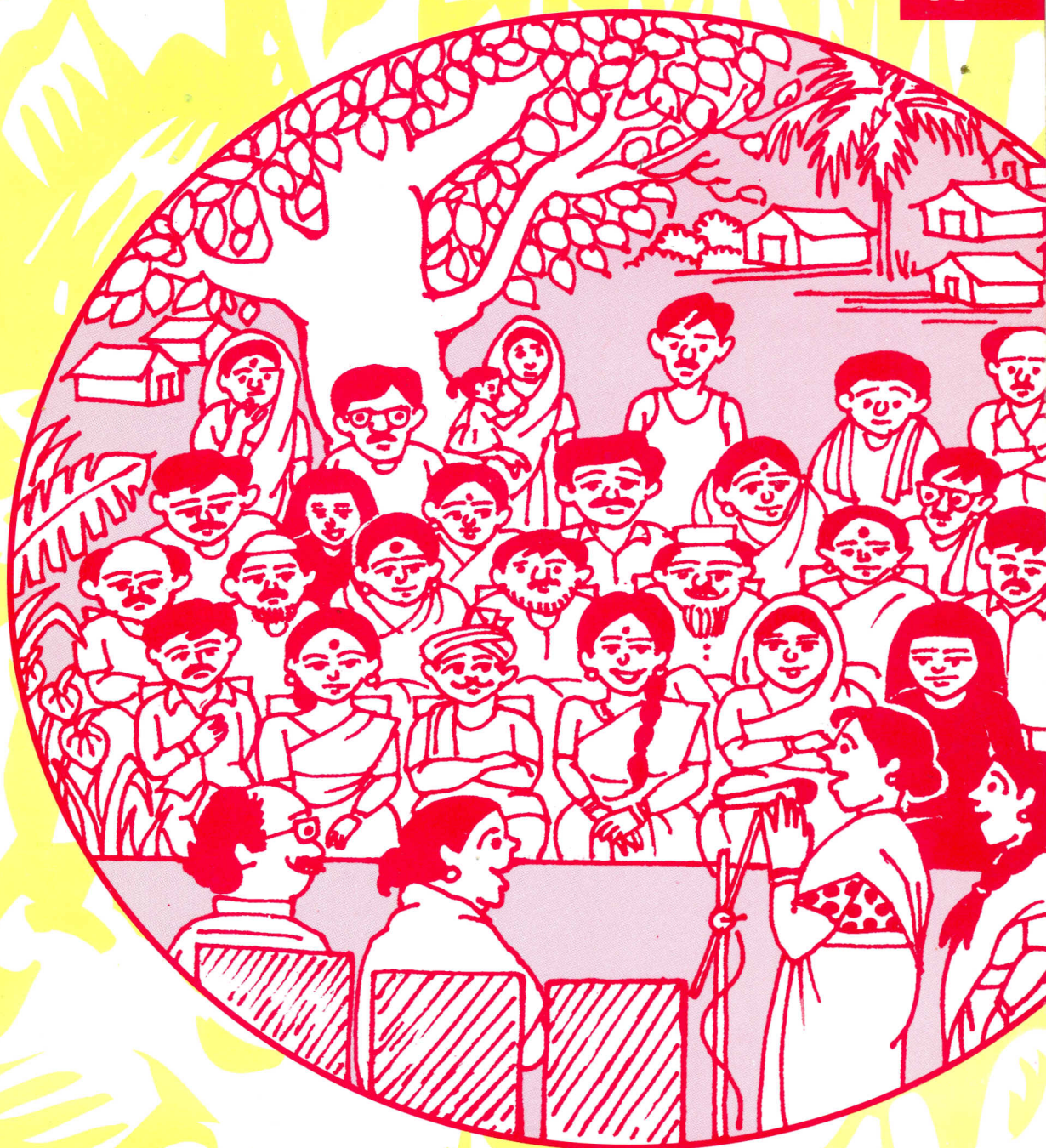


GRAMA SABHA PEOPLE'S SABHA

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INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL STUDIES TRUST
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**Grama Sabha
People's Sabha**

A Pictorial Hand Book



**NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTRE
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL STUDIES TRUST
Bangalore**

2001





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The pictorial handbook "Grama Sabha - People's Sabha" has been conceptualised, written and produced by the National Resource Centre at Institute of Social Studies Trust, Bangalore for Elected Representatives especially women and all others working for the political empowerment of women.

We wish to extend our gratitude to Dr. K.S. Krishnaswamy, former Deputy Governor, RBI for his valuable guidance and encouragement.

The booklet 'Guidelines for the conduct of Grama Sabhas' published by Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Government of Karnataka was found useful during the preparation of this resource book.

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Our grateful thanks to Dr. Swapna Mukhopadhyay, the Director of Institute of Social Studies Trust, Delhi.

Meera M.

Associate Director

ISST, Bangalore.




Preface


It is widely recognised that self-governing village communities characterised by agrarian economies had existed in India from the earliest times. These village bodies were the lines of contact with higher authorities on matters affecting the villages.

In course of time, these village bodies took the form of panchayats (an assembly of five persons) which looked after the affairs of the village. They had both police and judicial powers. Custom and religion elevated them to a sacred position of authority. These village bodies had been the pivot of administration, the centre of social life, and, above all, a focus of social solidarity.

It is evident that the non-functioning Panchayat Raj Institutions brought disrepute to the entire concept and its practice. There was a growing realisation that it was lack of constitutional support that had led to the sad state of affairs. There by, a series of Bills were introduced and finally in 1993, the 73rd Amendment Act was brought into force.

The Panchayat Raj Act has attached greater importance to the Grama Sabha. Grama Sabha, according to the Act, is supposed to be the foundation of the Panchayat Raj





Institutions. It is enjoined with the review of the accounts and the performance of the Grama Panchayat. It enables people to evince the most direct interest in the development of the village. It has a dual role: as a watchdog of the working of Grama Panchayat in matters in which public involvement and participation is necessary. Thus it can be rightly called as the pillar of local democracy.

The Government of India had declared the year 1999-2000 A.D as the "Year of Grama Sabha". But the year ended without leaving much impression on the people. Although Karnataka boasts herself of achieving more than 40% of women's participation at the grassroot level, it failed to provide real meaning to the Grama Sabha. Grama Sabhas according to villagers are mere "Loan Sabhas" where beneficiaries are selected and lent credits.

