



## **Acknowledgements**

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## Abbreviation

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BPL	Below Poverty Line
EO	Executive Officer
GP	Gram Panchayat
IEC	Information Education & Communication
KDP	Karnataka Development Progress
KM	Kilo meter
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MESCOM	Mangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited
NREGA	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
PDO	Panchayat Development Officer
PEAIS	Panchayat Empowerment Accountability Incentive Scheme
PRI	Panchayat Raj Institution
RTI	Right to Information
SC	Scheduled Caste
ST	Scheduled Tribe
TSC	Total Sanitation Campaign
TP	Taluk Panchayat
VWSC	Village Water Supply and Sanitation Committee
ZP	Zilla Panchayat

**DRAFT**  
**Case Study of Koppa Taluk Panchayat, Karnataka**

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**1. Introduction**

In 2005-06, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India introduced the Panchayat Empowerment and Accountability Incentive Scheme (PEAIS) to incentivize States and UTs to devolve powers to local bodies. Under this scheme, the best performing State/UT is awarded Rs 2 crore every year. Further, the Ministry also announces awards for the best Zilla Panchayats, Taluk Panchayats and Gram Panchayats for their performance in implementation of flagship schemes and execution of welfare programmes.

The National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) developed a Devolution Index to measure the State/PRI performance on the basis of devolution of three F's viz. finance, functions and functionaries. The assessment is carried out in two-stages with the first stage examining whether the State/UT has created conducive environment that enables the transfer of powers to the local bodies. Accordingly, the first stage checks whether the States have setup the District Planning Committee, established State Election Commission and State Finance Commission, and held PRI elections every five year. The Devolution Index is calculated for those States which have satisfied the criteria specified in the first stage. The three pillars in the Devolution Index capture either directly or indirectly the level of financial discretion, transfer of functions and steps taken to develop the capacity of functionaries of PRIs.

As for deciding the best panchayat at all the three levels i.e. Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti (called Taluk Panchayat in Karnataka) and Zilla Parishad, it is done through a process of scoring based on the devolution index and responses to a questionnaire that capture important aspects relating to activities of a model Panchayats. Some of the parameters used include – regularity of panchayat meetings including those of gram sabha and standing committees, attendance in these meetings particularly the representation of SC and STs in the Gram Sabhas, discussions held and issues discussed, resolutions undertaken on various development works, identification of various beneficiaries, implementation of the State and Central Government schemes, efforts for achieving total sanitation, development of effective plans for raising own resources, systems for effective tax collection, strengthening of local institutions, capacity building of the elected representatives and the staff and having mechanism for transparency and accountability and so on. Among the Taluk Panchayats, Koppa TP was selected for award under the Panchayat Empowerment & Accountability Incentive Scheme (PEAIS) 2011-12.

## 2. Profile of the Taluk

Koppa, popularly known as ‘Kashmir of Karnataka without the snow’ is a Taluk in Chikmagalur district of Karnataka. Encircled by the Sahyadri Range of Western Ghats, it is a lovely place located at a height of 763 meters above the mean sea level. The taluk gets an average rainfall of 3014mm. The main attraction of Koppa is Adi Shankaracharya Sharada Lakshmi Narasimha Peeta or Sharadamba Mutt, which is located in Hariharapura Gram Panchayat. The Mutt/Peeta is dedicated to Goddess Sharadamba and is on the banks of river Tunga. The Mutt/Peeta is actively engaged in the social development of the neighboring villages. In Bandigadi Gram Pachayath, another Mutt by name Shri Vidya Peetam is located. This Vidya Peetam too supports social development initiatives. Koppa is well known for its educational institutes. Among them, ALN Ayurvedic College is a prominent one.

## 3. Demographic Features

Koppa taluk covers twenty two Gram Panchayats, one Town Panchayat and three Hoblis. There are 80 revenue villages under this taluk panchayat. The total rural population of the taluk, as per 2001 census was 82,667, of which 41,427 were men and 41,240 were women. The Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) comprised 19 percent and 5 percent of the population of Koppa taluk. Sex ratio as per 2001 census was 994.

