EMPOWERMENT HAS widespread usage and is the key focus of development programmes. Post-colonial developing world since early 1970s, has experienced a phenomenal shift in the development strategy of the marginalised. In the backdrop of the declining access of a vast number of people to the means of livelihood security, literacy, healthcare facilities, housing and other basic necessities of life, the philosophy of social justice was integrated in the development discourse in 1970s. Again since 1990s, especially in the wake of globalisation, the strategy of empowerment with development has been adopted to integrate the marginalised sections with
the mainstream. World Social Development Summit, 1995 talked about people’s initiatives, people’s empowerment and strengthening capacities of people. Regarding objectives of development, it specifically mentions that empowering people to strengthen their capacities is the main objective of development. At the UN General Assembly in 2000, heads of States and Governments took stock of the gross inequalities in human development worldwide and recognised their collective responsibility to uphold principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level. In addition to declaring their support for freedom, democracy and human rights, they set eight goals for development and poverty eradication to be achieved by 2015, i.e. Millennium Development Goals. Among the eight goals listed, the third relates to promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women.

The term ‘empower’ literally means to give power or authority. The central notion of empowerment is located in the dynamics of sharing, distribution and redistribution of power, which has a basis of legitimacy. As viewed by famous sociologist Max Weber, power is one’s capacity to have control over others, and as this capacity is legitimised it becomes authority. In this context, Herrick points out that authority in general is used to mean:

(a) regulatory based on one’s formal position and status in relation to others;
(b) expert knowledge, where the expert may possess the power to define ordinary people; and
(c) relationship ability or interpersonal skill where power comes from interpersonal influence based on abilities to work with them.

The literature on empowerment offers further insights. It has been characterised as antithesis of paternalism by Swift whereas Rappaport featured it with key themes being the participation of people in their

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empowerment. For experts like Pinderhughes\textsuperscript{8} and Biegal\textsuperscript{9} it is building of individual and collective strength. Individual qualities associated with empowerment include self-efficacy according to Barton,\textsuperscript{10} participation in the opinion of Kieffer\textsuperscript{11} and rationally motivated action referred to by Mondros.\textsuperscript{12} The process of empowerment challenges power structure of subordination. In the words of Sen and Grown, empowerment is concerned with transformation of the structure of subordination. It implies a process of redistribution of power within and between families/ societies and a process arising at social equality, which can be achieved only by disempowering some structure, system and institutions.\textsuperscript{13}

The development strategies which were implemented within the pre-existing structural arrangements of the society, have not been able to bring an end to deprivation of the marginalised groups, rather have largely contributed to the social reproduction of marginalisation. The Human Development Report 1996\textsuperscript{14} has drawn attention to the jobless, voiceless, ruthless, fruitless and futureless growth all of which contribute directly into creating marginalised population. The Report considers that today the development perpetuating inequalities is neither sustainable nor sustaining. Here it is important to mention that 1995 World Social Summit, Copenhagen in which all the heads of the states of the UNO are the signatories, has emphasised on the strategy of empowerment as a mainstreaming endeavour of the marginalised groups.\textsuperscript{15}

Marginalisation is a process by which a group or individual is denied access to important positions and symbols of economic, religious, or political power within any society. A marginal group may actually constitute

\begin{itemize}
  \item UNDP 1996, Building Sustainable Capacity, New York, pp.8-14.
  \item United Nations, op.cit., 1995.
\end{itemize}
a numerical majority (as in the case of blacks in South Africa) and perhaps be distinguished from a minority group which may be small in number but has access to political or economic power. Marginalisation became a major topic of sociological research in the 1990s. The process by which this occurred became a major source of study particularly for those influenced by dependency, Marxist and World system theories which argued that the phenomena was related to the world capitalist order and not first confined to particular societies. The process of marginalisation economically denies a large section of society equal access to productive resources, avenues for realisation of their productive human potential and opportunity for their full capacity utilisation. Politically this process of relegation denies these people equal access to the formal power structure and participation in the decision-making process leading to their subordination and dependency on the economically and politically dominant groups of the society. Eventually, these groups emerge to be the under-represented and disempowered. In the continuous process of the relegation, they emerge to be culturally excluded from the mainstream of the society becoming alienated and disintegrated. They eventually get a stigmatised cultural existence, an ascribed low social status and become the victim of cultural segregation. As a consequence of the economic, political and cultural deprivation, a vast majority of population has emerged to be socially ignorant, illiterate, uneducated and dependent. Devoid of the basic necessities of life, they are relegated to live in the margin of the society with a subhuman existence. In every human society there is a section of marginalised group, which suffers from the brunt of deprivation. The Human Development Report (1998) observed that all over the world over a billion people are deprived of basic consumption needs. The Report states that deprivation in basic capabilities encompasses deprivation in years of life, health, housing, knowledge, participation, personal security and environment. When these different kinds of deprivation interact, they severely restrain human choices.

