UNIT 2 PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES IN STATE GOVERNMENTS AND LOCAL BODIES

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit teaches you the PR efforts of state governments and local bodies. After you study this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the concept of a democratic government and its functions;
- describe the public relations activities of a government;
- identify the factors which necessitate the practice of public relations in government;
- understand the media and methods that are used for disseminating information;
- explain the organizational structure and functions of the Information and Public Relations departments in the state government; and
- highlight the role and scope of public relations in local bodies.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the earlier unit, we had discussed PR practices in the central governments. In this unit, we will explain to you the nature and role of PR in state government and local bodies like the municipal corporations. The text material has been developed in this unit based on the concept of democracy and the role of public opinion and public information.

We shall first examine the structure of our government, as enshrined in the Constitution. This will help us in understanding:
i) the sources from where public information emanates; and
ii) the target audiences to whom these messages and information must reach.

This unit, will thus give you an indepth knowledge of the concept of public relations in state
governments and local bodies, whose survival depends on the acceptance and understanding
of the people's will. It will also highlight the means and methods of disseminating public
information.

2.2 CONSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE

India is a union of states with a parliamentary system of government. There are three levels of
governmental structures:

i) the Union Government;
ii) the State Governments and
iii) the Union Territories.

Within the purview of the government in the states, we have a 3-tier system—the 'District or
Zilla'; the 'Block or Mandal or Taluka' and lastly, the 'Gram Panchayat'. In addition, we
have the Municipal Corporations, e.g. the municipal corporations at Bangalore, Bombay and
Hyderabad. Smaller municipal areas, have ‘Municipalities’ looking after civic amenities of
major towns and small cities.

In all types of governments, there arises the need for 'citizen-government' relationship. Such
relations are established by a continuous flow of popular information from the government to
the people and in turn from the people to the government. This two-way process of
communication is handled by an agency called the information services. This is also known as
the Information and Public Relations machinery. Various inputs such as public opinion and the
mass media, contribute to the process of public relations in a democratic society like India.

2.3 DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT

The government is a political organization, comprising 'individuals and institutions,
authorized to formulate public policies and to regulate the relationships among the citizens
within the society and with outsiders. Government, in this sense, relates to the governments
both at the centre and the states. They are classified in many ways such as Centre, Central,
Union or federal for the government in New Delhi; as State and Local Governments in the
States and Union Territories. Democratic type of government is considered the best, despite
its limitations. It is a form of government that accords top priority to the famous dictum of
democracy by Abraham Lincoln: "The government of the people, by the people and for the
people". Here, the people are the masters in the government and the government is a trust of
the people; the bureaucracy and the political institutions, being the trustees; to work for the
welfare of the people. Therefore, people's opinion in a democracy is given the utmost priority.

India is a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic comprising of 25 States and 7
Union Territories with a strong Centre. In most States, Municipal Corporations have been
established for major cities under the Acts of Legislature while municipalities have been
constituted for major towns. The bodies, like the central government and state governments,
are headed by elected representatives.

Check Your Progress 1

Notes: i) Fill in the blanks with suitable words.
ii) Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of the unit.

1) The three tier system in state government includes levels at ....................
               ....................  ....................

2) The ................ form of government gives utmost priority to public opinion.

3) India is a .................................. Republic.

4) Major cities have ....... while major towns have ....... as administrative bodies.

5) Municipal corporations and municipalities are headed by ..................
representatives.
2.3.1 Functions of Government

The functions of government may be divided into two classes
1) Obligatory or primary, and
2) Optional or secondary.

Those essential to the preservation of the 'state' such as the right to life, and the pursuit of happiness etc. come under obligatory functions. Those rights which, although not essential, tend to contribute to a better system of Government and better living conditions in the society like transport, promotion of social welfare, recreation etc. come under optional or secondary functions.

The functions of the Union Government in India are quite massive as compared to most federations in the modern world. The constitution has directly entrusted 96 specific subjects to the Union government. There are 47 additional subjects, which, the Union Government shares with the states. Certain subjects are entrusted to the State Government. There is a concurrent list also in which the Union Government has an unquestionable superior position.

