Panchayats: The Need for Support System

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Contents

List of Abbreviations

ATI	Administrative Training Institute
BRGF	Backward Regions Grant Fund
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CRM	Centre for Rural Management
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DC	District Collector
DM	District Magistrate
GoK	Government of Kerala
GP	Gram Panchayat
GUS	Gram Unnayan Samity
Klink	Kutch Local Information Kendra
KNNA	Kutch Nav Nirman Abhiyan
LKP	Loka Kalyan Parishad
LoGIn	Local Governance Initiative South Asia
MM	Mahiti Mitra
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MGNREGS	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
MoU	Memoradum of Understanding
MRA	Mahila Rajsatta Andolan

NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRHM	National Rural Health Mission
NRLM	National Rural Livelihood Mission
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institutions
PRIA	Participatory Research in Asia
PWGI	Palampur Water Governance Initiative
RGPSA	Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Shashaktikaran Abhiyan
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SHG	Self Help Group
SIRD	State Institute of Rural Development
SWG	Social Watch Group
TSC	Total Sanitation Campaign
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VHSNC	Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Committee
WUMP	Water Use Master Plan

Foreword with Acknowledgements

Some of us, involved in strengthening Panchayati Raj in India, have been thinking of the various issues the Panchayats face. One of these issues was their own capacity. However, there have been many initiatives in capacity building over the years across the country. They, in general, were focussed on trainings.

So, what else is to be done? It is here that we thought of support system for Panchayats. SDC-LoGIn came forward to support us in crystalizing this idea into a concept paper. Review of various reports, interviews, field visits and case studies followed. Two consultative workshops were organised which were attended by a wide spectrum of stakeholders including Panchayat representatives, officers, academicians, researchers and activists. This document is a result of all their experiences, contributions and ideas. We thankfully acknowledge their contribution.

Case studies included in this document are based on various sources – Decentralization Community of UN Solution Exchange, PRIA, Centre for Rural Management, Mahila Rajsatta Andolan, Kutch Nav Nirman Abhiyan, The Hunger Project, GIZ and SDC. These were followed up with field visits to develop the case studies. Thanks to all of them.

We are indebted to Panchayat representatives who have shared their views and ideas, which form the basis of this document. Finally, we acknowledge with gratitude the support provided by SDC-LoGIn which made this document possible.

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1
Preface

Over the last couple of decades, there have been initiatives in various countries of the South Asia region to restructure or launch local government system. Reasons and the genesis of such initiatives vary from country to country. While the local governments are considered to be the governments at the local level, there are many actions yet to be taken at various levels to make them reach that level.

In countries where local governments have, by now, been functional, many initiatives were launched by various agencies, including the government and the non-governmental, to strengthen the local government system. Most of the discourses and actions on strengthening local governments focus on the 3 F's (functions, finances and functionaries) and also the capacity building. The latter, in practice, gets narrowed down to training. However, it is now clear that there are a lot more things to be in place for making the local governments function as real local governments.

In India, the national and state governments are equipped with various support mechanisms for their functioning. These include sectoral departments with professional human resources, training and research institutions directly or

indirectly under the relevant state or national governments, academic institutions, and experts on call through committees and task forces. In contrast, the local governments are devoid of any such mechanisms, especially those which could provide them support at the local level on a regular basis. In fact, they lack even the adequate human resources required for their day to day functioning; leave aside the professional and technical expertise. And, this is in the context where the Schedule XI of the Constitution mentions about 29 subjects to be under the local governments.

This is not to deny the fact that there are potentials. In fact, there is a large scope for identifying such institutions and organisations which could play the role of non-governmental support system for strengthening local governments. These include community based organisations like residents associations and Self Help Groups (SHGs), networks and platforms, academic and research institutions, voluntary agencies and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). However, these potentials have not been appropriately tapped, reasons being many. Some of the reasons are as follows:

- Local governments have very little knowledge and understanding about the capabilities and potentials of such organisations and institutions in supporting local governments
- With regard to the organisations and institutions mentioned above, they too have not understood that there is need at the local government level for their support as well as there is the expertise and knowledge available with them which can be of use to the local governments
- And for both the groups, there is lack of understanding about the scope of their partnership and how this partnership could be brought about leading to a win-win situation.

