

PARTICIPATION & GOVERNANCE

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EDITORIAL

Capacity building and Governance

The 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts of the Constitution brought into force in 1993, mandated the constitution of local governance bodies, conferring them with substantial powers and responsibilities. The provisions in these Amendments have far reaching ramifications and usher in enormous potential for growth of these bodies in both rural and urban centres.

Prior to these Amendments, women, dalits, tribals and other marginalised groups had been relegated to the periphery as far as governance was concerned and have largely remained voiceless, passive and almost invisible citizens. The Amendment has been particularly perceptive of this fact, by providing one-third reservation for women and proportionate reservation for other marginalised sections of the society, such as tribals, dalits, etc. However, one can not overlook the fact that this decentralisation is coming after hundreds of years of centralisation in the state machinery, public resources and bureaucratic structures. This has engendered the malaise of dependency on government agencies, programmes and resources amongst ordinary people. On the other hand, government functionaries are resistant to conceding and devolving powers to these local bodies.

Enormous and sustained inputs by way of capacity building are necessary to reverse this process. These inputs need to be directed at the whole gamut of actors ranging from the people's council and elected representatives, to NGOs/CBOs, media, bureaucracy, donors, judiciary and the civil society in general. These inputs have to be multi-pronged and directed towards enhancing capacities of its stakeholders: knowledge, skill, confidence, attitude, etc. These capacity enhancement initiatives at various levels, together with other enabling processes, can help these local governance bodies to realise the potential and faith reposed in them by the Constitutional Amendments. It is only when this happens, that there will be a greater match between peoples' needs and expectations, development plans and their implementation.

This issue of the bulletin is thus devoted to capacity building of Panchayati Raj Institutions. It seeks to share PRIA's own experiences over the years, in capacity building. It traces the meaning and various aspects of capacity building in the context of local governance and delineates the demand-supply linkages of capacity building at various levels and for various stakeholders of governance. While doing so, it also suggests interventions for achieving better dovetailing between



the demand for capacity building and supply of the same. A global perspective on capacity building for governance is also incorporated, which serves to highlight efforts being made in this direction, at the international level. On the other hand, coming to a more topical issue, it discusses the reconstruction measures undertaken in Gujarat after the earthquake and emphasises the need for capacity building of existing PRIA functionaries, to take up reconstruction on a more sustained basis.

Side by side with these theoretical aspects, is learning drawn from the field by engaging directly in the 'Dalit Adhikar Abhiyan' in western Rajasthan. This article recounts the multi-pronged capacity building interventions undertaken in western Rajasthan to promote social justice, by challenging deeply entrenched discriminatory practices against dalits. Lessons drawn from PRIA and its partners' experiences of conducting PEVACs (Pre-election Voters' Awareness Campaigns) are described. These can serve as capacity building inputs for conducting future PEVAC. Lastly, the salient features of the PRIA : (Panchayati Raj Jagrukta Abhiyan) campaign to orient newly elected representatives are outlined.

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Letters and Contribution

The editors of the Participation and Governance bulletin would welcome comments, criticism or feedback relating to any material printed in this bulletin.

The editors also invite contributions which should be typed, double spaced, on one side of the paper only. Two copies should be sent. Illustrations (B/W or colour prints or transparencies, line drawings, tables, maps, etc.) should be included where appropriate. Manuscripts should be addressed to the editors and sent to PRIA.

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