In order to carry out the functions of the government, several ministries, departments, corporations, commissions, various political, economic and social institutions have been constituted. The primary objective of the government is to ensure the safety of the people by maintaining the law and order. It is also supposed to initiate steps for general socio-economic development. Thus, a close linkage is sought to be developed between the government and the people.

2.3.2 Publics

The publics of the government broadly are of two types—individuals and institutions. In fact, every voter-citizen is a prime public for the government. However, employees, Members of Parliament, members of various state legislative assemblies, the media and their representatives, the farmers, industrial workers, business community, women, children, rural folks, tribal, youth, professionals representing various vocations, institutions like local bodies, educational institutions, trade unions, consumer organizations etc. all form part of the government’s publics.

Thus, every citizen of the country and every institution in the country comprise the publics of the government. In other words, government is the biggest organization which poses a great challenge to the bureaucracy in reaching its publics—the people. As such, there is a constant attempt, within the government, to find ways and means to let individual citizens and people’s organizations know how much the government is doing for them.

Check Your Progress 2

Notes: i) Answer the following questions in the space provided.
    ii) Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of the unit.

1) What are the main functions of a government?
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   ......................................................................................................................
   ......................................................................................................................
   ......................................................................................................................

2) Who are the public of the government?
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2.4 DIMENSIONS OF GOVERNMENT PUBLIC RELATIONS

Before we discuss the role of public relations in government, you must understand the concept and dimensions of PR in relation to government and its publics.

Edward L. Bernays, the famous PR theoretician of America, described public relations as "an attempt through information, persuasion and adjustment to mobilize support for an activity, a cause, a movement or an institution". The first ingredient of public relations, therefore, is 'information'. In other words, PR constitutes all forms of communication, outwards and inwards, between an organization and its publics for the purpose of achieving goodwill and mutual understanding.

Another appropriate definition in relation to government PR is that of Ms. Denny Griswold: "Public Relations is the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or an organization with the public interest and executes a programme of action to earn understanding and acceptance". Judged from the above definitions, public relations can play a vital role in government and its various organizations by creating the right environment and understanding between the government and its publics. The need for PR in government, be it central, state or municipal government, is all the more essential for getting peoples' cooperation and their participation in all their programmes. The role of PR arises in government on the ground that in a democratic set up public opinion is supreme. The primary responsibility of government PR is to disseminate information to the public. The whole philosophy of government public relations service is based on this principle.

Factors which Justify Government Public Relations

Let us examine the various factors which determine the need for government public relations.

Public Opinion: Democracy is a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people. Free discussion of government policies is the very basis of a democratic society. The policies and actions of democratic governments are open to criticism by press and public debate. Public opinion therefore plays a dominant role in shaping the policies and programmes of a democratic government. In order to create a favourable public opinion towards governmental policies, it is necessary to inform the objectives of the policies to the public. With this end in view, the need has been felt for an organized pattern of government information and public relations service. As this need grew, so did the means, of making official information widely available.

Feedback: It is also essential for all democratic governments to know the people's reactions towards their policies in order to modify them according to the wishes of the people. The need has been felt for an agency within the government for the dissemination of public information, and making a correct assessment of current public opinion and reactions to the policies of government. This agency should be able to keep the government well-informed about the changing trends in public opinion. This explains the growth of Official Information and Public Relations Service, in several countries, as a necessary concomitant in the machinery of government, both at home and abroad.

