Decentralization Community
Update 89
January 2015

Community Activities | Updates | Announcements

Dear Members,

We are happy to share the 89th Update on Decentralization Community of Practice!

With this update, we share news on: additional gram panchayats to be established in Karnataka; Panchayats in Haryana to be rewarded for water conservation; Government to involve private players in laying optic fiber network across 2.5 lakh village panchayats to establish broadband connections; Telangana panchayats to collect online taxes; officials of 29 departments in Telangana to be made accountable to panchayats; tablets to be provided under MGNREGA to monitor works; Goa panchayat union demands greater devolution of powers to PRIs; Rajasthan government to give Rs.10,000/- to each panchayats for awareness generation on road accidents and panchayats in Tamil Nadu reaping rich rewards through waste management.

We are also sharing some readings, web links and articles on: Kerala and the Rest of India: What We Can Learn from Each Other's Development Experience (an EPW article); Decentralization: The Indian experience; Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2014; Relevance of 3Fs and the role of necessary and sufficient conditions in devolution; and Knowledge Compendium: India Backbone Implementation Network (IbIn).

Members are requested to spread the word on the National Seminar on Democratic System and Good Governance in Indian Context: Challenges and Opportunities, to be held in M. P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh, the vacancy announcements and share their thoughts on the ongoing query on: Role of PRIs in improving the health and nutritional services at village level and Drafting Public Interest Litigation for Effective Devolution of Powers to Panchayats.

We thank all the members who contributed towards this edition.

Hope you would enjoy reading the update and we look forward for your contributions for the next!

Regards,
Naveen Das,
Resource Person,
Decentralization CoP, Solution Exchange

Community Activities

Ongoing Querries

> **QUERY: Role of PRIs in improving the health and nutritional services at village level. Experiences and Advice**

Most of the Central and State Government programmes are supposed to be implemented through panchayats at the village level. Since the upper castes are socially, culturally and economically powerful, they hold key positions in the village, which gives them the power to take decisions or influence the selection of beneficiaries under the government programmes. This prevents the selection of beneficiaries from SC and ST community for most of the beneficiary oriented schemes and also does not allow them from assessing the services, though most of the development programmes are meant for them.

Members of the decentralization community are requested to share their experience and examples on:

- What role can PRIs /Village Health, Sanitation & Nutrition Committees play in bridging the gap between the existing healthcare providers and the people in need of services particularly the excluded groups during Village Health, Sanitation & Nutrition (VHSN) days ?

- What are the parameters that need to be included while assessing the quality of the Health & Nutritional services of a village?

- What are the ways to assess/ investigate the access of services (Information, Physical, Financial and Social Capital) by the excluded community in a village

Please send your responses to se.decn.solutionexchange@un.net

----------------x---------------

➢ **Drafting Public Interest Litigation for Effective Devolution of Powers to Panchayats. Advice and Examples**

Panchayats are meant to be autonomous institutions of self-government however they are treated as subordinate authorities at present. There is a wide variation in the devolution of powers to the panchayats across states. Further power, authority and responsibilities of Panchayats as envisaged in the Article 243G could not be exercised, as the State Governments were unable to empower them to collect taxes under Article 243H and Finance Commissions were formed under Article 243-I to initiate measures to improve financial position of Panchayats. Hence panchayats are not in a position to undertake the responsibilities in respect of items stated in Schedule XI of the Constitution. Also various Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS), which are under the purview of Panchayats, are being directly implemented in a mission mode approach. There is a need for reviewing CSS to enable State Governments to devolve power and functions to PRIs. Such review can be enforced through Public Interest Litigation (PIL) to the Supreme Court highlighting the above issues. Members are requested to comment and share their insights on:

- Whether it is necessary to seek time bound directions from Supreme Court to the State Governments to implement the 73rd Constitutional amendment?

- What are the administrative advantages /disadvantages of implementing CSS through Societies instead of departments of state governments or through Panchayats?

- How many states have constituted Finance Commissions under article 243I? Are the findings of the State Finance Commissions constituted so far, available in the public domain under article-4 of RTI Act?

Read the full query here.
Read the responses here.

Please send your responses to se.decn.solutionexchange@un.net

Updates
News

From Resource Person

439 new gram panchayats to be established in Karnataka
Karnataka state cabinet has taken a decision to constitute 439 new gram panchayats taking the total panchayats to 6068 in the state. Under this there will be a gram panchayat for every 7-8 kms radius.

