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# Creating Spaces for Children

In Decentralized Planning  
and Local Governance

# The Project

A newly designed system of planning, named, Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDP) was launched in Madhya Pradesh state, India, to promote participation, inclusiveness and convergence of schemes and resources. This process focuses on 3 pillars (a) change in the financial allocation; (b) shift in the focus of GPs from mere creation of physical infrastructure to work on social infrastructure too; and (c) enlarging the practice of people's participation and social accountability.

In the above context, a joint partnership between **Samarthan-Centre for Development Support** and **UNICEF** was formulated to be implemented in 8 blocks covering 6 predominantly tribal Districts of Jhabua, Alirajpur, Barwani, Mandla, Dindori and Dhar in MP. The report is about the processes and challenges of the project.

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# 1. The Child Rights Framework

## THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Article 12 recognizes a child’s right to be heard or express views freely, to have her/his views considered seriously in decision-making and to have a government ensure the realization of these rights

Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals emphasizes the role of governance, inclusion, participation, rights and security in sustainable development. In particular, target 16.7 is to “ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels”

UNCRC has defined four guiding principles which are to be applied whenever a duty bearer is planning or executing work related to children.

- 1 Non Discrimination: Article 2 UNCRC**  
Children of all caste and class have the same right to develop their potential.
- 2 Best Interest of the Child: Article 3 UNCRC**  
In all situations, decisions will be taken on the basis of what is best for the child.
- 3 Right to Survival and Development:**  
Every child born has a right to live and grow to lead a happy life. Every child should have access to basic services and opportunity to develop.
- 4 Right to be Heard:**  
Every child has a right to express her/his opinion and the duty bearers have to listen, respect, understand and take necessary action.



“ **UNCRC Article 4:  
Protection of Rights**

**Government has to take all the measures to ensure that children’s rights are respected, protected and fulfilled. In the village, it is the responsibility of the Gram Panchayat to protect the rights of the children of the village.**

”



# Why Child Participation

Amongst themselves, children engage closely and freely as peers. It's only when adults enter their sphere that the question about 'levels of participation' arises. Adults pre-occupied with their own world views tend to neglect consulting children. Children are at best considered half a human, not yet fit to formulate or contribute their opinions. Thus, despite being the focus of the human race, children and their concerns continue to remain at the margins.

Overall quality of living improves in spaces where children are informed, consulted, and their participation in decision-making processes is a non-negotiable. This can be possible in the family, in institutions where children are present and even in communities. Child Participation therefore is primarily an inclusive process.

Child participation is made possible by enabling spaces and opportunities for children to engage in decision making processes that concern them directly or indirectly. However, in the case of children's participation in local governance, it becomes especially challenging for adults to allow children's voices to come to the fore. The outcome of children's participation in local governance is a more inclusive community development process that brings its most vulnerable group into priority.

A truly meaningful participatory process views children as proactive participants rather than passive receivers. Imperative to such a process is also the transfer of power from adults to children, dialogue and creating safe spaces for children as they articulate their views.

## Why child participation in local governance?

Children's rights are inherently connected to other rights. Realization of child rights eventually leads to the rights of others in the community. This includes improved services, plan and budgets that integrate child rights and entitlements.

Children have capacities to guide governance processes to be inclusive of their needs and concerns. This is possible only if the governance system adopts appropriate mechanisms to engage children. Children's participation in local governance includes ALL stages of situation assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review. An enabling child participation process will strive to be inclusive of child perspectives especially on issues related to children. Such a process essentially requires adult facilitators who have a pro-child perspective, encourages voices of children and

is not condescending towards children. To view children as partners thus requires a child lens that engages, encourages, enables children to participate in decision-making spaces with adults. And work with adults as well, to rule out tokenist participation of children and ensure safe, non-threatening spaces for children to participate in.

“  
**The very act of bringing this most marginalized voice to the forefront, and to enable their participation in decision-making processes is itself a precursor towards building an inclusive society.**  
 ”

