

Awareness Status of Village Panchayat Representatives in Chhattisgarh State



*Mani Shankar Mishra

Chhattisgarh is the 26th state of Indian sovereign. It came into existence after being carved out of Madhya Pradesh on November 1st, 2000. After 73rd constitutional amendment, Madhya Pradesh including Chhattisgarh was the first state to implement Panchayat Raj System. There are three tier Panchayat Raj System in Chhattisgarh as District Panchayat (Zila Panchayat), Block Panchayat (Janpad Panchayat) and Village Panchayat (Gram Panchayat). This paper presents the awareness status of Sarpanch (village head) and Panch (ward member) in different Government schemes because Village Panchayat is the main functionary for the implementation for the schemes today.

Objective: The study is basically aimed to see the awareness of village PRI members in different development and welfare schemes in Chhattisgarh state. After Decentralization, the village PRI members are the executives of the lowest level of Indian democracy i.e. village or Gram Panchayat. The implementing agency of many development and welfare schemes is Panchayat now that is why PRI members must be aware of these schemes. This study mainly focuses to check the awareness status of village PRI members, Sarpanch and Panch.

Methodology: The state of Chhattisgarh has been broadly divided into three regions namely Northern, Central and Southern. Sample selection was done across four districts belonging to each of those regions.

Sampling; The selection of districts from each region was done on the basis of the Human Development Index (HDI) as developed in the state Human Development Report, 2006 (see table). Four districts, one each from the northern (Surguja) and central regions (Dhamtari) and two from the southern region (Kanker and Bastar) were selected. The districts with extreme HDI values were discarded. Thus the districts for the survey were selected by the elimination process rather than selection process. The blocks for survey under these districts were selected randomly. The selection of villages from these blocks was done as per convenience keeping the safety aspect in mind

as Chhattisgarh is one of the worst affected states from the naxal extremism.

Table : Region wise HDI values of the districts of Chhattisgarh

No.	District	HDI	Region
1	Korea	0.391	Northern
2	Surguja	0.418	Northern
3	Raigarh	0.430	Northern
4	Jashpur	0.455	Northern
5	Korba	0.625	Northern
6	Kabirdham	0.326	Central
7	Rajnandgaon	0.374	Central
8	Bilaspur	0.449	Central
9	Dhamtari	0.496	Central
10	Janjgir champa	0.500	Central
11	Raipur	0.534	Central
12	Mahasamund	0.577	Central
13	Durg	0.578	Central
14	Bastar	0.264	Southern
15	Kanker	0.397	Southern
16	Dantewada	0.441	Southern

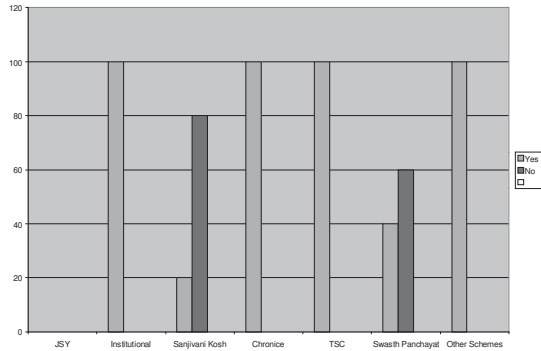
The questionnaire for the awareness status was prepared taking into assumptions regarding knowledge of the PRI members. It mainly included questions pertaining to the flagship programmes being run by the government.

Analysis:

Awareness Level of Sarpanchs (Village Heads);

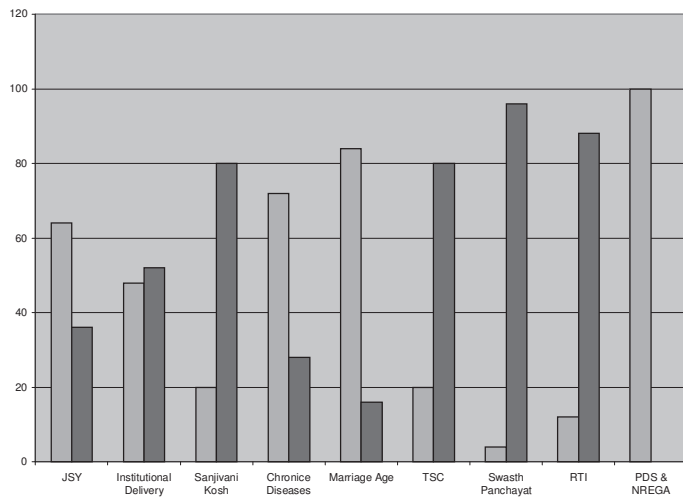
Sarpanch is the constitutional head of the gram panchayat, the lowest tier of the three tier Panchayati Raj Institution in India. Sarpanch has a group of other representatives, known as, upsarpanch (Dy. Sarpanch) and panchs, in his panchayat, who help him/her in taking decisions and implementation of various development activities in the village. Sarpanch and other representatives are elected by the village voters.

