

## CHAPTER 6

### COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

**4.6.01** An individual citizen is more directly affected by Local Government administration than by policies of the Union and State Governments. It is at this local level that services like road maintenance, street lighting, water supply, transport and communication and plethora of similar services are relevant to everyone. The attitudes towards public administration are general in nature and they are usually shaped by personal contacts. Since the citizens contact with the Local Government is closer and more frequent, public administration at the local level assumes critical importance. While working for improvement in the local administration, local authority must also endeavour to secure greater and better understanding from the citizens. It is only from such an understanding that we can expect greater responsiveness and enthusiasm from the people.

**4.6.02** The rights of the citizens relate to the basic needs of decent living. Citizenship is an obligation as well as a privilege. He is obliged to observe a code of conduct that reflects the interdependence of the citizens in matters of civic nature. Such a code of conduct is all the more

essential in a thickly populated and somewhat heterogeneous community. On one hand, the physical scene must be improved and on the other an education campaign undertaken with the object that the local community is enthused and mobilized with regard to the negative and positive aspects of civic behaviour. Among the instruments to be used, the most important is local leadership of both individuals and institutions. This must give rise to the birth of community development programme and every local administration must endeavour to provide a suitable machinery for undertaking such a programme. The problem is to devise ways of giving the individual an opportunity to play a more meaningful role in the Local Body Administration which are shaping the policies and programmes which affect his physical, aesthetic, occupational, recreational and environment at the local level.

**4.6.03** As a result of citizens' involvement, the following gains may accrue to the Local Body:

i) Citizens' involvement may improve the quality of public decision by ensuring that such decisions are based on complete and accurate information. Obtaining citizen's views before final decisions are arrived at will enable the local authorities to know the potential alternatives.

ii) Citizen's involvement will provide to the local authorities information which will alert them, to the potential problems and pit falls that could inhibit the progress of implementation. Another advantage would be that if the employees learn that citizens are monitoring the quality and quantity of services, their motivation for better services will improve delivery.

iii) Citizen's involvement will also help in improving the finances of the Local Body to the extent that greater involvement in the making of Government decisions creates a positive incentive for citizens to work for strengthening the civic community's financial basis. This will increase citizen's willingness to pay for the progress and projects which they know are going to cater to the basic needs of community.

iv) The increased citizen's involvement in the solution of neighbourhood problems will motivate them to solve their problems. If for example, citizens become involved in the development and operation of programmes, designed to meet people's need for shelter, they may in the process, identify additional ways of solving housing problems which do not require Government involvement. In the long run, neighbourhood development depends primarily on the willingness and ability of the citizens to develop solution to their problems.

#### **Role of Non-Governmental Organisations in Municipal Administration:**

**4.6.04** Urban Government has to work in the midst of a set of peculiarities of its own, namely, first, the concentration of a large population in geographically small areas creates congestion in the living pattern; slum life is intrinsically an urban phenomenon; secondly urban people are engaged in heterogeneous occupations and professions; third, urban people are conscious of their rights and duties; fourth, urban life is atomized and marked by anonymity and aloofness, hence it is difficult to generate strong community feelings; fifth, urban life is heavily dependent on organized infrastructure of civic services.

**4.6.05** Hence improvement in the standard of infrastructural services requires planning and would be aided by the involvement and participation of people in urban Government. It is not enough to elect the Government through democratic processes, it is necessary to devise institutional

mechanisms for community participation in urban planning and development. The success of urban development and civic services management depends on the cooperation and active participation of the people, especially the poorer sections.

**4.6.06** Urban Community Development (UCD) will be a useful approach for providing community services with grassroot participation in identification, execution and maintenance of development projects. It is suitable for the decentralized delivery of selected community services at a relatively low cost and is replicable in other areas of urban planning and development. For some time now, urban community development projects have been undertaken in Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Baroda, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Kanpur and other cities by such agencies as the Central Social Welfare Board, Bharat sevak Samaj, American Friends Service, Ford Foundation, Swedish swallows, Lutheran Services, Exnora and others. In Chennai Municipal Corporation area, "Exnora Madras", a people's movement is doing yeoman service in the upkeep of the civic services by actively involving the people of the area.

**4.6.07** Generally projects for community welfare have been started in deprived or backward areas and slums. A sense of patronage usually enters in service management and delivery, and the local people normally seek external assistance for ameliorating local environmental conditions. However, the local community needs to be awakened to its potentialities for self-organization, mutual cooperation and sharing of responsibility in managing urban development through the active participation of the NGOs. Project organization will not only have to be undertaken by the community itself but the Municipal and State Authorities would have to encourage and promote it by rendering active assistance and extending appropriate facilities so that people could come together and work for the improvement of their physical and social environment. The institutional support for the Municipal Authorities and the Government is part of the urban community development because the nature of urban living and its demands are too complex and gigantic to be tackled by voluntary community efforts alone through NGOs.

**4.6.08** The possible areas where development projects can be organized with community participation include shelter building, health and family planning, special nutrition programmes, informal and pre-school education, training for imparting skills, economic support, programmes involving the giving of pattas of house sites, organizing development committees, Mahila Mandals, Welfare Councils, etc. and community oriented social and cultural activities.