# Children in Local Governance

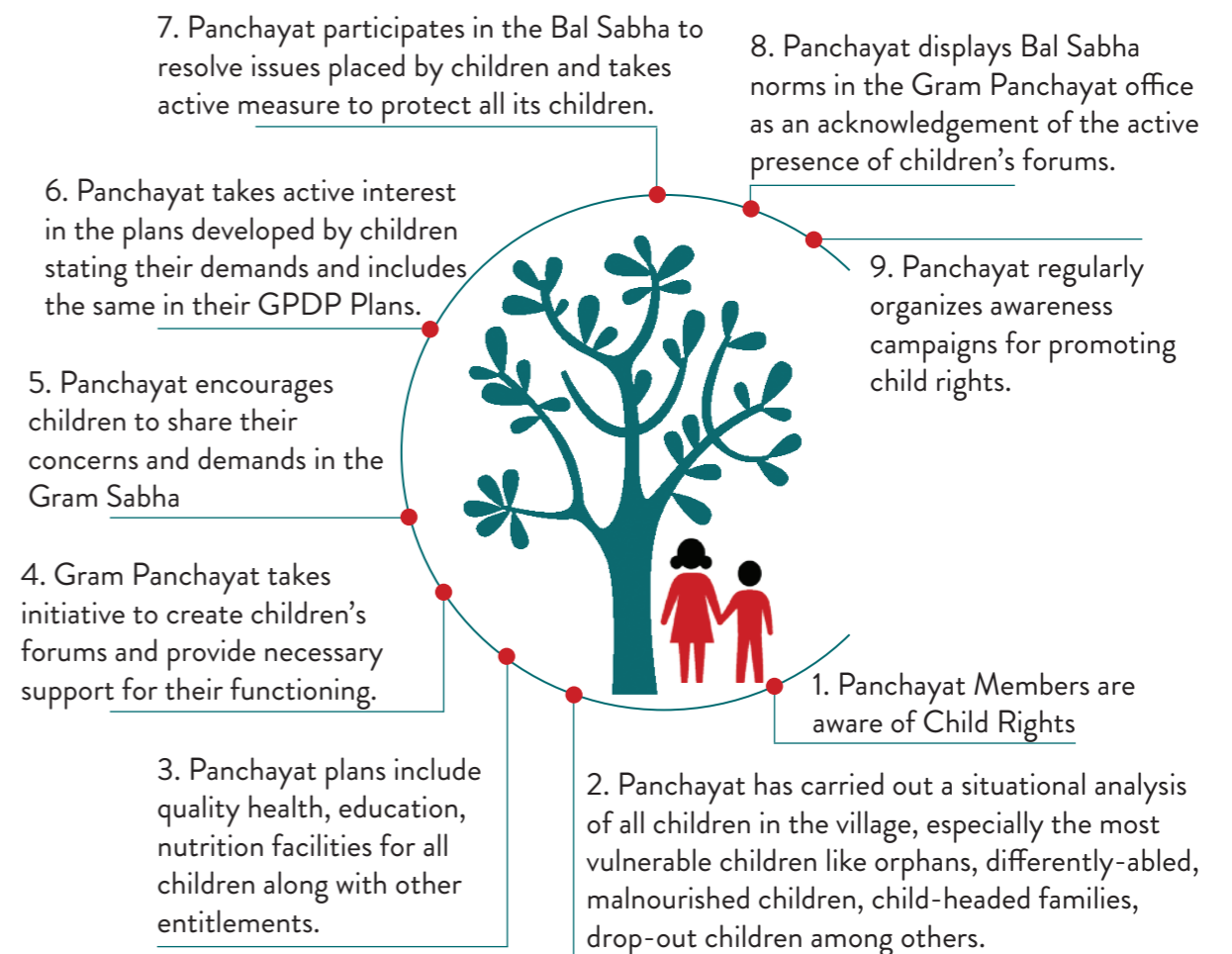
## The Panchayati Raj System

Panchayat Raj system came in to existence with the enactment of the 73rd amendment to the Constitution. As institutions of local governance, Gram Panchayat has a mandate to prepare local plans for economic development and social justice, implement schemes and perform functions for matters listed in 11th schedule (Article 243G) of the Constitution. Point 25 in the Eleventh schedule lists all Women and Child development related schemes and programmes as the responsibility of the Panchayati Raj institutions.

A Child-Friendly Panchayat is therefore a Constitutional Body with a legal mandate and responsibility to work for the development of women and children in its area.

Planning for children needs to be done with the participation of children themselves and in the Child Rights Framework of Right to Survival, Development, Protection and Participation. A Child Friendly Panchayat will strive to put mechanisms in place to engage with children.

## A Child Friendly Panchayat Is One Where:





# About the Project

## The Collaboration

According to the 2011 Census, Madhya Pradesh is home to 16 million STs. Of its 52 districts, 22 of them have a substantial ST population. However, the socio-economic conditions of the STs in MP is far from satisfactory. According to the Human Development Index (HDI) 2011 report, the tribal districts of MP show disturbing trends in terms of nutrition availability for both women and children. Overall health and education indicators as well access to schemes and services for the poorest are low.

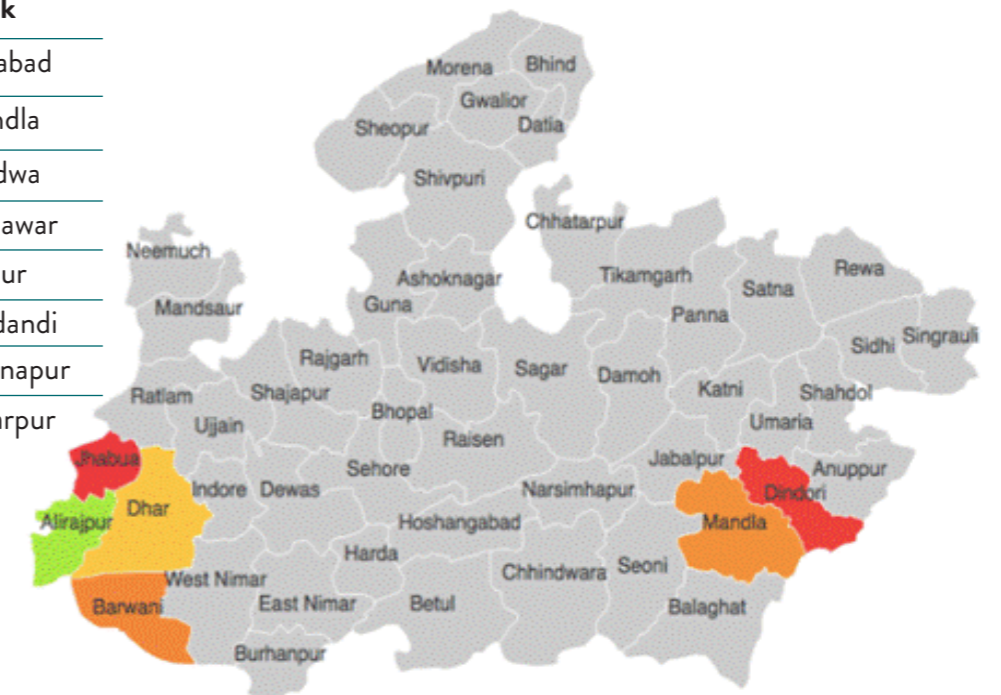
A newly designed system of planning, named, Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDP) was launched to promote participation, inclusiveness and convergence of schemes and resources. This process focuses on 3 pillars (a) change in the financial allocation; (b) shift in the focus of GPs from mere creation of physical infrastructure to work on social infrastructure too; and (c) enlarging the practice of people's participation and social accountability.

In the above context, the 14th Finance Commission (2015-20), under the Chairpersonship of Dr. Y.V. Reddy had forwarded recommendations to re-articulate the way government schemes have been formulated and disseminated in the country.

In the above context, a joint partnership between Samarthan-Centre for Development Support and UNICEF was formulated to achieve the following broad sets of objectives in 8 blocks covering 6 predominantly tribal Districts of Jhabua, Alirajpur, Barwani, Mandla, Dindori and Dhar in MP

## Intervention in Six Districts of Madhya Pradesh

No.	District	Block
1	Jhabua	Petlabad
2	Jhabua	Thandla
3	Alirajpur	Sondwa
4	Dhar	Manawar
5	Barwani	Rajpur
6	Mandla	Bijadandi
7	Dindori	Samnapur
8	Dindori	Amarpur



# 2. Development of Child Centric Gram Panchayat Development Plan





## Objective 1.

Strengthen stakeholder's capacities in 'Development planning through GPDP' ensuring greater convergence between social safety / security programmes and social services to reduce Child deprivations

### Outputs

- A Child Responsive GPDP Manual
- A pool of 20 Master Trainers
- A pool of 30 Micro Planners to demonstrate GPDP development
- Mechanism for District Response Plan to address the gaps identified by GPDP in Jhabua, Barwani and Alirajpur
- Scoping for DRR and gender based components completed for integration of SIRD training modules



## Objective 2.

Strengthen participatory planning processes leading to need based actionable participatory GPDP in 6 GPs per block in tribal districts of Madhya Pradesh

### Outputs

- Composite performance monitoring index for GPs developed in the context of SDGs
- Performance monitoring index rolled out in 30 GPs in select 3-4 districts
- Platform for child & adolescent participations developed in 5 GPs/6 districts.
- Implementation of Operational framework for convergent GPDP to foster linkages between social safety/security programmes and social services specially for children (0-19 years) and women in poor household in 30 GPs/6districts



## Objective 3.

Knowledge partnerships to institutionalize child responsive planning in local governance aligned with social sector SDGs