During primary data collection, 5 sarpanchs, out of 8 villages, were available for answering the questions regarding various schemes related to health and income. Following diagram displays the awareness status of Sarpanchs:



All the village heads were aware of the scheme JSY (Janani Suraksha Yojana), its operation and the provisions of the scheme. All the sarpanchs know about Institutional Delivery and its advantages. As far as Sanjeevani Kosh is concerned only one sarpanch was found aware. In case of chronic diseases like malaria and diarrhea, the awareness of the sarpanchs was found good. All of them know about these diseases. All the sarpanchs were aware of the minimum age of boy and girl for marriage and the scheme Total Sanitation Campaign. Only two sarpanchs were aware about Swasth Panchayat award. However all the sarpanchs were very well aware of all the schemes related to livelihood like NREGA and Public Distribution System. All the sarpanchs are aware of the provisions of Right To Information (RTI) but only one sarpanch has used it yet.

S.No.	Schemes	No. of Respondents aware	No. of Respondents not aware	Total
1	JSY	16	9	25
2	Inst. Del.	12	13	25
3	Sanjeevani Kosh	5	20	25
4	Chronic Diseases	18	7	25
5	Marriage age	21	4	25
6	TSC	20	5	25
7	Swasth Panchayat Award	1	24	25
8	RTI	3	22	25
9	PDS and NREGA	25	0	25



Awareness Level of Panchs (Ward Members); Panchs are the other representatives of the village which are elected by the village people. The up-sarpanch (Dy. Sarpanch) is the panchayat head in absence of sarpanch. Up-sarpanch is also a panch who is elected among the panchs. All the panchs take part in decision making and other developmental activities of the village along with Sarpanch. The panchs basically represents their ward, from where they have been elected. During the process of primary data collection, other than the sarpanch, some panchs of the villages were also

asked question to know the level of awareness among them. Below are the some findings from the available data:

Out of 25 panchs interviewed 16 were aware of the scheme JSY (Janani Suraksha Yojana), its operation and the provisions of the scheme. Only 12, out of 25 panchs know about the institutional delivery and its advantage over the traditional system of the child delivery. 5 panchs know about the sanjeevani kosh scheme, out of total interviewed 25. The source of information for 80% of them is the doctor from a Government health care centre. Seven panchs are there who do not even know about malaria, diarrhea and other chronic diseases. These are the either female panchs or the illiterate ones. All other know about these diseases. Out of all, 4 do not know about the minimum age of marriage and 5 do not know about TSC (Total Sanitation Campaign). The person who do not know about the marriage age and the provisions related to child marriage are either females or illiterates and the 5 who do not know about TSC are the panchs of the village where TSC is not worked well yet. Only one panch knows about the swasth panchayat award. Only three panchs are there who do not know any thing about the schemes in the schools and anganwadi. All other have good information about the scheme and

the progress of the education related schemes. The source of information for most of the panchs is the meeting with the teachers of the village with the anchayat. Only 3 panchs know about RTI and no one has used it yet. All the panchs know about PDS in the village and NREGA. Most of the ladies panchs do not have any kind of awareness or responsibility.

Conclusions:

The awareness status of almost all sarpanchs was found high in all the field. The reason behind their high awareness is their training and weekly meetings in the block panchayat office. In these meetings they are supposed to give reports of the condition of development in the village. So, because of investing more time in monitoring and reporting they know more about any scheme, which is running in their village. In case of panch and upsarpanchs, the level of awareness was not good. Being a village panchayat member, they should have good knowledge about the schemes. Main reason behind their low awareness is that, no training facility is there for them and they do not take part in any meeting outside the village. The sarpanchs of less age group are working better than the sarpanchs of older age. Their awareness about any scheme and its implementation in their village is better as compared to other villages. The awareness level was found very less among the illiterate PRI members.

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