The social categories such as educationally backward minorities, women, children, aged, spatial categories like backward / remote village and slum dwellers, people living below poverty line, landless agricultural labourers, unskilled or semi skilled construction workers, etc. some of the social categories like the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women have emerged to be the empirical epitome of the marginalised groups in

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India. Women as a social category cuts across the boundaries of all other social categories—caste, class, gender, race, status and so on. Within the social category of all the marginalised groups, they are most oppressed. The Human Development Report in South Asia (1998) also comes to the same conclusion. The Report states, “women bear the greatest burden of human deprivation in South Asia. There has been limited investment in improving the basic capabilities of women and enabling them to take full advantage of the opportunities of life”.18

**Empowerment of Women**

The Country Report of Government of India presented at Fourth World Conference on women at Beijing defined the concept in the following manner. Empowerment means working from a portion of enforced powerlessness to one of power. It would promote women’s inherent strength and positive self-image.19

Women’s empowerment can be viewed on a continuum of several interrelated and mutually reinforcing components. These components include awareness building about women’s situation, discrimination and rights and opportunities as a step towards gender equality, capacity building, and skill development, participation and greater control and decision-making power and action to bring about greater equality between men and women.20

The core of women’s empowerment is its argument that women’s development can be viewed in terms of five levels of quality of which empowerment is an essential one at each level. The levels according to Longwe are welfare, access, conscientisation, participation and control.21

In September 2005, the UN General Assembly reviewed progress towards eight Millennium Development Goals. Among the eight goals listed, the third relates to ‘gender equality and empowerment of women’.

Empowerment may take place in various dimensions such as social, economic and political. If women are to be socially empowered, they should know their status in the society and be helped to build a positive image and self-confidence among themselves by developing ability to think critically. Economic empowerment of women is possible by developing their skill through vocational and technical courses that generate income. There is

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18Ibid.
an urgent need to make women folk politically aware thereby removing the obstacles and facilitating political participation.22

Grassroots governance has been a major concern of planning process in India ever since the introduction of Panchayati Raj System in 1959. The spirit of democratic decentralisation that evolved over the years is being practiced only in a limited way. It is realised that development efforts in India did not address the issues of equity and the development of the poor. Therefore, there is a need to redirect development efforts towards the poor and those at the grassroots. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts have been major steps in the direction of decentralised governance in India. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act relates to bring reform in rural local bodies and the 74th amendment that of urban local bodies.

Studies conducted in several parts of the country show that: (a) representation in PRIs has been significantly increased (as the 33% reservation has been made mandatory); (b) women’s participation in the PRI meetings has also increased in spite of resistance from the conservative forces; and (c) in most of cases women’s decisions on various affairs of the PRIs are influenced by the male members of their family.

Capacity Building: Conceptual Framework

The concept ‘capacity building’ has been defined by J. Bolger as “abilities, skills understanding, attitudes, values, relationships, behaviour, motivation, resources and conditions that enable individuals, organisation, network/section and broader social system to carry out functions and achieve their development objectives over time”.23 Capacity building means support or intervention that empowers people, communities or organisations to achieve their objectives. Effective capacity building requires the interaction of learning-by-doing, access to resources, facilitation, mediation and training.24

Annual Report of the California Wellness Foundation25 portrays a slightly different picture. Capacity building means enhancing and expanding the leadership skills needed to forge creative ideas, good intentions and disparate energies into effective actions. It means helping individuals and community-based organisation build on their assets and strengths to realise their potential and maximise their effectiveness for long term survival. More or less the same view has been expressed by Canadian International