As per 2001 census, the rural literacy rate was 77.6 percent, the male literacy rate was 85.4 percent and female literacy was 71.2 percent. There are 146 primary schools, 26 high schools and 4 colleges. The major languages are Kannada, Tulu and Konkani.

Agriculture is the main activity of the population in the taluk. The region has many coffee and tea plantations. Areca nut and paddy is predominantly cultivated. Cardamom and black pepper are grown within the coffee and areca nut estates. The daily wage rate is between Rs.200 to Rs. 250 for men and Rs.150 to Rs. 200 for women.

## 4. Management of Taluk Panchayat

The elected body of the TP consists of 11 members, out of which six are women and five are men. The President of the TP is a lady, who has around seven and a half years of experience in politics. The executive wing of the TP is headed by the Executive Officer (EO).

Koppa Taluk Panchayat (ZP) has its own administrative building with adequate office space

and two halls. The halls are used for TP meetings and to provide regular trainings for PDOs,



Secretaries and elected members of both TP and GP. Koppa Taluk Panchayat has evolved and implemented many good management practices.

The taluk panchayat has put in tremendous efforts to achieve paperless communication between TP and GP. Prior to September 2009, all the work of taluk panchayat was carried out using two computers. The office correspondence was wholly carried out on paper. The work that had to be carried out by the gram panchayats were delayed due to heavy paper work that the TP had to carry out. After the present EO was appointed in September 2009, the TP was equipped with nine computers, one laptop, one xerox machine, one scanner, one fax machine, one camera etc. All the TP staff members have been trained in internet usage. There is a separate well-maintained computer room.

At the GP level, all 22 GPs are equipped with at least 2 computers and internet facilities. Thus, at present, almost 90 percent of the correspondence is undertaken through email. The Panchayat Development Officers and the bill collectors of all the gram panchayats in Koppa TP have been trained in computer and internet usage. Sixty percent of the gram panchayat secretaries have also been trained. The Executive Officer (EO) was instrumental in motivating the panchayat secretaries to master the usage of computer and the internet. Most of the communication between the TP and the GP is happening through the internet. All these factors have contributed significantly to increase the work speed.



## **5. Transparency and Accountability**

Koppa Taluk Panchayat is the only taluk panchayat that has uploaded all its information on to the ZP website (under the ZP's RTI). The public can access this information and contact the TP at any time. There is around 106 pages of information on the website. All the resolutions passed in the TP are also accessible to the public.

One practice that best exemplifies TP's accountability is that the President of the TP makes sure that she is present in the TP office at least once in two days. She does not absent herself, especially on Mondays, since the laborers have their weekly off on Mondays and they come to the TP office to meet the president for signatures and to get panchayat services.

At the GP level, the Grama Sabhas are given highest priority. This is to ensure TP's accountability to the people. In a year, each grama panchayat conducts about four grama sabhas. Each GP conducts two compulsory grama sabhas as per the Act. Of the other two, one is designated 'children's gram sabha' and the other as 'special grama sabha'. The special grama sabha is conducted in order to prepare action plans for NREGA implementation or sometimes the special grama sabha can be called by the excise department to address the complaints of the villagers or some times by the TP itself.

The Executive Officer and the elected taluk panchayat members exercise control over all the GPs for timely and regular conducting of grama sabhas. Most of the departmental officials attend the grama sabhas. If the officials are absent, people ensure that the GP President answers the citizens in a satisfactory manner. Some of the steps undertaken by the taluk panchayat to ensure compulsory conducting of grama sabhas with full attendance of the officials are:

- Dates of ward sabhas and grama sabhas are decided at the taluk panchayat level.
- PDOs are asked to suggest tentative dates for the grama sabhas after discussing in the general body meeting of the gram panchayat. In the PDO's meetings, these dates are discussed and it is ensured that the dates are not overlapping. The main purpose of this is to ensure that the officials will be present in all the grama sabhas.
- The officials (with their names), who will attend the particular grama sabhas are also fixed.
- The details of ward sabha and grama sabha meetings are furnished by the TP in the following format.