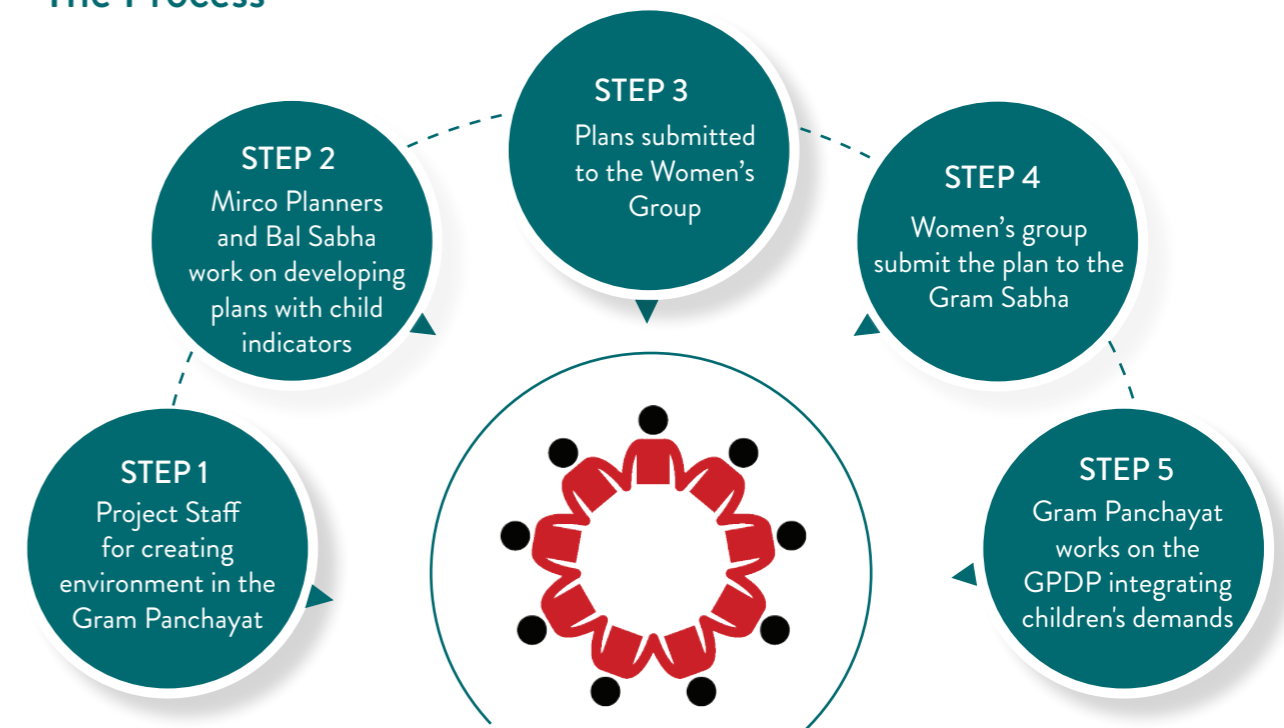
### Outputs

- M&E framework for monitoring implementation of GPDP, aligned to SDG targets developed and Piloted in 5 GPs/ 6 districts
- Knowledge platform developed in leadership of DoPR-SIRD and AIGPPA to promote good practices in GPs
- A "Resource Centre" for local self-governance in AIGGPA conceptualized

## The Implementing Team

Micro-planners at the Panchayat level facilitated the processes with the Gram Panchayat, government functionaries with support from the CBOs, Bal Sabhas and Women's groups. The Bal Sabha was the key steering group in the entire process.

## The Process





### 3.

## Rolling Out the Intervention

Engaging with Children, Women's Groups, and the GP

## The Process

Once the concept of the Child Centric Gram Panchayat was agreed upon between the partners, preparations for the field level implementation began with consultation meetings. Project Block Coordinators from Samarthan were introduced to the concept of Child Centric Gram Panchayats. They were also introduced to the Micro-planning process and asked to identify local male and female micro-planners, one each for 2-3 Panchayats.

A consultation meet with the SIRD, Jabalpur led to intensive discussions and review on existing GPDP documents. A draft Child Centric GPDP Manual emerged from the consultations. With support from the SIRD, a stakeholders meeting was held to review the draft CC-GPDP Manual. The inputs were later integrated into the draft and the Manual was finalized for field implementation. The readied CC-GPDP Manual was introduced to the field team through an intensive training process. This training was attended by Micro-planners identified from the field and Block Coordinators from Samarthan as well. Two batches were conducted in Dindori attended by participants from Dindori and Mandla. Second training was conducted in Dhar attended by teams from Dhar, Badwani, Jhabua and Alirajpur.

The now well-equipped and trained teams were ready to initiate the field process with children, the Gram Panchayat and the community. Bal Manch formation process was initiated with school going children and interactions began with Gram Panchayat members, government department authorities and the community. During this process, a day-long, block level training process was organized for Panchayat representatives, Secretary and field workers on integrating children's inputs into the GPDP. The Panchayat members were assisted in preparing Child Centric GPDPs. As the Bal

Manch started functioning, many child-focused tasks were taken up. This included admission of children in hostels, enabling beneficiaries to access schemes and services, enrolment of out-of-school children, reaching out to children and their parents and motivating them to send their children regularly to school.

Simultaneously, the Response Plan Tool was developed and the project teams oriented on its application. Once the GPDP plans of almost all the selected GPs were completed, the Response Plan for each GP was developed. As the Bal Manch started taking up village development activities, Adolescents from the Manch were trained on using digital platforms for accessing various government schemes and services. Panchayat members were motivated to make adequate budgetary allocations for the child centric processes. Community members were encouraged to proactively engage in the monitoring processes and support implementation of plans. The GPs also participated in a Self Assessment process carried out by various stakeholders to understand the progress of GPDP plan. The project team helped the Panchayat members to assess, analyse and record their own progress. Children were actively engaged in the monitoring, evaluation and review of the progress of the work and activities as proposed in the GPDP.

A conclave was organized on Dec 2, 2019 in Bhopal to share the experiences of creating a Child Centric GPDP process which integrates children's views about the development planning process and their suggestions. Child representatives from Panchayats, development agencies and government departments participated in the Conclave with everyone agreeing on the need to invest in a child friendly Panchayat process, especially with the participation of children themselves.