Mass Media: The growth of mass media is another factor. Alongside the steady expansion of newspapers and periodical press, came the development of the cinema, radio, television and other media of mass communication. These media are the principle vehicles of disseminating information. They are also effective instruments in forming and moulding public opinion. The relations with these media have to be very carefully cultivated and conducted by the government. Government needs their assistance for publicity purposes and presentation of its policies to the people in a fair manner. The press relations in government mainly relate to:

1) getting adequate free space in the newspapers for government communications and press releases; and

2) ensuring fair comment and preventing false criticisms of its actions. In its dealings with the press, Akashvani, Doordarshan, film and other media, the government should have an agency which could act as a link between the government and media. The government in these dealings is chiefly represented by the official information and public relations service i.e., the Information and Public Relations department.
Five Year Plans and Development: Another major factor, responsible for the creation and expansion of information service, both at the central and state levels, is the launching of Five-Year Plans. Development projects aimed at the overall development of the people can be successful only when the beneficiaries concerned are aware of such schemes and make use of them for their economic development. It is said “a widespread understanding of the plan is an essential stage in its fulfilment”. This highlights the need for adequate and effective flow of information to the people about the plans and economic development schemes. Hence the need arose for stepping up information machinery in order to motivate the masses to accept newer ideas and practices and work towards eradicating social evils. For this there was a need to communicate to the target publics about the objectives of development plans.

‘Bureaucracy leads to distrust’. Max Weber, the great social scientist in his analysis of bureaucracy, holds that “a pre-occupation with secrecy is an inherent characteristic of administrative institutions. Such secrecy often leads to ‘distrust’ not only between the government and the governed but also between the various segments and levels of the government itself.”

A paradox in citizen-government relations in a democracy is the behaviour of bureaucracy towards fellow citizens. Once L.K. Jha, former governor of the Reserve Bank of India and a senior civil servant, described the average perception of the public about an Indian bureaucrat as “a strange creature who sits on his files, sleeps over reminders, stands on his dignity, turns a deaf ear to complaints, sees no evil, often eats his own words and ties his hand with red tape”. This description is a legacy of the colonial rule. It is a product of the concept that only the citizen, who is kept ignorant of government functioning, is the best bashed, perhaps, on the adage of Britain’s first Prime Minister Robert Walpole, who said “let sleeping dogs lie”. Such an attitude diminishes the respect and the dignity of the citizens in the eyes of the public servants. This concept creates negative feelings for the government. It is in this context that late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi told a gathering of 60 Secretaries to Ministers at New Delhi on May 7, 1988 that our government is ‘much too closed’ and should ‘open out’. He said much of the decision making process could be made public. What the Government should do basically is to give ‘more information’ to people and the press about what is being done, and why he maintained.

Right to Information: In a democracy, a government is accountable to its citizens. To ensure such accountability the people have a right to know about the policies, programmes, activities, doings or mis-doings of their representatives in the legislature, executive and even the judicial branches of the state. Without a well-informed citizenry, a popular government will be ineffective and non-participating. Free flow of information through various media is, therefore, highly essential. The people are now demanding the right to information, to have access to all governmental information, in order to know every thing being done by the government. Article 19(1) A, of the Constitution of India guarantees to its citizens “the right to freedom of speech and expression”. Though this right has been guaranteed, the Official Secrets Act, 1923 still continues to be a restraint. People have no right or access to all official information. Therefore, there has been a demand in India to amend the colonial legacy of the Official Secrets Act of 1923 and give the people, the right to information and the right to know. Moves are afoot to give shape to the Right to Information Act. When this right is conferred on the people, there will be tremendous pressure on the government to provide information to the public. This will automatically enhance the importance and scope of public relations in government.

Check Your Progress 3

Notes: i) Answer the following question in the space provided below.
   ii) Compare your answers with the one given at the end of the unit.

1) Highlight the key factors that justify the need for PR in government.
2.5 INFORMATION ADMINISTRATION/INFORMATION SERVICES

Public Relations as a management function, has a distinct role to play in government to keep the people constantly well informed about the policies and programmes of the government and also in collecting feedback on public opinion. To achieve these objectives, there is a need for an administrative service or ‘information administration’ to communicate ideas to the people through all available media. This is also known as Indian Information Service in the centre and the State Information and Public Relations Service in the states.

Objectives: The objectives and functions of the government Information and Public Relations Service/Information System/Information Administration may be summarized as follows:

1) Dissemination of public information and government policies, programmes through various media of mass communication such as newspapers, radio, television, publications, photographs, exhibitions, audio-visuals, films, traditional media etc. This is known as ‘onward information’.