Sl. No	Name of the GP	Dates of Ward Sabhas (depending upon the No. of villages)	Dates of Gram Sabha	Name of the Department	Name of the department official attending the grama sabha (at the GP)

- In the format, it is also indicated, whether the grama sabha is the first one or the second one. An attested letter is circulated to all the departmental heads, requesting them to attend/depute officials to the grama sabhas on the dates as mentioned in the format.
- This is further monitored at the grama sabha to ensure accountability. In the beginning of the grama sabha, the attendance of all the officials is taken. Plan B is also

developed in advance, where in case an official is absent, it is decided, who would address the queries of the villagers.

- Each of the department schemes are explained on the spot and beneficiary list is presented in the grama sabha. The issues raised by the villagers are addressed by the departmental representatives if it is related to the department, otherwise GP addresses the issues.

## **6. Good Practices**

### **a. Dealing with outstanding electricity bill**

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One of the major issues facing the by the GPs of Koppa taluk panchayat was the huge outstanding electricity bill, just like other GPs in the country. It was observed that a scientific process of billing was not adopted by the distribution company i.e. MESCOM. The bills were being sent in a haphazard way and very often, interest at the rate of 12 percent was being added on the outstanding bills. The basis for billed amount was not clear as the streetlights had no meters. The ZP used to deduct the electricity bill amount from the statutory funds of the GPs. As a result some times, the GPs were not receiving any funds. When the current Executive Officer of Koppa TP took over in September 2009, he observed that the outstanding amount from 22 GPs was around Rs. 22.21 lakhs. He was concerned about the interest amount on outstanding bills being paid by the GPs. He decided to resolve this issue immediately by taking some action.

#### **Step 1:**

As a first step, the executive officer discussed the issue in the TP general body meeting and later invited the GP presidents and the secretaries for a discussion. He facilitated the discussions to enable the GP presidents to understand how they were burdened with the electricity bill and mainly how huge amounts of money were spent on interest. He suggested that if they could save the interest money, they can pay the salary of the panchayat water men. The GP presidents got convinced with this and decided to pay back the outstanding electricity bills.

#### **Step 2**

The GP presidents, held discussions on this issue in their respective GP general bodies and decided to clear the outstanding amount by using the amount of the third development grant installment. The grant installment amount was Rs. 120000 per gram panchayat. As a result, by February 2012, all the GPs became free from the outstanding electricity bill.

### Step 3

In the meantime, the TP was also thinking about sustainability and wanted to establish a scientific process for measuring electricity usage in all the GPs. The TP asked MESCOM to furnish the basis on which electricity charges were being levied. MESCOM tried to avoid giving any explanations. The TP in the beginning threatened that they will not pay the amount until they get proper bills. Also, they demanded metering of the streetlights. Several rounds of correspondence and meetings were held between the TP and MESCOM for two years. Even though, it was long, the TP did not get discouraged. Because of the TP's efforts, MESCOM finally yielded to install meters for the streetlights in all the GPs of the taluk. This is the first of its kind in the state of Karnataka. At present all the GPs in this TP, get electricity bill based on meter reading (that contains RR number).

### Step 4

A monitoring system has been developed at the TP and the GP level to keep a close watch on the electricity bill generation by MESCOM. A log book is maintained by all the 22 GPs. The electricity bill reaches the Taluk Panchayat directly between the by fifth day of every month. PDOs collect the electricity bill, when they attend the KDP meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> of every month. Incoming and outgoing registers are maintained at the TP level. When MESCOM sends the bill to TP, the TP receives it and makes a note of it in the incoming register. When the bill is dispatched to the PDOs, the PDOs have to sign in the outgoing register. This is to ensure that the GP receives the bill.