## Child centric activities identified by children for inclusion in GPDP

### In Schools / Anganwadis

- Construction and repair of buildings/ extra rooms
- Boundary walls.
- Electricity connection and availability of fans/cooler
- Construction of roads up to the facility
- Construction/ repairing of toilets in school (Separate for boys and girls) and regular water supply/cleaning
- Plantation to build green environment
- Establishment of library in school
- Appointment of teachers.
- Up gradation of school to higher classes.
- Availability of complaint box in school
- Availability of sports materials in School and Aanganwadi/Playground
- Timely opening of schools, enrollment of drop outs and ensure regular attendance. Providing scholarship/ distribution of books, school uniform in time

### In Other Sectors

- Capacity building of village level institutions/committees, health, education etc
- Actions against child marriage, child abuse, and child labor.
- Improve functioning of village level committees and PRI by regular meetings and monitoring.
- Awareness among the community on importance of education in children's life.
- Strengthening Gram sabha and Gram Panchayat function through active participation of GS/PRI members.
- Availability of employment in GP to stop children migration with parents.
- Skill development Centre at GP

### In Health Centers / Anganwadis

- Admission of malnourished children's in NRC.
- Poshan Vatika in children's home.
- Regular distribution, quality of MDM and supplementary nutrition.
- Improving regular presence of children's in Aaganwadis.
- Aware community on vaccination, malnutrition and care of children

## Involvement of Women's Groups



Once the indicators were ready, a delegation of children met with the members of the Women's group to hand over their list of demands towards creating a child friendly Panchayat. In some places, children's delegation handed over their charter of demands to the Sarpanch or Panchayat representatives directly with a request to incorporate the same into the GPDP.

The Women's group handed over the children's charter of demands to the Gram Panchayat representatives in the Gram Sabha. The Gram Panchayat members promised to integrate children's demands into their GPDP.





## Outcomes

The project team carried out an analysis of the socio-economic context of the village vis-à-vis issues concerning children. During the micro-planning process, problems were identified and prioritized with community participation. The roadmap for addressing the problems prioritized was taken up by the Gram Panchayats leading to exceptional changes in many Panchayats.

### Key Outcomes:

- During the project duration, capacity strengthening of key stakeholders at the state, district and Panchayat level to operationalise child responsive convergent GPDP, integrating gender and DRR were carried out. This has led to improved convergence between social safety, security programs and social services to ensure child rights.
- Child Centric plan has been developed in 60 Gram Panchayats of 6 districts with the participation of children, PRs and community.
- More than 100 children were admitted in hostels and schools. Most of the children were dropouts belonging to poor families.
- Gram Sabhas passed resolutions banning child marriage and child labour in their respective GPs.
- The project has added value to the resource team of MP State by developing 20 Master Trainers at the state level and 30 Micro-planners at the district level.
- Training manuals and Guidelines have been developed which detail out their roles and responsibilities.
- The Response Plan developed during the process is a demonstrative tool for addressing the issues pertaining to children
- Models of Child Friendly Gram Panchayats were developed through need based actionable participatory GPDP involving children and adolescents in the selected GPs of all the 6 districts integrating gender and DRR. This resulted in strengthening of participatory planning process leading to need based actionable participatory GPDP involving children and adolescents in 60 GPs/6 tribal districts of MP.
- Knowledge networks and partnerships with State institutions and Civil Society Organizations towards building a Child Centric governance system were established.
- Final processes for establishing a Resource centre for local self-governance in MP has been initiated.

## 4.

## Outcomes

## Case Study: Padariya Gram Panchayat



### Improvement in School Education

- After rigorous mobilization and meetings with the teachers, Parents and dropout children, children have been motivated to attend school regularly. The Teacher-Parent committees have been revamped leading to a significant increase in attendance in all schools of the GP.
- One of the identified problems was lack of teachers in the primary and middle schools. Two qualified teachers have been appointed through efforts by the Panchayat.
- Panchayat ensured electricity and functional fans in the middle school.
- Safe drinking water is now available in Padariya after installation of a new water tank in the school.
- With the assertive and collective action of the community, local Panchayat members and School staffs, schools now function regularly, with regular and timely attendance of both teachers and children.
- Quality of MDM served to the children has improved as well.



### Improvement in Health and Nutrition of Children

- In AWC Padariya, tap water supply facility has been installed by the Panchayat to ensure safe drinking water for children.
- Focused monitoring and sensitization of the functionaries like AWW has been carried out. The AWCs now open in time, the Anganwadi worker discharges her duties as per norms.
- Improved quality of MDM and breakfast, attempts are being made to follow the menu
- AWC has undertaken tree plantation campaigns and planted saplings in their AWCs as well.
- Electrical works have been carried out in the Anganwadi Center Amatola, Padariya.
- Wire fencing of AWC Padariya for protection of children has been carried out, alongwith construction of a boundary wall with locally available resources, with a low cost budget engaging people's participation.



### Other initiatives

- The Panchayat has taken protective measures to check child labour and child marriage, necessary actions and collective oath have been taken by the villagers formally,

## Model Child-Friendly Gram Panchayats

Some other model Child Friendly Gram Panchayats and their initiatives include:

### Gram Panchayat Vijaypur, District Mandla

#### Key Outcomes:

#### Education

- Reduction in school dropout rate
- Regularized attendance of both children and teachers in various schools
- Plantation in various school campuses.
- Timely opening and closing of school.
- Kitchen shed construction in Piparia Maal primary and middle School.
- Tap water connection provided in primary and high school campuses.
- Improved quality of Mid Day Meal and regular distributed.
- School books distributed to children's in time.

#### Health and Nutrition

- Anganwadi centre of Vijaypur-1 and 2 have been painted and decorated.
- Tap water connection set up in Anganwadi centre-1 of Vijaypur.
- School uniform, shoes, socks, water bottles, bags, pens, pencils distributed to children in Anganwadi-1 of Vijaypur
- Electric connection and a ceiling fan set up in Anganwadi-1
- Boundary wall construction is in progress in Anganwadi-2 of Jamuntola
- Kitchen shed construction is in progress in Anganwadi centres of Vijaypur-1, Piparia Maal and Baihar.

#### Others

- Gram Sabha passed a resolution to stop child marriage and child labour.
- Children have participated in preparation of village development plan.





## Gram Panchayat Agalgaon, District Barwani

### Key Outcomes:

#### Education

- Water tank made available in Bajad school for drinking water supply
- Improved playground of Bajad primary and middle school.
- Repairing of Bajad primary and middle school building.
- Four new teachers appointed in various school of the Gram Panchayat.
- Improved quality of mid day meal.

#### Health and Nutrition

- Improved regularity of Anganwadi Centres.
- Improved breakfast, MDM quality and distribution.
- Increase in regular attendance of children in the Centres

#### Others

- Gram Sabha passed resolution to stop child marriage and child labour
- Children have participated in preparation of village development plan.

## Gram Panchayat More, District Jhabua

### Key Outcomes:

#### Education

- Timely opening and closing of schools started.
- Improved regular attendance of children's and decreased dropout rate.
- One new teacher appointed in school.
- Tap water connection given in primary and middle school of Titoripada, to improve drinking water facility.
- Electric connection and fans set up in primary/middle school More and primary school Aamlipada.

#### Health and Nutrition

- Improved regularity of Anganwadi Centres.
- Improved breakfast, MDM quality and distribution.
- Increase in regular attendance of children in the Centres

#### Others

- Gram Sabha passed resolution to stop child marriage and child labour
- Children have participated in preparation of village development plan.

