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## The Role of Gram Sabha in empowering Tribal People in Odisha

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### Introduction

Gram Sabha (village assembly) is a concept intending to represent ordinary people needs and wishes which appeals to the general mass of population irrespective of class, caste gender distinction and political partnership. It refers to the supremacy of the people. It enables each and every voter of the village to participate in decision-making at the local level, as the epitome of participatory and direct democracy and is any person which provides valuable input to Gram Panchayat to lead local government effectively. In India, the idea of Gram Sabha is not new although it got more currency after the 73rd Amendment to the constitution and particularly after the extension of this act to the 5th schedule Areas by the Panchayat Act 1996. In Orissa, there has been a cataclysmic change in the empowerment of people through the introduction of the Panchayat Extension Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act 1996. The Act has made it mandatory for nine state having scheduled areas to make specific provisions for giving wide-ranging powers to tribal on matters relating to decision making and development of the community. PESA is a crucial legislation to empower the tribal. Despite myriad steps taken by the policymakers to empower Gram Sabha as well as their performance are deviators, due to lack of training and political interference. Gram Sabha is gradually losing its sting.

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments have conferred the right on every registered voter to directly participate in Governance. The Gram Sabha and Ward Sabha's are the institutionalized foundations for decentralized participatory democracy. The Gram Sabha and Ward Sabha have to play a key role in rendering the Gram Panchayat transparent and directly accountable to the people. The Gram Sabha is a means to solve people's problems and felt needs and to decide how to use the available resources optimally in ways desired by them, to benefit the poorest in the village through direct democratic and participatory planning. The role of Gram Sabha is vital in bringing good governance in the local self-government. The ground reality reveals that the way the Gram Sabha is conducted is not in accordance with expectations. There appear to be several reasons for this situation. The main reasons seem to be the lack of

awareness amongst the elected representatives of PRIs, Ritualistic conduct of the Gram Sabha, information about the Gram Sabha meeting not reaching the people well in advance, sparse attendance at the Gram Sabha, and a lack of cleared understanding amongst the people about the importance and the functions of Gram Sabha. The Planning Commission of India issued guidelines for preparation of decentralized district plans in a bottom-up approach during the 11<sup>th</sup> Five-year plan in the month of August 2006. The guidelines clearly indicated that the village development plans should be prepared by people in a participatory mode through Gram Sabha. The Union Ministry of Panchayat Raj, in its efforts to strengthen the institution of Gram Sabha and improve awareness among the citizens, requested the states to observe the year 2009-10 as the year of the Gram Sabha and to organize awareness campaigns from October 2nd of 2009 to December 2nd of 2010.

Gandhiji often pointed out that India lives in villages and unless village life can be revitalized the nation as a whole can hardly come alive. When India became independent in 1947, perhaps one-third of the villages of India had traditional Panchayats and many of them were far from flourishing conditions. It has, however, always been a problem as to how this concept can be practised effectively in such a way that people could be closely associated with the decision making the process at the grassroots level. It is in this context that Mahatma Gandhi had stated that 'True democracy could not be worked out by some men sitting at the top. It had to be worked out since below by the people of every village'. Article 40 of the Constitution clearly declares 'The State shall take necessary actions to organize village Panchayats and to endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government. The aim was to foster democratic participation, to involve villagers in the development of the community and to reduce the burden of a higher level of administration. With a view to involving people in grassroots governance, various solutions have been considered from time to time.

The Constitution of India, therefore, gave specific importance to the institution of Village Panchayat by enjoining that it shall be the endeavour of the state to take steps to strengthen the village Panchayats.

The 73rd Amendment Act has added a new Part in the constitution Part Nine consisting of 16 Articles and the 11<sup>th</sup> Schedule. The functions of the Panchayati Raj institutions have been clearly spelt out in Article 243G of the Constitution, read with Article 243 ZD and the 11th Schedule. The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are supposed to be genuine institutions of local self-government, not adjuncts to the implementing agencies of State Governments. The constitution, which describes them as institutions of local self-government, says that this status is given to them for two specific purposes: planning for economic development and social justice and implementing these plans. Moreover, it says that this process of empowering them through devolution in order to enable them to plan and implement their own programme of the neighbourhood, economic development and social justice will be governed by the laws of the legislatures of the States. The Constitution says in the 11<sup>th</sup> Schedule that this empowerment shall relate or could relate to the 29 subjects listed in the Schedule. Any form of Panchayati Raj that falls short of this cannot be described as genuine Panchayati Raj.