On a monthly basis, the GP has to furnish the status in the following format:

Progress Report of the .....Month of the year..... of .....GP																
Sl.No	Electricity details	Balance in the beginning of the month			Demand from MESCOM at particular month			Total demand			Paid to MESCOM			Balance at the end of the month		
		Actual	Interest	Total	Actual	Interest	Total	Actual	Interest	Total	Actual	Interest	Total	Actual	Interest	Total
	Drinking water and street lights															
	Total															

The taluk panchayat consolidates the status of all the GPs and develops one statement and sends it to MESCOM. The Assistant Engineer of MESCOM, verifies and signs the statement in order to confirm and give a statement that all the bills have been paid (if paid). If not he/she will issue a statement stating how many GPs have to pay and what is the balance amount.

The following format has to be filled by the GPs and given to the TP, so that the TP can consolidate it and send it to MESCOM.

<b>Status of electricity bill balance in ..... Month</b>						
<b>Sl.No</b>	<b>Name of the GPs</b>	<b>Amount that had to be paid in the last month</b>	<b>Total bill inclusive of the previous balance</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Amount paid during this month</b>	<b>Balance</b>
1						
2						
3						

Similarly, MESCOM furnishes the status statement every month regarding the balance that is due from the 22 GPs.

Once in a quarter, the TP takes stock of the status (regarding electricity) from the GPs

### **Step 5**

The responsibility for covering the water supply electricity costs, was handed over to the village water and sanitation committees. The committee decided to raise the water taxes and ensured regular water supply and covered the electricity costs for supplying water.



### **b. Village Water Supply and Sanitation Committees**

On the whole, there is less dependency on water provided by the gram panchayats, since most households have wells and also as access to water is assisted by the terrain (gravity) of the taluk.

One of the interesting practices of this taluk is that all the villages have the Village Water Supply and Sanitation Committees (VWSC). More than 70 percent of the water and sanitation committees are active in this Taluk. The Executive Officer found that water supply was managed by the GPs all alone with no participation or involvement from the villagers. There was no monitoring system to control water wastage and there were frequent breakdown of pumps. People would fight in the gram sabhas water not being supplied on time. In order to make people responsible for the management of water, the EO decided to call for a meeting of GP presidents and the PDOs in 2010. He convinced the GP presidents and the PDOs about the importance of village water supply and sanitation committees in ensuring people's participation and thereby making them responsible for managing the water effectively.

Prior to this, VWSCs existed in some of the GPs but they were not active. Thus, all the GPs resolved to reconstitute the village water and sanitation committees. Some of the steps taken to were:

- Discussions were held in the general body meetings of gram panchayats to form the committees and decision was taken to select the members in the Ward Sabhas.
- In the Ward Sabhas, the members for VWSCs were identified
- The members identified were invited for a meeting and oriented on their duties and responsibilities and the VWSCs were formed in the villages
- A common bye law was developed and shared among the VWSC members. But they were free to modify the bye law in accordance with the local needs.
- The VWSCs held meetings with villagers and discussed the fixation of tax rates, water connection to the households, details of deposits that they had to pay, maintenance, etc
- The public indicated how much tax they (including the SC and ST communities) could afford to pay.

#### **Details of Village Water Supply and Sanitation Committees in Koppa Taluk Panchayat**

- There is a common norm that 7 to 12 persons would be the members in each VWSC.
- The elected member of the village becomes the president of the committee.
- The treasurer will be one of the beneficiaries of water supply and sanitation.
- For the bank transaction, there would be three signatories viz. the President, the Treasurer and the GP Secretary.
- VWSC meets once a month and discusses the progress. The resolutions passed in the committees are recorded and maintained in the villages.
- The committee makes sure that they conduct beneficiary meeting once in three months to discuss on the progress and issues if any.

As stated by the VWSCs of Bandigadi and Halmuttur village, the tax rates vary from village to village depending upon the decision taken in the VWSC in consultation with the village people.