2) Conveying to the government the popular reactions to official policies in the form of press clipping service, daily summary of press reactions and feedback reports as received from the field officers, otherwise known as ‘Feedback Information Service’ or ‘Inward Information’.

Infrastructure: The information administration or the government information set up in the states before 1959 was being run on an ad hoc basis without any permanent arrangement. The Venkateshwara Rao Committee (1959), perhaps the first Committee after independence, which had gone into the basics of information set up, not only highlighted the need for a permanent set up of the information administration as an essential arm of the government, but clearly indicated that publicity should be a sustained effort.

The word ‘Information’ in relation to administration has a specialized meaning. It means administration of the governmental information for dissemination to the public. Therefore, information administration is management of the dissemination of government information at national, state, district, sub-division and village levels. Carlton E. Spitzer, in the chapter ‘The Practice’ describes a public information system as:

“A democratic nation’s public information system may be defined as consisting of all those elements and channels of communication through which a citizen learns of the activities of government and conveys to government his or her needs and views. This system embraces a nation’s government staffed by political leaders, bureaucrats, and information agents and public relations specialists, special interest groups staffed by experts in the media, manned by reporters and news gate keepers’.

Check Your Progress 4

Notes: i) Explain the following terms briefly in the given space.

   ii) Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of the unit.

a) Information administration.

b) Onward information.
2.6 STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF STATE GOVERNMENT PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENTS

Along side the growth of information machinery in the Central Government the information and public relations administration has also developed in all the State Governments of the country. If the Indian Information Service handles the dissemination of public information at the Centre through the various media units, each State Government has its own state information service to manage the department of information and public relations.

In the State Governments and the union territories the nomenclature of the department varies from state to state. If Andhra Pradesh has a “Department of Information and Public Relations”; the Department in West Bengal is designated “State Department of Information and Cultural Affairs” in Madhya Pradesh as “State Department of Information and Publicity”; in the Union Territory of Andaman, and Nicobar Islands it is “Department of Information, Publicity and Tourism”. However, in a majority of the State Governments the nomenclature is “the Department of Information and Public Relations”.

For the purpose of this unit, you will study the functioning of the Andhra Pradesh State Information and Public Relations Department which almost reflects the functioning of departments in any other state governments. This will give you a clear picture of Public Relation activities in the State Government.

Organizational Set-up—Secretariat: As in the case of other government departments, the subject of Information and Public Relations is under the charge of a Secretary to Government in the General Administration department in the Secretariat. It is called General Administration (Information and Public Relations) Department, which is mainly concerned with the framing of policies, laying down rules and procedures, financial control, legislature work, general direction and annual review.

The information policies of the government, as approved by the Minister for Information & Public Relations, are transmitted by the Secretary to the Directorate for implementation. As such, the Secretary functions as a link between the Minister and the head of the department of Information and Public Relations. There is a separate minister in-charge for the Information and Public Relations portfolio, who is responsible for major policy decisions. In this task, the minister is assisted by the Secretary and his Secretariat.

Directorate: Directorate of Information and Public Relations in Andhra Pradesh, as a line agency, is the executive arm for implementing the government’s Information and Public Relations policies. Earlier, the department was headed by a Director, but now it is headed by a Commissioner who is an I.A.S. Officer. He is also the ex-officio Secretary to Government (Information and Public Relations) in the Secretariat.

The Commissioner, as the Head of the department, is assisted by one Director, five Joint Directors, one Radio Engineer, five Deputy Directors, two Divisional Radio Engineers, seven Assistant Directors, five Public Relations Officers, two Deputy Radio Executive Engineers and one Accounts Officer, besides the non-gazetted staff numbering 282. The Commissioner, who provides the critical leadership also co-ordinates functions and acts as the eyes and ears of the state government.

