UNIT 1 PEOPLE’S PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The challenges of development have opened many avenues unexplored in the journey of a nation. The traditional approach of centralized planning and top-down approach focused on economic growth as an objective. This approach is based on presumption that higher economic growth leads to redistributive justice to all. However, decades of experiments and experiences have proved otherwise. The search for new alternatives has thrown many avenues which focus on people-centric development, decentralized governance and participatory approach to development.

Decentralized governance, meaning involving all stakeholders in the process of development is an instrument for promoting equitable development. In this unit, we will focus on people’s participation in governance and development. There have been significant changes in policy directions for development like reactivation of Panchayat Raj in rural India and Municipal Bodies in Urban India. We shall study the meaning of people’s participation and why it is a necessity in today’s context and how the same is being ensured through formal and informal institutional structures at grass root level. The understanding of the methodologies of decentralized governance and functions of grass root institutions like Gram Sabha and Ward Sabha enables you to comprehend the democratic processes of our political system.

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the meaning and concepts of people’s participation.
- Discuss the importance of local Self Governance, people’s participation in development.
- Comprehend the role of Grass root institutions like Panchayati Raj Institutions, Gram Sabha and Ward Sabha.
1.2 PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION - CONCEPT AND IMPORTANCE

1.21 Meaning of Participation

Most simply defined, 'participation' means taking part. In the context of development theories, participation means direct involvement of all those people in the decision making process which is likely to affect their lives. The way participation is defined largely depends upon the context and background in which participation is applied. While the Economic Commission for Latin America (1973) considers contribution by the people to Public Programmes to the complete exclusion of any involvement in the decision making process as participation. Cohen and Uphoff (1977) maintains that participation includes the people's involvement in the entire decision making process. FAO (1982) emphasizes participation in all decision making process but by the People's own Organization and through self organized actions. Paul (1987) introduces the concept of enhancement of well being in terms of values cherished by the communities as being the ultimate objective of participation.

Participation can be seen in two extreme forms. It can begin as passive participation where people are told what is going to happen or happened. People are just objects on whom action is thrust. On the other extreme is self mobilisation where people participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems. Participation starts from the conception stage up to the delivery of the product and its consumption. The process involves decision making at various stages, independent of any external influence. Participation can be categorized into various stages in which degree of involvement varies. The Typology of Participation are:

- Passive Participation
- Participation in Information giving
- Participation by Consultation
- Participation by Material Incentives
- Functional Participation
- Interactive Participation
- Self Mobilisation

In the above typology passive participation is at the one end of the spectrum where people are told what to do while on the other end is the self Mobilisation where local people themselves are in total command. As one moves from passive participation to self Mobilisation control of local people increases and outsiders decreases. According to Zubair Meenai (2008) "The principle of participation is widely recognized as a right in itself. The right to take part in the conduct of public affairs means that every person and all people are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy civil, economic, social and political development."

1.2.2 Importance of People's Participation

Participation as a concept has found ‘favour among masses, policy makers, politicians, and sociologists. Croft and Bensford (1994) have elaborated some arguments for participation.
Most people want to be involved - People have intrinsic desire to get involved. People have right to be involved - people have the legal entitlements to be involved, the rights to redress, to comment and to be consulted on issues impacting their lives and society.

Participation has accountability - Accountability means not just being responsive but also answerable to the people. People have the right to know what is happening and why? Increased direct involvement of the service users results in more effective accountability of the service providers.

- Participation makes more efficient and cost effective services.

Involving people challenges institutionalized discrimination.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) looks at participation from three perspectives: (a) Functional, (b) Empowering and (c) Philosophical. Participation is understood at various levels. Conceptualization of participation has ranged from contributions by the people to Public Programme to the involvement of people in the entire decision making process (Zubair Meenai, 2008).