In Halmuttur village, water connection has been provided where 2-3 houses can collect the water from the same tap. Very few individual water connections have been provided based on demand. The committee has charged Rs. 1000 as connection fees (they do not term it as deposit since deposit has to be paid back) from each individual house and has taken the

responsibility of providing the water connection. According to the committees this is not a heavy amount, as the public have agreed to this. Moreover, the committee has observed that the wages that people get in this area are high and so they can afford to pay for individual connection, in case they need it. They are also given the flexibility to pay in installments. In Bandigadi village, the committee charges Rs.50 for public taps and Rs.75 for private taps.

The committee provides water for one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening. They also collect the taxes and deposit the same in the bank. Committees also clean the water tanks every month. The overall maintenance of the water supply system lies with the VWSC. In case of any issues, the public complain directly to the committees rather than to Gram Panchayat.

As a result of the formation of VWSC, the GPs and the people are enjoying many qualitative outcomes such as:

- The committees hardly receive complaints from the public, since they take the ownership of the maintenance of water supply.
- In case of any repairs, the public take the initiative to repair by themselves and they do not bring it to the notice of the committee.
- Taxes are paid on time.
- Since records are maintained at the village level, public can ask for details like the total amount of tax collected in the village etc.
- Public also feel good that one among them is a signatory of the bank account and has the signatory power.

### **The Way Forward:**

The Taluk Panchayat feels that in the future every VWSC should have its own building like it has in Halmattur village of Bandigadi Gram Panchayat. Few more trainings are required to strengthen the VWSCs and enable them to become self sustainable.

### **c. Management of Records**

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Another interesting and useful management practice at Koppa TP is the establishment of the well maintained and efficiently managed record room. Before 2009, all files were just dumped in the record room and there was a total disorder. With the permission of the EO, the TP manager initiated streamlining the record room. As a first step, the files were wrapped in cotton cloths. Each type of file got assigned with a particular colored cloth and in accordance with the color assigned, the file got wrapped. The following table shows how the files are categorized in accordance with the colors:

Category	Color	Preservation period	Type of files in the bundles
A.	Red	Permanent Files	Files of salaries of the government employees, TA bills etc.  Separate bundles in red color are kept aside for the account section.
B.	Green	30 years	Ex staff details, personal files of staff, RTI application documents, incoming and outgoing letter registers, D.C bills (contingency bills), Akshara Dasoha register, diesel bills, NREGA registers, etc
C.	Yellow	10 years	Correspondence with the GP, housing scheme related correspondence, government guidelines, Jamabandi books, etc,
D.	White	5 years	Correspondence letters of all sections
E.	Blue	1 year	Various Applications

There are several bundles within each of the color category. Each bundle is marked with the details of files, rack number and the file number. Information regarding all the files is uploaded in the ZP website in the RTI section (see Koppa TP in the RTI section in the website - [www.chickmagalur.nic.in](http://www.chickmagalur.nic.in)). This is the only TP that has uploaded all its information in detail on a ZP's website. Particulars of about 1200 files have been uploaded and the following details have been furnished. Many more such files are in the process of being uploaded.



- Sl. No
- File No. and Date
- Details of the file
- Year
- No. of Pages
- Opening Date
- Closing Date
- Discarded Date

The TP is planning to improvise the record room further by assigning closed racks for each of the file types. Other taluk panchayats are frequently visiting Koppa TP to learn regarding this innovative records management system.

#### **d. Systematic processes for review and monitoring**

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Decision making process is very interesting in Koppa Taluk Panchayat. The decision making processes occur at two levels, one at the level of local self government and the other at the administrative level.