## Gram Panchayat Bhimkund, District Jhabua

### Key Outcomes:

#### Education

- Dustbins given to all 3 schools
- Electric fitting done in all 3 primary schools.
- New school building constructed in school Falia.
- Increase in regular attendance of children and teachers
- Timely opening and closing of school.
- Improved quality and regular distribution of mid day meal.

#### Health and Nutrition

- Sanitary pad distributed to adolescent girls.
- Improved quality and regular distribution of mid day meal.

## Gram Panchayat Ajanda, District Dhar

### Key Outcomes:

#### Education

- Four new teachers appointed in various schools of GP.
- Four dropout children enrolled back to school
- Improved timely opening and closing of school.
- Increase in regular attendance of children in school.
- Two toilets repaired in the middle school.

#### Health and Nutrition

- Boundary wall constructed in Anganwadi-2.
- Tap water connection given in Anganwadi-2.
- Toilet repaired in Anganwadi-2.
- 13 out of 14 malnourished children's admitted in NRC and improved their health
- Increased regular attendance of children's in various Anganwadi centres.

#### Others

- Gram Sabha passed resolution to stop child marriage and child labour
- Children have participated in preparation of village development plan.

## Gram Panchayat Manori, District Dindori

### Key Outcomes:

#### Education

- 17 dropout children enrolled back to school.
- Soak pit constructed near hand-pump of Primary middle school campuses.
- Electric fitting and fan given to primary and middle school Manori.
- Improved timely opening and closing of school.
- Improved regular attendance of children and teachers in school.
- Improved quality and regular distribution of mid day meal.

#### Health and Nutrition

- Improved regular attendance of children in Anganwadi centers.
- Initiated distribution of sanitary pads to adolescent girls.
- Improved timely opening and closing of Anganwadi centers.
- Improved quality and regular distribution of mid day meal.

#### Others

- Gram Sabha passed resolution to stop child marriage and child labour
- Children have participated in preparation of village development plan.



# 5.

## Facilitating Child-Centric Local Governance

### Tools & Methods



# The Response Plan Tool

The Bal Sabha had identified a set of child centric activities required to make their Panchayat a child-friendly one. A dialogue was initiated with the Panchayat officials and functionaries on taking up further steps to initiate real actions. Panchayats were suggested to bifurcate the charter of demands presented by children into four different segments based on their priority, resources and authority to take up work on the same. This was titled as the Gram Panchayat Response Plan.

<b>Quadrant 1</b>	<b>Quadrant 2</b>
Includes all activities in which Panchayats have all three parameters - priority, resources and authority to work like Playground, GYM, drinking water facilities, boundary wall, MDM etc.	Includes all proposed activities in which GP has priority and power to work upon but no or inadequate availability of resources to meet out like Library or computer lab installation in schools
<b>Quadrant 3</b>	<b>Quadrant 4</b>
Includes all activities where GP has neither resources nor adequate power to act upon like recruitment of teachers, AWWs or engineers or Doctors.	Includes all activities that lead to State level policy modification like demand of college or High secondary school but it has the criteria of population and others as set by concerned departments

The Response Plan Tool was developed accordingly and initially tested in 8 Gram Panchayat areas where intensive field engagement was in process. The Response Plan Tool demarcated do-able and challenging activities thereby making it more user friendly, even as it helped the GP analyze its own areas of weaknesses and strengths. The detailed components of the Tool included:

## Response Plan I - Activities the Gram Panchayat is able to do with its own resources

- Construction of roads/ Play ground/ water storage tank/stop dam/ School boundary
- Plantation in School and Anganwadi campus.
- Availability of drinking water in school/ Anganwadis
- Distribution of benefits: Social security pension, PMAY, benefits of NREGA sub schemes etc.
- Selection of beneficiaries for other schemes implemented by line departments

- Regular and quality meetings of GP/ GS and their committees
- Improved functioning of GP, GS and their committees.
- Enrolment and attendance of every child in school, Anganwadis
- Improve services of various institutions in village like school, Anganwadis, health, PDS etc.
- Regular opening of school, Anganwadis
- Awareness against child marriage, child abuse and use of alcohol.
- Employment under MGNREGS to poorest households.

## Response Plan II - Activities Gram Panchayat is able to do but needs additional support.

- Construction of Anganwadis and school buildings.
- Construction/repair of toilets in school and Anganwadis
- Capacity building of various functionaries and committees.
- Construction/ plantation works in forest areas.
- Distribution of MDM, supplementary nutritional foods with quality, in school and Anganwadis.
- Availability of sports materials in school and Anganwadis.
- Availability of electricity and fan in School and AWC's.
- Repair of non functional individual toilets.

## Response Plan III - Activities Gram Panchayat is unable to do, but appear in GP Priority

- Appointment of functionaries of various departments at village/GP level.
- Up gradation of school for higher classes
- Sanction of new Anganwadis, school, health Centre
- Establish skill training Centre.
- Constructions of roads, bridges, stop dam (more than 15 Lakhs).
- Timely distribution of books, uniform, scholarship to all eligible children
- Benefit distributions of schemes of line departments like- Agriculture, NRLM, Health, forest etc.
- Training of teachers and other staff to provide quality services.
- Provide benefits of Nal Jal Yojna/Tap water supply.
- Electrification in village/hamlets.
- Electricity connection and availability of fans/ Cooler in school and Anganwadi Centre's.
- Inclusion of needy and poor families in PMAY waiting list

## Response Plan IV - Plans leading to State Level Policy Modifications

- Demands for college or High secondary school but it has the criteria of population and others as set by concerned departments

# The Self-Assessment Tool for Gram Panchayat

## The Rationale for the Tool

Panchayat is a public institution that needs to continuously review and improve its services. It needs to engage with multiple stakeholders, gather their inputs, develop measurable performance indicators which are quantifiable as well. This needs a 360 degree approach and appraisal of the GP.

Stakeholders carried out an assessment of the Gram Panchayat's performance on implementing the GPDP using the Self Assessment Tool

### Need for self assessment:

- The GPDP lists all the development works to be carried out by the Gram Panchayat.
- The Gram Panchayat is enabled to carry out a self assessment of their own work, identify strengths and weaknesses and work on improving the same.
- This gives the Gram Panchayat an opportunity to understand progress from the community's perspective.