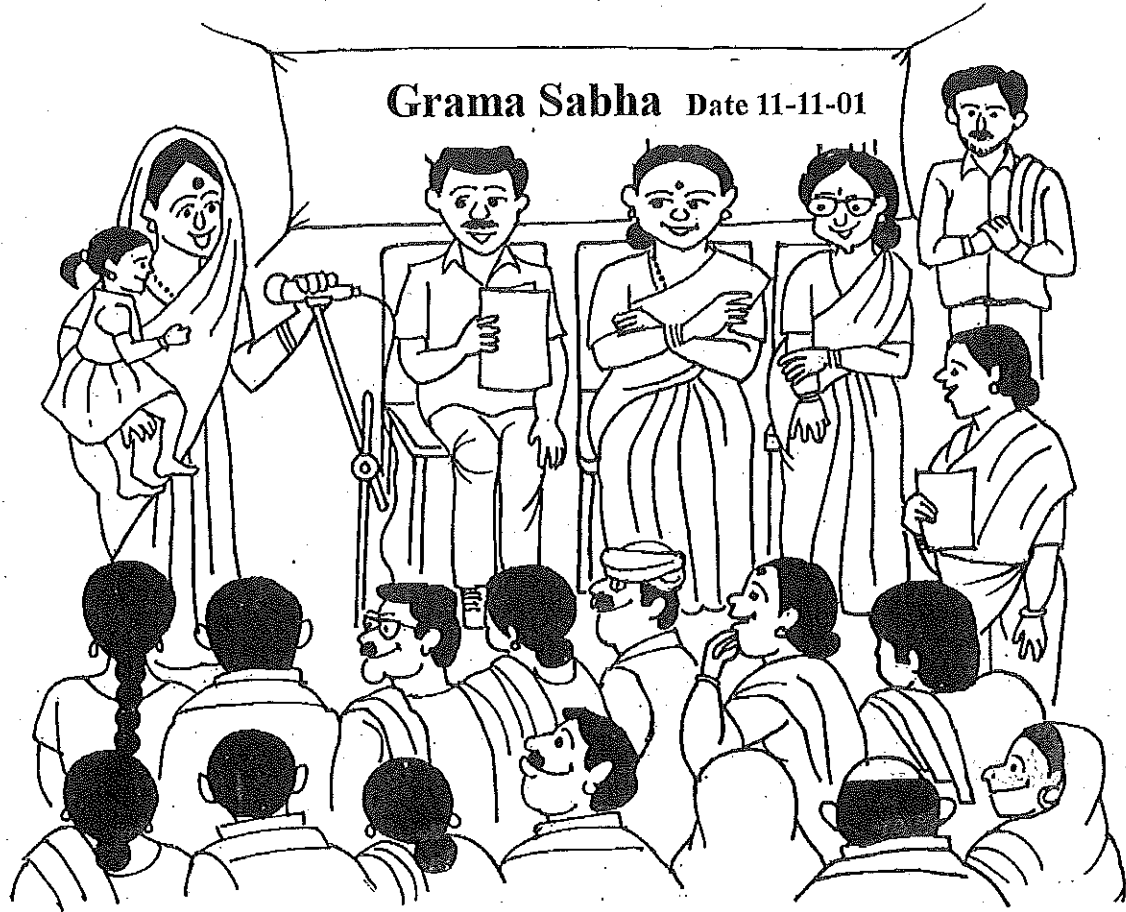
There is widespread discussion among thinkers, academicians, social workers and others about empowering Grama Sabhas in order to make Panchayats accountable vibrant. On these lines, ISST, is bringing out a "Pictorial Handbook on Grama Sabha" to enable the village people and the elected members to the Panchayat know about Grama Sabha which would in turn bring in real essence of self governance.

This book will help all elected representatives, village community, potential leaders, activists and will even serve as a guide to trainers, grassroot level NGOs who are working in the development field or Panchayat Raj Institutions.

ISST Team
Bangalore

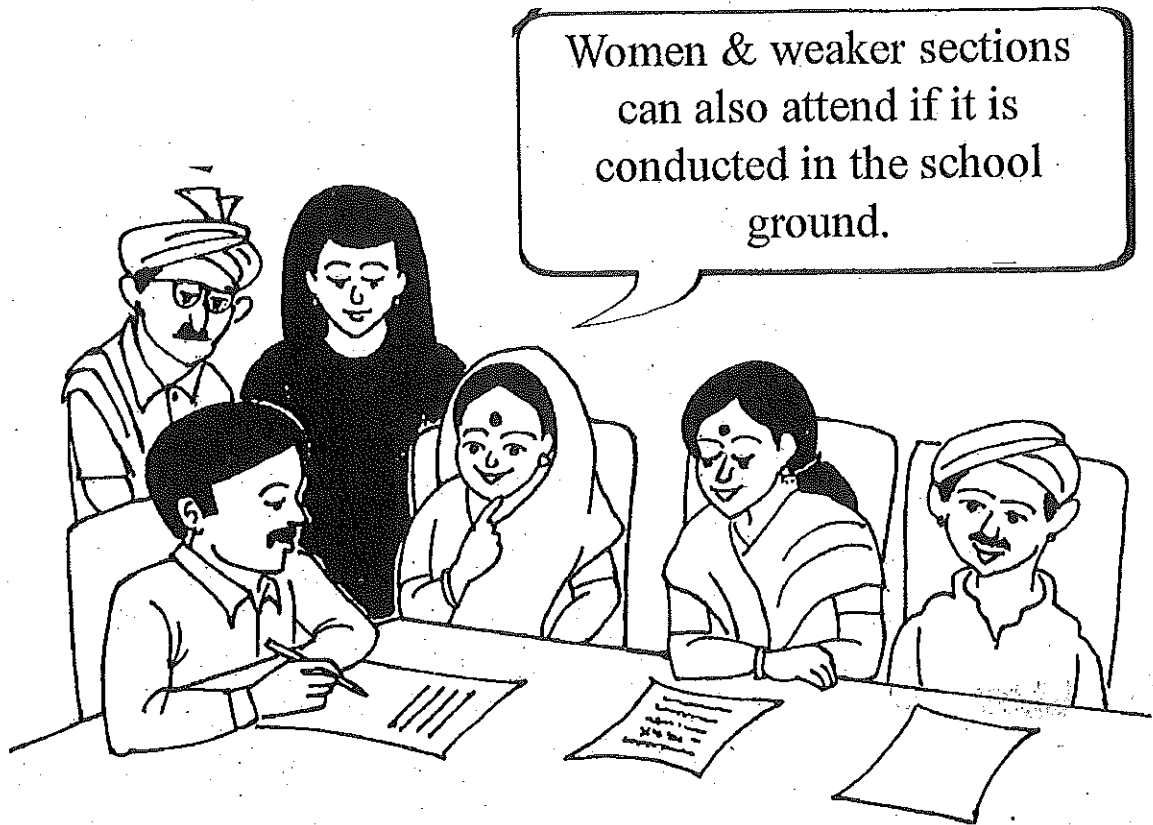


What is a Grama Sabha?



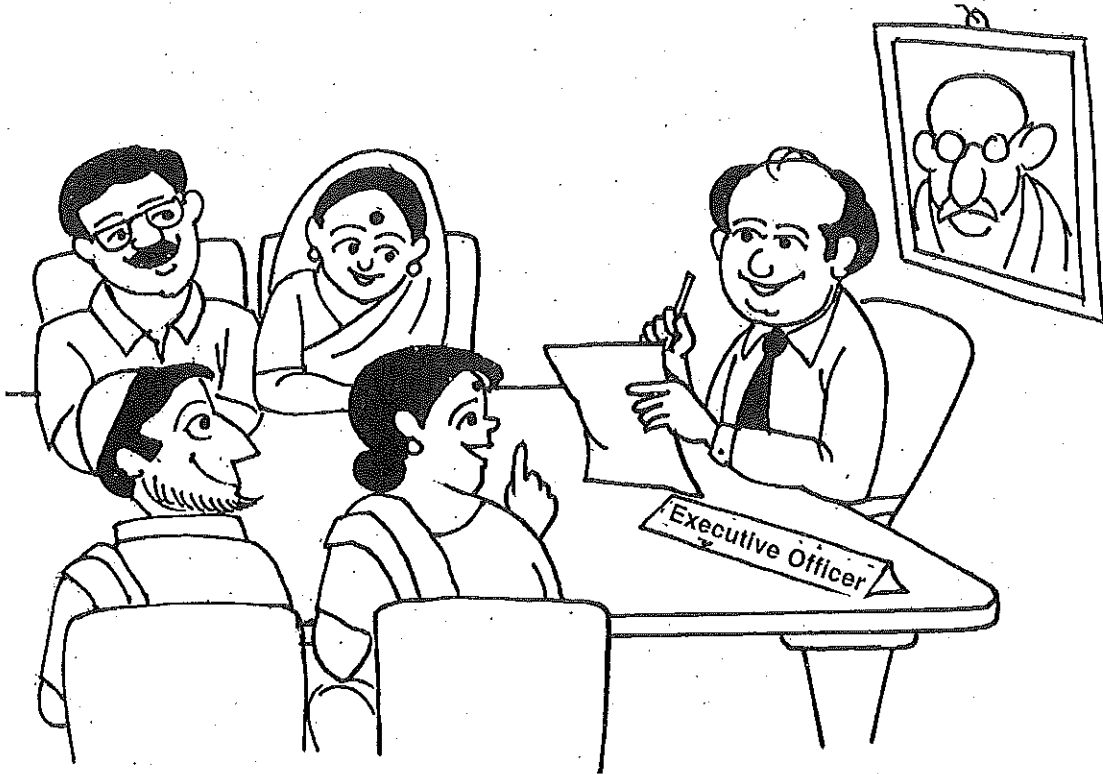
Grama Sabha means a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within the area of Gram Panchayat, which strives for the overall development of the village through suggestions and discussions with the concerned elected representatives and officials of the departments. Grama Sabhas are envisaged as platforms for open and vibrant interaction towards strengthening decentralised democracy. Grama Sabhas are people's Sabahas.