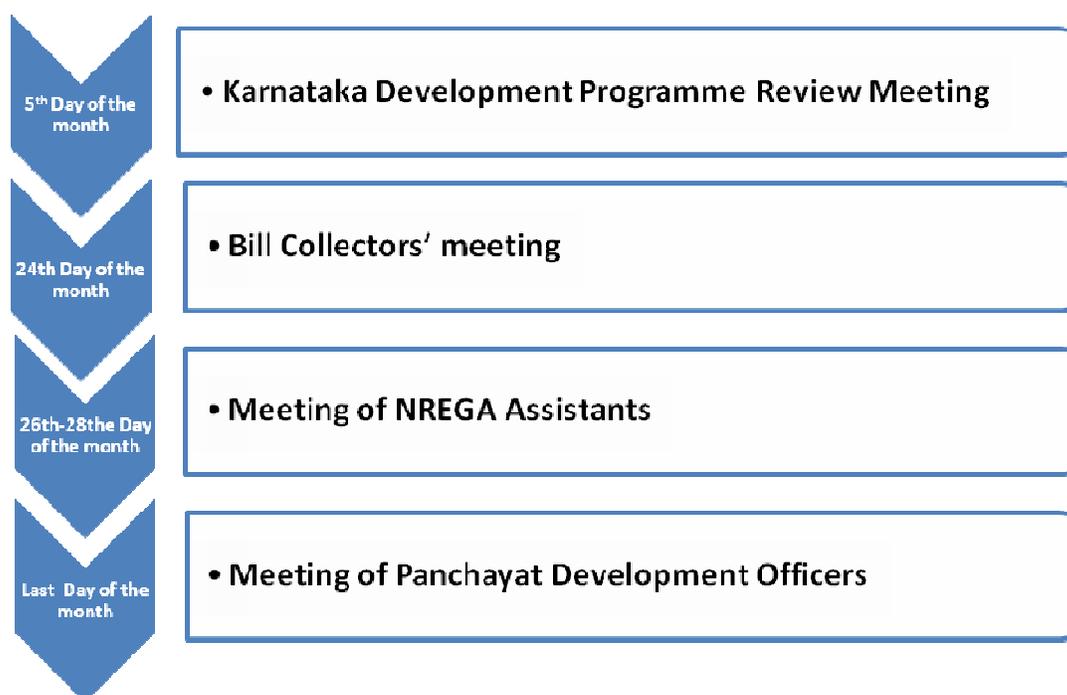
##### ***Decision making at the level of Local Self Government***

Prior to the TP general body meeting, the standing committee members meet and plan in their respective standing committees. This plan is submitted to the general body of the taluk panchayat and is discussed in the meeting of the general body. Once in two months, the Taluk Panchayat, under the leadership of the TP president, conducts regular meetings. Out of the 11 TP members, nine members belong to the same party. This aids constructive decision making without many complications. Also, though the other two members belong to a different party, collectively all the members give priority to address the local issues rather than get entangled in party issues. There is a good amount of cooperation between the members. All the proceedings of the meeting are recorded. The elected members of the TP have good rapport with the higher level government officials and especially with the local MLA. The MLA is well liked across the religions and the parties for his excellent contribution to the development of Koppa taluk. They also have the capacity to negotiate and influence the government officials and politicians.

##### ***Decision Making at the Administrative Level***

It is interesting to observe that Koppa TP has a very different and unique approach when it comes to administrative level decision making. This practice was an innovation of the Executive Officer and is in vogue since 2009. Other than the general body meeting, four levels of meetings are regularly held at the TP level.

## Monitoring and Review System in the TP



**Bill Collectors Meeting:** On the 24<sup>th</sup> of every month, all the GP bill collectors attend the TP level bill collectors meeting. Issues related to taxes, including house tax and water tax are discussed at the meeting. The target for collecting the taxes is fixed and is monitored every month at these taluk level meetings. Based on the issues and challenges faced by the bill collectors, strategic inputs are given to them by the EO. The proceedings of the meeting is recorded and maintained at the taluk level.

### Meeting of the NREGA Assistants

Between the 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of every month, all the NREGA assistants attend the TP level NREGA assistants meeting. Here, the progress is reviewed against the set, strategies are planned and new targets are fixed. Such meetings also facilitate learning among the assistants through each other's experience.