#### **Origin of the Gram Sabha:**

The experience of the past suggests that the Panchayati Raj System could be a very effective instrument in the process of devolving power to lower to levels for materializing democratic decentralization through people's active participation. The basic philosophy behind this thinking is that the process of development gets accelerated as and when common people identify themselves as active partners in the process of development. Another school of thought advocated by Norman Uphoff (1985), considers "creation of local capacity for resource mobilization and management in support of development programmes", as a principal concern for the existence of institutions of local governance. Whatever the case, the grassroots level institutions of local governance are important instruments in the process of democratic decentralization. Experimentation with one or the other form of democratic decentralization has been going on for quite some time in many developing countries of South and South-East Asia. It has shown mixed results. In the context of India, particularly rural India, the Panchayats have been providing the institutional mechanism for such democratic decentralization. It is a well-known fact that Panchayats in one form or the other have existed India since long.

After independence, although the draft Constitution of India did not make any mention of Panchayats, a mention was added in the final draft under Article 40 in the chapter on 'Directive Principles of State Policy'. It states, "The State should take steps to organize Village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self- government." This provision of the Constitution was primarily advisory and not taken seriously. Immediately after the independence the policy planners got engaged in experimenting with the Community Development Programme (CDP) for most of the 1950s. It was only in 1959, that the Panchayati Raj System came into existence in a formal way after the Study Team headed by Balwantrai Mehta expressed concern about the lack of popular participation in the Community Development Programme and made a strong plea for the devolution of power to lower levels through Panchayati Raj.

During the 1980s, various committees were constituted to suggest measures which could be taken to revive the Panchayati Raj System in India. The G.V.K. Rao Committee commissioned in 1985 to look into administrative arrangements for rural development suggested devolution of powers and authority to the village panchayats. In 1986, the L.M. Singhvi Committee pleaded for the constitutional recognition of apart from attaching great importance to, the Gram Sabha. The Sarkaria Commission on Center- State relations recommenced strengthening of panchayats financially and functionally. In 1989, the Congress Committee headed by V.N.Gadgil recommended a tree- tier system, five years term and reservation for weaker sections. After a great deal of debate through various committees for almost over three decades, we reached the threshold of reactivating the Panchayati Raj System, this time armed with the Constitution (73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment) Act, 1992. This was followed by Conformity Acts passed by the State Governments and elections to panchayats were held throughout the country. As a result of this revolutionary legislation, we witnessed that about 3.4 million people were elected throughout the country. It included more than one million women, most of whom made it to these bodies for the first time.

Equitable and just social and economic development pre-supposes the active involvement of the vast majority of the people in the process of development itself. Although we may feel justly proud of our achievements in various fields, large majorities of our people, especially those in

rural areas, are still not active participants in the process of development. The primary reason for this imbalance is that the grass-roots level democratic institutions do not have any significant role in determining the directions of development. The revival of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) through the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment of the Constitution of India was to correct this imbalance and to endow PRIs with the strength and prestige associated with self-governance structures sanctified by the Constitution itself.

It is necessary to mention here that local-government is a subject mentioned in the state list incorporated in Schedule VII of the Constitution. Thus, the state legislatures have the required authority to decide about the structure, organization, functions, finances and all other issues concerning the process of local self-governance. This was the reason why various states adopted various types of PRIs- a varied number of the tier, various names, different methods of elections to the different tiers, different powers and functions and different financial support systems, before the enactment of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment. The Constitution (73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment) Act-1992 has given constitutional status to the panchayats as institutions of self-government. It provides for certain mandatory provisions which were considered essential for bringing in uniformity and for the sustenance of these institutions. The amendment is an important landmark in the process of democratic decentralization because it has given legal recognition to the three-tier system of governance with Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) at the district, intermediary and village levels, except in those states where the population is less than 20 lakhs. For them, a two-tier system is prescribed. It also expects the state to devolve adequate powers, responsibilities and finances upon these bodies so as to enable them to function as effective institutions of self-governance and to prepare plans and implement schemes for economic development and social justice. The expectation is that it will help improve the delivery of some of the public goods and services. Basically, the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act provides a basis framework for the decentralization of powers and authorities to the Panchayats. It is the responsibility of states to give it a practical shape. And the state is expected to act in consonance with the spirit behind the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment for establishing a strong and viable system of local self-government in India.