**PARTICIPATION**

| **Functional participation:** to increase efficiency and effectiveness of Research & Development. |
| **Empowering Participation:** To increase the independence, awareness and capacity of marginalized groups. |
| **Philosophical Participation:** Participation to allow expression of alternative views. |

**, Participation is seen from two perspectives**

i) **Participation as a process** - If seen as a process in development Programme, there is involvement of local people in implementation of externally designed initiative. There is collaboration along with external agency and local population whereby externally designed development activities are implemented in a participatory manner. Thus, participation is a means or instrument to implement a programme to achieve desired goals.

ii) **Participation as an end** - Participation as a goal of a policy initiative entails empowering people in terms of their acquiring skills, knowledge and experience to take greater responsibility for their development. People are provided access to power and resources to create opportunities which are self sustaining.

Bastain (1997) sketches four different thematic variations in the concept of participation.

- First, participation is employed as a simple means of getting unpaid, labour from the people. It serves the purpose of creating a sense of belonging among the public about the public utilities created.
- Second, participation is interpreted as an attempt to provide self reliance.
- Third, participation approach is resorted as a technique to create ideal villages.

Finally, participation is resorted as a method of Project Management.
1.3 PEOPLE’S PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

The importance of people's participation in governance and development in recent years is highly recognized both by national and international organizations. According to Joel and Bhore (2003), "The essence of development is nothing but peoples' participation. There are many components that are involved in development like money, material, resources, technology, human etc. Of all the social factors, human factors are the crucial elements. People are the pivot around whom the entire development processes are supposed to revolve." The above statement underlines the importance of peoples' participation in development process. Ever since societies have strived to develop, the methods of development have been widely debated. The early phase of development era emphasized on the Top down approach to development based on trickle down theory. During this phase, the emphasis was on planning at the top with focus on achieving higher growth rate. This approach was based on the premise that centralized planning ensures higher growth which automatically trickles down to grass root level. "During 1950s and 1960s - modernisation theories had been so pervasive that it was almost impossible to separate modernisation from development linked to capitalism and economic growth" (Zubair Meenai, 2008).

However, the experience gained during this time reflected that these development strategies were losing battle against the poverty and hunger. Even a higher growth rate could not ensure equitable growth and disparities in development levels continued to either remain or get wider and wider. Participation as a concept and a strategy of development is an outcome of the profound disillusionment with the established development strategy in post Industrial Revolution period. The experiences of the fifties and sixties have demonstrated the fundamental weakness of the Top down, GNP focused, growth centered strategy of development based on professional expertise and modernized technologies. The development strategy followed during this period emphasized economic growth and industrialization in the context of increasingly centralized planning and control over the distribution of resources (Joel and Bhore, 2003).

The origin of participatory approach to development is based on the failure of the growth centered approach to achieve all around development. This phenomenon was observed across the countries and international agencies like UN, UNDP, ADB, FAO, hotly debated the feasibility of this model. Gunnar Myrdal, the Noble Prize winning Economist in the late 1960s urged governments to plan their economies actively, adopt social policies that enhanced people's welfare and take steps to redistribute income and wealth. This led to the publication of a major policy document from the UN (1971), 'Social Policy and Planning in National Development.'

The shift in focus of development strategy from growth centered to people centered has necessitated planning from grass root level involving all the stakeholders in the process. According to Joel and Bhore (2003) "People must be at the centre of human development. Development has to be woven around people.
not people around development". David C Korten has articulated such concept of people's involvement as "People Centered Development". People are the primary subject matter in people centered development.

It is now said that development is no longer a favour or a privilege to the people. It has to revolve around them. They cannot be treated as mute observer or objects or passive receivers as they are powerless and un-endowed. They are supposed to be prime movers of development at any given point of time. FAO, while emphasizing the role of people's participation in governance and development, has listed various ways by which people's participation can be strengthened.

- Participation by information - a unilateral means of providing information to people without seeking their response.
- Participation in information giving — people do not participate in process of decisions making but are encouraged to share their views.
- Consultation — People participate by being consulted — The programmes and plans are subject to modifications based on response and input from people. However, same is non-obligatory.
- Joint Planning — people participate in joint planning, analysis and formulations of new methods. Local groups control local decisions and hence have stake in maintaining structures and practices.
- Decision making - when consensus is acted upon through collective decision, this marks the initiatives of shared responsibilities for outcomes that may result.
- Empowerment - The ultimate objective of participation wherein the local community has the right and capability to have a say in decision concerning their lives.