Regional Set up: Andhra Pradesh is divided into six administrative zones. The set up of the State Information and Public Relations department is also divided into six regions, each region headed by a Regional Deputy Director. These Regional Officers supervise the work of 23 District Public Relations Officers, 8 Assistant Project Officers (Tribal Welfare Publicity)
District Set up: There are 23 districts in Andhra Pradesh. Each District has one District Public Relations Officer, assisted by Divisional Public Relations Officers, Assistant Public Relations Officer, Audio-visual Supervisor, Cinema Operators and other supporting ministerial staff. Each District Public Relations Unit is provided with a Mobile Publicity van to organize film shows and a Video van for the purpose of showing video films.

Special Publicity Cells: To publicize the developmental activities undertaken by the government for tribals, and to counter the propaganda by the extremists, eight special publicity cells, each headed by Assistant Project Officer, have been established in different tribal areas.

Sub-divisional Set up: The districts of Andhra Pradesh are divided into 70 Revenue Sub-Divisions, each headed by a Revenue Divisional Officer. The Information and Public Relations set-up has been expanded up to sub-divisional level with the appointment of a Divisional Public Relations Officer for each sub-division. These officers organize field publicity programmes in different villages.

2.6.1 Functions of the Department

In order to effectively achieve the two-way communication between the people and the government, this department has set for itself the following major functions:

1) Publicity activities of government through the media of mass communication like the Press, Radio, Doordarshan, Publications, Exhibitions, Films, Song and Drama, Oral communication etc.;

2) To keep the government informed of the people's reactions to the policies and programmes as collected by the field officers and also as reflected in the press;

3) To have close liaison with the Government of India media units like All India Radio, Doordarshan, Song and Drama, Films Division, Directorate of Field Publicity, etc. and also to establish rapport with all the newspapers and periodicals for effective media coverage of State Government activities;

4) Installation and maintenance of community radio sets and community television sets, public address system and audio-visual equipment:

Check Your Progress 5

Notes:  
i) Answer the following question briefly in the given space.

ii) Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of the unit.

1) Enumerate the major functions of the public relations department of the state government.

2.7 DISSEMINATION OF PUBLIC INFORMATION: MEDIA AND METHODS

Just as there is a separate executive department, known as media unit, for each medium in the GOI, there is one wing for each medium or group of media in the Directorate of Information and Public Relations of the State governments. Almost all media are utilized by the state Information and Public Relations departments for reaching the target publics residing in every nook and corner of the state. The Directorate of Information and Public Relations of the government of Andhra Pradesh is broadly divided into different wings—each wing headed by a joint Director. The media-wise break up of the Directorate is as follows:

1) Press wing;
Public Relations in Government and Industry

2) Photo wing;
3) Publications wing;
4) Advertising wing;
5) Exhibition wing;
6) Song and drama wing;
7) Films wing;
8) Electronic media wing;
9) Information centres wing;
10) Field publicity wing; and
11) Research and reference wing.

The Press Wing: The press is an important medium used in public relations for influencing the educated sections of the society. The functions of the Press Wing are:

- To issue press notes, features and backgrounders;
- To arrange press conferences, press briefings and media visits;
- To prepare a summary of press reactions to government policies and programmes;
- To supply photographs to newspapers; and
- To give accreditation to eligible correspondents and reporters.

The Photo Wing: ‘One picture is worth a thousand words’ is an apt saying. Therefore, photographs are used extensively in the print media for creating greater reader interest in events. This Wing undertakes extensive photo coverage of important news events and of the Chief Minister’s visit all over the state besides the visits of VIPs to the state. It supplies photographs to the press, as well as to Doordarshan for wider coverage, and maintains a library of negatives.

Research and Reference Wing: The Research and Reference Wing acts as a ‘Think-tank’ for the department. Its functions are summarized as follows:

- Maintenance of diary of important events;
- Preparation of backgrounders on various fields of development like agriculture, power, irrigation;
- Personal profile notings on eminent persons of the state;
- Compilation of the year book on the state.

Publications Wing: The printed word, reinforced with pictures, is a potent medium for influencing the literate population. The department, therefore, brings out a monthly journal ‘Andhra Pradesh’ and other ad hoc publications and posters. The publications include books, brochures, pamphlets, folders, leaflets which highlight the state’s achievements in different fields including art and culture.