### The self assessment tool has two parts:

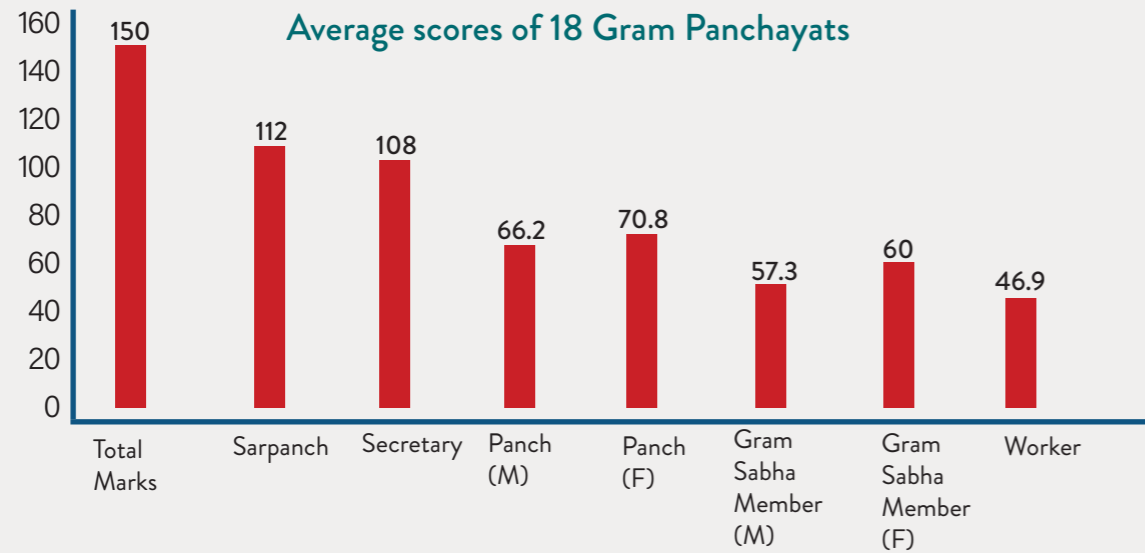
- The first part has the indicators for all the development works taken up by the Panchayat
- The second part has all the indicators for establishing a child friendly Panchayat
- 47 indicators covering 8 Sectors associated work of Gram Panchayat are listed
- The scoring is on a scale of 2-5
- The assessment of the GP's performance is carried out by 6 different stakeholders
- A total of 150 marks is pre-decided for all the indicators collectively



		Sarpanch/ Sachiv	
		High	Low
Panch and Gram Sabha members	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs of all weaker sections included in GPDP</li> <li>• Approval of GPDP taken from GS</li> <li>• Regular and timely opening of GP office</li> <li>• Regular GP meetings and documentation</li> <li>• Proper maintenance of files and registers of applications of various schemes.</li> </ul>	
	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action taken report shared and discussed in Gram Sabha and GP meetings</li> <li>• Approvals of construction works from Gram Nirman Samiti</li> <li>• Social audit conducted in Gram Sabha in last one year</li> <li>• Budget and expenditure shared in GP Meetings</li> <li>• Conducted Gram Sabha with genuine quorum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formation and functioning of all General administration, Nirman and Vikas and Education, Health and Social Justice Committees.</li> </ul>
		High	Low

		Sarpanch/ Sachiv	
		High	Low
Panch and Gram Sabha members	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit of last year accounts and availability of report</li> <li>• Birth/death/marriage registration and distribution of certificate</li> <li>• Increase in expenditure of NREGS with respect to last year.</li> </ul>	
	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of priority activities from last GPDP</li> <li>• Wall writing of expenditures and name of various functionaries, Members of PRI's.</li> <li>• Uses and availability of Computer in GP</li> <li>• Open presentation of expenditure of GP</li> <li>• Monitoring of School, Aganwadi, health, PDS, services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formation and functioning of Gram Sabha committees.</li> <li>• Uses and availability of T.V. in Gram Panchayat building.</li> <li>• Increase in self generated revenue.</li> </ul>
		High	Low





Sr. No	Governance Sectors / Indicators	Sarpanch / Sachiv	Panch	Gram Sabha Member	Social Worker
1	Functioning of the Gram Sabha	91.9	55	45.6	40.6
2	Functioning of Committees in the Gram Sabha	63.3	36.7	25	23.3
3	Functioning of Gram Panchayat	90	51.1	37.2	28.9
4	Functioning of Committees of the Gram Panchayat	64.2	27.5	20	20
5	Effectiveness of GPDP Planning and implementation	58.2	42.7	32.7	28.2
6	Own Source Revenue and Expenditure	63.3	36.7	26.7	18.3
7	Quality of Monitoring of Services	82.5	60	52.5	38.8
8	Quality of infrastructure and office functioning	87.4	50.4	42.2	27.8
9	Children's sensitivity in Gram Panchayat	61.8	43	43.2	34.6

		Sarpanch/ Sachiv	
		High	Low
Panch and Gram Sabha members	High	None	None
	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Files and Registers regarding all services and applications are well maintained.</li> <li>Audit for the last year has been done, report is available</li> <li>All births/deaths/marriages have been registered and certificates issued.</li> <li>The Action-Taken report of the Gram Panchayat decisions is to be tabled in the next meeting.</li> <li>Budget and Expenditure has been tabled in Gram Panchayat meetings.</li> <li>Approval of GPDP has been taken from the Gram Sabha.</li> <li>Gram Sabha has conducted social audit within a year.</li> <li>Approval regarding constructions is taken from Gram Vikas Samiti.</li> <li>Gram Panchayat conducts meeting every month.</li> <li>Most of the budgets allocated for GPDP has been utilized.</li> <li>Most of the GPDP activities planned for the last year have been completed.</li> <li>Teachers come to the schools on time and are regular.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sanitary pads are distributed to adolescent girls</li> <li>Electricity is available in schools</li> <li>Needs of all category are included in GPDP</li> <li>There are provisions in GP for registration and grievance redressal of complaints from children.</li> </ul>
		High	Low

### Areas for Improvement:

- Need to improve all indicators which have been marked low
- Sarpanch/Secretary have marked themselves low on some indicators, this needs improvement as well
- Some indicators have been marked high by the Sarpanch and Sachiv but the Panch and other Gram Sabha members have ranked them low. These processes need to be monitored better.
- Some indicators can be strengthened through participatory processes and ensuring transparency
- This assessment should be done atleast twice a year in the Panchayat which can enable both the community and the Panchayat as well to understand progress on their Plans.

## Conclave: Sharing of Project Learnings and Challenges



A Conclave on Child-Centric GDDP process was held to consolidate learnings of the project at Bhopal, on December 2, 2019. Participants included children and PRI members from the project areas. Representatives from civil society organization and government departments were part of the Panel. Honourable RD and Panchayat Minister Shri Kamleshwar Patel also graced the event.

Ms. Bina from UNICEF highlighted the role of elected representatives of a Panchayat like Sarpanch as the key leaders who can initiate this work by engaging with children. The PRI system has capacities to create an equitable society for all children. The Panchayats can function as the checkpoints and decisions makers for such issues and resolve internally. Panchayats can provide common opportunities and freedom that may bring broader changes in the perspective of the community. They can work towards changing discriminatory social practices and create equal norms for both boys and girls under same parameters.