There are different kinds of functions to be undertaken by the local governments;though they may vary across states. They require support in addition to the routine training programmes offered by the government agencies. There are possibilities of such non-governmental support mechanisms available at the local level. At present there are gaps and limitations in accessing this support. But there are experiences from various states, if these are analysed, and successes, failures and gaps identified, the local governments will be able to function more effectively and efficiently.

Generally, the trainings provided by the government agencies and training institutes focus on rules, orders and guidelines. They do not address the ground realities like:

- *How to manage the system, various institutions and mandates in Panchayat?*
- *How and why vision should be developed?*
- *How to address felt needs and move towards new ideas to address them?*
- *How ideas could be translated into action by leveraging the existing opportunities like the possible local solutions, various governmental schemes or other resources?*
- *How service delivery could be improved? and so on.*

There would be various specific purpose Community Based Organisations (CBOs) like the farmers organisations in the Panchayat, people who are exposed to relevant areas for action or who would be interested or could be motivated in supporting Panchayats, colleges and similar academic institutions in the nearby areas, certain specialised organisations working on issues of relevance to Panchayats etc. Lack of awareness on the part of the Panchayats and the groups mentioned above on the potentials of working together is a major limitation. In addition, is the fact that the government led decentralisation process in the Country has

so far not been able to provide a framework for such collaborations and support mechanisms.

No concrete steps have so far been taken in the country to conceptualise this support system. Apart from some individual reports – of which many are not in the public domain – there have not been many attempts to have the reports consolidated. It would be useful for strengthening local governments in the Country if such an attempt is made, through which conceptual and operational framework for non–governmental support system can be developed from the scattered experiences so far.

For Whom and What

This document could be used by:
- Local governments in understanding how and where they could look for support organisations and what such support organisations could offer.
- Various organisations and institutions to see how they could play a facilitatory role in strengthening local governments.
- All stakeholders like local governments, organisations and others for advocacy with the governments to provide facilitatory environment for such support systems.

Scope

It is to be noted that local governments in India are not homogenous, there are variations across states as the level of devolution varies from state to state. There are also the urban and rural local governments, the latter again having three tiers viz. district, intermediate and village. Even within a state, there would be differences due to socio–cultural and developmental status. In this document, rural local governments are being considered with focus on village local governments.

2
Support System

Support system for local governments can be defined as a group of organizations, institutions, governance and development experts, network of peers,platforms for advocacy and knowledge management available to the local governments, for carrying out its functions as a local government and enabling them to mature and strengthen itself as real institutions of local governance.

Such a support system is inclusive of the government, where as our focus is on non-governmental support system. Non-governmental is clearly something outside the government and is in the 'private' domain. However, can it be 'purely' private?

Going by the definition of capacity development and its practical interpretations for local governance by many organizations including United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), non-governmental support system has to be one of the components of capacity development and not exclusive. However, the difference is from trainings and orientations which are usually one –
off programmes or a series with a timeline,

the non-governmental support system is a dynamic system which is concurrent, continuous and regular. It is demand driven as well as supply based.

The broad objective of the non-governmental support system is that the support is available to the local governments to carry out its functions as local governments.

In India, what are the functions of local governments? Is it enough to be concerned only with the existing functions or is it for enabling the local governments to 'mature and strengthen itself as real institutions of local governance?

Local Governments in India are still in the early stages of evolution, character varies from state to state, content of legislations might be different, number of functions and the way they have been transferred vary, status in terms of funds and functionaries are dependent on state policies, framework in which they work is different – still there is a common thread. They have been formed as per the broad framework envisioned in the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution of India. The major objective mentioned in these amendments are 'to promote social justice and local economic development'.

There are specific functions transferred (and sometimes assigned) to the local governments. These include subject areas like health, education, social welfare, drinking water, sanitation, agriculture and many others. Though these subjects are transferred as per the Schedule XI and XII of the Constitution, there is no clarity on the actual transfer within these subject areas. Considering the federal characteristics of the Country, it is clear that these subjects would not have been transferred to the local governments in its entirety. Attempt at activity mapping too did not succeed.

In addition to these are various vertical schemes sponsored by the state and national governments like Backward Regions Grant Fund (BRGF), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) etc where local governments have been assigned key roles. There are the new schemes like RGPSA and NRLM where too local governments have a major role to play.