Where should a Grama Sabha take place?



Grama Sabhas should be conducted in all the villages coming under that Gram Panchayat on the specified date, time and venue. The time and venue should be convenient for the effective participation of women and marginalised sections of the village.

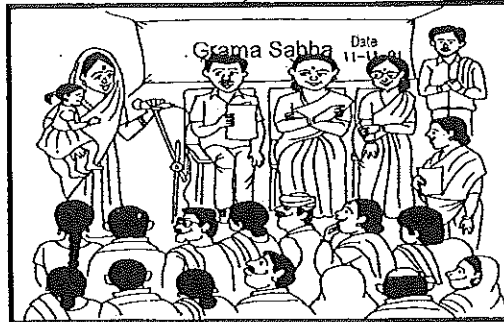
Who should call a Grama Sabha?



The Executive Officer of the Taluk Panchayat with concurrence of Presidents of Grama Panchayats should decide the dates for Grama Sabha giving a detailed schedule for holding Grama Sabhas in all villages in the Taluk spanning over a period of one week to 10 days.

If the Grama Panchayat fails to convene the Grama Sabha within the specified time, the Executive Officer should convene the Grama Sabha.

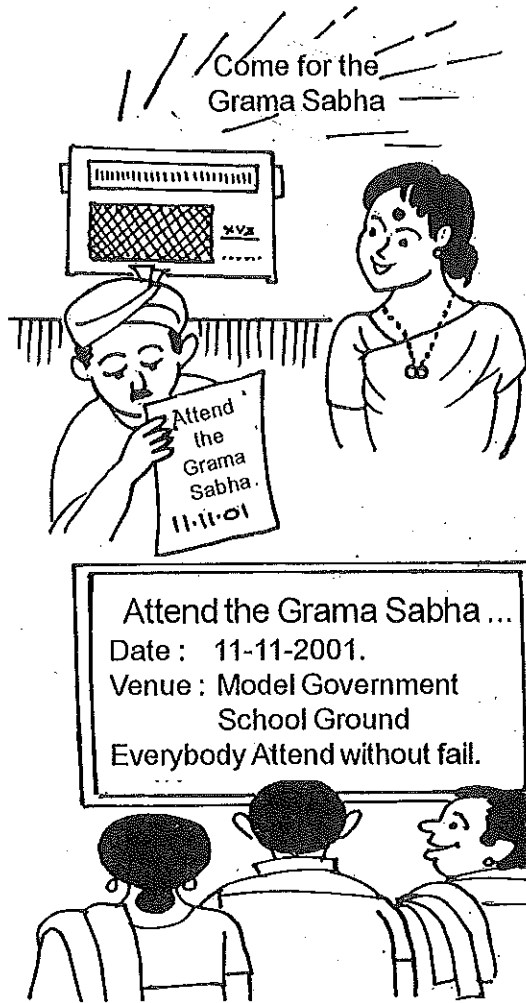
*How many Grama Sabhas
should be conducted in a year?*



Atleast 2
**Grama
Sabhas**

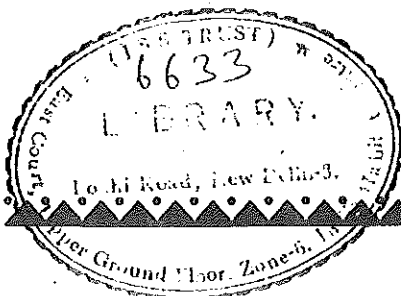
According to the notification of the Government of Karnataka, the Grama Sabha should be convened at least twice a year, once in the month of April - May and later in the month of October - November.

How should a Grama Sabha be publicised?



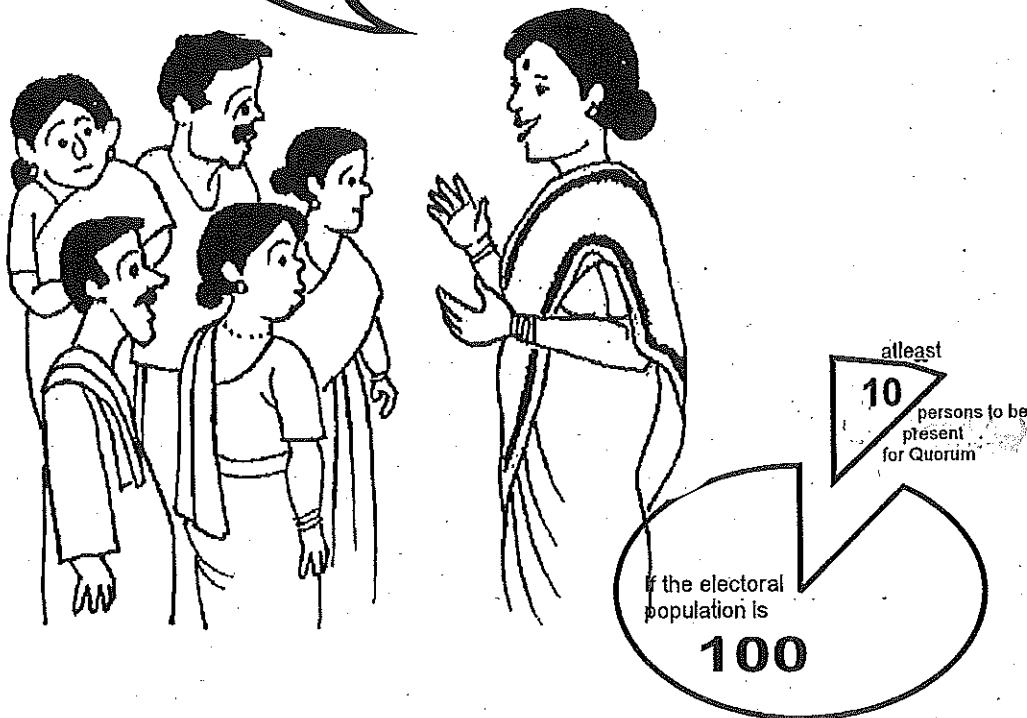
The schedule of the Grama Sabha should be published in all Taluk level offices, Gram Panchayat offices and in the Panchayat News letter. The schedule should also be announced in the local newspapers and All India Radio. The Secretary, Grama Panchayat should announce the schedule of the Grama Sabha by the beat of tom-tom (drum) at

least one week prior to the date fixed for the Grama Sabha. The tom-tom should be repeated two or three times till a day prior to the date of the Grama Sabha.



What should be the Quorum in Gram Sabha ?