Development Agency (CIDA). According to CIDA, capacity building is a process of which individuals, groups, institutions, organisations and societies enhance their abilities to identify and meet development challenges in a sustainable means.26

Peter Morgan identified several distinct phases of concern with building capacity of governments. In the 1950s and early 1960s, when many countries were emerging from colonial status to Independence, focus was on institution building. But during the later 1960s and early 1970s, efforts shifted to improving the operation of existing organisations and to training and performance of government personnel. During 1980’s attention shifted to development management, concentrating on the capacity to manage development programmes focusing on the economic and social conditions of the poor majority which required considerable organisational initiative and inter-institutional coordination. The approach was broadened to include the activities of private and Non-Governmental Organisations.27 Peter Morgan refers capacity building as the ability of the individuals, groups, institutions and organisations to identify and solve development problem over times. Capacity building implies developing a system of coordinated and interdependent activities of the public organisations, the market and civic societies with broad array of actions and processes required for sustained development. This concept of capacity building is synonymous with development itself. Some have defined capacity building more narrowly in terms of developing and sustaining the specific skills required by individuals of public organisations. Operationally capacity building can be defined as the ability to perform appropriate tasks effectively, efficiently and in a sustainable manner.28

Profile of the Study Area

A brief profile of the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands has been presented here. The Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands is cut off from mainland by vast stretches of sea. Andaman and Nicobar Islands is situated in the Bay of Bengal between 6° to 14° north latitude and 92° and 94° east latitude. There are two groups of Islands, i.e. Andaman and Nicobar separated by 100° channel which is about 144 km. wide and 400 fathoms deep. The Andaman group of Islands consisting of erstwhile Andaman District cover a gross length of 467 km. while Nicobar

27UNDP, op.cit., pp. 8-14.
Islands is 8249 km. The geographical area of Andamans is 6408 km and that of Nicobar is 1841 km. The Union Territory consists of more than 306 named and unnamed Islands and 260 named and unnamed rocks. However, only 36 Islands are inhabited. Of these 24 are located in erstwhile Andaman District and 12 in Nicobar District. At present there are three revenue districts, i.e. South Andaman District, North and Middle Andaman District and Nicobar District. Nicobar District is mostly inhabited by tribals and is declared as tribal area. There are nine tehsils and 555 revenue villages in the Union Territory.

The population of these islands can be classified into two categories—the aborigines and immigrants. As per 2011 Census the total population of the Islands comes to 3,80,581 and of which 2,02,871 are males and remaining 1,77,710 females recording a growth rate of 6.86 per cent. The sex ratio of the islands is 876. The density of population is 46 per cent. The literacy rate registered in this UT is 86.6 per cent (male literacy is 90.3 per cent and female literacy 82.4 per cent) (Census of India, 2011b). The population of tribes has shown a decline from 29,469 in 2001 to 28,530 as per 2011 census, registering a decrease of 3.19 per cent. The population of tribes comes to 7.5 per cent of the total population.

Bulk of the population of the islands are non-aborigines, which can be categorised into three streams. First, the descendents of convicts from India and Myanmar (Burma) who immigrated to Islands before 1942 popularly known as local borns. This category includes:

(i) the Moplahas who settled down in South Andaman after Mopalah Rebullion in 1920 in the erstwhile Malabar area in Kerala,
(ii) the Karens, a tribe from Burma who migrated in 1925;
(iii) the Bhatus, a group of permanent settlers; and
(iv) some families reached here from Pakistan and Nepal.

Second category includes the refugees and repatriates resettled and rehabilitated in various Islands and generally called as settlers. Vast majority of this population are from East Bengal. They are living in rural area of South, Middle and North Andaman. The settlers from Travancore-Cochin and Madras and evacuees from Burma have also been rehabilitated in rural


30 Census of India, Primary Census Abstract, Data Highlights 2011, Andaman and Nicobar Islands UT, Directorate of Census Operations, Port Blair, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, 2011.

31 Census of India, op. cit., 2011.
area. Third, the voluntary migrant population from mainland India who came here seeking employment in government service, merchants and their employees from mainland, and labourers. People of this category are known as mainlanders. Majority of the Tamil, Telugu and Malayalee population came in this category. Hindi speaking population excluding the local borns also come in this group.

