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## CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN INDIA: THE GANDHIAN PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

*Mahatma Gandhi had a dream that Indian independence must begin from below i.e. grass root level. He wanted every Indian village to be independent and self sufficient. Gram Swaraj was the very dream of Gandhi and for which he lived his life for the betterment of the villages. India too worked on the lines to make the Gandhian dream a success by incorporating Panchayat Raj System in the development agenda. Since Gram Panchayats are the base of the Panchayat Raj, it should be a sound base so that the fruits of development should reach the poorest of the poor. The capacity building of Gram Panchayats is of paramount importance for effective management of rural development in India. After the implementation of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitution Amendment Act, a large number of Panchayat Raj functionaries, especially from weaker and marginalized sections were elected for the first time. Hence, in order to perform their duties effectively they need skills in management of rural development programmes, knowledge of development strategies and financial aspects to understand the functioning of decentralized planning under Panchayat Raj. For this purpose, suitable capacity building exercises are required to be developed for the Panchayat Raj institutions in India.*

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In recent years, Capacity development (also referred to as Capacity Building, Capacity Enhancement or Capacity Strengthening in some of the literature) has become recognized as a necessity for underpinning a number of critical prerequisites for sustaining development in the world (Hope 2009). High on the list of those prerequisites is Good Governance. It is very clear that growth and development cannot be achieved where the governance is bad. Without Good Governance the quest for development is fruitless goal. Good Governance, therefore, can be regarded as governance on behalf of the development oriented policy. Sustained Good Governance is the ultimate goal and Capacity Development is a critical input for achieving that goal.

Lack of Good Governance in developing countries like India has shown corrosive effects on the development process. Such poor governance undermines democracy, subvert the rule of law, entrench corruption, scare off foreign investment and foreign aid, obstruct the implementation of poverty alleviation and development policies. Therefore, improving the governance environment in the developing world has become a major priority and the capacity to do so must be enhanced. There are several definitions and conceptualization about Capacity Development. Capacity Development

is regarded as an instrument, as a process, an objective, a general approach to development as well as a change and transformation framework. In the context of this paper, Capacity Development is defined as the enhancement of the competency of the individuals, public sector institutions, private sector entities, civil society organizations and local communities to engage in activities in a sustainable manner for positive development impacts such as poverty reduction, improvements in governance quality or meeting the Millennium development goals. Hence, Capacity Development is not a stand-alone training intervention but it is rather a strategically coordinated set of activities aimed at individuals, institutions and sectors. It is much more than improving the abilities and skills of individuals (HOPE, 2008; OECD, 2006).

Capacity Development for promoting Good Governance is well recognized as a pivotal and important crucial fact by Policy Makers & the common man especially when the country is passing through an era of unprecedented changes at various levels & especially when the democratic institutions are becoming more vibrant and accountable to the people. At the same time, certain challenging issues of equity, equality, inclusiveness, environmental

protection & its degradation have come to occupy the centre stage. Above all, there is a crying need to combat the problems of poverty, housing, hunger & unemployment. Viewed in the light of the above scenario, India currently stands to realize the opportunity of Good Governance.

Since independence, serious efforts were made to bring about rapid growth along with sustainable development as well as socio-economic transformation of India with an integrated approach on the lines of our Father of Nation Mahatma Gandhi. He wanted to improve the quality of life of the disadvantaged sections of the society and to ensure effective participation of the people in the democratic functioning.

It was Gandhi who insisted that after independence, India must go back to the trusted age old practice of its grass root democracy. According to him, the accomplishment of Gram Swaraj only, can be called as Poorna Swaraj. During the struggle for freedom on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947, Mahatma Gandhi stressed the need for Village Swaraj (independent republic). To quote him, "My idea of village swaraj is that it is a complete republic independent of its neighbors for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity". (Gandhi 1962, p.31). According to Gandhi, progressive spontaneity of the institutions, those natural streams of Indian Strength, were inherently dependent on the policy of Panchayat Raj.

For the survival of meaningful democracy, it is essential that every citizen kept on reiterating that the actual goal of the leaders of such perks and privileges of a few as people the very fundamentals of their freedom and humiliate the spirit of India.

The Gandhian perspective reminds us that the growth of a society is not determined solely by the Gross National Product. The citizen must participate in each movement of change, only then it will contribute to the development of Human Being.