Participation in development is now being sought in World over, not because it is fad but because there has been a consensus on the usefulness of people's involvement in governance and development. This has several advantages like:

**Efficiency:** Participation can ensure effective utilization of available resources. The people and other agencies work towards achieving their objectives, involvement and cooperation among all stake holders to improve efficiency and effectiveness of planning process.

**Effectiveness:** Failure of conventional growth strategy because of lack of grassroots knowledge and absence of people's role in development makes most of the plans ineffective. People's participation can make the development strategy more effective by granting a say in dividing the objectives and strategies and participation in management ensures effective utilization of resources.

**Self Reliance:** More often, it is noticed that people at local level look up to the external experts or Government for solutions to their problems. This leads to distortions and ineffectiveness of planning due to lack of local knowledge. If the local resources are utilized on the basis of decisions taken by the people themselves, the realization grows that many problems faced by the people have local solutions at their levels. With active involvement of the local people, it is possible not only to break the psychological barrier of dependence, but also to
increase their awareness, self confidence and control of the development process. In fact, the involvement in decision making, implementation and monitoring helps in developing local human resources.

**Coverage:** People's participation in decision making process widens the coverage among all sections including deprived and weaker sections.

> **Activity 1:** Talk with several of your extension colleagues and ask them to define what they mean by Participation. Compare those definitions with the one given in this unit.

**Sustainability:** External interventions through government or other agencies lack potential for long term sustainability of schemes if local participation is not ensured. People's involvement in governing the scheme creates local capability and ownership of resources. It is a sustainable development alternative for long term solutions to local problems.

### 1.31 People's Participation in Indian Governance

India has had a long history of local governance. The concept of village as a self sufficient unit and existence of Panchayats at village level have existed since ancient times. Panchayats were institutions of local people for governance and resolution of disputes at local level. Despite having no codified laws for functioning of Panchayats, they existed as potent institutions to maintain law and order, stability and utilization of local resources for common good of the community. Panchayats were democratic means of involving people in decision making, using local resources and talent to manage all affairs of the society. Panchayats were least dependent on external agencies and were the best examples of local governance through democratic participation.

In the modern India, the concept of participatory development had been experimented much before it took shape in the development discourse. The first such attempt of structural participation of people in development was through Community Development Programme in 1952 as a Programme of aided self help. This Programme intended to be planned and implemented by the villagers themselves, government offering technical and financial assistance. The community development Programme failed miserably because of lack of political patronage as well as bureaucratic lethargy. The country in its endeavor to fast track growth, focused on growth centered approach through centralized planning. There was no political priority to decentralize the governance system. This happened despite the fact that the Constitution of India had recognized Panchayat bodies as units of Self Government drawing its inspiration from the historical legacy of Panchayat Systems of Indian villages.

The importance of people's role in overall development framework was well enshrined in the Indian Constitution although in the Directives Principles of state Policy, Article 40 of the Constitution reads as “Organization of village Panchayats: The State shall take steps to organize Village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of Self Government.” However, the non-obligatory nature of its reference in the Constitution resulted into complete exclusion of Panchayat System from policy priority. From independence up to 73rd and 74th
amendment to the Constitution of India several efforts were made towards
decentralization emphasizing the role of participatory governance at grass root
level. Some of the salient steps were:

- **Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957):** this Committee was set up to study
  the problems and suggest ways and means for implementing the scheme of
  Panchayati Raj on some uniform line throughout the country.

- **Ashok Mehta Committee (1977):** to suggest measures to revitalize
  panchayati raj institutions (PRIs).

- **C.H. Hanumantha Rao Committee (1984):** to suggest the methodology
  for district level planning.

- **G.V.K. Rao Committee (1985):** to study the administrative arrangements
  for rural development programmes and poverty alleviations schemes.