About 14 years have passed since the enactment of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment and during this period elections have been held twice in most of the states. The process of democratic

decentralization set in motion by this historic legislation was expected to direct towards achieving the goal of self-governance by the people. "It implies that they have to be democratic in nature "(through regular and mandatory elections) with allocated values, priorities, and policies and should have been able to adjudicate over conflicts under their jurisdiction." What we find in its actual implementation is that while the mandatory provisions of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment have been followed, the state legislation differs considerably as far as the devolution of powers and functions to the panchayats in concerned. Article 243G of the Act states, "Subject to the provisions of the Constitution, the legislature of a state may by law, endow the Panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government and such law may contain provisions for devolution of powers and responsibilities upon the panchayats at the appropriate level, subject to such conditions as may be specified therein, with respect to (a) the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice; (b) the implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them including those in relation to the matters listed in the Eleventh Schedule. "It appears that necessary amount of thought could not be given between the enactment of Seventy-third Constitutional Amendment and subsequent state legislation. It turned out to be a race for catching the deadline rather than realistic thinking. In most cases, some amendments were incorporated in the already existing State Acts to make them look, ostensibly in conformity with the Seventy-third Amendment." A number of amendments brought in various State Acts, over the past decade, now have not succeeded in catching up with the spirit of self- governance embodied in the Amendment yet.

In the Eleventh Schedule, there are 29 items ranging from agriculture, minor irrigation, mining of minor minerals to small-scale industries as the functional areas of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The Schedule also mentions education, health, literacy and sports. The welfare activities of the weaker sections and the disabled are also expected to be under the jurisdiction of PRIs. The responsibilities of rural housing, drinking water, non-conventional energy, women and child development, family welfare, social forestry and khadi and village industries are all expected to be assigned to PRIs. It seems that the "Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), in effect, on paper are expected to be entrusted with the entire burden of rural development that the national and state

governments have failed to shoulder". The 'Activity Mapping' did not receive any serious consideration so far. The experience of a decade and a half long post –Amendment period reveals that the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment in general and Article 243G, in particular, have not been implemented in letter and spirit. It seems that there is large-scale overlapping of functions/ areas of responsibilities among the three levels of PRIs on the one hand and between the PRIs and the state agencies on the other. The situation has been further complicated by the lack of the basic awareness regarding the Panchayati Raj system and how to carry out assigned responsibilities among most of the elected members of panchayats. "One point that was meant to be not negotiable was the concept of 'institution of self-government'. But it lost its identity in the legal verbiage. This has resulted in conceptual confusion." Whatever the case may be, the fact remains that even after having been conferred constitutional status through the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment about a decade and a half back, the panchayats have not emerged as genuine institutions for participatory self- government.

There are a number of factors responsible for such a state of affairs. One of these factors, which contributes to the present situation also, is the lack of awareness about the concept, meaning and functioning of Panchayati Raj both in retrospect and prospect on the part of elected members of Panchayats. We still lack a clear-cut training policy for capacity building, so badly needed to materialize the concept of democratic decentralization through Panchayati Raj. As a result, there is hardly any visible impact of the sporadic training interventions made by the mushroom growth of government and non-government training institutions. We have been generating a lot of literature on the subjective of Panchayati Raj, highlighting at times isolated successes which do not get replicated later or elsewhere. Invariably this literature is not in the format suitable for and the language of a common man, we consume it among ourselves. We have witnessed the absence of preparedness stemming from a lack of knowledge and awareness on the part of elected members to shoulder responsibilities. To overcome this issue, as a first step, it is not only necessary but also crucial that elected members of the panchayats are adequately equipped with the knowledge and awareness about the concepts and practices of self- governance along with that of the mandatory provisions of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act. This could also serve as resource material apart from its reinforcing and be supplementing the ongoing training and other activities



focusing on the various aspects of the state-specific acts and other details. The present publication on 'Panchayati Raj in India' is a modest attempt to have a look at Panchayati Raj System in retrospect and prospect. It is basically meant for those who are responsible to materialize the concept of democratic decentralization through Panchayati Raj in the country. It briefly looks at the historical background, analyses post-independence period leading to the enactment of the Constitution (73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment) Act-1992, discuss its main features and the post-amendment scenario. Finally, it analyses Principles of Local Governance before concluding with some thoughts on 'Empowerment of Panchayats- A perspective'.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act envisages Gram Sabha as the foundation of grassroots democracy that provided a constitutional sanction to the institution which has ensured the independent status of Village Panchayat. Article 243(A) of the Constitution read. "A Gram Sabha may exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the legislature of a State may by law provide". This simple provision in the Constitution has enabled the state legislatures to empower Gram Sabha by assigning the statutory powers to it. This means if the State Legislature desires, the Gram Sabha can only be strengthened. Similarly, the Article 243(8) "Gram Sabha consists of all persons registered as voters in the electoral roll relating to the village comprised within the area of the Panchayat at the village level. The concept behind giving primacy to this body is that this should work like General Body of the village and the Village Panchayat / Gram Panchayat should function as its Executive Body. Another word, Gram Sabha is a constitutional body of democracy and is the main source of authority and powers that are enjoyed by the institution constituted by the elected representatives that is the Gram Panchayat. Hence, the Gram Sabha is the center of democratic power in the local governance system and the Centre of village development and planning activity. The basic philosophy of the concept of Gram Sabha is that 'let people plan and decide about the development of their own village'. Article 243(6) of the Constitution of India enabled the state governments to empower the Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs) to function as institutions of local self-government and ask to plan and implement schemes programmes for economic development and social justice.



Thus, the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act provides a unique opportunity to promote low self-governance in the rural area. This is not governance carried out through an elected representative, not merely a representative democracy, but this is governance carried out by a direct, active and full participation of people. Hence, the Gram Sabha in the village is the final form of governance of village affairs that includes the definition of public good for all people of the village and creation of the mechanism for managing the resources, both natural and human available in the village. It is not a system where individuals elected as representatives of the village take a decision on behalf of the villagers, rather, it is a system where all the villagers are involved in a process of face to face interaction, dialogue and decision making in order to collectively govern their own affairs. The enormous literature on Panchayati Raj Institutions variously labelled the Gram Sabha. According to Jain (1997), it is the gateway to grassroots democracy, the base of Panchayati Raj (Dutta, 1994), one of the most important three basic institutions of new, direct democracy of village level (Narayanaswamy, 1995). It is devised to ensure greater participation of people and for more effective implementation of village development programmes. Gram Sabha is a participatory decision-making process, functions as a mechanism to plan, monitors and evaluates the development activities carried on by the Panchayat. Thus, all the activities carried out by Gram Panchayat have to get the approval of Gram Sabha and as such, it takes up the responsibility of introducing direct accountability of Panchayat Raj Institutions to people. 'The Gram Sabha, is therefore, expected to accord approval for different activities relating to schemes, programs, plans and also a selection of beneficiaries of different programmes of government.

#### **Role of Gram Sabha in Local Governance:**

The Odisha Gram Panchayat Act, 1964 empowered the Gram Sabha by assigning the following are the role of Panchayat:

- Approve the plans, programmes and projects for social and economic development before such plans, programmes and projects are taken up for implementation by the Gram Panchayat.
- Identify and select persons as beneficiaries' under the poverty alleviation or similar other programmes. Provided that every Gram Panchayat shall be required to obtain from the Gram Sabha a certificate of utilization of funds by that Panchayat for the plans and projects.

- Consider and approve the annual budget of the Gram Panchayat including the supplementary or revised budget;
- Consider levy of all taxes rates and fees and enhancement of rates thereof.
- Organize community service and drawing up and implementation of agricultural production plans.
- Consider all such matters as may be referred to it by the Gram Panchayat for its decision.

In the same way, the said Act states that subject to the provisions of Sub-Section ( 1 ) the meetings of the Gram Sabha shall be convened by such authority, in such manner and at such time and intervals as may be prescribed.

