

# **A Case Study on Ghatboral Gram Panchayat**

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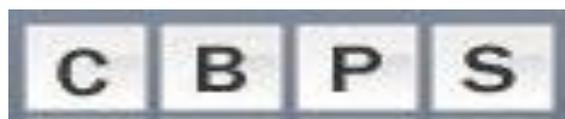
## **Best Practices of the Gram Panchayat**

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## Abbreviation

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| BEO    | Block Education Officer                               |
| BPL    | Below Poverty Line                                    |
| DSU    | District Support Unit                                 |
| GESCOM | Gulbarga Electricity Supply Company Limited           |
| GP     | Gram Panchayat  |
| GS     | Gram Sabha  |
| KM     | Kilo meter  |
| MLA    | Member of the Legislative Assembly                    |
| MoPR   | Ministry of Panchayati Raj                            |
| NH     | National Highway                                      |
| NREGA  | National Rural Employment Guarantee Act               |
| OSR    | Own Source Revenue                                    |
| PDO    | Panchayat Development Officer                         |
| PEAIS  | Panchayat Empowerment Accountability Incentive Scheme |
| PHC    | Primary Health Centre                                 |
| PRI    | Panchayat Raj Institution                             |
| RTE    | Right to Education                                    |
| SC     | Scheduled Caste                                       |
| SDMC   | School Development & Monitoring Committee             |
| SHG    | Self Help Group                                       |
| SIRD   | State Institute of Rural Development                  |
| ST     | Scheduled Tribe                                       |
| ZP     | Zilla Panchayat                                       |

## **Case Study of Ghatboral Gram Panchayat, Bidar District, Karnataka**

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### **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's 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 a 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. Ghatboral Grama Panchayat of Bidar District is one of the seven panchayats selected for award under the Panchayat Empowerment & Accountability Incentive Scheme (PEAIS) 2011-12.

## Profile of the District

Bidar is one of the 30 districts of Karnataka. It occupies the north-eastern tip of Karnataka and resembles the 'crown' of the state. The name 'Bidar' appears to have been derived from 'bidiru' which means bamboo<sup>1</sup>. The geographical area of Bidar is 5448 square kilometers and is positioned between the districts of Nizamabad and Medak (Andhra Pradesh) on the East and Nanded and Osmanabad (Maharashtra) on the west. On the south lies the district of Gulbarga. Due to its location, Bidar held a pre-eminent position in Deccan plateau's history. But today, centuries of neglect is evident in its adverse socio-economic, political and cultural situation.

The headquarter of the district is Bidar Town, which is at a distance of around 700 km from Bangalore. Bidar district consists of 5 taluks namely, Aurad, Bhalki, Basavakalyan, Bidar and Humnabad. The district is rich in metallic and non metallic minerals such as bauxite, kaolin, red-ochre, building stones and quartz. The district is an ideal industrial base for food processing, garments and sugar industries.

Bidar is predominantly an agricultural district and major portion of its land is used for agriculture. The major food crops of the district are groundnut, red gram, cowpea, field beans, green gram, jowar, maize and castor. The cash crops grown are cotton, groundnut, sunflower, and sugarcane. The district's average land holding size is 6.2 hectares, which is higher than the state average of 4.4 hectares.

As per the 2001 census, the overall population of the district was 15.02 lakh. The literacy rate was 60.94% (2001 census). Bidar district is rated as one of the most backward districts in the state and gets a lower ranking when it comes to human and economic development. As per 2001 census, Bidar occupied the 21st position among the state's 27 districts in human development. The vulnerability of the poor is further increased due to the fact that the district is a drought prone area. The percentage of poor is more among the scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and the minority communities. Muslim population constitutes 19.69 percent of the district's total rural population as against the state average of 12.23 percent. Similarly, the scheduled caste population constitutes 19.89 percent and the scheduled tribe population constitutes 12.13 percent of the district's total rural population (state average is 16.2 and 6.55 percent respectively). The rural literacy rate is 56.7 percent, which is much below the state's average of 59.3 percent. The female literacy rate too is very low, i.e. 43.6 percent. Profile of Ghatboral Gram Panchayat

Ghatboral Grama Panchayat is located in a most backward taluk Humnabad of Bidar District. Ghatboral is at a distance of 20 Km from the Taluk headquarters and 60 Km from the district headquarters.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bidar.nic.in/>

The total geographical area of the GP is 3240 hectares. Ghatboral has only one revenue village called Ghatboral under its jurisdiction and has 4 Thandas and a sub village. The total population was 7735 as per 2001 census, out of which 4037 were men and 3698 women. The estimation of the villagers is that the present population will be more than 14000, since during the recent election, there were 7000 voters. The population of the scheduled castes is 2429 (31%) and that of the scheduled tribes is 1161 (15%).