- **Sanghvi Committee (1987):** to examine the functioning of PRIs,
  recommended reorganizations of villages for creating viable Gram
  Panchayats.

- **64th Constitutional Amendment Bill (1989):** to set up panchayats in every
  state, but could not be passed in Rajya Sabha.

- **73rd Constitutional Amendment (1992):** A Constitutional obligation to
  set up Panchayats in states, hold elections with provisions for reservations
  and devolve powers, administrative and financial to Panchayati Raj
  Institutions for grass root participation of people in planning and
  development process.

Since independence, India has experimented with its policies partially on the
lines of its own history and partially going by the global trends of the times. The
periods of 1950s-1980s were periods of Centralized governance systems even'
internationally with growth Centered top down approach to development. India
while giving token value to its own history in self governance, borrowed the
concept of centralized planning with top down approach. GDP growth was the
prime mover of the policy presuming it will take care of redistributive part.

The international failure of growth centered approach excluding the masses was
almost replicated in India also. India had multi dimensional issues to address on
development front like poverty, hunger, illiteracy, extreme inequalities, and rural
urban divide. Fortunately, the importance of all round development with active
people’s participation was realized sooner than later. The emphasis shifted from
'top down' to 'bottom up approach' meaning thereby transfer of planning,
decision making and delegations of administrative authority from the Central
and State Government to Local Administration units of Government. The
following quotes describes its importance ”it was increasingly realized that
democracy could play an important role in promoting development, eradicating
poverty and improving the quality of life, which makes strengthening of local
democracy an end to itself. Thus efforts to institutionalize the participation of
citizens in decision making, development planning and management by giving
more powers and resources to the grass root level was aimed to be brought
about by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts (1993). These
Constitutional Amendments, the 73rd pertaining to rural local government
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and 74th for urban local government have given a shot in the areas of decentralization.  

These actions fully guarantee the vital role of people in harnessing their own talents and govern their own resources for their own development, State or any external agency being a nominal facilitator in the process. The 73rd Amendment, which is a watershed in the sphere of rural governance has an attached Eleventh Schedule to the Indian Constitution which covers 29 functional areas ranging from agriculture, land reforms, forestry, small industries, drinking water, rural electrification poverty alleviation, education, development of women and children, etc. Local Government, be it rural or urban, is essentially a manifestation of popular participation in the process of governance at the grassroots level.

All political power in democracy stems from people. Access to political power is critical for economic and social empowerment. Central, therefore, to governance is empowerment of people by increasing their control over governance. Till the 73rd Amendment there were few structural institutions of governance at local level. People were largely excluded from the development process. A policy shift towards decentralization of political power took place in India through the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution of India. This was an outcome of growing concern about increasing inefficiency and costs of delivery systems of development programme.

After reading and understanding the concept of participation, its importance and relevance in Indian context, now attempt these questions given in check your progress-1.

Check Your Progress 1

1) What do you understand by Participation? Explain why it is important for development.

2) Is the concept of self sufficient village of ancient India an ideal example of people's participation in their affairs?
1.4 GRAM SABHA AND PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

Right from the Gandhian Economics of the grass roots and Schumacher's 'Small is beautiful' much has been written and said about taking economic development to the rural areas and with it, the smallest unit of the Indian democratic set up, the village. The dream of such visionaries was realized in modern India through the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution which provided for creation of three-tier structure of Panchayats. The creation of this system was made constitutional obligations on all states leaving no discretion with them. Thus democracy began to flow from lowest level of society and development became people centric.

The setting up of Gram Sabha at village level has strengthened the people's direct involvement in their affairs. The Gram Sabha has been set up in each village consisting of all members of the village who are eligible to vote in elections. According to Article 243(b) a Gram Sabha consists of all persons registered as voters in the electoral roll. Gram Sabha is empowered to look after all the developmental issues of village and has a binding duty to discuss them in meetings to obtain consensus of its members. Gram Sabha is recognized as the assembly of Panchayati Raj.

i) Composition of Gram Sabha:
- There will be at least two meetings of Gram Sabha every year, one in the first and the other in the last quarter of the financial year.
- Gram Sabha can also meet on the written request of one tenth of its members, or if required by Panchayat Samiti, Zila Parishad or the State Government.
- Participation of people in meeting is ensured by Panchayat by placing before the Gram Sabha - (in first quarter).