Five linguistic groups constitute majority of this non-aboriginal population of the Islands. Bengali speaking people form the largest group, followed by Tamils, Hindustanis, Telugus and Malayalees. These five groups constitute 80.78 per cent of the non-aboriginal population. Besides these five major linguistic groups, there are persons speaking Punjabi, Urdu, Marathi, Oriya, Kannada, Nepali and other languages. They constitute 9.87 per cent of total population.

Decentralised Governance in the Island Territory

Earlier 44 Gram Panchayats were functioning under the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Gram Panchayat Regulation, 1961. The 44 Panchayats were from Andamans and Nicobars Districts except the tribal areas and the urban municipal area (i.e. 42 in Andamans and 2 in Nicobars). Pradhan, Up-Pradhan, Sarpanch and Up-Sarpanch used to be elected by indirect elections by the elected members of the Panchayats. The tenure of Panchayats was only four years.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment strives to make the PRIs more effective. Consequent upon the aforesaid Constitutional Amendment Act, the President of India promulgated ‘Andaman and Nicobar (Panchayats) Regulation 1994’ which came into effect from April, 1994. The Regulations extend to the whole of Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands except the areas included in the municipality, i.e. Port Blair and areas notified as reserved areas under the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation 1956. Such reserved areas are as follows:

(a) Western portions of Middle and South Andaman
(b) A portion of Little Andaman
(c) Car Nicobar (excluding the portion like fields)
(d) Great Nicobar (excluding specified portions)
(e) Kamorta (excluding portions like port)
(f) Nancowry
(g) Katchal
(h) Trinket
(i) Chowra
(j) Strait Islands

(k) Some other small Islands

With the passing of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment, further decentralisation was introduced in the islands in the 1990s. In 1994, the Municipal Regulations of 1957 and the Panchayat Regulation of 1961 were repealed by the Andaman and Nicobar (Municipal) Regulation, 1994 and the Andaman and Nicobar (Panchayat) Act, 1994 respectively. The Port Blair Municipal Council consists of 18 wards. Provision for reservation for women has also been effected as provided in the Constitutional Amendment.

Table 1 shows the position of PRIIs in the Islands.

TABLE 1: POSITION OF PANCHAYATI RAJ IN THE ISLANDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tehsil /Panchayat Samitis</th>
<th>Gram Panchayat</th>
<th>Panchayat Samiti Members</th>
<th>Zilla Parishad Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diglipur North &amp;</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayabunder Middle</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangat Andaman</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferrargunj South</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prothrapur Andaman</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Andaman</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbell Bay</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>69</strong></td>
<td><strong>707</strong></td>
<td><strong>69</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Andaman and Nicobar Gazettee Extraordinary, September 24, 2010.

Under the new Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Panchayats) Regulation, 1994, the three tier panchayati raj system was constituted. The three tiers are Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad. Seats are reserved for Scheduled Tribes and Women according to the Regulation. Elections to the officers of Gram Panchayats are also to be held directly. The Pramukh and Up-pramukhs of Panchayat Samities are to be elected from amongst the elected members of Panchayat Samiti. The tenure of Panchayats and of Gram Pradhans, Pramukhs and Up-pramukhs is for five years. The Adhyaksha and Up-adhyaksha are to be elected from amongst elected members. Reservation in the offices of the Pradhan of Gram Panchayats as also in the offices of Pramukhs of Panchayat Samities for the STs and women have been provided according to the constitutional provisions. The office of the Adhyaksha for the first and third year of the Zilla Parishad is to be reserved for women.
Capacity Building efforts in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands

With the introduction of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment, and consequent to the beginning of three tier system of PRIs in the Island territory, training for the elected members was also initiated. Training programmes were conducted by two agencies—first from the part of the Andaman and Nicobar Administration and the other by NGOs. Let us examine the training undertaken by the UT Administration. The Department of Local Self Government undertook training programmes, the details of which are given in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Duration of training</th>
<th>No. of Members Trained</th>
<th>No. Training Programmes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Four days</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Three days</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Six days</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Three days</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Six days</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Six days</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Six days</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Five days</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Six days</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Six days</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Five days</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Three days</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifteen days</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Four days</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Five days</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Directorate of Panchayats, Andaman and Nicobar Administration, Port Blair.