Mainly cash crops are grown in this area. Sugarcane and grapes take the foremost place in terms of production, followed by wheat, vegetables, soya bean, toor dal, ginger, pumpkin, ash gourd, and pomegranate. The daily wages range from Rs.150 to Rs.200 for men and Rs.100 to Rs. 150 for women. Gender discrimination with respect to wages is very rampant.

Ghatboral Gram Panchayat has one private school, which was started in the year 1952. This has led to many persons from the GP pursuing education and there are among them today many doctors and engineers working in various parts of the world. One of the ZP members belongs to this GP. An influential MLA candidate also belongs to this GP. All these factors are helping the GP to tap the various schemes.

The gram panchayat also has 3 lower primary schools, 3 higher primary schools, 1 high school and 11 anganwadies. Students have to travel 13 Km to Basavakalyan in order to obtain college education. There is a primary health centre, which is attended by people from the neighboring villages too.

### **Management of Ghatboral Gram Panchayat**

Ghatboral Gram Panchayat has provision for 20 elected members. Currently there are 19 members, out of which 7 are women. The Panchayat has full time staff, including the PDO appointed by the government. Besides this, a bill collector and a data entry operator are in service. The Panchayat Development Officer (PDO) is in charge of two GPs. The other GP (Halliked) has a population over 20000 with 43 members. The PDO finds it difficult to manage the two panchayats that are large in size with staff shortage;

### **Infrastructure & Systems**

The gram panchayat is functioning in its own building, which was newly constructed under the Rajiv Gandhi Seva Kendra Scheme. The building has three office rooms and a meeting hall. There is a computer and a scanner, which is operated by the data entry operator. The data entry operator however, honest enough to admit that he is over burdened with the work of NREGA, ration card and other office functions.

### **Conducting Meetings**

The Panchayat members conduct monthly meetings regularly and discuss issues that are related to the developmental tasks of the Panchayat. The overall attendance has been 90 percent and above.

## **Accountability and Transparency**

The Gram Panchayat has the practice of conducting mandatory number of Gram Sabhas. The members in the Gram Sabhas are very active. They are very proactive and provide ideas for planning and implementing schemes. The GP furnishes in-depth details of all the schemes to the Gram Sabha. Gram Sabha members have great confidence and trust in the officials and the elected members.

## **Best Practices of Ghatboral Gram Panchayat**

### **a. Resolving issues through a team approach**

One of the best practices of the panchayat is that the elected members address the issues as a team rather than individually. If they, as a team, cannot resolve the issue, they again get together as a team and consult the concerned persons or departments and ensure that the issues are quickly resolved.

- Under NREGA, the line departments have to undertake quality audit of the work and approve payments. One of the NREGA works undertaken through Ghatboral GP in June 2012 was afforestation. The work was completed successfully. Though the GP invited the forest department to undertake regular supervision, they did not do so. Even after the work was completed, the forest department did not undertake the quality check. This was despite several letters issued by the GP. Without the approval of the forest department, the GP could not sanction the amount that was to be paid to laborers. As a result, the laborers did not get their wages on time and they were upset with the GP. When the forest department finally visited the GP, they declared that the work undertaken was not of good quality. The GP members were upset that the forest department did not inspect the work while it was underway and they declared the work as low quality without sufficient grounds. The GP members held a discussion and they decided to approach the MLA for resolving this issue. Since all GP members came together, the MLA summoned the forest department staff and the issue was resolved amicably and the laborers finally got their wages (though delayed by three months).
- This GP used a very unique strategy i.e. political influence to mobilise resources. A majority of the elected members belong to one particular party while the MLA of this constituency belongs to another party. In spite of this, the GP members supported the MLA indirectly and facilitated his win in the election. One of the reasons for this is that the earlier MLA, though belonging to the same party as that of the GP members, was residing in Bangalore and was not contributing much for the development of the GP. Thus, the GP members have developed very good rapport with the current MLA. Also, the GP members do not seek the MLA's support as individuals. They meet the MLA as a team, discuss the gram panchayath issues and make sure that from each of their visit, they

get some of benefit from the MLA. Though the GP does not get direct funds, the MLA ensures that the works that are supposed to be undertaken are sanctioned to the GP. Some examples of resource mobilization through such political influence are mentioned here:

