency of meetings to make them more vibrant.
Haryana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recently 50% reservation of seats have been reserved for women representatives in Panchayats through amendment in Haryana PR Act. • Right to recall has also been added in PR Act. These will enhance participation in GS meetings. • Participation in GS also monitored by District officials • Yearly calendar of the GS meetings to be prepared in advance and shared for better participation.
Telangana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per State PR Act, it is mandatory to hold GS meetings once in two months. The functionaries who are to attend is also specified in the Act. • The Panchayat Secretaries also have official subordinates and there are also 4 types of standing committees. All of them participate in the GS meetings. • Meetings are video graphed and the Minutes of previous meetings are also read out in the Gram Sabha. • A mobile app also is being used to track and monitor the GS meetings • As per PR Act, Sarpanch shall be deemed to have been removed from the office if he fails to convene the meetings of the Gram Sabha. All Standing Committees have been constituted and they are participating in the meetings.
Karnataka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainings of Panchayati Raj representatives are done towards preparing them for GS meetings. • The GS meetings oversee selection of beneficiaries of the schemes • The newly elected ERs will be appraised about the details of making GS meetings vibrant.
Bihar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GS meetings are held on quarterly basis during a year. Special meetings are also held as per requirement.
Jharkhand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The State has employed “anusamarthan didis” using RGSA funds in 91 blocks on experimental basis • The ‘didis’ are providing helping hands to the Panchayats and making GS meetings vibrant • SHG women also participate in the meetings.

Rajasthan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women participation is more than 50 % in GS meetings • 4 GS meetings are mandatory as per PR Act
Tamil Nadu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 GS meetings on special occasion days are mandatory. On an average 6 GS meetings in a year are held. • The GS meetings approve annual plans, budgets, audit reports, review of schemes etc • Participation of district officials like inspector of panchayats, Asst/Dy. BDOs etc are already in practice.
Punjab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The State has large number of GPs and hence monthly frequency for the meetings would be difficult in terms of logistics. Hence, 2 to 4 meetings would be appropriate. • Group-A & Group-B officers to attend atleast 10% of the Gram Sabha meetings. • Help of various functionaries like teachers, ASHA workers, Rozgarsahayaksetc may be utilized for making the GS meetings vibrant
Manipur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings of Gram Sabha are conducted as per schedule. Four meetings of Gram Sabha are normally held during a year. • Provision is also available for special GS meetings
Jammu & Kashmir	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of the calendar for GS meetings is under process. • 2nd Wednesday of a month has been fixed for the Block level meetings. • Participation of women in meetings is satisfactory.
Himachal Pradesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gram Sabha meetings are held, by serving notice of meeting in advance, at different times to ensure maximum participation. 4 mandatory GS meetings are held. • Two Mahila Gram Sabha meetings (1st meeting on 8th March on International Women Day and 2nd meeting on 1st Sunday in September) are also held under chairmanship of Women Sarpanch. • Awareness and frequency of the meetings needs to be increased.
Gujarat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They agree with the submission made by representative of State of Punjab regarding difficulties in arranging a large number of meetings. • Agree to the suggestions regarding participation of Group A/B officers in GS meetings. • Consider organizing some special events like medical checkups, visit to schools for awarding meritorious students etc to create motivation for attending the GS meetings.
Uttar Pradesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33% reservation of seats for women in Panchayats has been made in State PR Act. • Two meetings of Gram Sabha, 1st at Rabi season and 2nd at Kharif season, are held during a year. • A maximum of 6 GS meetings could be held in a year.
Chhattisgarh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state has large tribal areas. Mahila Sabha and Bal Sabha are being conducted before holding GS meetings. • PESA Rules are being framed to give more power to Gram Sabhas.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance notice of at least one week to be given for meetings of Gram Sabha for better participation.
Sikkim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two meetings of Gram Sabha are mandatorily held during March and October in the year. • Special meetings can be held as per requirement.
Uttarakhand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be pre-defined agenda points for the GS meetings. • Roster of work also moved from house to house so that members who are unable to attend can also record their comments. • Need to reduce the trust-deficit in order to make GS meetings more vibrant.
Tripura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 meetings of Gram Sabha are held during a year as per PR Act of Tripura.
Madhya Pradesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On an average six meetings of Gram Sabha are held during a year as per PR Act. • Participation of PR Dept officials are more prevalent than line department officials • There should also be thematic meetings on various subjects like Gender issues, environment, old age persons etc. • If the proceedings of GS meetings are video captured and uploaded on websites, the authenticity and transparency will improve.