### **Constitution and Human Rights:**

Section (5) mentioned that the business of the Gram Sabhas shall be conducted and the record of the proceeding thereof shall be maintained in the prescribed manner. The Act further states that in scheduled areas, the Gram Sabha shall be competent to safeguard and preserve the traditions and customs of the people, their cultural identity, community resources and customary mode of dispute resolution consistent with the relevant laws in force and in harmony with basic tenets of the Constitution and Human Rights.

As per Section 6(1) of the Odisha Gram Panchayat Act, 1964 “for every village within the Gram there shall be constituted by the state government, a Gram Sabha, provided that where the area comprised within a ward constituted for the Gram under Section -8 consists of more than one village, there shall be only one Gram Sabha for such Ward.

The Sub-Clause (2) further states that “Each Gram Sabha shall consist of all persons registered by virtue of the Representation of People Act, 1950 in so much of the electoral roll for any Assembly Constituency of the time being enforce as relates to the area of the Gram Sabha and the said portion of the roll shall be deemed to be electoral roll of the Gram Sabha.

Sub-Section (4) of Section -6 of Odisha Gram Panchayat Act, 1964 states that “the person representing the Gram Sabha area in the Gram Panchayat or if there be more than one such person one from the list of all such persons in order of preference to be determined by the Gram

Panchayat shall preside over the meeting of the Gram Sabha and in the absence of all such person at the meeting, at the appointed time, those present in the meeting may elect one from themselves to preside over the meeting. Provided that if any member of Gram Sabha files a complaint either in writing or in person in the next meeting of the Gram Panchayat challenging that the proceedings have not been correctly recorded by the President, the Gram Panchayat may in its discretion, summon another meeting of Gram Sabha, to consider the same issue or issues, to be held in the presence of a member of the Panchayat non-connected with the Gram Sabha, duly authorized by the Panchayat shall be taken to be final.

Henceforth, Gram Sabha is the only meeting for the participation of people in the decision-making process of the local governance system. The Gram Sabha should, therefore have the central place in the system. Panchayats as the basic units of self-governance at village level are expected to bring about an element of transparency between the people and the government system. Accordingly, all the activities carried out by village Panchayats have to get the approval of the Gram Sabha and as such, it takes up the responsibility of introducing direct accountability of Panchayati Raj institutions to the people. The Gram Sabha is expected to accord approval for different activities related to the schemes and plans and selection of beneficiaries for different government programmes and that affect the lives of the people in the village. Involvement of the working of Gram Sabha shows that except during the current year, all previous years, the working of Gram Sabha was not encouraging. The reasons may be due to lack of awareness among the majority of tribal people about the importance of Gram Sabha and their role in it. In some cases, the Sarpanches were not interested to convene the meetings and in some cases, the failure of Gram Sabha may be assigned to distant factor. Lack of publicity, communication and information are also responsible for the non-vibrant functioning of Gram Sabha. But the most important factor is that the Gram Sabha has not been endowed with powers and sometimes the decisions of Gram Sabhas are changed at higher levels. The Gram Panchayats also do not respect the decision of Gram Sabha. The Gram Sabha meetings are convened at such time when the people are busy in their agriculture and other works. Therefore, there should be awareness among the tribal people about the effectiveness of Panchayat system of governance and special

emphasis is required to highlight the role of Gram Sabha in providing good governance through the system of local self- governance.

### **Odisha Government's Initiative for Empowerment of Gram Sabha:**

Gram Sabha has lost its importance due to lack of tribal participation and a feeling of doubt and mistrust created in the minds of people regarding its outcomes. The present government in the State realized the need for the conduct of Gram Sabha across the State for successful implementation of government schemes, plans and programmes. Though Gram Sabha is a constitutional body, due to lack of awareness among the tribal, it was not conducted successfully. In view of the above, conceptualization and implementation of Gram Sabha empowerment programme was launched on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2012 across the State by the Department of Panchayati Raj, Government of Odisha. The programme lasted for 45 days driving community mobilization and enhancing the institutional capacity of Panchayati Raj Institutions through administrative and technical support. This is a major step towards empowering the local self- governance system in Odisha. The Gram Sabha was conducted in the State with the following objectives:

- ♥ To study the role of Gram Sabha in general and its role in empowering tribal in particular.
- ♥ To study the political, social, economic, psychological and educational impact of Gram Sabha on tribal.
- ♥ To study the problem faced by the Gram Sabha in empowering tribal.
- ♥ To support capacity building of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and elected representatives of PRIs for the conduct of Gram Sabha for planning and implementation of different govt. schemes.
- ♥ To ensure enhanced tribal people's participation in village level planning.
- ♥ To generate awareness and social mobilization for people's participatory planning.