For the Grama Sabha to be conducted at least 10 out of 100 people must be present. So you all should attend grama sabha



The Quorum in the Grama sabha should be atleast 10% of the total electorate of the village.

If the attendance in the Grama Sabha is less than 10% of the total electorate the Gram Sabha may be adjourned to a later date, which should not, in any case, be later than a week.

*Who should preside over the
Grama Sabha?*

*Since the President is suffering
from ill health, I, the Vice-president,
am presiding over the
grama sabha*



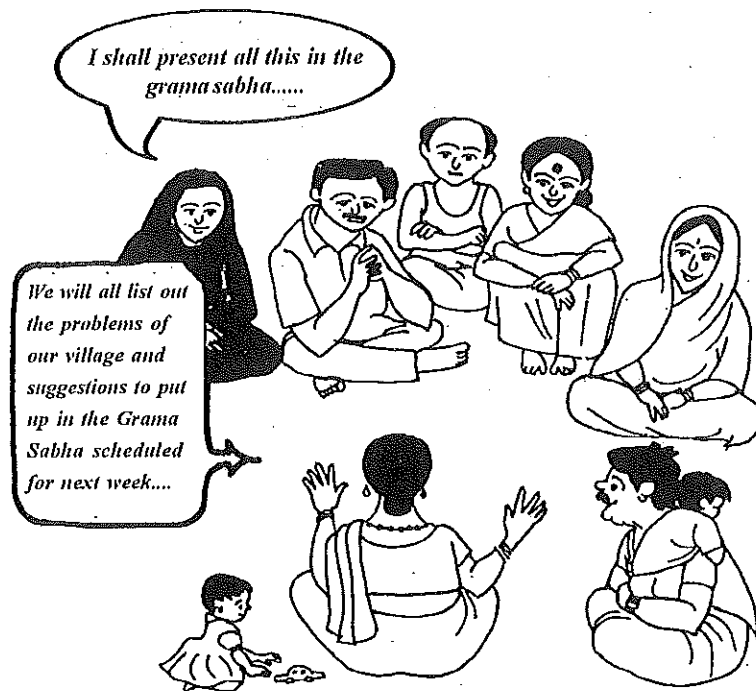
The Grama Sabha should be presided over by the President. In her/his absence, the Vice President will preside over the Grama Sabha. Even if s/he is not available, then any of the elected members should preside over the Grama Sabha.



Who should be present in the Grama Sabha?

- Persons enrolled in the electoral roll
- Gram Panchayat President
- Gram Panchayat Secretary
- Elected Representatives of the concerned Gram Panchayat.
- Executive Officer
- Moderator
- Officials from various departments.
 - ★ The Headmasters of schools situated in the villages and the Chairman as well as the Members of the School Development and Monitoring Committee.
 - ★ The Medical Officer of the concerned Primary Health Centre and the Veterinary Doctor or Assistant of the concerned Veterinary Dispensary
 - ★ Manager of the concerned commercial bank or regional rural bank.
 - ★ Concerned Agriculture Assistant or the Assistant Agriculture Officer
 - ★ Concerned Village Accountant and the Revenue Inspector
 - ★ The Anganwadi workers of the village
 - ★ Chairman of the water Panchayat or the Village Water and Sanitation Committee
 - ★ Concerned official from Social Welfare Department
 - ★ Concerned official from Small Scale Industries Department
 - ★ Concerned official from PWD
 - ★ Other concerned officials.

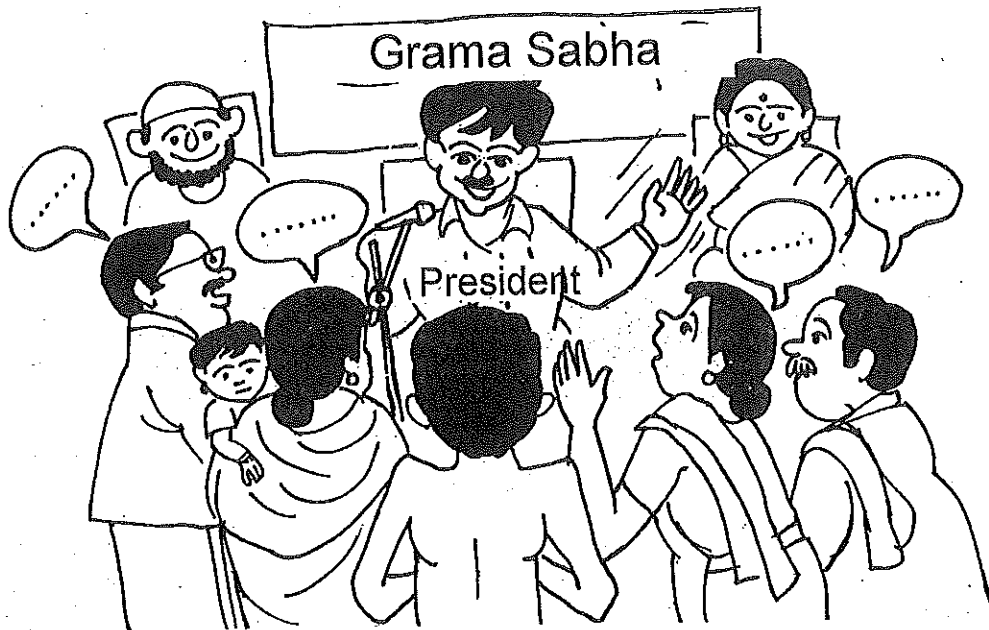
What are the roles of Participants in the Grama Sabha ?



❖ Every person whose name is registered in the electoral roll should participate in the Grama Sabha. For the Grama sabhas to be successful, it is, especially important that large number of women and those from marginalised sections participate actively.

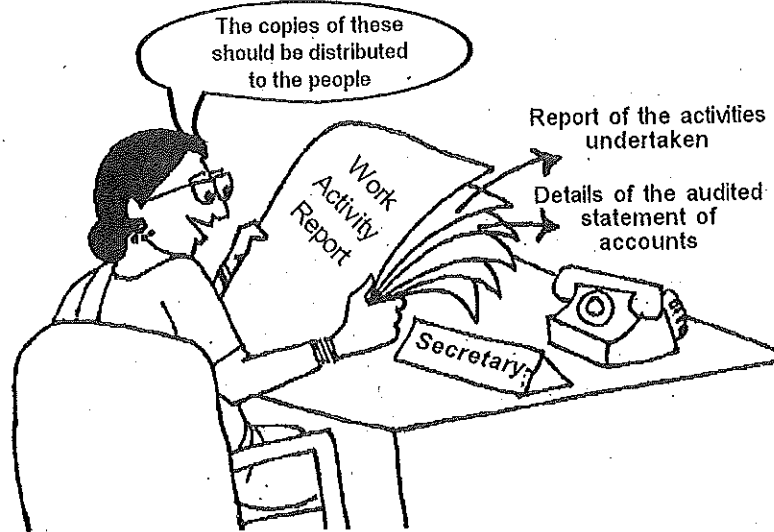
- ❖ People should make a list of all the problems well in advance and put forth the list and discuss at the time of the Grama Sabha.
- ❖ The people should take part in the activities pertaining to all round development of the village and also help the Grama Sabha in the selection of the beneficiaries for the developmental schemes.
- ❖ The people should contribute either by providing physical assistance, or by way of donations or kinds to any unfinished work left over in the village that has been brought out in the grama sabha.
- ❖ The people have a right to put forth and seek clarification on any of the malpractices observed in the Gram Panchayat during the Gram sabha.

