

PANCHAYAT INITIATIVE IN SANITATION AND DECENTRALISED GOVERNANCE SYSTEM OF MADHYA PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

The UNO has declared the Year 2008 as the International Year of Sanitation in order to accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal on Sanitation in a stipulated time frame set at the Earth Summit in Johannesburg in 2002.

Around 2.6 billion of the six billion people on this Planet do not have access to safe and hygienic toilets. Most of the diseases which afflict young and old alike in sanitation sans area snatch away a substantial amount of people's income for treatment. Total Sanitation Coverage would not only raise the standard of living but also the health of the masses and thus the productive capacity of the Economy.

The Government of India has already launched a drive for Total Sanitation Coverage in the country in Partnership with UNICEF. But the implementing agencies are not very enthusiastic. Any scheme for the general welfare of the masses could only succeed if the participation of the stakeholder is ensured. For this the community at the Grassroots level has to be activated and motivated.

Decentralization promotes and enhances the pace of development or decentralization is an outcome of the higher level of prosperity. It has been argued that it reduces the cost of services, brings efficiency in providing basic public services but most importantly in a country like India decentralization facilitates reaching out effectively to the masses. The experience of the last ten years of democratic decentralization in India by constitutionally recognizing the Panchayats as the local governance institution, has established that Panchayats are quite capable of handling local issues. To draw a parallel, Gram Sabha is the General Assembly and the elected representatives are the Cabinet Members. This form of direct democracy in the form of Gram Swaraj is a novel experiment and has not been attempted anywhere else.

In this Paper, the Author argues and suggest on the basis of the lessons learnt from the Total Sanitation Covered villages, the crucial role of decentralized governance for the success of the project. The most important component of typical Indian decentralized villages is the General Assembly {Gram Sabha}. In villages where the general assembly {all the voters} is empowered, they automatically get motivated and ensure the implementing agency to perform. And these are the villages which have achieved the target of Total; Sanitation Coverage. Thus Empowered Gram Sabha facilitates good governance which performs.