An additional Rs.69 crore has also been approved for their creation. The delimitation exercise was carried by a committee headed by S G Nanjayyanamath.
Ream more [here](#)

Panchayats in Haryana to be rewarded for water conservation
The district authorities in Sirsa, Haryana have announced that village panchayats that work towards conservation of drinking water will be given cash reward between Rs 20,000 to Rs 50,000 depending upon the population. Villagers are encouraged to set up recharge pits so that the water flowing in the streets did not go waste. District authorities have also issued a toll free number 1800-180-5678 for lodging any kind of complaints regarding supply of potable water.
Ream more [here](#)

Wi-Fi hotspots in Kerala panchayats soon
Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL), a special purpose vehicle set up by the central government for the establishment, management and operations of National Optical Fiber Network project (NOFN), has started working on establishing Wi-Fi hotspots in grama panchayats in Kerala. This will enable delivery of various services such as local planning, management, monitoring and payments under government schemes at panchayat level. The project is modelled on the NBN project, which is being implemented in Australia.
Ream more [here](#)

Government to involve private players to cover 50 thousand panchayats under NOFN
To expedite roll out of National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) for high speed broadband in rural areas, the government will float tender in March to invite private firms for laying fibres across 50 thousand village panchayats. The government has set target to complete the roll out of NOFN across 2.5 lakh village panchayats by December 2016. The network aims to deliver broadband connections of 100 megabit per second download speed at village panchayat level. Bharat Broadband Network Ltd is currently handling roll out of NOFN through three public sector firms -BSNL, RailTel and PowerGrid.
Ream more [here](#)

Panchayats in Telangana to collect tax online
All the village panchayats in Telangana will soon have computers for online tax payment. The government will install around 2,400 computers in the first phase and 2,900 computers in the second phase in the villages. This will boost tax collections by panchayats and panchayats collecting 100 per cent tax will be given development funds from the state government. Under this scheme, each village will have one village-level entrepreneur (VLE).
Ream more [here](#)

Telangana plans to overhaul gram panchayats
The Telangana government is contemplating radical changes in the functioning of gram panchayats by bringing in a new legislation to strengthen the system and decentralise power. The gram panchayats would be linked with 29 officials working at village level for proper utilisation of government funds and taxes collected from people. The employees would be made accountable to gram panchayats led by sarpanches in discharging their duties.
Ream more [here](#)

Government to provide tablets to Gram Panchayats under MGNREGA
To improving implementation of MGNREGA and enable access to real-time data at the village level, government has decided to implement the first phase of mobile monitoring system from April 1 in 35,000 gram panchayats. Under this Rural Development Ministry will distribute tablets to each of the gram panchayats.
Ream more [here](#)

Panchayats preparing Community plan
The Kozhikode district panchayat authorities in Kerala have directed the grama pachayats to prepare community plans at the time of preparing annual projects for the financial year 2015-2016. The community plan will cover details about the grama panchayat bodies, its wards, population,

occupancy, its existing status, major problems and development plans for future. The annual plans shall be prepared on the basis of the community plans.
Ream more here

Panchayat Union demands power to Zilla and Village Panchayats
The Goa Panchayat Raj Institutions Union has called for devolution of powers to the Panchayat Raj institutions in the State and restoration of the executive powers of sarpanch. Earlier the second Finance Commission has made suitable recommendations for devolution of funds to the PRIs, as the village panchayats are starved of funds and are unable to do even the bare minimum to mitigate the hardships faced by the villagers.
Ream more here

Government plans to give Rs.10,000 to every gram panchayat for road safety
To curtail the growing number of road accidents and fatalities in Rajasthan, the state government will provide an assistance of Rs 10,000 to each 9,900 gram panchayats to launch awareness campaigns. The year 2015 is marked as 'road safety year' which aims to bring down the road accidents. The approved scheme will be launched after panchayat polls.
Ream more here

NITI Aayog to replace Planning Commission
With the setting up of the NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India), the Government of India has lifted the curtain on the new horizon of policy making and implementation in the country. The NITI Aayog, termed as "a directional and policy dynamo", will provide critical directional and strategic input to the development processes. Please read further the Cabinet Resolution at http://solutionexchange-un.net.in/ftp/decn/resource/NITI_Aayog_Cabinet_Resolution.pdf and GoI press release at http://solutionexchange-un.net.in/ftp/decn/resource/NITI_Aayog.pdf

Over a billion live on less than $1.25 a day: Oxfam
According to a report by Oxfam released on the eve of the Global Economic Forum, if wealth concentration grows at the present rate, in two years 1 per cent of the global population will earn more than the remaining 99 per cent. Global wealth inequality has reached staggering proportions with 1 in 9 people not getting enough to eat and over a billion on less than $ 1.25 a day. The international agency has called for governments to adopt a 7-point programme to address the problem of staggering inequality.
Ream more here

Panchayats reap rich reward through waste management in Tamil Nadu
The solid waste management scheme rolled out by the state government has started making impact in all the 11 town panchayats in Karur district. The scheme aims at helping local bodies to generate income from garbage, besides ensuring clean environment. Production of manure and vermi-compost and production of biogas from food waste are among some of the projects being implemented by the town panchayats.
Ream more here

Readings/Web links/Repositories

From Resource Person

Kerala and the Rest of India: What We Can Learn from Each Other's Development Experience (an EPW article by Pulapre Balakrishnan, Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram)
Kerala has shown that it is possible to improve the quality of life of a people even at low levels of per capita income through efficient provisioning of public services in health and education. At the national level there has been a dramatic alteration of production possibilities achieved by intelligent public policy intervention supported by determined resource mobilisation. The article shares some of the lessons that can be learned from Kerala.
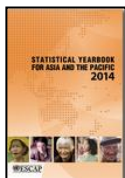**Read more here**

Decentralization: The Indian experience (a paper by Raghav Gaiha, India)
The article discusses Panchayat organization, design and structure with reference to various schemes across states in India. It deliberates on the variation in implementation, devolution, autonomy and empowerment of PRIs. It also discusses the role of: cooperatives; labour unions; farmers' unions and associations; and government's role in terms of organizational reforms and capacity building.
Read more here

Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2014

The Statistical Yearbook 2014 is an electronic file which consists of short analytical texts on 32 selected diverse topics, such as population, education, health, poverty and inequalities, gender, economy, environment and connectivity in the region and related key messages as well as relevant data tables, and country profiles of main development indicators for each of the 58 regional member countries/areas of ESCAP.
Read more here

Relevance of 3Fs and the role of necessary and sufficient conditions in devolution (an article by Dr B P Syam Roy, West Bengal)
The article seems to provide some fresh insights into the theoretical issues relating to much talked decentralisation strategies in India. The author appears to believe that lack of clarity on concepts of decentralisation by many of us is a serious bottleneck in plunging deep into the realms of decentralisation in our country. The write-up is an attempt to initiate refreshing critical deliberations on our decentralisation strategies.
Read more here

Knowledge Compendium: India Backbone Implementation Network -IbIn (by Arun Maira, Chief Mentor, IbIn, New Delhi)
The IbIn Knowledge Compendium has compilation of reports of IbIn projects along with insights and methods that have been distilled since its inception two years ago. IbIn is finding methods from around the world for systematically creating collaboration amongst stakeholders and is promoting the use of such methods in various areas in the country. These include the tuning up of the business regulatory framework, industrial relations and skill development, urban improvement, MSME clusters, and village management.
Read more here

Past Events

Training programme for Sarpanch on"Enhancing participation of women in gram sabha" and "Enhancing women's rights to land ownership" (by Shilpa Vasavada, Working Group for Women and Land Ownership (WGWLO), Gujarat)
Working Group for Women and Land Ownership (WGWLO) is a network of 41 CSOs in Gujarat, working to enhance women's land ownership in rural areas of Gujarat. In support from State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD), Gujarat it conducted training programmes for Sarpanchs and Patwaris on enhancing women's participation in Gram Sabha and on women's land ownership.
Read more here

Upcoming Events

National Seminar on Democratic System and Good Governance in Indian Context: Challenges and Opportunities on March 3 to 4, 2015 (by Prof Yatindra Singh Sisodia, M. P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh)
M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain is going to organise a National Seminar on **Democratic System and Good Governance in Indian Context: Challenges and Opportunities** on March 3 to 4, 2015) sponsored by Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi. To participate in the event visit http://mpissr.org/ and refer the brochure here.

Training Course on Research Methodology in Social Sciences from March 9 to 18, 2015 (by [Prof Yatindra Singh Sisodia](#), M. P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh)
M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain is going to organise a Training Course on Research Methodology in Social Sciences from March 9 to 18, 2015 sponsored by Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi. The objective of the training programme is to provide a basic orientation on the emerging methodological issues to young social science research scholars.
To participate in the event visit http://mpissr.org/ and refer the brochure [here](#).

Announcements/Opportunities

From [Resource Person](#)

UNESCO

Job Title	Deadline	Location
[Administrative Assistant (G-4)](#) - Education Sector, Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development	9 February 2015	New Delhi
[Project Assistant (G-5)](#) - Education Sector, Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development	9 February 2015	New Delhi

UNDP

Job Title	Deadline	Location
[Project Assistant,](#) Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Government of India	5 February 2015	New Delhi

UNWOMEN

Job Title	Deadline	Location
[Consultant](#) – Sectoral Application of Gender Responsive Budgeting (Agriculture)	5 February 2015	Home based

_____

Many thanks to all who contributed to this issue!

If you have items to feature in the Updates, please send it to Solution Exchange for the Decentralization Community at
se-decn@solutionexchange-un.net.in

Solution Exchange is a UN initiative for development practitioners in India. For more information please visit www.solutionexchange.net.in