**4.6.09** Once the poor and disadvantaged sectors are effectively organized through NGOs participation, they can function as a check on the bureaucracy technology-contractor nexus in the development process. By exercising sufficient vigilance the organized community would also be in an advantageous position to fight against administrative corruptions. However, whether and how far these goals would be achieved depend on the extent of the functioning of the basic democratic institutions like the competitive political system, free press and independent judiciary.

**4.6.10** Experience of urban community development through community participation suggest that such efforts constitute a useful process of training the poorer sections of the society in self help and mutual cooperation. The importance of basic linkages between voluntary efforts and environmental improvement, and between community initiative for development and financial institutions in the formal sector of the urban economy has been well demonstrated through the urban community Development and Urban Basic Services.

## **Role of Non-Governmental Organisations in Rural Development Administration:**

**4.6.11** Non-Governmental and community organizations have an equally important role to play in rural administration and development under the new dispensation of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Unfortunately in spite of the people's institutions like the Panchayati Raj, it has been pointed out time and again that people are not coming forward and involving themselves in the functions of the local institutions, except perhaps at the time of voting. People's participation either in the implementation of the programme or in developing plans for the improvement to a village, area or community is greatly dependent on them being ascribed roles in the community. If they occupy roles in a community which are vulnerable, the chances of their participation will be very much less. Whatever may be the ascribed position of an individual in a particular community, his position as an individual member of the community must be recognized regardless of his personal resources and until and unless this is done, the chances of people's involvement will remain bleak.

**4.6.12** The process will also call for active involvement of grassroots activities and voluntary groups. The proposed restructuring of rural development programmes is not to be left to the Government alone, nor even to elected bodies. A substantial contribution will have to come from social action groups and organizations that are in constant touch with the people, particularly with the marginalised and deprived sections so that the relevant institutions remain accountable and responsible.

**4.6.13** Potentially this arrangement can help increase the effectiveness of various programmes arrived at for women and children-such as maternal and child health services, integrated child health services, adult education and nutrition-by conveying these services through a responsive local agency.

**4.6.14** Among the responsibilities of the Village Panchayats, the following items of work involve negligible amount of labour component.

Provision of drinking water.,

Provision of community Radios.,

Provision of Television sets.

These works involve only switching on and switching off the relative equipments which can be done at the wink of an eye or twist of fingers. Even for these services, the Panchayats have employed men on a paltry sum paid as honorarium. The attention paid by these persons is naturally commensurate with the amount they receive. They also demand certain other benefits like bonus, weekly holidays, uniform cloth etc., which the Panchayats are not able to afford. The most suitable method to get this work done satisfactorily, is the entrustment of this work to Non-Governmental Organisations, or Organisations like Scout, N.S.S. Since there are more than 12,000 Panchayats, Non-Governmental organizations with a wider network covering the entire state will be ideal. The boys' scout, N.S.S. are also the organisations which are more suited for this purpose. It is learnt that the scout organisation has established itself very well in Maharashtra, West Bengal and Karnataka as the State Governments have put the organisation to the optimum use and also have offered substantial financial assistance. In Tamil Nadu every village has got an elementary school and a bigger village has got a High School or Higher Secondary School. If boy's scout is organised in all the schools it will be a force that can be reckoned with for the entrustment of this job. The

State Government may think of enhancing the grant-in-aid now given to scout organisation and entrust these jobs to them wherever possible. The boys' scout being a well trained organisation, their services can be utilised for purpose of cleaning the surroundings of drinking water sources, Panchayat bus stands, cart stands, public markets, etc., for which at present there is no arrangement existing in the Panchayats. In Schools and Colleges, in their curriculum, the need for proper maintenance of core civic services, the involvement of the students and the people in this affair must be included.

**4.6.15 The Commission therefore recommends that**

i) In all development programmes, the role of community is very crucial both for the success of the programme as well as for its sustainability, emphasizes that the community should not only participate in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes but to the extent possible should be partners in the cost sharing. The non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are better suited to organize the community and evolve suitable structures for such participation by the community; therefore recommends that NGOs should be involved not only in the task of community organization but also in policy formation and monitoring and evaluation.

ii) Non-Governmental organizations which are community based, non-political and are constituted by the marginalised people and have a close and effective rapport with the people they work, may be given their due recognition and effectively utilized in planning, implementation and management of programmes at grassroots level in both urban and rural areas.

iii) A catalogue enlisting all Non-Governmental and community organizations involved in Local Body Administration both in rural and urban areas be prepared immediately, for involving them in formulation of plans, implementation and monitoring local area programmes of action. Their representatives can participate in various committees that are constituted for formulation of the programmes and monitoring of its implementations.

iv) Adoption of a bottom up approach to plan for urban poverty alleviation may be resorted to for starting from the micro plans at the community level and developing them into the town/district/metropolitan plans as envisaged in the 74th constitutional amendment, and also to develop a total city plan for the urban poor.

v) NGOs and wherever possible, Organisations like Scout and N.S.S. can be involved for the proper maintenance of community infrastructure like water supply, roads, street lighting etc.

vi) In Schools and Colleges, in their curriculum, the need for proper maintenance of core civic services, involvement of the students and the people in this affair, must be included.