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Government of India
Ministry of Panchayati Raj

Minutes of Meeting with States on 'Making Gram Sabhas Vibrant'
held on 23rd July, 2021 under the chairmanship of Secretary, Panchayati Raj

A Video Conference (VC) meeting with the senior officers of the Panchayati Raj Departments of the States on '**Making Gram Sabhas Vibrant**' was held on 23rd July, 2021 under the Chairmanship of Secretary, Panchayati Raj. The list of participants is at **Annexure-**

I.

2. At the outset, Shri C.S. Kumar, Additional Secretary, MoPR welcomed the Chair and the Senior Officers of the Panchayati Raj Departments of the States present in the meeting. He stated that the Gram Sabhas constitute a key part of the Panchayati Raj system and the role of the Gram Sabha assumes great importance to ensure effective functioning of Panchayats. He also mentioned that the purpose of the present meeting is to discuss the gaps and deficits in the functioning of Gram Sabhas and to bring out necessary interventions to address those gaps and deficits so that they may become vibrant and meaningful. He also urged States to empower Gram Panchayats so that they may become self-sufficient in discharging their functions as per their mandates. Such empowerment of Rural Local Bodies is also necessary to enable them to generate their 'Own Sources of Revenues' to become self-reliant in earning revenues on their own in order to undertake developmental activities locally as per the requirements.

3. Setting the tone of the meeting, Shri K.S. Sethi, Joint Secretary, MoPR made a brief power point presentation on 'Making Gram Sabha Vibrant'. His presentation covered outlines of the measures needed to revitalise Gram Sabhas. Recapitulating various points elaborated in the previous presentation on the subject during March, 2021 as well as of the concept note on the subject circulated to the States, his presentation covered various ways and means of strengthening the Standing Committees of the Gram Panchayats and the roles of its Elected

Representatives. After his presentation, officers of States were requested to offer their suggestions on the concept note already circulated to them.

4. The representatives of States, while broadly agreeing to the contents of the concept paper, provided various feedback and suggestions on the subject and these are listed in the **Annexure-II**.

5. While appreciating the suggestions given by the participants from the States, Secretary, Panchayati Raj, made the following observations/suggestions:-

- i. The Ministry is in the process of finalising the advisory on 'Vibrant Gram Sabhas', which would also contain measures for making the Standing Committees of Gram Panchayats more effective.
- ii. The suggestions made by Andhra Pradesh representative that the resolutions of Gram Sabhas, should be binding on the Gram Panchayat Committees was pertinent and needs to be taken into account.
- iii. The suggestions made by Madhya Pradesh representative about the Gram Sabhas to be chaired by a person other than the Sarpanch and convening of some Gram Sabha meetings outside the Panchayat Bhawans like schools, Anganwadi Centres and at other public buildings and places within the Panchayat are also noteworthy since the same would draw the attention of the Gram Sabhas, common masses and respective functionaries towards the necessities for proper upkeep, maintenance, repair, renovation, sanitation, drinking water and other specific needs of these public buildings and places which play crucial role in the development of the Panchayats and the rural inhabitants. The same can be considered after obtaining the opinion of other States on the issue.
- iv. Suggestion on delegating more powers to the Standing Committees in order to effectively discharge their duties is also important, and the States may take up necessary amendments in the relevant Acts/Rules/instructions, as required, in this regard.
- v. Suggestion from Assam representative on formation of a Standing Committee for preserving the ecological balance is also relevant. In this regard, though the general suggestion is to have six Standing Committees, however, the State Governments are

free to make provisions for other standing committees as per their requirements. But, it may be ensured that every Elected Representative is made part of at least one of these Standing Committees.

- vi. The Panchayats would need to generate Own Source Revenues (OSR), in order to effectively cover the expenses of the developmental work in the Panchayats. Also the remuneration suggested to the elected representatives in the standing committees would be easily met if enough OSR are generated by the Gram Panchayats.
- vii. States including Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh have not framed PESA Rules. These States should take necessary action for framing these Rules as these are pivotal for strengthening of GPs in Fifth Schedule areas. Any reservations/challenges in this regard may be communicated to the Ministry for finding suitable solutions.
- viii. The States having Sixth Schedule areas such as Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya Assam, Tripura and Manipur having Traditional Local Bodies, are also required to broadly adhere to the spirit of the advisories issued by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj for utilization of Central Finance Commission grants.
- ix. Suggestion to allow the members of Civil Society organisations to participate in the Gram Sabhas would be examined as such members, if they are voters in the respective constituency, will be automatically eligible as the member of the Gram Sabha. However, any outsider representing the Civil Society organization may have to be considered only as an observer to the meeting.
- x. As attendance in the Gram Sabhas is a critical issue, all suggestions for improving attendance like IEC, mobilisation activities, awareness generation events etc are to be implemented by the States as well as Panchayats in right earnest.
- xi. Suggestions made by Jharkhand and Gujarat representatives about the need for subsuming the various Committees formed for various Schemes of the Central Ministries/Departments within the Standing Committees of Panchayats have also been noted. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj would hold further consultation with the concerned Ministries/Departments on this matter.