There are the basic functions, office and financial management, monitoring of various programmes, local development planning, service delivery, organisation of participatory forum like Gram Sabha and other committees; and various other day to day issues to be addressed locally. There are also the functions like community mobilisation, conflict resolution etc. It also requires intellectual and practical support to identify opportunities available and adapting or innovating to suit the local realities. Moreover, these are functions and activities devolved or sometimes delegated to the local governments.

Being in a stage of evolution, in the context of centralised governance at the state and national levels, will these vaguely defined functions and activities be enough for the local governments to 'mature and strengthen as real institutions of local governance'? It is in this premise that the functions of local governments are approached in this document. It is also, about local governments as a whole and not just about elected representatives.

3
Functions of Local Governments: 4 Fs

At the practical level, there could be four broad categories of functions the local governments of today have to address: Statutory, Delegated, Ongoing and Potential

Statutory functions are those that have been bestowed on them through the Constitution, state legislations and rules. Delegated functions are those that from time to time are assigned to them. There are many functions the local governments carry out within their geographic territory which are not covered in the statutory and delegated functions and these could be termed as "Ongoing functions". In order to mature and strengthen to become real institutions of local governance, there could be many other areas which need to be identified by themselves depending upon the local situation.

i.   Statutory Functions

As mentioned, these are functions transferred to the local governments through constitution, legislations and rules, from the national and state levels.

- Day to day administration
- Basic functions (civic, regulatory and developmental)
- Service delivery
- Planning

ii. Delegated Functions

In many situations these are agency functions.
- Implementation of flagship programmes
- Channels for distribution of government benefits
- Monitoring of schemes and services
- Grievance redressal
- Reporting to the higher levels of governments
- Representative of the higher levels of governments

iii. Ongoing Functions

There are many functions the local governments carry out at the local level which are not under the category of statutory or delegated functions. These functions are need based and many of them could be interpreted to be part of the statutory functions.
- Grievance redressal
- Conflict resolution
- Support to citizens in accessing rights entitlements
- Coordination of community activities
- Decisions on local norms and rules
- Public – private interface
- Advocacy

iv. Potential Functions

These are functions they could/should do to establish themselves as local governments. These are also dependent on the expectations and perceptions of the people about local governments. It may vary from place to place, culture to culture and contexts. A few examples are given below:
- Improving quality of services through local innovations
- Productivity enhancement strategies in agriculture
- Facilitation of public–private–citizen interface
- Dealing with issues of commons
- Innovative strategies in poverty alleviation
- Advocacy on issues of relevance to the area

4
Classifying
Support Needs

In order to carry out these functions the local governments require support in the following areas:

i.   Knowledge Needs

- Access to new knowledge
- Access to information on various aspects in an understandable form, including government schemes and programmes, rules and regulations, powers and responsibilities
- Ideas for new initiatives

Experiences of Kutch Nav Nirman Abhiyan (KNNA) in Gujarat in initiating a few technology driven programmes in the region to bridge the knowledge / information gap within the governance system provide concrete future directions in addressing the knowledge needs of local governments. Programmes like Setu ('bridge'), Mahiti Mitra (MM) (Information friend) and Kutch Local Information Kendra (Klink) became very popular in the region in supporting and facilitating local governance in the post-cyclone, earth-quake years. Setu was conceived as a decentralized space facilitated by technology to ensure the co-ordination of the local relief and rehabilitation effort and manage the task of creating the database of information. Mahiti Mitra (Information friend) was developed to meet the mandate of 'using and developing information technology to institute an e-self governance system'. Klink as a programme arose from the need to organise the data for relief and rehabilitation.

ii. Skills

- Elected representatives – For responding to the day to day needs, 'as executive, planner, implementer, social activist, advocate and as representative of the people'
- Other functionaries like staff – planning, office management, and quality improvement in service delivery
- Planning: (methodology, tools, technical knowhow, opportunities, needs assessment, ensuring participation, identifying opportunities)

Water and sanitation are key intervention areas for local governments. Successful models related to the Water Use Master Plan (WUMP) in Sobra in Odisha facilitated by Intercooperation and Institute for Women Development with support from Arghyam, implementation of watershed plan in Bonthi in Karnataka facilitated by Intercooperation and Myrada with support from Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Zurich City and Palampur water governance project in Himachal Pradesh supported by GTZ provide concrete evidences on how building skills help.