Role of the President



- ❖ The President should preside over the Grama Sabha.
- ❖ The president should make room for open discussions in the Grama Sabha.
- ❖ S/he should be ready to give relevant answers to any question raised in the Grama Sabha.
- ❖ S/he should try to ensure that a majority of the members of the Grama Sabha of that particular village gather at the appointed time and the date of Grama Sabha.
- ❖ The representation of women and weaker sections in large numbers of that particular village where the Grama Sabha is being held should be ensured. Proper seating arrangements should be made in the front rows for women and persons belonging to the weaker sections and they should be encouraged to share and discuss their problems.

Role of the Secretary



- ❖ Secretary plays an important role in the successful conduct of the Grama Sabhas.
- ❖ S/he should send the notice regarding the time, date and venue of the Grama sabha.
- ❖ S/he should announce the schedule of the Grama Sabha by the beat of tom tom at least one week prior to the date fixed for the Grama Sabha. The "tom tom (drum)" may be repeated two or three times till a day prior to the date of the Grama Sabha.
- ❖ The Secretary should prepare detailed notes on the items in the agenda for the Grama Sabha and obtain the approval of Grama Panchayat at least ten days in advance. S/he should prepare copies of the agenda notes and make them available for distribution to the public. The notes should include a report on the activities proposed during the year in question and also summary of the latest audited statement of accounts.
- ❖ S/he should ensure adequate representation of women and weaker sections in the front rows in the Grama Sabha to facilitate their effective participation.

Role of the Elected Representatives

❖ The elected representatives should pressurize the Gram Panchayats to conduct Grama Sabhas as per scheduled time.

❖ Elected Representatives should compulsorily attend it.

❖ Prior to the Grama Sabhas, the elected members should inspect the condition of basic amenities like roads, lights, drainages etc. of the village.



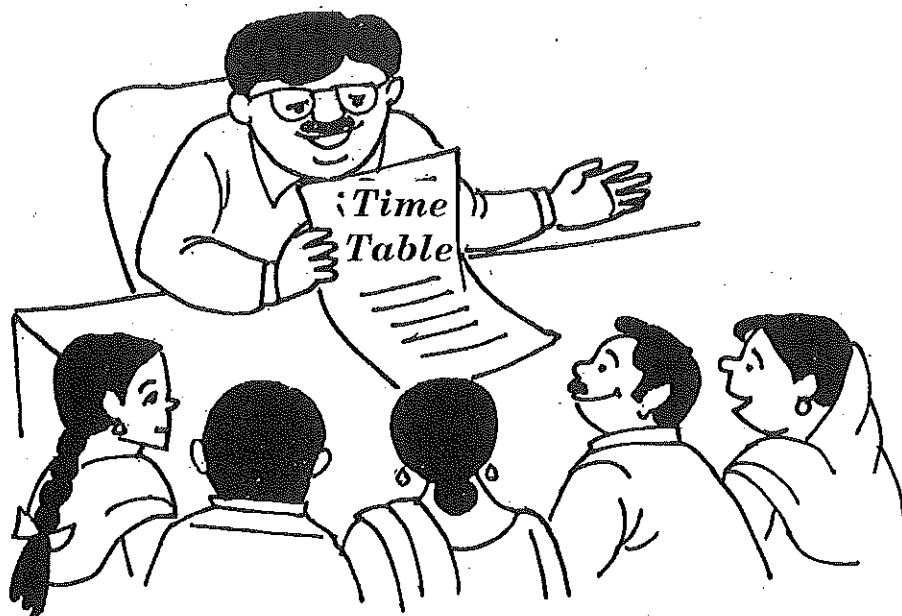
❖ They should keep reminding the villagers about the date of Grama Sabha and ask them to put forth their issues in the Grama Sabha. This has to be brought to the notice of the President and the Secretary.

❖ They have to visit the schools, anganwadi, PHCs etc. and discuss their problems with the concerned officials well in advance.


❖ Knowing the socio-economic status of the villagers, they should assist in selecting the beneficiaries for the development schemes.

❖ They should see that the representation of women and weaker sections of the society is in large numbers in the Grama Sabha. They should make proper seating arrangements for them in the front rows to facilitate their effective participation in the Grama Sabha.

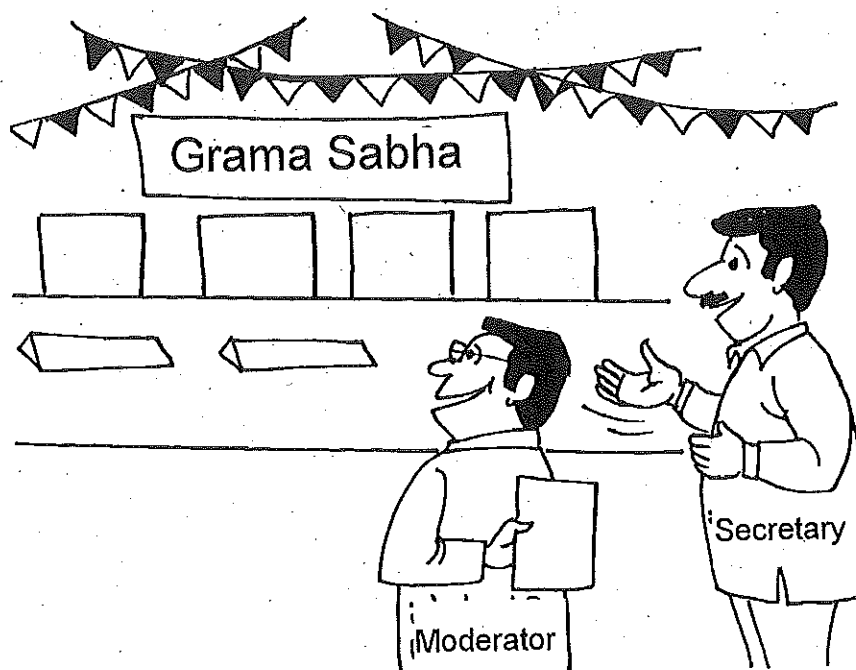
The Role of the Executive Officer



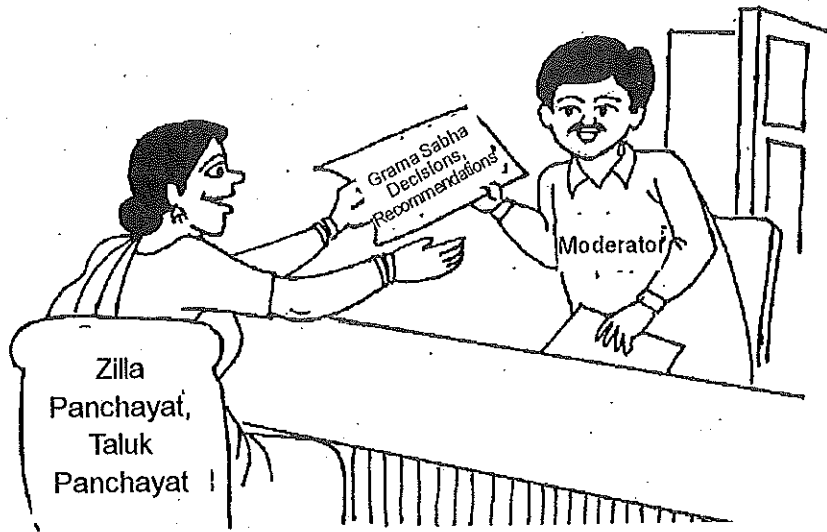
- ❖ In order to ensure that Grama Sabhas are held in a fruitful and regular manner, the Executive Officer of the Taluk Panchayat should publish, with the concurrence of Presidents of Grama Panchayats, a detailed schedule for holding Grama Sabhas in all the villages in the Taluk over a period of one week to ten days, specified for the purpose during the months of April-May and October-November of every year.
- ❖ This schedule must be published by the Executive Officer at least two weeks before the commencement of the week in question. The schedule should contain the dates and timings of Grama Sabhas in every village in the taluk. As far as possible, Grama Sabhas should be held in the late afternoons in order to have more and more villagers attending the Grama Sabhas.