**PDO Meetings:** On the last day of the month (either 30<sup>th</sup> or 31<sup>st</sup>), all the PDOs are invited to the TP. Information is shared by the officials of TP and the GPs. Progress related to each and every aspect of the GP is discussed. Discussions are also held about the issues raised by the bill collectors. Based on the tentative dates suggested by the PDOs (these tentative dates are fixed by the GP elected members at the GP level), the Gram Sabha dates are fixed. Discussions are held on all kinds of development issues that exist in the GP and monthly targets are fixed. The progress is reviewed in the subsequent month.

**KDP Meetings:** On the 5<sup>th</sup> of every month (excluding government holidays), the taluk panchayat conducts the Karnataka Development Progress (KDP) Review meeting. This meeting is presided over by the president of the taluk panchayat. The Executive Officer and the presidents of the standing committees are present in the KDP meeting. Taluk level officials from 21 departments present their respective departmental progress. Further, the progress is reviewed and action plans are developed. All 22 PDOs of the taluks too attend the meeting. The purpose of inviting PDOs for this meeting is to discuss issues pertaining to departmental cooperation (with the GP) in the presence of the President of the TP and the EO. Similarly, the departmental expectations (from the PDOs) are also discussed in the meeting, to seek the PDOs support. This has enhanced the rapport and trust between the department officials and the PDOs. The mutual cooperation and coordination thus achieved has supported both the GPs and the departments to implement the grass root level programs effectively.

#### ***Decision making of TP with regard to GP level Conflict Resolution***

Interestingly, good cooperation/coordination exists between the PDOs, the EO and the members of TP & GPs. Whenever, a conflict arises between the PDO and the GP members, the TP pitches in and resolves the conflict by inviting both the parties (elected body members and the PDO) to the Taluk Panchayat. The TP President or in some instances, a few TP members and the EO together sit with them, listen to the issues expressed and facilitate an understanding between them. Since the elected body members and the administration at the TP and GP levels share good relationship the conflict resolution is achieved without much difficulty. Some of the newly recruited PDOs believed mistakenly that they were the ultimate decision makers and so took decisions without consulting the elected GP members. It took some time for them to understand that the elected body is supreme at the GP level and they need to consult them. Now the issues are resolved and in all the GPs, the PDOs and the elected GP members work with full cooperation.

#### **e. Other Best Practices of the Taluk Panchayat**

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##### **High Percentage of Tax Collection in all the Gram Panchayats**

Over the three years, the percentage of tax collection has increased drastically in all the 22 Gram Panchayats. This is due to the strong monitoring system of the Taluk Panchayat. The tax collection is above 90 percent in all the GPs from 2009 onwards.

##### **Convergence of funds for various types of fixed assets**

There is constant motivation by the Executive Officer of the TP to construct fixed assets through convergence funds. The main purpose of this is to enable the GPs to have qualitative fixed assets, which are durable. For example, prior to 2010, the GPs did not have a proper

centre to conduct gram sabhas or public meetings. They used to conduct these in the schools or other old buildings, which did not have sufficient space. There were no funds available for constructing spaces for such purposes. In 2010-11, with the convergence of Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee (Rs.10 lakhs) and the GP fund (Rs. 4 lakhs), Bharath Nirman Rajeev Gandhi Seva Kendras (centres) were constructed in all the 22 Gram Panchayats. The EO motivates the elected members and the PDOs to take up sustainable works like rejuvenation of lakes, fish ponds etc in all the meetings and trainings.