PRI members shared their experiences, observations and questions related to the

Child-Centric GDDP process. Children, Bal Sabha members who were actively involved in every single processes of the project shared the constraints, struggles, reflections, changes and betterment in their self-development and Panchayat after execution of the project.

Children have placed their demand for their basic needs like boundary walls, toilets, library, electricity connection, fan, drinking water facility, playground for their schools and routed their process through the Gram Mahila Sangathan to the Panchayats. It was felt that the Panchayats are now taking cognizance of the demands raised by the Bal Sabha. They have started pursuing multi-lateral, inter-departmental approaches to meet the children's expectations.

This upholds the sense of empowerment in the children and places them as a crucial stakeholder in the overall village change making process. Children have set an evaluation mechanism (simple tools based on their self-identified indicators) to continuously review their plan progress in the Panchayat, set accountability mechanisms and measure impact.



## 6. Challenges & Way Forward



The Gram Panchayat Response Plan Tool and the Self Assessment Tool for Gram Panchayat were the key tools developed to assist the Panchayat to carry out self assessment and improve its overall performance and services. Some of the key challenges were identified as the systemic lacuna of funds due to very limited availability of untied funds from the Government, community led participation, inter-department coordination and convergence of plans & budgets. Dr. Yogesh from Samarthan urged for a policy level intervention to explore how a comprehensive child-centric Gram Panchayat plan can be evolved.

Other eminent speakers like Sachin Jain, from Vikas Samvad; Shyam Bohare, Dr. Bir Pal Singh, Arvind Gupta, Sameer, and Shivani from The Hunger Project called for a process that builds the leadership capacities of a child and encompasses all the significant aspects of a child's development and is in a constitutional framework. They also emphasized the importance of participatory approach to engage with communities, especially with children; the need for accountability mechanisms and an improved focus on Health and Nutrition of children.

Shivani especially mentioned the lack of capacity building and training opportunities for women elected representatives. This creates a huge gap in terms of women elected representatives capacity building and perspective building. Shivani advised for an effective strategic training and capacity building program that really nurtures their ability to take up development work.

Dr. Sanjay Saraf from SIRD Jabalpur shared the overview of the new PRI training strategy and implementation planning undertaking by SIRD and AIGGPA. He shared that the Institution is responsible for successful execution of appropriate training program for all the newly elected PRI representatives of 22824 GPs across the state. Micheal Juma, State Chief, UNICEF MP stressed on how child development and local governments are interlinked and play a significant role in desired transformation for a

child's life. He referred the various national and international norms and conventions that ensure rights to every single child. He saw a prominent role of Gram Panchayats and Gram Sabhas to lead sustainable actions to meet SDGs in the localised framework and State norms.

Honorable RD and Panchayat Minister, Govt. of MP: Shri. Kamleshwar Patel recognized the efforts made by the Project teams to ensure well-being of children. He assured his complete support in taking the process ahead. He highly appreciated the concept of Child Friendly Panchayats and encouraged to keep such interventions in loop with more Panchayats.

He had shown his bi-lateral concerns on how to ensure quality of basic amenities and services like education and health by inventing effective monitoring tools at local level through community and Gram Sabha. He appreciated the efforts of the Bal Sanghathan and Bal Sabha. The Honourable Minister declared that on every 14th November on the occasion of Children's Day, a special Gram Sabha meeting shall be held on every Panchayat on the specific agenda of child and woman related issues exclusively.

A short video based on child centric Gram Panchayat, prepared by a local videographer from Barwani district was shown in the gathering. The video details out the process of how the Bal Sabha forms, learns about issues and engages in planning processes. The video was appreciated by all.



## Children's Voices



“ Lalita (18) and Kirti (13)

There are many important here. Even the Minister will come to listen to us. This will help fulfill all the demands made by our Bal Sabha.”

Kirti says, “We did not have the Bal Sabha earlier. But when the project began, we started calling children to form the group. In our meetings, we learnt many new things. We also learnt how to place our demands. Our Bal Sabha has given a list of demands to the Gram Panchayat. Slowly, they are working on it.”

“ We also learnt about many government schemes. There are many schemes. We learnt that many of these schemes do not actually reach the most needy in the community. What is the use of such schemes then?”

“ We had never made such a plan before. But our bhaiyya and didi helped us make the plan. We also put free sanitary pads for all girls in the Anganwadi Centre. We gave this list to the Women's group and they took it to the Gram Sabha. This has been passed. Our girls are happy because a big problem has been solved. When we went to call children for our group meeting, they asked many questions. We told them, “it is a very important meeting because we are going to make a plan for our school, Anganwadi and Health Centre.” Some were not sure about coming for this meeting. But they stayed on till the end. We have games, songs and many important discussions. Some children like to write. We speak, they write it very neatly on a chart.”



“ We handed over our demands to the women’s group in our village. They presented it in the Gram Sabha. We can do it as well, but maybe the Panchayat will not listen to us. But if the Women’s group say anything, they have to listen. ”



“ “My mother left us. My father is absconding. I look after my younger siblings, so I could not attend school. There is no one to look after us. But our Bal Manch and our Sarpanch understood my situation. They are sending all of us to a hostel where we can be together and continue our education as well... ”

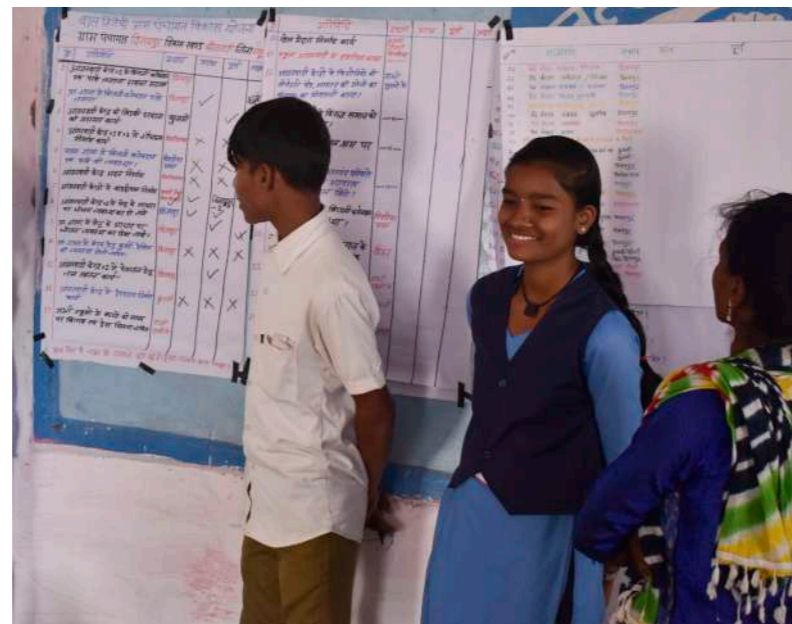


“ There was no drinking water in our school. We used to run upto our houses during break time to drink water. In summer time, we would feel very thirsty. So, we put this on our list. Our Gram Panchayat acted on our demands and got a water tank for our school. It is better now since we have drinking water for all students. ”