Advertising Wing: The main objective of government advertising is to create a favourable image of the government in the minds of the public based on its performance. It also seeks to secure acceptance of its policies and programmes. The advertising wing of the department releases both classified and display advertisements of the state government to various newspapers and magazines.

Exhibitions Wing: Seeing is Believing. Exhibitions which are based on this axiom assume importance in the scheme of publicity and public relations. Informative exhibitions have added importance since they attract literate and illiterate populations alike. This Wing has the responsibility of organizing major exhibitions in the state’s capital and guiding the district Public Relations Officers in arranging district level exhibitions besides coordinating and presenting tableaux both at the Independence Day and the Republic Day parade in Hyderabad. In addition, it organizes a tableau and folk dance performance at New Delhi on the Republic Day.

Song and Drama Wing: The performing arts can reinforce the reach and impact of mass communication very effectively. This wing organizes traditional media programmes throughout the state for the purpose of giving publicity to the activities of the state government in general and its achievements in particular. It provides scripts on development themes to the approved troupes in the district. Folk art-forms like ‘Harikatha’ Burrakathalu!’
are extensively used. It also provides cultural programmes-support for government functions.

Films Wing: Film is a powerful medium of mass communication. This is a particularly effective medium in a country like India where the percentage of literacy is low. The Films Wing arranges production of documentaries and newsreels through the Andhra Pradesh Film Development Corporation. It also arranges distribution of 16 mm films for screening through district Public Relations Officer. The Annual Film awards are also arranged by this Wing for best feature and documentaries within the state.

Electronic Media Wing: The Wing has a complete video production unit which undertakes recording, production and distribution of video films to district units, besides feeding Doordarshan for telecast purposes. It maintains audio-visual equipment like projectors, generators, cassette recorders, public address system etc. Each district has one video mobile publicity van which organizes video shows on development topics.

Similarly, the department has other wings like Information centres, Special cells for Tribal Welfare Publicity, Field Publicity etc. to undertake the dissemination of information about the activities of the government. All the wings work in a coordinated manner under a single window: The Directorate of Information and Public Relations.

Check Your Progress 6

Notes:

i) Briefly state the role of the following wings of the state public relations department.

ii) Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of the unit.

a) The press wing
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b) The Song and Drama wing
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c) The Advertising wing
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d) The publications wing
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e) The Research and reference wing
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2.8 CO-ORDINATION OF STATE AND CENTRAL INFORMATION AGENCIES

The central government and state government Information and Public Relations departments have distinct roles to play in their respective fields. If the Indian Information Service projects
Public Relations in Government and Industry

Vast public relations opportunities are available for state governments in the central government media units like All India Radio, Doordarshan, Films Division. Similarly central media units depend on the cooperation of state governments for their functioning with the state. Therefore, mutual cooperation and co-ordination are of high importance. How is this achieved? There are several ways:

i) Annual Conferences of state Information Ministers;
ii) Planning Commission;
iii) Programme Advisory Committee; and
iv) Inter-Media Publicity Coordination.

Annual Conferences of State Information Ministers: Such annual conferences are convened by the ministry of Information and Broadcasting at the national level every year to discuss the national information policies and matters of mutual interest. Policy guidelines are formulated at such conferences to ensure effective publicity both to the central and state governments. State Secretaries and Directors/Commissioners of Information and Public Relations also attend.

Planning Commission: A national information policy has been evolved by the Planning Commission, for the effective use of electronic media and information services, by allocating funds to the central and state sectors. The information schemes are to be approved by the Planning Commission under the Annual Plans. This ensures uniformity and coordination in publicity schemes.

Programme Advisory Committees: The Regional Stations of All India Radio and Doordarshan Kendras have Programme Advisory Committees for formulation and implementation of their respective programmes. The representatives of the State Information machinery, on such Committees, ensure better coordination between the Central and State Information Network.