In the first meeting of the Gram Sabha generally following issues are discussed.

1) Annual Statement of Accounts
2) Report on the Administration of the preceding financial year
3) The development and other programmes proposed for the financial year
4) Last Audit Report

In the meeting held in last quarter of the year generally following issues are discussed:

a) Statement of Expenditure incurred during the year
b) Physical and Financial programmes taken during the year.
c) Proposals for any changes in the Programme
d) Budget of the Panchayat and tax proposals of the Panchayat.

Besides above any other matter referred by Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti, Zila Parishad, the State Government is also taken up by Gram Sabha.

ii) Quorum: The quorum for a meeting of the Gram Sabha shall be one tenth of the total members out of which at least 40 per cent should be women.
iii) **Presiding Officer:** The meeting of the Gram Panchayat shall be convened and presided by the Sarpanch of the Panchayat or, in his absence, by the Upsarpanch of such Panchayat.

iv) **Functions of Gram Sabha:**
- To consider and approve the annual plan prepared by the Gram Panchayat.
- To generate proposal and determine the priority of all schemes and development programmes.
- To identify and select individuals for beneficiary oriented programmes.
- To disseminate information on development and welfare schemes.
- To assist Gram Panchayat in collection and compilation of details about the village for development plans.
- To collect information about **functioning** of Gram Panchayat and share in Gram Sabha.
- To generate awareness among people about programmes and schemes for development.

In addition to above Gram Sabha discharges almost all functions which are required in the village for the development including persuading members to pay taxes and loan repayment.

v) **Constraints in functioning of Gram Sabha:**
- Lack of awareness, lack of attendance, domination of forward caste.
- Lack of awareness about legal provisions of Gram Sabha.
- Poor people feel that their issues are not taken up.

The above structure of Gram Sabha incorporates all members of the community. The decisions are collective in nature and rely on utilization of resources for the benefit of the society. Meetings of the Gram Sabha are convened to ensure the development of the people through their participation and **mutual** cooperation. The attendance ratio of people in Gram Sabha meetings is the best indicator of peoples' participation in planning and development.

vi) **To promote effective participation in Gram Sabha the following positive actions are needed to be taken:**
- Creation of objective conditions in the society
- Democracy cannot succeed with inequality and poverty.
- Effective role of political parties in educating and mobilizing people for Gram Sabha.
- Panchayat leadership to be more democratic and open to criticism.
- Freedom of speech to be ensured.
- Information dissemination of positive works of Gram Sabha and Panchayat to be highlighted.
- Government agencies to be responsive to people.
- Advice and decisions of the Gram sabha to be binding on the Gram Panchayat.
- State to ensure penal action for not holding Gram Sabha meetings.
- Motivate members for meaningful participation and effective role in Gram Sabha.

**Activity 2:** Visit a Village nearer to your residence and attend one Gram Sabha meeting and note down the discussions in the meeting. Compare them with what is explained in this unit.

### 1.5 WARD SABHA AND PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

#### 1.5.1 Ward System in Urban Local Bodies

The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, provided for creation of Urban Local Bodies for wider participation of people in development of urban areas. The background for this was weak and ineffective local bodies due to failure to hold regular elections, prolonged supersession and inadequate devolutions of powers and functions. Urban Local Bodies were not acting as vibrant democratic institutions of self governance with active peoples' participation.

The Constitutional Amendment created viable municipal bodies in urban areas which represented the people of the municipality. Municipalities were to have Wards within their territorial jurisdictions. However, the Ward Committees and Municipalities have not been adequately developed into the institutions of people's participation.

Urban decentralisation has not matured to the extent it is done in rural areas. Our cities and towns do not have bottom up structures that create more proximity between the citizen and their urban local government. People's participation is at the heart of democracy. The absence of people has several adverse consequences on the functioning and accountability of those managing these institutions.