WUMP helped to train the local leaders about the participatory planning, create greater ability for panchayat members to deliver services and implement schemes, and to mobilise government funds in efficient ways. Increased awareness among Panchayat and sub-committee members and community resource persons about the technical details of various public programmes and the transparent way of handling public fund is a major achievement of Watershed programme in Bonthi.

The Palampur Water Governance Initiative (PWGI) is essentially an application of Payment for Eco-system Services (PES) model mainly involving Palampur Municipal Council and Village Forest Development Society at the upstream rural areas. The PWGI model opens an avenue for the Forest Development Society for collaborating with larger players including Irrigation and Public Health Department and hydro power companies. The set process has created a scientific understanding about their resources among the local communities also.

iii. Guidance

- Rights based approach to local governance
- Creating a vision

There is the case of Mahila Rajsatta Andolan (MRA) in Maharashtra which was initiated in 2000 as a campaign for Women in Governance, with a view of empowering both the elected as well as other motivated women members within Gram Panchayats. Though the campaign has positioned itself as a Civil Society initiative, it has become successful in participating actively in the political process at grass root level. MRA is encouraging women to come forward and demand their rightful share in political governance. It also creates awareness about the success and struggles of these women leaders. It has become successful in making the elected women representatives conversant with the Panchayat laws, procedures, their rights, powers and functioning of the administrative mechanism.

iv. Technical and Professional

- Planning
- Technology support
- Implementation
- Monitoring and evaluation

Government of Kerala (GoK) tried to facilitate the process of formally engaging the technically capacitated civil society organizations with the local government plans by giving accreditation to the organizations based on their core skills and capacities. In those areas, the Panchayats can formally tie up with the concerned organizations to be their implementing agency without going through the routine tender processes.

v. Resources

- Mobilising financial resources, including government and non government
- For financial resources
- Mobilising professionals and technical support

Odanthurai Panchayat of Coimbatore district in Tamil Nadu has set up a revenue generating model in a partnership with Suzlon. They erected a wind mill and have sought a loan from the Bank of India. The electricity generated is sold back to the grid and after loan servicing over 7 years, and a maintenance contract with Suzlon, the village will have a sustainable revenue source for development purposes.

Kumily Gram Panchayat in Kerala set a model in the mobilization of local resources through the support of Centre for Rural Management (CRM). The Panchayat could increase its own funds substantially over the years. This was achieved by enhancing the quality and content of delivery of services along with a tax collection drive, thereby motivating the people to pay taxes.

vi. Management

- Understanding rules and regulations
- Interpreting rules and regulations
- Monitoring and evaluation
- E-governance
- Interface with officers within and outside

Info Gram is a comprehensive IT Solution, covering all activities in the village panchayats. It has been implemented in five village panchayats in Goa. The modules cover services pertaining to registration of births, deaths; maintain payment details and budget entries, data on house and light tax, trade licenses, electricity connection etc.

Mahiti Mitra (MM) and Kutch Local Information Kendra (Klink) under the Setu project mentioned earlier have played a major role in contributing to e-governance as well as helping Panchayats in understanding rules and regulations.

vii. Service Delivery

- Ideas on how to improve service delivery
- Supporting service delivery

The project on "Strengthening gender response of Panchayats in Rajasthan" facilitated by PRIA with financial supports from United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and active engagement of local partner organizations helped the Panchayats in improved service delivery with focus on gender responsiveness. Panchayats have been enabled with appropriate capacities, tools and methods to help them address and be responsive to gender issues in their jurisdiction. The continuous local level support to panchayats was provided by the network of Civil Society Organisation (CSO) partners, trained on various themes of gender, health and governance by PRIA. The CSO network provided regular information and capacity building support to panchayats and various other committees (Gram Sabha, VHSNC and Social Justice and Social Welfare Committee) for effective gender-responsive actions at the grassroots. These various village level committees were organised and capacitated significantly to act as monitoring committees and provide check balance to the system of health delivery and governance. All these interventions prepared panchayats to undertake participatory health planning exercise in their Gram Panchayats. These participatory health plans also influenced the thought processes of people as well as priorities, planning, budgeting and expenditure patterns of panchayats for making them gender responsive, which was earlier lacking at the local levels. The project has thus been able to sensitize, activate and capacitate panchayats to work on the gender and health issues affecting their areas.