Inter-Media Publicity Coordination: For better coordination between the Government of India Media Units (like All India Radio, Doordarshan, Films Division, Song & Drama, Field Publicity, etc.), and the State Governments, including Public Sector undertakings, and also to give maximum publicity through Radio and Doordarshan, the Government of India have constituted the Inter-media Publicity-Coordination Committee in each of the State capitals. The State Director of Information and Public Relations, Public Relations Managers of Public Sector undertakings, Heads of Publicity Units in various State Governments are the members of this Committee. This Committee reviews the publicity schemes being implemented and designs programmes for future coverages. This forum provides an opportunity to State Government Public Relations machinery and the Heads of Media Units in the State to come closer which may result in joint multi-media campaigns.

2.9 IMPACT OF STATE AND CENTRAL INFORMATION AGENCIES

The Information and Public Relations machinery in Andhra Pradesh has spread from the State Headquarters to the level of sub-divisions. District Public Relations units, Tribal Welfare
Publicity cells and the Divisional Public Relations units numbering over 100 move into villages every day with mobile cinema and video vans. About 10 to 15 villages are covered every day with field publicity programmes such as film shows, video shows, public meetings, exhibitions, song and drama performances etc. All these activities, policies, programmes highlight the achievements of the State Government. In fact, the Directorate of Information and Public Relations Department acts as chief window for all government public information. Media relations programme of the Directorate and field publicity programmes of District Public Relations units at the grass-roots level undoubtedly inform, educate, and motivate people for their participation in development projects.

The Information Administration both of the Central and State Governments always tend to provide publicity to such decisions and policies of government which can present a favourable image of the party and individuals in power. This may lead to credibility crisis. Therefore, attempts should be made to maintain objectivity and balanced views in government publicity programmes by undertaking publicity for service-oriented schemes.

### 2.10 PUBLIC RELATIONS IN LOCAL BODIES

Different forms of governments are constituted all over the world. Each type has specific powers and functions. Local bodies exist in all types of governments both in unitary as well as federal types of governments. The need for local government arises from certain historical developments. With all their multi-faceted functions, it is impossible for either the central or the state governments to effectively administer the local units and their problems. The scope of central government covers the entire nation; that of the State Government, the whole state: while local government deals with local issues, local problems, needs and the aspirations of the local people. The local government always stands on a different footing and requires a different kind of treatment and administration.

Local governments have, therefore, been constituted within the State Governments in India to administer the public activities of a purely local nature. They owe their existence to the statutory orders of the State Government and exercise authority within the specified areas with a population to serve. It is a government in a limited sense, within a government, or it may be called a mini-democracy government. A municipal corporation is a body created by the people of a specified areas and invested with subordinate powers of legislation, for the purpose of assisting the civic government of the state and for regulating its local affairs.

The Local Units have twin-functions:

1. to function as agents of State government in tackling the problems of the local area; and
2. to function as autonomous units with statutory powers for providing civic needs of the local citizens.

Citizens owe a lot to the city. Civic sense or civic consciousness is one thing that brings the city and the citizen closer. Civic-consciousness is a feeling towards a fellow-citizen. Be it the question of keeping the city clean, conserving the use of water in summer, protecting walls or street name boards from being spoilt by posters, treating of community halls/public property as sacred—all these demand an awareness and a civic responsibility among the public.

In this context, every local body has a civic ideal. This is where sustained public relations are required—to create civic consciousness and to seek people’s cooperation in civic programmes. Against this background, major municipal corporations in India have established their own public relations Department, headed by one Public Relations Officer, to deal with public communication.

**Public Relations Goals:** The Major functions of Public Relations Department in local bodies are:

1. To inform the people what is happening in the local body, including the schemes taken up for the benefit of the public. This is to ensure their participation in the programmes.
2. To instill better civic consciousness among the citizens for proper utilisation of civic amenities.
3. To advise the municipal government on policy matters, gauge public reaction and suggest the administration on the means of gaining public acceptance and cooperation.
4) To conduct educative public relations campaigns to seek public support for new taxation proposals and other civic schemes.

5) To inform the civic administration about peoples' reactions and attitudes to its policies and programmes.