### **Empowering of Gram Sabha:**

A multi-pronged communication strategy was adopted to persuade the tribal people to participate in the conduct of Gram Sabha. An extensive range of communication materials was empowered keeping in mind the local needs and awareness level.

As part of the Gram Sabha empowerment programme, a host of IEC activities was implemented at village / Gram Panchayat / Block and district level including distribution of invitation cards to each households, putting hoardings and banners in public places, distributing leaflets, announcing the event through mike, promoted the event through appeal letters by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Odisha to inform and mobilize the people for effective conduct of Gram Sabha. This was enabled preparation and timely submission of village level plans for better fund flow and effective utilization of funds. The conduct of Gram Sabha in a phased manner across the State within a stipulated time frame has recorded over 99.44% success in terms of Gram Sabha and 97.37% with regard to Gram Sabha conducted. Media played a taking the initiative role to generate public awareness and make best possible coverage of the news across the State horn Panchayat level to State level. The technical support provided by a dedicated team at the State level and the proactiveness of the district or block administration with the cooperation of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and its members made the campaign more effective.

The Panchayati Raj Department, Government of Odisha was the nodal agency for the programme which reached out to 6236 Gram Panchayats across 30 districts that include 314 Blocks with a population of more than 3.5 crores. In the programme, the other departments of Government of Odisha like Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes (SC & ST), Women & Child Development, Rural Development, Agriculture, Health & Family Welfare, School and Mass Education, Tourism & Culture etc, were also involved in the campaign. It was attempted to resurrect all the essentials of organizing a successful Gram Sabha through community mobilization, individual and collective awareness building and dissemination of information to involve the people in the process.

It also made an attempt to create leadership horn among the marginalized sections of my committee. To provide real substance to the grassroots governance, a special effort was made in ensuring participation of women and other communities like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, in the Gram Sabha meeting. Mela on the first day of Gram Sabha helped the people to know the background information and the walkthrough exhibition, cultural event and interaction with officials from the Departments. For the first time in Odisha, all the Gram Sabhas conducted

during the campaign period have been video recorded. This is with an aim to ensure transparency and to strengthen the Gram Sabha with the active participation of the people.

Another feature of the campaign was capturing the data generated in the Gram Sabha, analysis and utilizing the data meaningfully for planning and implementation in the rural areas of the State. In a never before effort, information technology was used in the process to create greater efficiency and transparency.

### **Recommendations for Empowering Gram Sabhas:**

Making public awareness about the importance of Gram Sabha in the local governance system.

Active participation of members of three-tier Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Community mobilization through campaign mode, to participate in the proceeding of Gram Sabha meetings.

Avoid duplication of works. Prioritize the projects for proper implementation at a village level.

Making videography of Gram Sabha to avoid any kind of management at any level.

Ensuring active support from local administration for smooth conduct of Gram Sabha.

Adequate publicity for the conduct of Gram Sabha meetings.

Topics of Agenda for Gram Sabha meeting should be about the lives of people of the village.

### **Conclusion:**

With the introduction role of Gram Sabha in empowering tribal, there has been a tremendous improvement in the performance of Gram Sabha in the empowerment of tribal. Although a lot of reasons to be done; training of workers should be encouraged, political interference should be discouraged and then Gram Sabha expected to play a domineering role in tribal empowerment. To certify good governance in the rural areas of the State through local self- government system, we need to strengthen the people's institutions like Gram Sabha. The State Government should take steps to empowerment these institutions by devolving ample power to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) as visualized in the Constitution. The Gram Sabha can only be empowered by ensuring active participation of each and every voter of the tribal community, especially the larger participation of Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and women community. The local self-governance system can work effectively only when people realize the importance of Gram Sabha in village development. The government, civil society and members of the

three-tier Panchayati Raj Institutions should work together for ensuring better participation of people in Gram Sabha so as to empower the tribal people in Odisha.

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