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- ❖ The Executive Officer of Taluk Panchayat should designate an able Taluk level officer from one of the development departments of Zilla Panchayat or Taluk Panchayat as Moderator for every Grama Sabha not only to moderate but also to submit a report of the same.
 - ❖ The Executive Officer of the Taluk Panchayat should consider the works proposed by the Grama Sabhas of all the villages in the Taluk at the time of the finalisation of the action plans of the Taluk Panchayat and obtain the approval of the Taluk Panchayat. If some works cannot be included for various reasons, this should be informed to the Grama Panchayat for informing the Grama Sabha at a later stage. If some of the recommendations/decisions of the Grama Sabha pertain to the Zilla Panchayat, the Executive Officer should report the same to the Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Panchayat.
 - ❖ The Executive Officer of the Taluk Panchayat should consolidate the demands, suggestions and proposals received on the schemes of the Zilla Panchayat from all the Grama Sabhas in the taluk and send a report to the Chief Executive Officer within one week of the completion of all the Grama Sabhas in the Taluk.
 - ❖ If the Grama Sabhas fail to select the deserving beneficiaries, then the Executive Officer in concurrence with the respective Grama Panchayats should select the beneficiaries.

Role of the Moderator:



- ❖ The Moderator should be present at the venue of Grama Sabha at least two hours prior to the time fixed for the commencement of the Grama Sabha.
- ❖ The Moderator should satisfy himself that the Secretary of Grama Panchayat has taken adequate measures including advance publicity for the proper conduct of the Grama Sabha.
- ❖ The Moderator should facilitate discussion on the programme of the Zilla Panchayat and the Taluk Panchayat in the Grama Sabha in addition to assisting in the orderly conduct of the Grama Sabha.
- ❖ The Moderator should be conversant with the development programmes of the Taluk Panchayat and the Zilla Panchayat being implemented in the village concerned so that s/he is in a position to answer any queries raised in the Grama Sabha.



- ❖ It should be the function of the Moderator to record a brief summary of resolutions and recommendations of Grama Sabha, on the functioning of the different Departments under the Zilla Panchayat and Taluk Panchayat and convey the same to the concerned Department and the Zilla / Taluk Panchayat.

Role of Officials from various Departments

According to the guidelines given by the Government of Karnataka, the officials of various departments should participate in the Grama Sabha and give a detailed report of the proceedings in their respective departments. They should give explanation to the public regarding the success or failure of various schemes/ facilities apart from providing them the information of the forthcoming schemes/programmes. The officials should also make available printed materials on the schemes/programmes to the public in the forms of brochures or pamphlets. The officials must provide clarification and ensure redressal to the queries and grievances / complaints put forth by the public.

Role of Headmasters of Schools



The head master of the pre-primary/primary/high schools situated in the village should give details of the number of children enrolled in the school, number of children who have dropped out, with particular reference to the enrolment and drop out rate of girl children; and the condition of the schools including repairs, infrastructure required, if any, to the Gram Sabha.

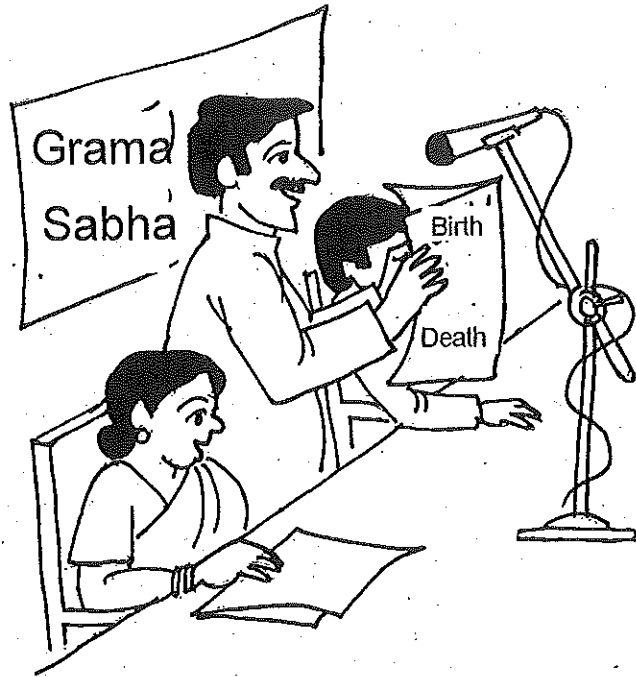
Role of Medical Officer



- ❖ The Medical Officer of the concerned Primary Health Centre and the Veterinary doctor or assistant of the concerned veterinary dispensary should discuss on the functioning of the Health Centres and the Veterinary Dispensaries respectively and the preventive measures to be taken in respect of common diseases.
- ❖ The Medical Officers should give details of the number of children yet to be immunised in the village and also the details of children who are suffering from malnutrition. S/he should educate the Grama Sabha about the preventive measures to be taken by the community against common diseases like Malaria, etc and also inform them about the facilities provided by the health centre to the village.

Role of Village Accountant

The village accountant should notify the births and the deaths recorded in the village during the last one year and update his records in case some births and deaths have not been registered.

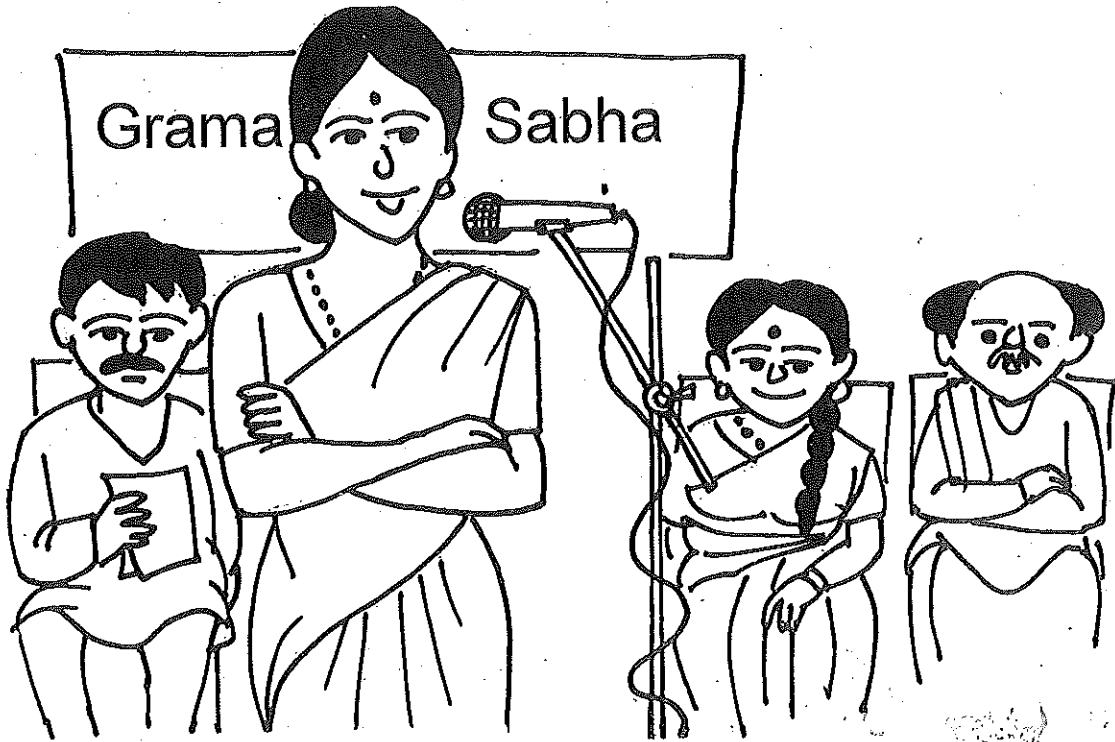


Role of Chairman of the Water Panchayat



The Chairman of the Water Panchayat should give a brief report on the maintenance of water supply schemes, the quality, availability and the demand for water and collection of water tariff.

Role of Anganwadi Worker



The Anganwadi worker should present the attendance of the children in the age group of 0-5 years in the anganwadi centre. She should also provide information about the number of children and lactating mothers who receive nutritious food everyday.

There should also be a discussion on the functioning of the anganwadi centres, the problems prevailing and the necessary facilities required for their proper functioning.

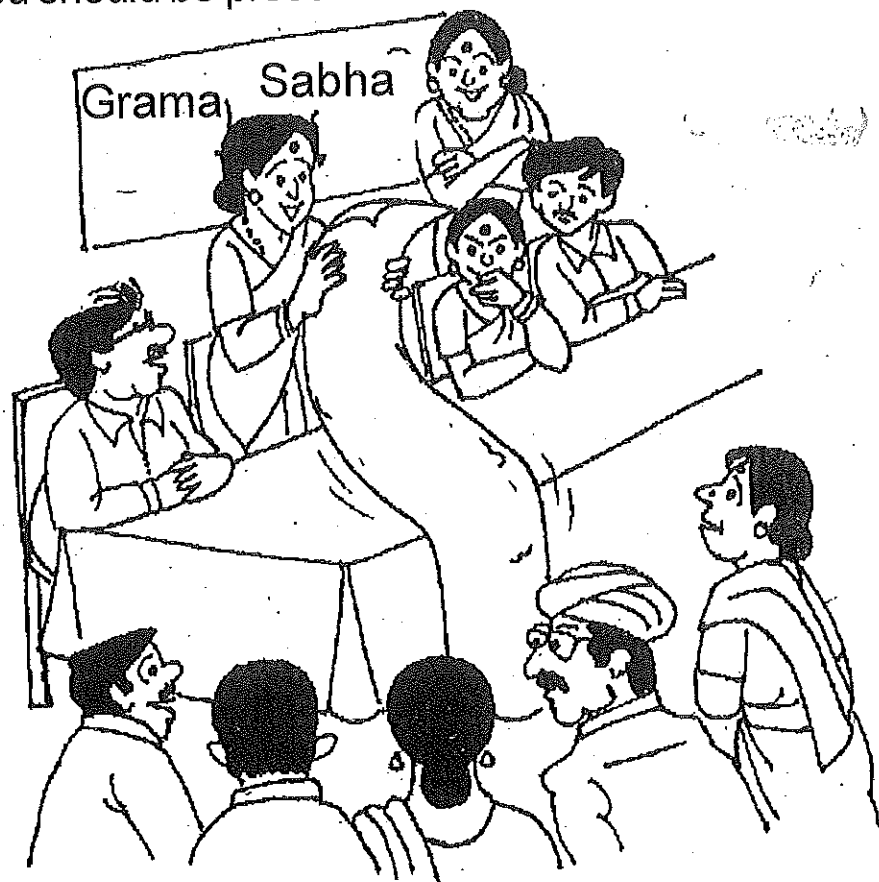
What are the Main Functions of the Grama Sabha?




- ❖ Reading report on the activities of the Grama Panchayat since the previous Grama Sabha. This should include the action taken on the decisions/recommendations of the previous Grama Sabha.
- ❖ Providing information on the details of the taxes collected by the Grama Sabha and the outstanding balances during the last one year. The details of demand, collection and balance of the water rate should be given separately.
- ❖ The details pertaining to the village in which Grama Sabha is being held should be furnished separately.
- ❖ There should be a discussion on the functioning of the public distribution system in the village and the implementation of

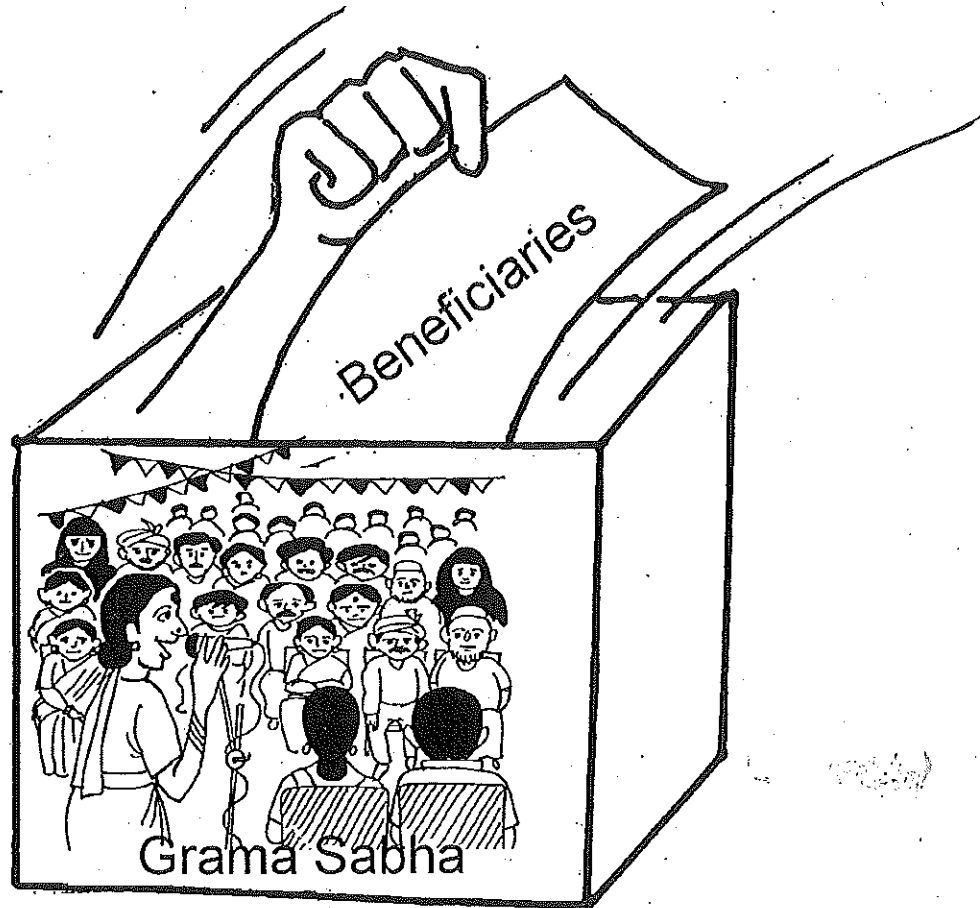
old age pension, pension for the physically handicapped, etc.

- ❖ Details of enrolment and attendance of children in the schools and issues concerning the development of the schools should be looked into.
- ❖ Details of the functioning of Health centre and the Veterinary Dispensaries and the preventive measures to be taken in respect of common diseases.
- ❖ The funds received by the Grama Panchayat under different programmes during the last one year and the expenditure incurred should be presented and discussed.