#### 1.5.2 Ward Sabha in Panchayati Structure

In some states a village panchayat consists of 'Wards' and each Ward has a Ward Sabha. The Ward Sabha in Gram Panchayat have been more effective instruments of airing popular views and opinion at decision making level.

i) Composition of Ward Sabha

The Ward Sabha comprises of all adult persons of the ward in the panchayat circle. The members of the ward elected through direct election, a panch as head of the ward who represents the people of the ward in all Grampanchayat meetings.

ii) Quorum

The quorum for the meeting of a ward sabha shall not be less than one tenth of the total members in the ward sabha or twenty members whichever is less. To ensure wider participation of all sections of the society, not less than thirty percent of the voters attending the ward sabha shall be women. The persons belonging to SC/ST shall be represented in proportion of their population in the ward sabha.
iii) Functions and powers of Ward Sabha

- To generate proposals and determine the priority of schemes and development programs in the area of ward sabha and forward the same to the Gram Sabha or Gram Panchayat for inclusion in the development plan.
- To identify eligible persons for beneficiary oriented schemes.
- To verify the eligibility of persons getting various welfare assistance from Government.
- To collect information about services, plans and decisions taken in Gram Panchayat concerning the ward.
- To mobilise voluntary action for public goods and services.
- To ensure that members of Ward Sabha pay taxes and repay loans.
- To suggest location of public services like street light, toilets, public wells, etc.
- To impart awareness on matters of public interest such as environment, sanitation, pollution.

Ward Sabha also takes up any other issues which concerns the members of the ward and raises it at Gram Sabha, Gram Panchayat level for resolving the problems. Ward Sabha has been effective channel for people to directly participate in managing their development needs.

iv) Meetings of Ward Sabha

Subject to orders of the Government ward sabha meets at least once in six month.

v) Constraints

Ward Sabha is a viable mechanism for active participation of all section of people at the very root of the society. However, there are limitations which can thwart people's role in governance

- Lack of education among majority in rural areas.
- Lack of awareness among weaker sections.
- Lack of knowledge among panches and Sarpanches about provisions of ward sabha.
- Domination of rich and elite in decision making.
- Exclusion of women and other weaker sections from ward sabha meetings.

Activity 3: Select some adult members of a Ward of nearest panchayat in your locality and ask them about their perception of Ward Sabha. Also ask some questions on Ward Sabha meeting. Note down the difficulties involved in the functioning of Ward Sabha.

1.6 INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION

The right to participate is linked to right to inclusion and right to obligations, through which poor people may expect to hold governments more accountable
and responsive. It is essential that civil society and government must work together to make sure that participatory local governance programmes are inclusive and equitable in order to correct power imbalances that exist at local level. For inclusive governance, the existence of diversity and differences has to be recognised. The salient features of inclusive participation are-

- Team work and collaboration.
- Individual and group activity.
- Action and ownership.
- Reflection and learning.

It has been observed that due to wide disparities in economic, social and political status of people in India, many individuals or sometimes the whole section are excluded from development because of their gender, ethnicity, disability or poverty. The effect of such exclusion is huge deepening the already existing inequalities.

Development must encompass the whole spectrum of the society so that all stakeholders in the outcome of development have participation and say in the process. Gram Sabha and Ward Sabha Panchayat institutions would become vital instruments for inclusive participation if their potential is properly harnessed. These institutions have inbuilt mechanism to include all sections of society in all decision making and development process. It ensures optimum utilisation of local resources including human resources for capacity building of local population. The legal provisions of Panchayat Act ensure compulsory participation of women, SC/ST and other weaker sections. Inclusive participation is to be at the centre of achieving equitable development, where in the fruits of the process of development are consumed at all levels. The mere inclusion of all ensures its correct path and optimization of resources. The effect of not harnessing the great potential of women as human resource has been felt all around.

Check Your Progress 2

1) The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act has led to true empowerment of people at grass root level by giving equal opportunity to all in development. Comment.