2.11 LET US SUM UP

Public Relations, as an art of maintaining harmonious relationships between an organisation and its publics, has been recognised all over the world. Its importance is vital particularly, in a democratic government where people are the masters. Therefore, public relations machinery has been established in Governments, be it the Central Government, State Government, Union Territory or Local Government. The main objective of PR practice in State Government is to disseminate information to the public on what the Government is doing for them and at the same time assess people's reactions to the policies of the government and keep the government informed of such feedback information.

Thus, you now understand that PR practice in Government mobilises public support and recognition for its activities. Factors like public opinion, feedback information, mass media, Five Year Plans, popular information, right to information, etc. strengthen the need for PR in the State Governments. Further, a distinct service called Information Administration has to be developed both at the Centre and States, to handle the dissemination of public information.

As an example, we have seen that the structure of the State Information and Public Relations Department in Andhra Pradesh has spread from the Directorate at the State level to Regional, District, and Sub-Division level. The Directorate has several media wings such as press, photo, publications, advertising, exhibitions, song and drama, films, electronic media etc., for the collection, processing and dissemination of public information.

We have also seen how the PR set up in local bodies aim at creating civic consciousness for the upkeep of towns and cities where Municipalities and Municipal Corporations function.

2.12 GLOSSARY

Information dissemination: Scattering or diffusion of news, knowledge, ideas over a wide area to the masses through one or several chambers.

Municipality: Self governing town.

Programme: Planned outline of activities for a campaign.

Public: Any group of individuals that a PR programme seeks to influence.

Booklet: A printed piece of six or more pages with a cover usually stapled together.

Constitution: A system of laws and customs established by the sovereign power of a state for its own guidance.

Image: A subconscious impression about a person or organisation held in common by a whole public.

Video: Video tape recorder that puts both sound and vision on tape.

Folder: A printed piece of four pages or a paper container for other printed material.

Goodwill: Favourable attitude of other persons towards any person, institution or group.

2.13 SUGGESTED READING


Check Your Progress 1
1) District or Zilla, Block or Taluka, Gram Panchayat
2) Democratic 3) Sovereign, Socialist Secular Democratic
4) Municipal Corporations, Municipalities 5) elected

Check Your Progress 2
1) The main functions of the government are:
   a) obligatory or primary which are essential to the preservation of the state
e.g. right to life.
   b) Optional or secondary which tend to contribute to a better system of
government and better conditions of Society.
2) Public of govt. include:
   a) all individual citizens and individuals
   b) Different segments of publics e.g. industrial workers, farmers, women,
business community etc.

Check Your Progress 3
1) Factories justifying need for government PR include;
   • Public opinion to create favourable image for mobilising popular support
   • For assessing public reaction through feedback
   • To disseminate information through various media
   • To motivate people to accept newer ideas for developmental plans
   • For cultivating media relations for better publicity

Check Your Progress 4
a) Information administration is the management of dissemination of government
information at nation, state, district, sub division and village levels.
b) Dissemination of public information through various media of mass
communication or traditional media etc. is known as onward information.
c) Conveying to the government popular reaction to official policies from the
press, or feedback for field is called Feedback information service or inward
information.

Check Your Progress 5
1) Publicising the activities and programmes of the government through the mass
media, providing feedback on popular reaction to the government; establishing
media relations; liaisoning with central media units; installation and
maintenance of community sets, audio visual equipment etc.

Check Your Progress 6
a) The press wing issues press notes, features, arranges press conferences and
gives accreditation to journalists.
b) The song and drama wing publicises the achievement of the state government
through folk art forms and provides cultural support.
c) Three advertising wings release advertisements of the state government to
favourably influence the public.
d) The Publications wing highlight the achievements of the state through its books, pamphlets etc.

e) The Research and reference wing maintains a diary of important personalities and prepares background.

Check Your Progress 7

1) The coordinations between the state department and GOI media unit is ensured through

   a) Joint annual conferences;

   b) Allocation by the planning commissions;

   c) Programme advisory committees; and

   d) State level inter-media publicity coordination committees.