- xii. The Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) are to be formulated after taking into account the entire resource envelope available to the Gram Panchayat. In this regard, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Department of Animal Husbandry has circulated the list of beneficiaries under the Artificial Insemination scheme to the Panchayats for consideration in preparation of GPDPs. Similar efforts will be attempted with the schemes of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Women and Child Development etc.
- xiii. The Gram Panchayats are expected to be in readiness to monitor and supervise the health infrastructure available at the Panchayat Level such as the Primary Health Centres etc. In this regard the operational guidelines, recently released by the Ministry of Finance for XV FC Health grants are to be examined in detail by the State Panchayati Raj Departments.
- xiv. The States were also requested to send in writing, any further suggestions immediately to MoPR, within 30th July, 2021 so that the same could be considered for integrating into the advisory to be issued by the Ministry on Making Gram Sabhas Vibrant.

The meeting ended with a Vote of Thanks to the Chair.

Annexure-I

List of Participants

Sl No.	Name of the Official	Designation
1.	Shri Sunil Kumar	Secretary, Panchayati Raj- Chair
2.	Dr. Chandra Shekhar Kumar	Additional Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj
3.	Shri K S Sethi	Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj
4.	Shri Alok Prem Nagar	Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj
5.	Ms. Rekha Yadav	Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj
6.	Shri Vijay Kumar	Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj
7.	Shri Tara Chandar	Under Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj
8.	Shri G S Krishnan	Consultant, Ministry of Panchayati Raj
9.	Shri Vaibhav Bhargav	Consultant, Ministry of Panchayati Raj
10.	Shri S Mohit Rao	Consultant, Ministry of Panchayati Raj
11.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Andhra Pradesh
12.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Assam
13.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Arunachal Pradesh
14.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Assam
15.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Andaman & Nicobar Islands
16.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Bihar
17.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Chhattisgarh
18.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Gujarat
19.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Himachal Pradesh
20.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Rajasthan
21.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Jharkhand
22.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Madhya Pradesh
23.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Karnataka
24.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Odisha
25.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Kerala
26.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Sikkim
27.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, West Bengal
28.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Punjab
29.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Telangana
30.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Tamil Nadu
31.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Meghalaya
32.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Jammu & Kashmir
33.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Manipur
34.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Mizoram
35.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Uttarakhand
36.	Representative	State Panchayati Raj Department, Uttar Pradesh

Annexure-II

Suggestions made by the State Representatives

i. Andhra Pradesh:

- a. Village health camps and cultural programmes may be conducted before initiation of Gram Sabhas to ensure greater participation.
- b. Resolutions of the Gram Sabhas should be taken into consideration by the Gram Panchayats while making its decisions. Moreover, a Gram Sabha meeting should be organised before every Gram Panchayat meeting and resolutions of Gram Sabhas may be taken into the Agenda of the Gram Panchayat.
- c. Holding Gram Sabhas for each Ward may be advisable for Gram Panchayats with population larger than 10,000.
- d. Resolutions of Standing Committee or Functional Committee of Gram Panchayats may also be taken as an agenda item in the meeting of Gram Panchayat.
- e. The officers of Line Departments at the level of Gram Panchayats may regularly attend the Gram Sabha meetings, which will enable the participants of Gram Sabhas, to have meaningful deliberations.

ii. Assam:

- a. A provision to create Sub Committee on ensuring the ecological balance of Panchayats may also be provided.

iii. Rajasthan:

- a. Relevant Line Ministry/ Department may be given the responsibility of conducting IEC activities, promoting schemes of the Government through exhibitions etc., for improving participation in Gram Sabhas.
- b. The interest generated over the years on funds remitted to the Gram Panchayats for different schemes of State & Central Government may be used by the Gram Panchayats in organising Gram Sabhas or providing sitting fees/honorariums to Panchayat officials. This would be helpful for smaller GPs with limited resources.