Loka Kalyan Parishad's (LKP) partnership with 50 Gram Panchayats in Birbhum and Uttar Dinajur districts of West Bengal is one example of how civil society organization can support Gram Panchayats in building their capacity through a participatory structure of CBOs networked with Panchayats for development. LKP worked as a facilitating organization recognizing the primacy of the Gram Panchayat as the local government and Gram Sansad as the people's forum as an integral part of Gram Panchayat. LKP's development assistance for the community is provided to the Gram Panchayats and integrated with the Gram Panchayat's own Books of Accounts, so that the community receives all development assistance from the panchayats and make it accountable to them. Capacity building of Gram Panchayats was not through any training but through a continuous process of working together with the sub-committees and also with Gram Unnayan Samity (GUS).

viii. Implementation

- Implementer of schemes and programmes
- Providing feedback

Social Watch Groups (SWGs) constituted in two blocks of Mayurbhanj district in Orissa have members from a multi-stakeholder base of people's representatives, government officials, media persons and community based organizations. These SWGs constituted by Sambandh, an NGO, use the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) assessment tool, which measures the achievement level of a particular village in terms of the localized MDGs across four goals and against twenty-eight indicators. An Annual Social Watch Report thus could be generated with technical support from a facilitating civil society organization. On similar lines, respondents mentioned the use of citizen report cards, a client feedback tool to assess the availability, quality and performance parameters for services. Members noted that a combination of such tools, as community scorecards, citizen juries administered in a systematic framework is quintessential to achieving social accountability.

ix. Lobbying and Advocacy

- Dealing with District Collector (DC)/District Magistrate (DM) and higher authorities
- Networking
- Collaborations and partnerships with other local governments

Motivated and educated by the State Federation of Elected Women (SUGRAMA) project, Smt. Nagarathnamma, Member of Singanahalli Gram Panchayat in Karnataka led the campaign for the Ashraya (housing scheme) scheme and fought against corruption, trying to ensure justice through nominating and selecting the right beneficiary for the scheme. She was also active in participating in the agitation against the government when there was a move to take the powers of the panchayat members in the Ashraya scheme.

x.   Community

- Community mobilisation for Gram Sabha, other such platforms for participation
- Conflict resolution
- Empowering civil society for ensuring better local governance
- At the time of elections to the local governments, helping in identifying the most suitable candidates and also for building election awareness

For mobilising people for Gram Sabha participation and everyday development activities Melli Dara Gram Panchayat of Sikkim adopted a method of constituting Standing Committees. Elected leaders under the leadership of the Panchayat President of Melli Dara Paiyong took the initiative to increase widespread participation and engagement of people. Attempt has been to form and functionalize 10 Standing Committees in this panchayat as an effective non-governmental support system to maximise community participation in the functioning of panchayat.

A community managed radio service provider, NammaDhwaniin Karnataka provides information on crops, market prices, health issues etc. This Community Radio Station has done pioneering work in broadcasting Gram Sabha proceedings live in Karnataka.

In Gujarat, Mahila Swaraj Abhiyan conducted a street theatre campaign to demonstrate to people how development issues are resolved and where panchayats have a role to play. This resulted in a perceptible improvement of numbers and quality of participation in Gram Sabha. Pre election awareness campaigns successfully carried out by CSOs under the leadership of PRIA in many states of the country is an example of how support to local governments could do even at the time of elections. It helped in better informed participation of the community in elections and also identify the right candidates by them.

5

Constituents of Non-governmental Support System

As we have seen in the previous section, it is a large group of potential support institutions and organisations. NGOs are part of it, but not exclusive. Academic and research institutions, Trusts, Foundations, private firms, Community Based Organisations (CBOs), networks and platforms are part of it. The group could also include para-state organisations, which usually do not figure in the government led support to the local governments. For example, the regular training institutes like State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD), Administrative Training Institute (ATI) etc could be termed as governmental in this specific context whereas a university (agricultural university) or its department, a local college department, a research institute on a particular thematic area etc, which may have government linkages could still be included in the group, as they do not fall within the usual governmental support system for local governments. The institutions could be at the local level, district or beyond, but the support is to be provided at the concerned level.

i.   Local General Interest Groups

There are such groups existing in various parts of the villages, small and large. It is a group of people in the village with common characteristics and they have broad objectives. These include collectives based on communities/ castes, youth clubs, women's organisations, reading rooms, libraries, residents associations etc

ii.   Local Special Interest Groups

These are groups or organisations formed for specific purposes. Examples include women's self–help groups, agricultural production related groups, environment protection groups, beneficiary groups of specific schemes etc.