“ All the students of the primary and middle schools shared one common playground. This playground was uneven and full of stones. During break times, it would always be crowded with many children. So, we demanded for leveling of the playground and for sports equipments. Our Gram Panchayat listened to children’s demands and started work on the same. We have a bigger playground now, which has been leveled. All children can play freely. ”

“ Right now, there are only school going children in our Bal Manch. We will now ask children who have dropped out of school to attend our meetings. Children who migrate with their parents or work in the fields are very unhappy. They cannot attend school and have to work all day. We will listen to their problems as well and find solutions for them. Our Bal Manch will make sure all children go to school. ”

“ Not only children, we will need to talk to parents as well. If parents are convinced, many of the problems faced by children can be solved. But they should trust us. ”



“ We found that many works have been done in Schools, Anganwadi and Health Centres. But some of our demands are still not met. We hope the Panchayat will complete them soon. ”



# Glimpses from the Conclave





# Challenges

Child Rights, especially Child Participation is a fairly new concept for the Gram Panchayat. In the absence of organized children's forums there is little scope of children's voices and concerns reaching the Gram Sabha or the Gram Panchayat. Exclusion of children from governance processes is primarily due to lack of awareness about child rights. Gram Panchayats need to gear up to listen to their children and include them in the village development process.

While the Child Centric GPDP pilot process has emerged with positive results, there is a long way to go before the government brings adequate focus on child centric processes. Training, related communication resources and continued handholding support in field along with dedicated budgets, including untied funds

and funds received from Central/State Finance Commission recommendation. Without a dedicated focus, upscaling of the Model CC-GPDP process is not possible. The Panchayat needs to proactively seek community participation in decision-making processes for all development works identified. This is crucial for sustaining any initiative undertaken in the Panchayat. Community participation however, remains a prime area of lacunae especially where children's participation is concerned.

Inter-sectoral coordination, communication and convergence remain a key area of challenge, especially in pooling of resources and efforts. A policy level intervention is required to explore how a comprehensive child-centric Gram Panchayat plan can be evolved.

## Key Learnings from the Conclave

In the Children's Conclave that was organized at Bhopal to consolidate learnings of the pilot project, some key learnings emerged as follows:

- The GPDP is a very potent tool for comprehensive development of the GPs. However, currently, it is reduced to activity planning primarily for budgeted activities. There is a need to evolve a deeper understanding of planning to promote processes that can address more complex and deeper issues of the development and social justice. The child centric GPDP will have various issues that are beyond simple construction or improvement of infrastructure.
- The issues of children are close to the women, therefore there is a need for systematic engagement of Women Elected Representatives (ERs) in the issue related to education, nutrition, health, water and sanitation. There is a need to explore collective strength of women ER. There is a need to think their engagement beyond their routine and structured engagement in GP and committee meetings. With the strength of the SHGs and WER, a critical mass of women can be formed to address issues that affect the children and women. Such platforms are effective to raise concerns of the very small children who can neither represent themselves nor articulate their needs. The women's collective needs to be nurtured to highlight such issues.

- Collective of children like Bal Sabha are useful platforms to strengthen their voices in public spaces to address issues concerning children. It should be nurtured as a mechanism to develop more concerned and responsible citizens when they grow as adults and become members of Gram Sabha.
- There is a need to integrate education with Gram Panchayat. Education is one of the most critical investment of children that can transform their life. There should be a dedicated fund available with the schools as well as GPs to be spent on the emerging needs of the children. It is pertinent that education becomes meaningful for the children and families for improving their livelihood opportunities as well as to deal with the real issues of life with the use of education.
- Need for behavioural change of the community emerged as a critical requirement or a necessary condition to create an enabling environment for the growth and development of children. There are several cases of child abuse and violence that need to be prevented through effective parental education on ethics and value development. The school curriculum should also focus on values and ethics to develop children as concerned citizens.
- There are various other Acts other than the Panchayat Act that have provisions for improving the well being of the children or improving the overall development of the villages. There is a need to comprehensively utilize the constitutional provisions under the Right to Education, Right to Employment National Food Security Act, Bio-Diversity Act, PESA and several other similar Acts. Gram Panchayats should emerge as the local governments to address the local issues of the Gram Panchayats with lesser dependence of the district administration. The other tiers of the Panchayati Raj System should also be integrated and strengthened to comprehensively address the issues of governance in education, health, nutrition and other sectors for sustainable development.
- It is pertinent that rights enshrined in the constitution should be delivered to the children by the Government. Some of the clear examples that emerged are the crèche facility at the worksite for the MGNREGS workers or protection of migrant workers' rights under the Right to Education or Food Security Act.
- It is pertinent that the fee for education should not be a barrier for the children as it was highlighted by some of the children. It was proposed that a rigorous study should be undertaken to identify various barriers that restrict growth and development of children.
- A cadre of trained facilitators need to be developed that have capacity to facilitate GPDP in its true spirit. The project has demonstrated that the GPDP facilitators have enriched child centric GPDP with their intensive engagement and several results were highlighted. State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD) should play an active role in developing and supporting GPDP trainers and facilitators.
- There is a need to develop accountability eco system to create enabling environment for the children. The accountability tools like report cards, social audits should be applied in the schools, health centres and other sector specific programmes so that the service delivery agencies and rights providers can be held accountable for the rights holders.



# Way Forward

- The project on developing child centric governance structure through GPDP has given a prospectus and hopeful insights for future plans and interventions. Some of the plans and interventions could be as indicated below:
- Aggregating the Panchayat/district wise plans and developing a sustainable mechanism for implementation and monitoring.
- Increasing the responsiveness of the district level stakeholders and building ownership. This could be substantiated with a proper ToR for the Master trainers and Micro planners to act. Additionally, the learnings and best practices need to be shared at various level. Forum for Master trainers and Micro planners is to be created for interaction and increase understanding their role widely accepted.
- Functional system of monitoring of GPDPs with sustainable implication could be explored. Advanced Technical applications could be used for monitoring with necessary indicators.
- Gender issues, DRR and child friendly Panchayats are to be focused with practical and sustainable approach.
- Adding value to Child Centric governance structure through official portals of Government of MP. Digitizing the information accessible for all to ensure participation and role clarity and accountability.
- Establishing and operationalizing Resource centre at State level with all purposes envisaged.



# Samarthan

Established in 1995, Samarthan is a support organization to address the challenges of poverty and underdevelopment through Participatory Development and Governances. Samarthan promotes participatory development processes by challenging the conventional top down model of development through direct field action, capacity building research and advocacy.

The programmes of Samarthan are spread over in various districts of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Besides, Samarthan has a large network of CSOs, support organizations and grassroots groups to demonstrate examples of participatory governance as well as to amplify voices of the Poor Dalits, Tribals and Women in policy making platforms.

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