- c. Participation of Self Help Groups, Pension beneficiaries and other beneficiaries may be promoted, as per the theme of the Gram Sabha.
 - d. Involving civil society partners which are working in the rural development and Panchayati Raj area and give them the responsibility to create awareness about the agenda of upcoming Gram Sabhas may also be explored at the local level.
- iv. Jharkhand:
- a. Attendance in Gram Sabhas has been a challenge in theme based Gram Sabhas.
 - b. Standing Committee of the other Central Department/Ministry such as education, sanitation, water supply, may be brought under the purview of the Panchayats.
 - c. The attendance of Frontline workers, Anganwadi workers, Volunteers, teachers, Head-Masters etc., may be mandated in the Gram Sabhas, to ensure accountability at the GPs level. A statutory provision may be explored in this regard.
- v. Madhya Pradesh:
- a. An independent panel of individuals which may consist of members from other village level committees, members from the Self Help Groups, may be formed. The Gram Sabhas may be Chaired by a member of this independent panel, which may be constituted every year. This would prevent any biases and conflict of interests, as well as facilitate active participation of villagers without any fear or hesitation.
 - b. Gram Sabhas may be organised in community service centres, schools, near ponds, etc., which would bring the development activities of the Gram Panchayat in public eye. In addition, it would also allow the villagers to assess the everyday functioning of those community assets, such as schools.
 - c. Gram Sabhas may be conducted with an agenda to discuss issues of larger importance such as availability of water, electricity etc., This could increase the participation of villagers as these Gram Sabhas could provide them a forum to highlight their problems and concerns.

- d. Pre activities to Gram Sabhas such as mobilisation of villagers, collecting representations, etc., may be conducted proactively in villages, before the Gram Sabha.
 - e. A Gram Sabha mobile application could be developed which could facilitate participation of villagers to join remotely.
 - f. In order to conduct Gram Sabhas effectively, the Central Government may develop training programmes, short films/documentaries etc. which could prepare and motivate villagers to conduct Gram Sabhas. The short films/documentaries may include case studies of model Gram Panchayats which have been successful in bringing positive change in the villages. These short films could also be shown before the Gram Sabhas.
- vi. Karnataka:
- a. A suitable time table may be drawn for Gram Sabhas to ensure participation from nodal officers of the line Ministries/Departments.
 - b. Instead of having an official as a Day Officer, the Elected Members of the Ward could be nominated as Day Officer by rotation. A Public Grievance help desk may be formed in the Gram Panchayat, which may also be presided by the Elected Members of Ward and address the grievances at the Gram Panchayat level.
 - c. It is further proposed to organise Ward Level Gram Sabhas and Street Level or Nukkad level Gram Sabhas, to promote participation in the Gram Sabhas and address the grievances could be registered at the lowest level.
- vii. Tamil Nadu:
- a. IEC activities may be started one week before the Gram Sabha to ensure proper information dissemination about the agenda as well as the services being offered by the Gram Panchayat.
 - b. In peri-urban panchayats with population of 20,000-30,000 organising one Gram Sabha may not see participation from larger number of people. Thus, it is suggested that 2-3 Gram Sabha meetings may be organised.

- c. Senior officials of Panchayati Raj Departments must be mandated to attend the Gram Sabhas.
 - d. An effort to uphold the rights of women and children may be made by the Gram Panchayat by organising dedicated programmes such as 'Eliminating Violence against women'.
 - e. Utilising technology for information dissemination about the Gram Sabhas.
- viii. Chhattisgarh:
- a. It should be mandated that the Gram Panchayat Office is functioning regularly, as per the given hours. Necessary manpower must also be allocated for this purpose.
- ix. Gujarat:
- a. Several Committees which are formed by different Departments/Ministries may be subsumed with Gram Sabhas for bringing them under the purview of the Panchayats
 - b. An online portal for monitoring the actions taken on issues discussed in the Gram Sabhas may be explored.
- x. Odisha:
- a. Dedicated Gram Sabha mobilisers may be deployed for all GPs similar to the PESA GPs in Odisha.
 - b. A planning expert may be made available at the Cluster level.
- xi. Sikkim
- a. Ward Members may be given the responsibility as Day Officer for the Panchayat Bhawans and the panchayat activities therein.
- xii. West Bengal
- a. Proper IEC activities may be undertaken before holding Gram Sabha meetings.
 - b. Issues like women empowerment, child-related issues, human trafficking etc may be discussed in the meeting.