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2) How Gram Sabha controls the resource utilisation in its geographical jurisdiction? Is it a true representative of all sections of society?

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3) **Decentralisation** of governance is better than centralized governance in a developing country. Explain the merits and demerits of the statement.

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1.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we discussed the **meaning and concept of participation**. The significance of participation in development policy was examined with reference to international experiences and in Indian context. We examined various ways of involving people in development process and disadvantages of non participation in the process. We had a look at experience of Decentralised governance in India since Independence and background which paved the way for enactment of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in 1992. Later we studied the structure of Panchayati Raj in rural areas and examined in some detail about the role and functions of Gram Sabha and Ward Sabha in formalising people participation in the local self governance in India. The importance of Inclusive Participation was briefly highlighted in the last section of the unit.

1.8 KEYWORDS

**Participation** : Taking part in an activity which impacts the individual itself or his community.

**Sustainability** : Used with reference to development for planning and schemes which create capacity for long term self survival and not meant for short term objective.

**Panchayati Raj Institution** : A three tier structure of local self governance as part of policy of Decentralised governance. A constitutional obligation for Indian States to establish the Panchayati Raj Institutions in rural areas.

**Gram Sabha** : A general assembly of all members of a Village who are enrolled as voters in electoral roll. Meets at least twice a year to discuss development issues of village.

**Sarpanch** : The head of the Gram Panchayat directly elected by the electorates in a Gram Panchayat.

1.9 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS


Planning Commission of India- India Vision 2020, GOI, New Delhi.


Wesites www.iiasiisa.be, FAO.org/participation.
www.infochange.org

1.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1) What do you understand by Participation? Explain why it is important for development.

Answer: Participation literally means taking part in some activity. By taking part in an activity an individual or group can exert its opinion and views based on the first hand information about any place, environment or any enabling condition that may be essential for successful implementation of a scheme or policy. In development sphere, it is important to know the local know how to correctly devise and plan schemes compatible with local conditions. Hence, participation is extremely essential in development field to collect local information by involving local people at all stages.

2) Is the concept of self sufficient village of ancient India an ideal example of people's participation in their affairs?

Answer: India has had a long history of self governing village societies through Panchayat institutions. The relative isolation of villages in India in ancient times made it almost compulsive for people to learn to govern
themselves. The Panchayats had the sanction of the society to engage into not only development issues but many a times they were called upon for maintenance of law and order, discharge judicial functions and resolution of disputes in its territory. They worked as perfect institutions of governance at that time but in today's modern times, it may not feasible to expand their sphere beyond development issues, since there are other structures to take care of other functions on an all India level. Panchayats are potent institutions for development purposes even today as reflected in the success of Panchayati Raj in many places.

Check Your Progress 2

1) The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act has led to true empowerment of people at grass root level by giving equal opportunity to all in development. Comment.

Answer: The 73rd Constitutional amendment has provided for local self governance and participation of all sections in the development process by giving reservations to weaker sections including women. The Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayats are true representatives of people who have stake in the process of development. However the dynamics of rural society, polity and economy does play role in determining the functions of Panchayats at grass root level. For example on a reserved seat for women either the women of ruling elite get elected or women is by proxy represented by male of the family thus diluting the very concept of democratization.

2) How Gram Sabha controls the resource utilisation in its geographical jurisdiction? Is it a true representative of all sections of society?

Answer: Gram Sabha is the general assembly of people in a village which decide on all matters related to the village. The functions include decision on beneficiary of schemes, approval of development plans for the village and collection of information on all issues of development. The decisions taken in Gram Sabha are collective where all sections of society have equal representation.

3) Decentralisation of governance is better than centralized governance in a developing country. Explain the merits and demerits of the statement.

Answer: Decentralisation of governance is a better method of development since it involves participation of people in the very process itself rather than at the end of it when end result is given to people. In developing societies, there is need to involve people to ensure equitable distribution of development. The centralized planning approach followed world over failed to do justice to large majority widening the gap between elites and deprived. However decentralized planning needs to be followed with care as majority of people in developing countries are illiterate and unaware.