#### **Efficient utilization of funds for the people with disability**

In practice, Koppa has reserved and utilized 3 percent of the funds (reserved from various schemes) for the benefit of people with living with disability. The TP is highly sensitive for utilizing this fund for the welfare of the person with disability that would be sustainable in nature. For example, though there were provisions for providing wheel chairs for the disabled persons, the TP realized that this would not be feasible in a geographical area like Koppa. So, the TP provided them with two wheelers to which extra wheels can be attached and thus the vehicle can be used. Similarly, one of the TP staff (contract staff) lost his leg and there was a need for Rs.2.2 lakh to fit an artificial limb. All the TP members decided to support this person and sanctioned Rs.1.95 lakh from the amount reserved for the persons with disability.

### **8. Conclusion**

Koppa Taluk Panchayat has enjoyed remarkable achievements in terms of its management systems as well as implementing the schemes effectively. One of the remarkable achievements is the metering of streetlights, which can, as a development model, be a great learning for the state and the entire country. Convergence between two departments is not a common practice in most of the blocks/state. This particular taluk panchayat has continuously practiced convergence meetings between the departments. The TP (especially the EO) also believes that it is not enough if the convergence meeting happen only between the departments. But more important than this is that such convergence has to be sustained at the grass root level and this must be measured through quantitative and qualitative indicators. For this, there needs to be immense coordination and cooperation between the TP, the departments, the GP and the public. This was made possible by Koppa Taluk Panchayat, through the hard efforts of the Taluk Panchayat elected members, the Executive Officer, the PDOs and the GP members. Such stories of successful decentralized governance increase our hopes in true democracy, the objective of which is ‘development through real people’s participation’.

### **Coordination between the elected TP and GP members**

There is personal rapport between the TP and the GP elected members. The main reason for this is the GP members frequently visit the TP and thereby the TP members and the EO have personal rapport with the members. The second aspect, which is also the strength of Koppa TP is that all the taluk level trainings for the GP members (including presidents, vice presidents and PDOs) are held in the TP training hall. While the trainings are targeted at the presidents of



GP, the TP makes sure that the PDOs too attend these trainings. The Executive Officer and the TP president, make sure that they spend some time with the participants attending the training. This has enhanced the relationship between the TP and GP members and if any issue arises at the GP level, the TP will pitch in and resolve the issues. At the same time, the implementation of various schemes is undertaken smoothly, since the TP ensures that the scheme reaches the target beneficiaries. The PDOs have also built good rapport with the public. The Executive Officer believes that this kind of coordination is important, at all the levels. He also believes that a dictatorial leadership does not help in bringing about good result, especially when someone is involved in public service.

### **Commitment of the Executive Officer**

The Executive Officer, Mr. Thippesh an engineering graduate had joined the Public Works Department (PWD), as an Assistant Executive Engineer (civil). Later in 1983, he was deputed as Asst. Engineer to the ZP. In the year 2006, he was deputed as the Executive Officer of N.R.Pura TP. Since, he was in the technical field, he had to learn administration. He implemented innovative ideas like repaying all the outstanding electricity bills of GPs, during his previous tenure at N.R. Pura. In 2009, Mr. Thippesh was transferred to Koppa Taluk Panchayat. With the help of his previous TP work experience, he improvised his ideas and shared them with the TP members. The executive officer is highly regarded by the TP members because of his commitment and innovative ideas. Because of his encouraging support, the record room of the TP was re-organized, where he facilitated the team to complete the work without any hindrances. He brought in the idea of conducting monthly bill collectors meetings, PDO meetings, enabling the PDOs to attend the KDP meeting, streamlining the grama sabhas and ensuring that officials attend the grama sabhas etc. He also

orients the PDOs, as and when required. The PDOs have good respect for him and they consult him frequently.

**Higher level of awareness among people**

Last but not the least an aware and enlightened civil society ensures good participation of people in the ward and the grama sabhas. If any kind of malpractice occurs or the construction quality is bad, they take the GP to task. Hence, GPs and other departments, make sure that they deliver quality work and services. In one of the Gram Sabha, during the field visit, it was observed that an engineer was taken to task by the people for sanctioning bills before confirming the availability of water in the newly constructed well. This exhibits the extent to which, people concerned regarding the quality of work that is executed by the GP and the departments.

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