The data regarding details of training programmes conducted before 2000 is not available. Altogether, around 15 programmes were conducted during the period from 2000 to 2009. Training was imparted in matters relating to Panchayat regulations, duties and responsibilities of elected representatives, rules and regulations of the Government, office procedure, different schemes of Central Government implemented in the Islands, procedure regarding Grant-in-Aid and the RTI Act.

Since there is no training institute in the Island Territory, officials from the Directorate of Panchayat, Directorate of Rural Development and District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) took classes. Resource persons were also invited from higher educational institutions in the Island.

Various NGOs were functioning in the Islands; some of them became active after the occurrence of Tsunami. One such organisation is Association
of Catholics, Andaman and Nicobar Islands (ACANI). This organisation came into existence in 2004 and have been engaged in social activities. The ACANI undertook two training programmes in the Island territory. The First training programme was conducted in 2005 in two places, i.e. in Campbell Bay and Hut Bay, two remote areas in the territory. It was a sensitisation programme for elected members of PRIs. It was a one-day programme in which 30 members participated. Resource persons from Care India took classes. In addition to this, there was also an effort by the NGO to sensitise SHGs. The second training programme by ACANI was conducted again in Campbell Bay. It was two-day programme and 30 members participated. This Programme gave emphasis to disaster management measures.

Another agency which is presently engaged in training of elected members of PRIs is the Nehru Yuva Kendra. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India entrusted this agency to implement the newly introduced, i.e. Panchayat Mahila Evam Yuva Shakti Abhiyaan Scheme. The Scheme has two components – (i) Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhiyaan and (ii) Panchayat Yuva Shakti Abhiyaan. The objectives of the schemes are as follows:

(i) creating enabling environment for the elected women representatives for sharing their problems and discussing the issues around them;

(ii) creating a platform for the elected women representatives for taking advocacy work about their issues;

(iii) empowering the elected youth representatives for playing active role in rural development through orientation programmes; and

(iv) building linkages and networking for achieving good governance.

This orientation-cum-sensitisation programme covers the subjects like PRI dynamics, participatory skills, leadership skills, conflict resolution, record keeping and accounts including mastery over muster rolls, completion certificates, social audit, RTI, etc. This programme would enable the participants to play leading roles in fulfilling the core objectives of 73rd Constitutional Amendment. The resource persons will be identified from the locality.

(A) In the first stage, the “Sensitisation-cum-orientation programme” was organised at Samiti level. Six programmes were conducted, one in each Panchayat Samiti. This programme began in December, 2008. They could cover six Samitis within a period of three months. In every Panchayat Samiti, training programme of two-day was conducted. However, The Campbell Bay Panchayat Samiti (in Nicobar District) was not covered.
The names of the Panchayat Samities covered are bellow:

1. Panchayat Samiti, Ferrargunj, South Andaman, Port Blair. Sixty members (47 female and 13 male) participated from the entire Panchayat Samiti.

2. Panchayat Samiti, Prothrapur, South Andaman, Port Blair. 44 members participated (43 female and one male).

3. Panchayat Samiti, Rangat, Middle Andaman. Sixty members participated (42 female and 18 male).


5. Panchayat Samiti, Little Andaman, South Andaman. Thirty members participated.


(B) In the second stage, the “District level Sammelan” was organised at two Districts of A&N Islands including six Samitis and 64 Gram Panchayats of Andaman & Nicobar Islands except the Campbell Bay Samiti.

(a) District Level Sammelan at Mayabunder, North & Middle Andaman District. 125 members participated from the entire district.

(b) District Level Sammelan at Port Blair, South Andaman District. 89 members participated from South Andaman District.

(C) In the third stage, the “State level Sammelan” was organised at Port Blair including six Samitis and 64 Gram Panchayats of Andaman & Nicobar Islands except the Campbell Bay Samiti of Nicobar District. A total of 203 members participated.