iii.   Voluntary and Charitable Organisations

Most of the voluntary agencies are membership based and work for a common cause. They have to be differentiated from the conventional NGOs. In the case of members of voluntary agencies, they generally are not salaried. These organisations include advocacy initiatives and activist groups.

iv.   Non–Governmental Organisations

There are different ways of defining the nongovernmental organisations and categorising them. In general they are advocates, educators, catalysts, monitors, whistle blowers, mediators, lobbyists, activists, mobilizers, protectors of human rights, conscientizers, animators, and conciliators (D Mishra et al, 2004)[1]. A typical categorising scheme used to differentiate NGOs is on the basis of their operations.

[1] Debiprasad Mishra, Saswata N Biswas, Shiladitya Roy (2004), "Governance of Non Government Organisations", Silver Jubilee Symposium on Governance in Development – Issues, challenges and strategies, Institute of Rural Management Anand.

- That work directly with particular communities at some geographic level. They are also referred as "Project Implementing NGOs".
- That emerged during the 80s with the prime aim of supporting and building capacities of project implementing NGOs. They are referred as 'support/intermediary organisations'. They provide training, hand-holding as well as other support services.
- That which engages exclusively in research and advocacy efforts.
- A relatively new category consists of "networks".
- Those are primarily involved in raising resources for "voluntary and / or development action".

v. Academic and Research Organisations

There are academic institutions in the nearby areas of the local government like colleges, polytechnic institutes etc. At a larger level there are universities, research institutes etc which could provide specific support. Academic and research institutions could support Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) functionaries and elected representatives by imparting training and support on specific issues in accordance with demand. For example, Departments of universities and colleges can have signed MOUs with Gram Panchayats (GPs) for tasks like preparation of guidelines for GP budgeting, situational analysis, health management and health sector planning, education and watershed based planning and strategy development in various sectors.

vi. Networks and Platforms

Networks are groups of organisations and individuals who share common interests. They can pool in their technical resources or share their knowledge resources

to others, especially local governments. There are also platforms for advocacy, knowledge management etc. In addition, net work of local governments or associations of local governments could also play a major role as support system.

vii. Funding Organisations

Various categories of funding organisations are there from local charitable trusts, foundations and bilateral and multilateral agencies.

viii. Private Sector

Apart from the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, they could also provide technical support in certain cases.

6
Role Characteristics

It is by now clear that the non-governmental support system being defined here is a large group of potential support institutions and organisations at various levels. How they perform this role is important.

Supply vs. Demand

The support could be demand driven or supply based.

Channels

These could be provided as part of projects, consultancies or MoUs with the local government, voluntary or payment based.

Type

Support considered here is not merely the routine training programmes but handholding and facilitating.

Relation

The relation has to be based on the legitimate status of local government as a tier of governments.

7
Support Needs Analysis

While there are methodologies in use in India on training needs analysis, they do not cover the support needs as defined in this note. There is a need to develop a methodology for the Support Needs Analysis. To begin with, a simple matrix format as shown below could be used.

No.	Functions	Support Needs	Category	Present availability	Potential Support Providers
I	Statutory				
II	Delegated				
III	Ongoing				
IV	Potential				

This is to be followed by an analysis of how the support is usually provided and how it should be provided, the reasons for the gaps and how these gaps could be addressed.

8

Challenges and Risks

The most important challenge and the risk are about the tendency of such support systems to underestimate the legitimate status of local governments and play the role of the leader rather than support system. Sometimes these tend to establish parallel systems and bodies.

Role of higher level governments is crucial in providing appropriate environment for the functioning of such support systems. This could be through accreditation or guidelines for specific activities where the non-government support system can play a role. Here too, how to prevent them from becoming parallel structures for specific activities is the challenge.

Many projects and programmes supported by donor agencies at various levels tend to ignore the legitimate status of local governments as the third tier of governments. These too would only help in making the potential support system to be parallel agencies thus weakening the local governments.

Lack of information and knowledge among the local governments regarding the availability of support systems as well as among the various organisations and agencies regarding the need for such support is the most crucial challenge. How such requirements could be assessed and potential support sources are identified is the next step required in the capacity building initiatives for local governments in India.