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- ❖ The measures taken and the expenditure incurred by the Grama Panchayat, Water Panchayat towards the maintenance of water supply schemes should be discussed.
 - ❖ Details of the number of latrines built in the village and the amount of subsidy disbursed should be shared.
 - ❖ The functioning of the Anganwadi centres in the village should be discussed.
 - ❖ Identification and selection of individuals/families to be benefitted under different schemes should be taken up.
 - ❖ There should be a discussion on the schemes/programmes proposed to be taken up by the Panchayat during the current and succeeding year.
 - ❖ Community welfare activities, collection of gifts and donations and Shram daan. is also one of the functions of Grama Sabha.
 - ❖ Address any other subject suggested by the Grama Panchayat or taken up with the permission of the president of the Grama Sabha.

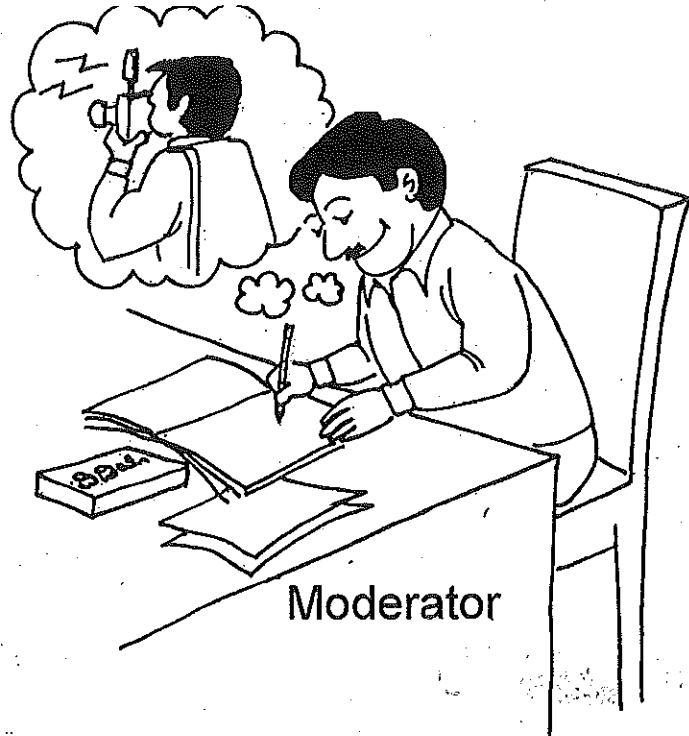
Who should select the Beneficiaries?



The Grama Sabha identifies and selects the beneficiaries to be assisted under different schemes. In case, the Grama Sabha fails to do it, then the Executive Officer of the Taluk Panchayat with the concurrence of Grama Panchayat selects the beneficiaries.

How to Report and Document the Proceedings of the Grama Sabha?

It is the function of the Moderator to record a brief summary of resolutions and recommendations of the Grama Sabha and report the same to the Executive Officer of the Taluk Panchayat. The Executive Officer, in turn, consolidates the demands, suggestions and proposals received



on the schemes of the Zilla Panchayat from all Grama Sabhas in the Taluk and sends a report to the Chief Executive Officer within one week of the completion of all the Grama Sabhas in the Taluk.

Arrangements should also be made for videography or photography of the Grama Sabha for documentation purposes to be kept in the Gram Panchayat. Copies of the photographs of the Grama Sabha should be submitted to the Executive Officer of the Taluk Panchayat.




In Conclusion....

Grama Sabha is the foundation of which the Panchayat Raj Institutions thrive. Realising the crucial role of villages in bringing about their allround development. The Panchayat Raj Act provides for the active participation of the people in local administration and has bestowed power on them to question and participate in the planning process for the development of the village. Thus Gram Sabha assumes great importance. In this context, ISST studied some of the Gram Sabhas to see whether they are being conducted according to the guidelines proposed by the Dept., of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Government of Karnataka.

Our observations were quite different from what was proposed in the guidelines of the government. Nowhere did we see the moderators attending the Gram Sabhas and documenting the proceedings. The issues raised by the general public were neither clarified nor discussed properly. In most of the Grama Sabhas beneficiary selection was not taken up. Men folk were prominently seen participating in the Gram Sabha and the voice of women was hardly heard except in a couple of instances. The information disseminated by the department officials left much to be desired. Thus it appears, that the Grama Sabhas are conducted just to observe the dictum. It seems that the potentials of Grama Sabhas are not recognised properly.

For the process of decentralisation to be effective, there is an urgent need to strengthen Gram Sabhas. People must actively participate in the Grama Sabhas to facilitate transparency and collective decision making and hasten the process of development to make the "Grama Swaraj Dream" of Gandhiji a reality.



ABOUT US

ISST is a non-profit organisation with its head office in Delhi and branch office in Bangalore. ISST is dedicated to action research to ensure social justice and equity for the underprivileged with a focus on women. It strives to combine fieldwork and related research with action programmes and seeks to relate the micro with the macro reality. In recognition of its efforts, ISST was conferred NGO Consultative Status by the United Nations.

Over the years, ISST has undertaken several pioneering action and research endeavors to initiate alternative development strategies that recognize the role and contribution of women. The emphasis at ISST is on action research, documenting and disseminating information, expanding information bases, networking and providing liaison services at national as well as international levels. The Institute has provided insights, inputs and resource materials to researchers, Governments and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), on subject ranging from Panchayat Raj, Capacity Building of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) to Adult Education, HIV/AIDS and Gender issues.

ISST Bangalore has over the years acquired expertise in evolving strategies and working towards strengthening Women in Local Governance in Karnataka through its projects. ISST Bangalore has undertaken the project "Women in Local Governance" being funded by Action Aid India from 1999. With its objective in view, ISST runs a Resource Centre at the Bangalore office. This Resource Centre is actively involved in Strengthening Women in Local Governance through research, field studies, participatory training, documentation, publication and dissemination at multi-levels. It is accessible to activists, academicians, policy makers, individuals, researchers, students, women's organisations and to governmental and non governmental organisation (NGOs) who are engaged in enhancing the capabilities of women in various ways from across the state, nation and beyond.

"UMA Prachar" is the quarterly resource letter on Panchayat Raj being published in three languages by ISST Bangalore. It has since 2001 commenced publication of an innovative, illustrated Wall Magazine in Kannada titled "Namma Panchayathi" for Elected Representatives and the Community. This is the first of its kind in Karnataka State.

Our Publications



RESOURCE BOOKS :

1. Panchayat Parihara (2001)
2. Blooming Beyond Barriers - Case Studies (2001)
3. Grama Sabha - People's Sabha (2001)
4. Grama Panchayat Budget - Karnataka (2001)
5. What Works (1999)
6. As We Did It (1999)
7. From Darkness to Light (1997)
8. Letters to a Friend (1994)
9. Moving Forward Together (1994)
10. Strengthening the Core (1994)
11. From Role Plays to Role Models (1994)

RESOURCE LETTER :

UMA Prachar - English, Kannada and Tamil (2001)

WALL MAGAZINE :

Namma Panchayathi - Kannada (2001)

REPORTS :

1. Gender, Governance and Grama Sabha: Regional Seminar (2001)
2. Training Reports of 3 Phases (2001)
3. All Women Gram Panchayat - (a) Athnur, Gulbarga (b) Wanjerkheda, Bidar
4. Redesigning from the Roots (2000)
5. Exploring New Frontiers: Regional Seminar (2000)
6. UMA at a Glance (1999)
7. UMA Utsav Report (1999)
8. Macro Myths: Micro Realities - Occasional Paper (1999)
9. Training Methodology & Material: Workshop Report (1999)
10. Mydolalu: All Women Grama Panchayat (1998)
11. Training Methodology & Material: Workshop Report (1998)
12. National Seminar Report (1995)
13. UMA MELA Report (1995)

TRAINING MATERIALS :

1. Snake & Ladder Game (1997)
2. Clock (1997)

NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS :

Newspaper Clippings on Panchayat Raj (1993-2001)

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