Observations of the Study

Following observations have been made:

1. From the part of the Government, they could conduct around 15 training programmes during the period 2000 to 2009. In the absence of a training institute in the Island territory and in the peculiar geographical set up, this is an achievement on the part of UT Administration. The training programmes of NGOs like Association of Catholic, Andaman and Nicobar Islands (ACANI) was limited to two places in the island territory. It can be considered only as a post-tsunami exercise. They could not widen and strengthen their capacity building efforts further. The presents efforts undertaken by Nehru Yuva Kendra, may have a positive impact if they can do it in an effective manner. This project is for the whole of the islands.
(2) Majority of the elected women representatives are not fully aware of various aspects of decentralised governance. Field experience reveals that their knowledge is limited to symbol but not in substance.

(3) Those who are elected to PRIs second and third time are to some extent acquainted with techniques of dealing with public, meeting officials for articulation of demands and to solve the problems of the public.

(4) The researcher’s own experience and interaction with the functionaries from NGOs working in the field of rural development reveal that women members lack a participatory approach. They hesitate to come forward and not really interested to participate in socio-political activities. They do not take much interest in knowing socio-economic problems, though these affect them.

(5) Non-government Organisations such as ACANI was having plan to introduce schemes in the field of agriculture in the Islands. When this NGO approached Panchayat bodies, many panchayat raj bodies were not ready to provide necessary data for preliminary survey. The PRIs lack transparency and sometimes give vague picture. Due to their apathetic attitude, the NGO could not move further. And hence they dropped the plan.

(6) Many members of the PRIs in the island lack capacity for decision-making. Whenever they face any problem, they place the matter before the Secretary of the Panchayat and simply accept the decisions of the Department Officials.

(7) Majority of the members of the PRIs are not in a position to mobilise sources of income for the panchayats. They depend upon Grant-in-aid from the Government. Consequently, many panchayats lack sustainability.

(8) In majority of Panchayats, mainly civil works for infrastructure development have been given emphasis. No priority has been given to formulate schemes for socio-economic development.

SUGGESTIONS

(1) There is an urgent need to assess training needs of members of PRIs. As per the training needs analysis, orientation programmes have to be started especially for newly elected members. Training has to be imparted in such a way that the members should obtain knowledge and skill related to matters such as scope of
decentralised governance, role of PRIs, duties and responsibilities of the elected representatives of PRIs and rules and regulations. Priority has to be accorded for developing decision-making capacity of elected representatives.

(2) A well-defined training policy has to formulated. Presently, the local administration has its programmes (mainly depending on the fund from Central Government), the Ministry is conducting through NYK and certain NGOs are also in the field, though not active. There is no proper coordination of the training programmes.

(3) Regarding the institutional framework, the Administration has to take steps to start a training institute in the model of Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) in Kerala. Experts in the field especially from NIRD may be invited to impart instruction. Possibilities of collaboration with NGOs can also be explored in this regard.

(4) Another suggestion that can be practically applicable in the island context is that the elected representatives be provided with chances to share their experiences. Platforms for this can be formed at Taluka and District levels.

(5) Dissemination of information through mass media has been found successful in many places. Exposure of elected representatives through both print as well as electronic media can play an important role in generating awareness. Publishing of News Bulletin also helps in dissemination of views, opinion and ideas.

(6) Women should be encouraged to organise themselves. Mahila Mandals in the villages can be effectively used as instruments to mobilise them. Women’s organisations can also act as catalytic agents for encouraging women’s participation in social and political activities.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Any attempt for capacity building of the elected representatives of the PRIs in the island territory should intend to achieve socio-economic development. Majority of the people in the islands seem to be apathetic and hence, there is an urgent need towards political socialisation of elected representatives of PRIs. Another aspect is that training programmes for elected representatives of PRIs should be conducted in such a way that it will help in identifying locally available resources. They should also be able to identify areas in which human resource development is possible in
the context of islands. This may help to solve unemployment problem by identifying and developing manpower relevant to the island territory.

A mass political culture has to emerge in the rural area. Creating a favourable and conducive environment for making the elected representatives especially women folk politically conscious and to inculcate democratic values, to a certain extent help to socialise politically. The political parties and interest groups have to be activated. Since majority of rural mass residing in the island territory are found to be unaffiliated with any formal organisation (cultural or professional) an emerging need is to develop social capital which will help to contribute collective action. In the emerging scenario, the process of empowerment of women cannot be strengthened in the absence of civil society organisations.

A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY


