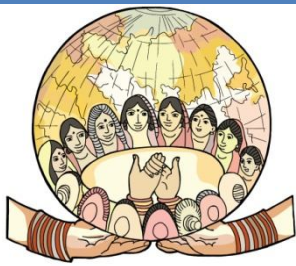


2012

REPORT – APRIL TO DECEMBER 2012



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SUGRAMA – Grama Panchayat Chunayitha
Mahila Prathinidhigala Sangha - Karnataka

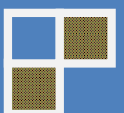


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ACRONYMS

ANSSIRD	Abdul Nazir Saab State Institute for Rural Development
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CDPO	Child Development Protection Officer
EWR	Elected Woman Representative
GP	Grama Panchayat
LSG	Local Self Government
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MP	Member of Parliament
MSK	Mahila Samakhya Karnataka
NGO	Non Government Organisation
PRI	Panchayat Raj Institution
RDPR	Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department
SC	Steering Committee
THP	The Hunger Project
TP	Taluk Panchayat
WCDD	Women and Child Development Department
ZP	Zilla Panchayat

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

SUGRAMA, registered under the Societies registration Act of Karnataka, 1960 in March 2010, is a state association of Gram Panchayat elected women leaders in Karnataka. A membership based organization, SUGRAMA, at present reaches out to 17 Districts, has a 2 tier structure, is supported by 51 Taluk associations in these Districts and enjoys a membership base of more than 3000 elected women representatives.

The process of establishing SUGRAMA has been participatory, democratic and based on the principles of inclusion. Over a period of 18 months, an interim steering committee of 7 EWRs representing 8 districts put in place the building blocks that would help form a practical, impactful and sustainable state association. The members themselves formed rules related to issues of membership, elections, structure, reservation and fee collection.

SUGRAMA is an association representing the rights and interests of Grama Panchayat elected women representatives of Karnataka. Incumbent elected women representatives and one term ex EWRs can be its members. SUGRAMA is also a platform where women members can come together in solidarity and support each other to bring about change and advocate for better policies. Their reasons for joining SUGRAMA are centered on accessing development for their Panchayats, addressing issues of social and gender justice and advocating for their rights as elected political representatives. Issues have ranged from the need to address caste and gender discrimination, deal with male domination and atrocity, remove corruption, advocate for basic infrastructure in the villages and support women's leadership.

The reporting period April – December 2012 is primarily an extension of the programmes enunciated during the period 2011 – 12. The activities of SUGRAMA have been women centric and looked at the three main components – governance, social justice, economic development and gender formalized at the Samavesha of SUGRAMA held on September 2010.

SUGRAMA entered into a consultancy contract with The Hunger Project for the period 2011 - 12 for an amount of Rs. 10 lakh. Though SUGRAMA was able to complete some of the activities planned, the members were keen to undertake the pending tasks. In view of the activities and the budget, SUGRAMA requested for a no-cost extension upto December 2012.

The main activities undertaken during this period were:

State	Taluk Level
Samavesha – Annual General Body Meeting	Conducting taluk level meetings of the taluk federations
ToT for SUGRAMA Steering Committee members	Formation of new Taluk federation at Puttur
Visit of SALAR delegation to SUGRAMA	Members advocating for their rights and privileges through signature campaigns, dharnas, etc.
Stakeholders meeting – proposed amendments	Conducting press meets thereby increasing visibility of a common platform for members
Conducting Steering Committee Meetings at regular intervals and strategizing the activities of the federation	Enhancing their capabilities by attending the training programmes and other programmes of The Hunger Project, Partner Organizations and other CSOs
Networking with likeminded organizations / individuals and joining them in protests, dharnas	SUGRAMA members acquiring posts at other networks and groups/committees
Attending meetings of likeminded institutions and civil society organizations – state and taluk level	SUGRAMA members conducting dharna on violence against women at taluks
Exposure Visit to KILA, Kerala	Raising revenues through renewal of membership and inducting new members
Auditing of Accounts and Filing of Returns	SUGRAMA members contesting elections for President and Vice President and elected

OUTCOMES:

During the year, SUGRAMA was able to cut across the barriers and enunciate women as 'change agents', they have broken all the myths associated with the women – historical subjugation as well as fears of '*being proxies*' – dominated by their men and caste. As change makers, women members were able to outnumber the voices of men representatives. This truly has made these 'powerless' women to be more assertive, communicative, vocal and powerful.