Gandhi considered the resurgence of the lowest in the society as the criterion for development. He suggested that in order to build up self reliant rural communities, the self-governance institutions at the village level should be

strengthened. He laid great emphasis of the need to revitalize the village Panchayats and establish Gram Swaraj. He put forward the suggestion that the Gram Panchayat should have authority to identify the needs of the villages, look for practical solutions and mobilize the resources for implementing plans. While initiating development programmes with the aim of making the villages self reliant, Gandhi considered the institution as the centers of inspiration, Gandhi gave emphasis to three things –

1. Identifying local leadership in the work area and transferring the responsibilities to them at the earliest, paying special attention to bring to the leadership those who belong to the weaker sections.
2. Organize peoples groups and enable them for local action.
3. Attempt to create production and marketing methods on local resource

According to Gandhi, development should be the result of the will and the work of the people. The beneficiaries should also be its creators. The decentralization process is not complete with the decentralization of development projects alone. It should start from the decentralization of political power. Structure needs to be created for the distribution of resources, for taking decisions on their proper use and for implementing these decisions without external interference. This calls for enlightened political will. Herein lies the relevance of Gandhian socio-political thinking.

Gandhi believed in ensuring maximum utilization, promotion and development of human resource, equitable distribution of wealth, in emphasizing on production which does not endanger natural resources, in ensuring that the basic needs of ordinary people must be completely satisfied.

In a land of Mahatma, with scarce capital and abundant human and natural resources only through decentralized modes can the above objectives can be achieved. Gandhians dream of sustainable growth and development in India cannot be achieved in the absence of Good Governance. Good Governance ensures the most efficient utilization of already scarce resources in the promotion of development

enhances participation, responsibility and accountability and has the potential to emancipate people from poverty. Any effort to reduce poverty and sustain development in India must be built on the foundations of Good Governance. Honest Government results in the adoption of policies that eliminates the capacity constraints which hinders sustained socio-economic development.

Several analysts and Policy Makers have drawn a link between Good Governance and sustainable development. That analysis clearly shows that where there is a failure of governance, the economy is sure to fail and often to fail badly. Therefore, there is a growing consensus in the literature that development is impossible in the absence of Good Governance. It has been observed that in India, the capacity for sustaining good governance is very weak, which in turn, means the capacity for sustaining development is also weak and needs to be developed. Both the demand and opportunities for capacity development have never been greater.

After decades of approaching Capacity Development as just the enhancement of skills through training and institutional strengthening, India have now come to realize that there approach ignored the reality that capacity development also entailed the achievement of societal goals with a systems approach that allows for setting of objectives, drawing up of action plans, development & implementation of Plans and Programmes, Management of partnership and fostering an enabling environment for civil society and private sector.

In pursuing Capacity Development for improving governance in India especially at the grass root level in order to realize the dream of Gandhi, the country must ensure that Capacity Development initiatives at grass root level must be comprehensively designed to be simultaneously related to change and transformation at the individual, institutional and societal levels. Capacity Development means not only to train individuals but to help the country to build self sufficient institutions in real sense of the term and also to create an environment where individuals can serve the needs of the country. It also includes empowering the institutions in terms of

finances, functions & functionaries. It involves a fundamental society transformation process & requires openness to lessons of experience and flexibility to modify approaches as required.

In the context of achieving Good Governance for sustainable development, the objectives of Capacity Development must include the following –

1. Ensuring that there exists a relationship of trust between the Government and the citizenry.
2. Empowering those who are badly affected by bad governance and poverty.
3. Creating an enabling environment for completion and plurality of ideas.
4. Mobilizing respect for human rights, freedom and rule of law.
5. Enforcing ethical behavior amongst public servants and political leaders.
6. Strengthening Public Financial Management.
7. Enhancing institutional reforms focusing on administrative and civil services thus promoting participative decision making.
8. Building on the existing local capacity.
9. Involving a broad based participatory approach.
10. Local governments needs better respond to the needs of the Citizens.

Ideally, developing countries like India should try to establish a Capacity Development Facility (CDF) through which they can implement their Capacity Development initiatives. In pursuing Capacity Development for good governance in India, local conditions should be given preference & should not be transferred from other areas. Focus should be on recognizing the existence of local capacities rather than simply on external transference of knowledge bearing in mind that Capacity Development is an important aspect of creation of Capable States with demonstrated Good Governance. It should be supply driven rather than demand driven.

National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), State Institute Of Rural Development (SIRD) and other training institutes are not enough to impart training facilities, there is a dire need to establish semi autonomous agencies with partnership to ensure 100%

coverage and training to Panchayat Raj functionaries on the basis of training need analysis. A training policy should be made for systematizing it. Certain amount of budget should be compulsorily allocated for training purposes. Training should be made compulsory to sensitize them properly as Panchayat Raj functionaries generally avoid attending it and do not take it seriously. Exposure visits to other States must be arranged. Electronic media can play a vital role in Capacity Building of

Elected Representatives. Government should telecast successful Case Studies of Panchayat Raj institutions on Television for encouraging and empowering them to enrich their knowledge and develop their confidence. To conclude, if we train the PRI member's and the people of the country in the areas of social, economic and cultural development with a holistic approach and in a systematic manner, then only we will be able to achieve Mahatma Gandhi's ideal of Gram Swaraj.

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