The myth of having powers as mere representatives, with power being shelved with the men in their family has been overpowered.

Women members were able to voice their concerns against the lackadaisical functioning of the government officials and were successful in bringing good practices in the local self government. They were fruitful in also voicing against issues affecting women and have been looking at addressing issues of violence, harassment, etc.

The training programmes of The Hunger Project, ANSSIRD and other civil society organizations have enabled in enhancing their capabilities. Women members who were found less assertive and having no knowledge about the government earlier have now seen articulating for their rights and interacting with the government officials. This can be termed as **success – an ‘effervescent radiance’** considering the magnitude of their performance both at their Grama Panchayats and also at the SUGRAMA meetings.

SUGRAMA members have participated actively in the 15 day campaign – Violence against Women and conducted programmes at the taluk level. Further, they reacted sharply with cases of sexual assault on women especially the Delhi incident and put in their voices in the taluks.

WAY FORWARD:

SUGRAMA has been able to create a niche for itself in the local self government arena and has been successful in enabling women exercise their rights in an effective manner. The backbone of SUGRAMA has been the taluk level federations. Hence, there is a need to strengthen the taluk level federations and sustain them as they have a bearing on the state level.

SUGRAMA also has been looking at increasing the taluk federations. Puttur taluk federation was formed during this period by Jana Shikshana Trust. SUGRAMA currently is formed in 51 taluks of 17 districts of Karnataka. Of the taluks, 36 are vibrant, while the others need to improve.

SUGRAMA – GRAMA PANCHAYAT CHUNAYITHA MAHILA PRATHINIDHIGALA SANGHA – KARNATAKA

REPORT - APRIL 2012 – DECEMBER 2012

INTRODUCTION

In the reporting period April 2012 to December 2012, the main aim for SUGRAMA has been to function as an independent organization by undertaking advocacy efforts on behalf of its members, increasing its membership base and raising its organizational profile. The objectives were as follows:

- ✓ To sustain its operational platform
- ✓ Increase its financial capability by inducting new members to SUGRAMA and initiate the process of renewal of old membership
- ✓ To function as an independent body and conduct its own activities

PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES:

STATE LEVEL PROGRAMMES:

The reporting period saw many activities at the state level. The major highlight of the period was the visit of SALAR delegation to Bangalore for interactions with the Steering Committee members. The delegation visited Bangalore twice – September and November. SUGRAMA also convened its annual general body – Samavesha. SUGRAMA steering committee members underwent training for 4 days in Mysore. Besides, members of SUGRAMA were taken to an exposure visit to Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), Thrissur, Kerala.

SAMAVESHA – ANNUAL GENERAL BODY MEETING:

SUGRAMA conducted its Annual General Body Meeting – Samavesha on April 26, 2012 at Bangalore. The Samavesha brought together 60 EWRs – primarily the Presidents of the Taluk Federation of SUGRAMA. Dr. Shalini Rajneesh, IAS, Secretary to RDPR Department, Government of Karnataka presided over the meeting. The members interacted with the Secretary and placed the issues confronting them in their panchayats. Dr. Shalini Rajneesh reciprocated well and mentioned the efficacy of

women representatives in bringing in a change in local self government. She also applauded the members of setting up a forum – SUGRAMA which has given them a platform to address their grievances. She apprised members about SAKALA and hinted on SUGRAMA to be merged with Mahila Shakti Abhiyana set by the Government.

TRAINING TO STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Hunger Project Karnataka conducted Training to the Steering Committee members of SUGRAMA for a period of 4 days – May 23 – 27, 2012 at ODP Campus, Mysore. The objectives of the training programme are as below:

- To bring clarity on roles/responsibilities of SUGRAMA members/ EC committee/ Taluk federations/ Director
- To bring clarity on relationship between GP- Taluk- State level federation and linkages between them.
- To bring clarity on proper identification of issues and where to address it- GP- Taluk- State
- To bring clarity among SUGRAMA members about their responsibility and roles to strengthen Taluk federations.
- To better understanding on collective leadership in the context of equality and positive utilization of power.
- To bring clarity on team work- collective approach, sharing of responsibilities, participation, conflict resolutions.

The Training looked at giving inputs to the SC members on gender, SWOT analysis, SUGRAMA, collective approach, powerful and powerless, equality, leadership and advocacy initiatives of SUGRAMA. This paved way for members to conceptualize the action plans for SUGRAMA. Further, the training gave clarity to the roles and responsibilities of President, Secretary, Treasurer, Members and Director. This enabled in building close coordination between them.

VISIT OF SALAR DELEGATION TO BANGALORE

SUGRAMA during this period obtained an opportunity to meet the delegation of SALAR – Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, Sweden who were on a study visit to New Delhi and Bangalore. SUGRAMA saw the presence of three representatives of SALAR in its Samavesha and this was followed by the delegation headed by Mr. Anders Knape, President of the Board, SALAR. The first delegation met members on September 13, 2012 and constituted office bearers and members of the

board. The second delegation headed by Ms. Lotta Hakansson Harju, President of the Committee and Mayor of the Municipality of Jarfalla constituted 10 representatives – Mayors of Municipalities of Sweden.

SUGRAMA Steering Committee members met the delegations and interacted with them on the activities, achievements of SUGRAMA and obtained inputs from the Swedish delegation about the functioning of local self government in Sweden. The Director made a power point presentation about SUGRAMA to both the delegations.

In recognition of the commitment and work of SUGRAMA, SALAR donated an amount of 5000 USD to SUGRAMA during its second study visit to Bangalore.

STAKEHOLDERS MEETING

The Government of Karnataka had proposed to make some amendments to the Karnataka Panchayat Raj in view of the constant demand for increasing the tenure of GP Presidents and Vice Presidents from 30 months to 60 months, so also of the direct elections. In view of this, the RDPR department, under the leadership of the then Minister for RDPR – Shri. Jagadish Shettar (currently, the Chief Minister of Karnataka) set up a committee to study about the pros and cons of the proposed changes to the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act.

The committee proposed several changes to the KPR – all three tiers of the local self government and uploaded the same in the website of the RDPR department. There was a need to look at the positive and negative aspects of the proposed amendments, as most of the proposed amendments seem to be deterrent to the functioning of the elected representatives. Hence, a stakeholders meeting with the Hunger Project, Steering Committee members, partner organizations of The Hunger Project was conducted on September 14, 2012 by The Hunger Project headed by Ms. Veda Bharadwaj, Programme Officer, The Hunger Project, New Delhi. Discussions were conducted between the participants and each amendment was scrutinized and it was decided that SUGRAMA shall conduct activities such as jatha, signature campaigns and press meet, amongst others to entice the government to revoke the negative aspects of the proposed amendments. Letters were sent by both state and taluk level SUGRAMA federations with signature campaigns, etc. Discussions were held with other civil society organizations and SUGRAMA was successful in reinstating the current status and stop the passing of the proposed amendments.

EXPOSURE VISIT TO KERALA

Members of SUGRAMA – Grama Panchayat Chunayitha Mahila Prathinidhigala Sangha – Karnataka (both Steering Committee members and select Taluk Presidents with Director) and representatives of The Hunger Project, Karnataka (list of participants attached) visited Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), Thrissur, Kerala between October 8 and 12, 2012. This visit was planned and finalized by The Hunger Project for the members of SUGRAMA.

The primary aim of the exposure visit was to enable SUGRAMA members to learn from the experiences of local self government in Kerala and share their experiences with the members of the Grama Panchayats of Kerala. Of the 4 days of the exposure visit, two were field visits to GPs while two were in-house training programmes. The SUGRAMA members upon experiencing the functioning of the grama panchayats are now looking at replicating some of the activities as being undertaken by the GPs at Kerala.

MEMBERS MEETING THE RDPR MINISTER

The Steering Committee members along with Advisory Committee member – Shilpa and Director – Padmini Ananth met Shri. Jagadish Shettar, Minister, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department, Government of Karnataka on April 3, 2012 firstly to finalise the date of the samavesha and secondly invite him as Chief Guest for the Samavesha. After discussions with the Minister, it was decided that the Samavesha be conducted on April 26, 2012. Discussions were also held with him regarding housing schemes, pensions, electricity, etc. The Minister promised to take up the issues after his interaction with SUGRAMA members at the Samavesha.

SHARING OF INFORMATION – STATE TO TALUK

This has been a crucial and an important activity of SUGRAMA. Consistent information sharing is vital for the progress of SUGRAMA. The issues of taluk level when unsolved, needs to be taken up at the state level and hence there is a need for sharing of information between taluk and state level. Hence, this was successfully resolved through the newsletter – SUGRAMADA DHWANI done by the Director at the state level. The information so given in the newsletter is sought from the taluk level. Each taluk president has been told to send in their reports – activity, issue, participation in meetings, representing SUGRAMA in other platforms and programmes through SUGRAMA. These are then consolidated in the newsletter prepared on quarterly basis. Though efforts are made to obtain reports from taluk presidents, many of the taluk presidents – including the Steering Committee members have failed to do so. But with

the information obtained through interactions, this lacuna is being taken care of. The newsletter is first prepared in English and then translated to Kannada and sent to the Taluk Presidents/SC members.

SUGRAMA WEBSITE/VIDEO DOCUMENTATION

The Hunger Project initiated the process of designing a website for SUGRAMA. Thereupon, the process of developing a website was initiated and it was decided that the website shall be designed, uploaded and maintained by a professional consultant– Ms. Angeline Pradhan, The Other Design Studio, Bangalore. The website shall contain the basics – Vision/Mission, Objectives of SUGRAMA in addition to activities conducted and achievements. Initially, it was felt that the contract shall be made between The Hunger Project and The Other Design Studio. But due to technical problems, it was decided that a contract be made between The Hunger Project and SUGRAMA and SUGRAMA therein shall undertake a contract with The Other Design Studio. An amount of Rs. 1.5 lakh was obtained by The Hunger Project to SUGRAMA for the website and video documentation.

As part of building a website, it was felt that video recordings of SUGRAMA members could be uploaded. Accordingly, three video recordings – Renuka, Bhagya and Lakshmi Bai were done during this period. The videos are of 3-minute duration and are being uploaded to the website. Video recordings of other select members shall be done.

Prior to the process of initiating a website, the logo of SUGRAMA was digitized. Accordingly, the logo was digitized by Ms. Angeline Pradhan, The Other Design Studio, Bangalore.

DOCUMENTATION

During this period, The Hunger Project developed four posters – Grama Sabha, Domestic Violence, Child Marriage and NREGA as well as two booklets – Panchayat Raj and Women's Rights. SUGRAMA Director was a part of the process of developing the posters and the booklets.

TALUK FEDERATION:

During this period, SUGRAMA organized taluk level federation meetings at the taluks. SUGRAMA during the consultancy period conducted 37 meetings at the taluk level. These were the first round of meetings, while one more round of meetings needed to be conducted. During this period, SUGRAMA was successful in completing the first round of meetings in 43 taluks and 12 second round meetings. In addition, SUGRAMA undertook campaigns/jatha programmes in 10 taluks. The members undertook jathas in the taluk with respect to the proposed amendments to Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act and also on violence against women.

The taluks covered during this period were:

Campaigns/jathas – proposed amendments/VAW		Second Round		First Round
Chickballapur	Sringeri	Belur	Bidar	Mandya
Gauribidanur	Kadur	Virajapet	Chennagiri	Tarikere
Shidlaghatta	Bhadravathi	Maddur	Kadur	Bagepalli
Shira	Tarikere	Sringeri	Bhadravathi	Srirangapatna
Madhugiri	N.R. Pura	Koppa	Gauribidanur	T. Narasipura
Belur	Chennagiri	Chickballapur	Shira	Kolar
Koppa	Srirangapatna			
T. Narasipura	Maddur			
Shira	Koratagere			

FIRST ROUND OF MEETINGS

The primary aim of the first round of taluk level meetings was to look at the performance of the functioning of the taluk level and analyze and strategize a suitable action plan to increase its performance. The meetings primarily highlighted the following:

- Review of Progress of activities of the Taluk level
- Achievements documented
- Membership mobilisation –New / Renewal
- Action plan for next 3 months (with advocacy initiatives)
- Roles and responsibilities of EC members in Taluk level.

The members also discussed about the need to sustain SUGRAMA at the taluk level.

SECOND ROUND OF MEETINGS

The second round of meetings at the taluk level primarily looked at the issues faced by the members and the advocacy initiatives at the taluk level. The members undertook signature campaigns, submitting memorandums to the taluk officials and interacting with the officials. During the process,

the issues covered were nonpayment of sitting fees/honorarium, awareness generation rallies on grama sabha, transfer of title deeds, corruption in NREGA, direct elections, tenure of GP President, etc.

The members of Bantwala Taluk along with the office bearers conducted a meeting of SUGRAMA on their own. It is to be noted that the taluk conducts its monthly meetings without fail wherein discussions are held on issues affecting the GP members and conducting meetings at the GP level. The members felt that in order to cut down the costs of the meetings, the members decided to conduct the meetings in their GPs wherein the member shall take the responsibility of food.

JATHAS/OTHER PROGRAMMES CONDUCTED

Proposed amendments to the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act

SUGRAMA has been advocating for the 5-year tenure of the Grama Panchayat Presidents and Vice Presidents. This was also voiced by other NGOs and associations. The Government of Karnataka taking the recommendation into consideration set up a committee to study the pros and cons of increasing the tenure. The committee placed several propositions to the government with respect to bringing in changes to the three tiers of local self government. Accordingly, the committee stated the increase in 5-year tenure, conducting ward/grama sabha once in 3 months, members declaring assets, etc. While these suggestions were found welcoming, other suggestions such as taking away the powers of members and transferring them to the officials with respect to selection of beneficiaries, etc. were detrimental to the functioning of local self government. SUGRAMA undertook jatha/dharna, signature campaigns and other such activities and submitted memorandum to the government seeking the withdrawal of such proposed amendments which are detrimental to their functioning.

Violence against Women - Campaign at the Taluk Level

The Hunger Project, Karnataka undertook a 15-day campaign on violence against women. The campaign was primarily to create awareness amongst issues affecting women – especially violence of all forms. SUGRAMA conducted jathas at the taluk level. The jathas organized at Srirangapatna and Gauribidanur evoked good response from the community. While SHG women also participated in the event, the local schools also evinced their support. The high school students of a government school in Gauribidanur also joined the walkathon of about 5 kms. The BEO also supported the jatha. Later, a memorandum was submitted to the Tahsildar. Similarly, the women actively participated in Srirangapatna joined by SHG women and submitted a memorandum to the Tahsildar. The jatha conducted at T.Narasipura also evoked good response.

SUGRAMA members also conducted jathas, silent protests and dharna protesting against the crimes being meted out to women including the recent Delhi incident. SUGRAMA members joined hands with other organizations and women's associations and undertook mass rallies. The rally at Gauribidanur evoked good response by other platforms and the general public. The rally was also televised in the local channels and widely covered in the newspapers.

SUGRAMA has signed a petition opposing the Water Policy and demand for its withdrawal. A letter has also been forwarded by SUGRAMA to the Minister.

BUILDING THE CAPACITIES OF ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES

During this period, the members of SUGRAMA have participated in the programmes conducted by The Hunger Project through its partner NGOs in the respective taluks and districts. The members of SUGRAMA have had interactions with the government officials. These meetings enabled members to interact with the officials of various departments at the taluk and know more about the schemes, panchayat functioning, etc. Further, the members actively participated in Grama Sabha Mobilisation, awareness creation on Violence against Women and participated in the street plays, etc. Vrunda, President, Bantwala Taluk took up an 8-day rally in her taluk to create awareness on the mandatory requirement of conducting ward sabha and grama sabha.

SUGRAMA's aim has been to connect its members to the ongoing training programmes for elected women representatives on governance and leadership of other NGOs and SIRD (State Institute for Rural Development) in the state.

SUGRAMA members have also joined other networks and platforms and have participated actively in their programmes and meetings. Further, they have participated in the programmes of Grama Panchayat Hakkotaya Andolana, SWARAJ, Date Charitable Society, Mahila Samakhya Karnataka and other civil society organizations and NGOs. SUGRAMA members participated in the interaction meeting at Gauribidanur with Ms. Nandana Reddy and Mr. Damodar Acharya. Members also participated in the Water Campaign at Bijapur and other districts.

Four SUGRAMA members participated in the Women's Political Empowerment Day conducted by Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi on 24-25, April 2012. These members representing Kolar district spoke about SUGRAMA and formed the large gathering of EWRs from Karnataka. This helped SUGRAMA to gain more visibility in platforms at national level.

SUGRAMA members have been actively participating in the Orientation workshops and meetings of Jagruthi Vedike being conducted by The Hunger Project through its partner organizations. SUGRAMA members especially two Steering Committee members – Asha G. Shetty and Mani T.S., and

two Taluk representatives – Sudha Mohan and Jayamma participated in the Sarojini Naidu Prize 2012 held in New Delhi. Sudha Mohan was also interviewed at this event.

SUGRAMA members especially the Steering Committee members participated in the event conducted by Pension Parishat – a network of organizations working towards the upliftment of poor and enabling them to get pensions. The network primarily stated regularization of pensions – old age, widow, handicapped, etc. and increasing them.

DEMANDING ACCOUNTABILITY AND PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNANCE

The taluk federation members of SUGRAMA apart from conducting the above programmes undertook other initiatives at the taluk level. These initiatives had an impact in the functioning of the local self government and resulted in great visibility to SUGRAMA. Following have been the initiatives/activities of the members of taluk level:

- ✓ SUGRAMA members of Shira Taluk found irregularities in the GP and the collection of bribe by the Secretary for transfer of title deeds. The members created uproar and this resulted in the visit of EO who took action on the secretary.
- ✓ Members of Udupi, Mangalore and Bantwala involved in Shramadhana activities
- ✓ Members of Bantwala Taluk took up a mass rally programme for 7 days and visited all GPs to raise their awareness on the participation of the community in grama sabha/ward sabha. Similarly members of Maddur taluk organized/participated in the street plays to create awareness on grama sabha.
- ✓ Members of Chennagiri taluk conducting a press meet demanding direct election of GP Presidents and their tenure to 5 years.
- ✓ Letter campaign by members of taluk federations of Chickmagalur on nonpayment of honorarium, sitting fees, seeking direct elections, increasing the tenure of the GP President, etc
- ✓ Members of Virajapet taluk participated in the children's grama sabha and took active role in it.
- ✓ Members of SUGRAMA also raised their voice against the lack of information about the developmental works undertaken by the TP and ZP in the GP
- ✓ Members of SUGRAMA were successful in acting as mediators between the community and the panchayat in helping them avail the schemes and facilities of the Government. They have also raised voices against the improper functioning of the PDS depot. Members also helped the community in submitting online application forms.
- ✓ As a redressal platform, members have been successful in resolving petty issues within the panchayat limits. This has helped them to be noticeable in their villages/panchayats.

- ✓ The taluk presidents of Maddur, Bantwala, Shira and Gauribidanur are also attending the taluk meetings of other taluks and sharing about their taluks
- ✓ Members of Muddebihal taluk have attended training programmes on Panchayat Raj system, health, education, agriculture and have in turn trained 30 women across their panchayat. They have also looked at socio-economic and political empowerment through such trainings.
- ✓ Members of Aurad taluk have raised their voices against the high levels of corruption in NREGA by the Secretary and PDO. Through SUGRAMA, they are now contemplating at conducting mass programmes, letter campaign and meeting Lokayukta officials.
- ✓ Members of Chickballapur, Gauribidanur, Shidlaghatta and Bagepalli were part of the district wide protest with respect to permanent water source to the district.
- ✓ Members of Bidar, Gulbarga participated in the protests regarding the Hyderabad Karnataka region, while members of Bijapur protested against being a part of the region
- ✓ Members of SUGRAMA across all taluks have been associated with other platforms and associations and this has resulted in expanding the horizons of SUGRAMA.
- ✓ Members of Belur taluk fought against the orders of the government regarding one post one person to the GP members who are also anganawadi workers. Members reiterated that the current status be continued until the next elections.

FORMATION OF NEW TALUK FEDERATION – PUTTUR TALUK

SUGRAMA has always been looking at expanding its horizons to other districts and taluks. While SUGRAMA evinced formation of 5 taluk federations during this period, this could not be completed directly by SUGRAMA. But with the support of Jana Shikshana Trust and SUGRAMA, a new taluk federation was formed at Puttur Taluk. The following are the office bearers of Puttur Taluk:

Sl. No.	Name	Grama Panchayat	Designation
1	Rajivi	Kenlige	President
2	Neelavathi	Kadaba	Vice President
3	P.T. Leelavathi	Ramakunja	Secretary
4	Lakshmi	Belandur	Treasurer
5	Zara	Ariyadka	Director
6	Pushpa	Koyla	Director
7	Sesamma	Bannur	Director

RAISING THE ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE OF SUGRAMA:

In order to increase the visibility of SUGRAMA and also to build alliances with other network organizations and NGOs, SUGRAMA members including the President and the Director attended meetings of other network organizations and NGOs. Some of the meetings attended are as follows:

1. SUGRAMA members attended the Women's Political Empowerment Day at New Delhi.
2. Vani, Joint Secretary participated in the residential training programme of Mahila Samakhya
3. Consultation meeting on Status of Women in Karnataka organized by ISST, Bangalore.
4. The President participated in the Farmers Training Programme at GKVK Campus.
5. Supporting the Right to Food Campaign which advocates for regularization of Public Distribution System and Pensions – Pension Parishad.
6. Participating and supporting the initiatives of Jana Vikasa, an NGO in Tumkur district.
7. Four SUGRAMA members participated in the Sarojini Naidu Prize 2012 event at New Delhi.
8. The Director participated in the meeting on regularization of PDS conducted by CIVIC, Bangalore and another by ISI at Bangalore.
9. The Director also participated in the 3-day civil society meeting of Open Space in Bangalore.
10. Director represented SUGRAMA in discussions with MLAs and MLCs conducted by Grama Panchayat Hakkotaya Andolana.
11. SUGRAMA had nominated four members for the Asian Rural Women's Coalition, September 2011. Recognising their services to the poor especially women and working towards their empowerment, the Asian Rural Women's Coalition, Malaysia rewarded the members with certificate of appreciation to Ms. Nagarathna, Ms. Renuka, Ms. Vrunda and Ms. Sudha Mohan.

SUGRAMA AND GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA

SUGRAMA has created a niche in the government departments especially in the RDPR department. SUGRAMA was invited by the Minister and Principal Secretary to discuss about the possibilities of merger with Mahila Shakti Abhiyana and the process of financial sustainability through the government. However, SUGRAMA is not in favour of merger as the very objective of advocacy would be defeated as government is the policy maker and SUGRAMA becomes a part of it with the merger. Also, SUGRAMA opines that the government could help SUGRAMA in gaining visibility and increasing its membership with only GP members but not include TP and ZP as is the case is in Mahila Shakti Abhiyana. SUGRAMA also opines that it is not a training centre or an organization aimed at building capacities but however would support such organizations willing to take up such programmes.

This was followed by meetings with the department officials. SUGRAMA took a stand on being a non-partisan with the Government in conducting programs of the Government.

The President and Director met the Secretary and Principal Secretary of the RDPR department primarily to seek their appointment to enable SUGRAMA members interact with the department personnel after their stand towards the proposed amendments. Both the Principal Secretary and Secretary evinced interest in meeting SUGRAMA members in January 2013.

INTERACTION MEETING WITH VIMOCHANA

During this period, the Director had an interaction with the representatives of VIMOCHANA – Ms. Donna Fernandez and Ms. Madhu. The interaction primarily was to look at building an alliance between SUGRAMA and VIMOCHANA to enable the organizations to work together with respect to violence against women. VIMOCHANA primarily sought the support of SUGRAMA for conducting activities/programmes in Kolar.

VISITS TO TALUKS

The President, Renuka and the members have been making occasional visits to taluks to attend the meetings of the Partner Organisation. In addition to attending these meetings, they have also successfully organized meetings of SUGRAMA at the taluk level. The President accompanied by the Joint Secretary attended the Parliamentarian programme at Koppal and Tumkur.

During this period, the Director attended programmes/ jathas at Koratagere, Gauribidanur, Chickballapur, Bagepalli, Bidar, T. Narasipura, Kolar and Maddur.

INSTITUTIONALISATION OF SUGRAMA:

Institutionalizing of SUGRAMA is needed considering its growth, sustainability being important at this juncture. Hence, there was a need for building the economic base of SUGRAMA for it to be viewed as a credible organization by other stakeholders.

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS:

During this period, SUGRAMA conducted three Steering Committee meetings – two in April and one in August. The meetings conducted in April primarily looked at the planning and decisions regarding the conduct of Samavesha in April. The meeting conducted in August looked at discussions pertaining to website, exposure visit and participation of SUGRAMA in other platforms. While efforts

were made to conduct the meeting of the Advisory Panel, the elections to the post of GP President and Vice President and the busy schedule of the panel members hindered the possibilities of the meeting.

TALUK LEVEL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

During the taluk level meetings conducted by SUGRAMA and the programmes of the partner organizations, it was found that not all office bearers of the taluk level federations were participating in the programmes. Either they were found to be absent continuously or paying no attention to their duties. Hence, it was decided that such office bearers who remained inactive pave way for active members. In this manner, changes were made in taluks of Tumkur, Mandya, Kolar, Bidar districts.

VISIT OF PRESIDENT TO BANGALORE:

The President, Ms. Renuka has been making occasional visits to the office. She has discussions with the Director on the further course of action and activities of SUGRAMA. The visit of the President also enabled the Director to review the current scenario and network with the officials.

CHANGE IN BANK ACCOUNT

Upon shifting the office from Jayanagar to Shantinagar, SUGRAMA in the current period changed its bank account from Banashankari IIInd Stage to Richmond Road branch. Further, SUGRAMA previously had a Current Account in Banashankari IIInd Stage. At the time of shifting the account, the account was also changed to a Savings Bank Account. SUGRAMA now has Savings Bank Account – 32525017783 at Mission Road, Richmond Road Branch, Shantinagar.

AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS

M. S. Kamath and Associates, a Chartered Accountant firm was commissioned to audit the accounts of SUGRAMA State Federation. The accounts of financial year 2011 – 2012 have been audited. SUGRAMA also filed returns for the Tax Deducted on the instalments received from The Hunger Project.

DONATION RECEIVED

The visit of the Sweden delegation twice to Bangalore to meet the Steering Committee members turned to be fruitful to SUGRAMA. The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) donated an amount of 5000 USD to SUGRAMA for its commitment and work. As SUGRAMA does not have a FCRA, it was decided that the donation be romped in through The Hunger Project, wherein SUGRAMA shall seek the funds through a proposal to The Hunger Project, New Delhi.

RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP – REVENUE RAISING

This has been the backbone of SUGRAMA considering its financial sustainability. Being a membership based organization; renewal of membership was the prime activity of SUGRAMA. Besides, SUGRAMA also looked at new memberships in the taluks. It is heartening to note that inspite of the absence of a partner NGO, Vani Gowder, Joint Secretary North representing Bijapur had managed to get the renewal of 19 members of the 21 members and is now concentrating on new memberships.

Renewal of Membership as on December 2012 1954

New Membership 283

Performance levels of taluks:

Vibrant Taluk Federations 36 Moderately Active taluk federations 14

CHALLENGES

- Communication and coordination between the state and taluk level has been challenging. Though the newsletter serves as a media for members to voice their concerns, there has been a considerable delay by the members (including SC members) in sending in their reports.
- Though women members reiterate the need for collective platform, yet with their dual responsibilities at home and politics as well as agriculture, they have been finding it difficult to lend more space and time for SUGRAMA. Hence, there is lack of participation.
- SUGRAMA finds it challenging to keep up the pace of continuity in Gulbarga. Efforts are on to look at a partnership with MSK for organizing meetings of SUGRAMA in Gulbarga and Bijapur.
- Though the ToT and the exposure visit were effective in providing clarity to the members, it is yet to bring in changes in the performance levels of the members.
- Revenue raising especially renewals has been challenging. Members have been trying to defer their payments and the office bearers are not effective in collecting membership renewals. Instead, they are mostly looking at new members.
- Completion of programmes has been challenging, as members keep attending meetings of the partner organizations at regular intervals and hence try to avoid consecutive meetings with their busy schedule. Hence the participation of the members has also been curving.

LEARNINGS

- Regular advocacy at the state level is necessary to keep SUGRAMA visible.
- Regular taluk federation meetings and steering committee meetings are necessary to keep members motivated and action oriented.

- Building linkages with CBOs, NGOs and government officials were deterrent to keep SUGRAMA visible.
- Effective participation of SC members especially office bearers is vital for the smooth functioning of SUGRAMA, though they are experienced to undertake it, their dual role and increased responsibilities at home have hampered their effective functioning. This needs to be counseled to get their effective participation. Attitudinal changes of members through interactions will help in their effective participation.
- There is also a need for ToTs for office bearers especially the Presidents of Taluk federations as it would give them clarity on their roles and responsibilities.

WAY FORWARD:

- Sustaining the finances of SUGRAMA by obtaining funds and grants from other sources & Government agencies
- Launch website to enable wider sharing
- Advocacy and Lobbying - supporting members thus being change agents
- Forming new taluk federations
- Exposure visit of EWRs within the state and outside, to facilitate cross-learning.
- Ensure smooth flow of information from Taluk federation to state and state to taluk
- Conducting jathas and other programmes at the taluk level to keep the momentum of SUGRAMA members and make SUGRAMA visible across all platforms.
- Supporting the state level research of The Hunger project on tenure of Gram Panchayat Presidents

GLIMPSES OF THE PROGRAMMES:







SUGRAMA

**GRAMA PANCHAYAT CHUNAYITHA MAHILA PRATHINIDHIGALA
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