- a. There is a Primary Health Centre (PHC) in Ghatboral Gram Panchayat. The neighboring villages too benefit from the PHC. The PHC was damaged and was not functioning effectively due to the poor condition of the building. Though the PHC consulted higher officials, no positive response was coming forth. Even the gram panchayat was in continuous correspondence with ZP. Since there was no positive response, the GP members decided to consult the MLA, once again as a team and exerted pressure on the ZP. As result, Rs.60 lakh was sanctioned for renovating the PHC and the renovation work was undertaken successfully. Now the PHC is functioning with two doctors providing service to the patients. The PHC is equipped moderately with the required basic facilities to attend to the immediate needs of the patients. Also, the PHC staff strength was also increased, with the support of the MLA.
- b. The Gram Panchayat has 4 Thandas<sup>2</sup>. There was a huge need for housing by the people in the Thandas. Usually around 23 houses are allotted in a year for each GP under the Indira Avas Yojana (Rajeev Gandhi Rural Housing Corporation Limited is in charge of this). In the year 2011-12, the elected members got together as a team and consulted the MLA so that the needs of the Thandas could be addressed. Because of this and also since the MLA was aware of the high number of SC population in this area, he agreed to allot 75 houses to the GP. All together, the GP received allotment for 98 houses to be constructed.
- c. The basic needs of Ghatporal GP are housing, water and better roads. The elected members have put in enormous efforts, to use their political influence in order to address these needs. Through the same MLA's influence, the GP was able to lay cement roads that cost Rs.1.35 crore under the PMGSY scheme. One more road from Ghatboral GP to Maniknagar (worth Rs.1 crore) was also constructed. Four bore wells were dug, the funds for which were obtained through the MLA's influence and support.

### **b. Resource mobilization through local contribution to implement a project**

Prior to 2010, Ghatboral Panchayat had applied for the Jal Nirmal Project. The project is funded by World Bank. Ghatboral GP was categorized as a low water table area and it was included under the project for financial and other technical support. Through this project, it was envisaged that all the households will get sufficient water. The main criterion for the

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<sup>2</sup> A thanda is a habitation of Lambadas – a tribal people related to gypsies.

implementation of this project was that the community should contribute 10 percent and the GP should contribute 5 percent of its own source. A condition was also applied that only if the GP raises 10 percent of the amount through local contributions, the project will get sanctioned. The previous elected body could not tackle this major challenge and thus could not raise the amount either through local contributions or through the Grama Panchayath's own resource.

When the newly elected body came to power, the PDO and the elected GP members took keen interest in order to tap this project. The GP consulted the District Support Unit and convinced it by mentioning that they will take initiative and raise the local contribution. Accordingly, the DSU estimated the project and the estimation was Rs.2.93 crore. The estimation was arrived at after studying the existing area conditions.

In the previous proposal, as part of the project, DSU had plans to excavate two open wells. The proposal was placed in the Gram Sabha for discussions. The farmers had knowledge about the water sources in the area. The farmers knew that construction of open wells will be a major failure since their previous experience showed that open wells had insufficient water. Farmers suggested that the GP has to adopt strategies where in water could be collected and surface water can be stored, so that people can access water source throughout the year. Five kilometers away from the GP, a backwater source called Chulikinal existed. Two neighboring GPs were using this source and water was available to them throughout the year. Seeing this, the people of Ghatboral GP suggested that the GP should tap water from this source. The Gram Sabha and the GP took a decision to tap the Chulikinal water source. The Gram Panchayat requested DSU to modify the proposal. Accordingly, DSU made modifications to the proposal and adopted laying of pipelines as the strategy.

As per the guideline, the GP had to pay Rs. 14.65 lakh. Since the GP had very less resources of its own source, it requested the Karnataka Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency to reduce this amount. Being aware of the situation of North Karnataka, the KRWSSA accepted the request and agreed to reduce the local contribution amount by 50 percent. The GP now had to raise only Rs.7.33 lakh as local contribution. Thus, finally the project agreement was signed on 3 April 2012 and the work is under progress. The GP's aim is to ensure that 100 percent of the households get water facility through this project.

Thus a practical solution was found with people's involvement and the GP was able to negotiate affordable funding for the project.

#### **d. Management of Water Supply System in the Gram Panchayat**

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Ghatboral Grama Panchayat is providing water supply through 3 large open wells and 8 small open wells. Three hundred houses have individual water connection and the rest of them are getting water through the public water supply system. There are around 24 pumps connected to all these wells and bore wells. Maintenance of these pumps was a major challenge. The GP

had not hired a regular mechanic for repairing the pumps. There are around 10 mechanics in Ghatboral village. They have enough work all through the year, since the farmers in Ghatboral grow sugarcane and vegetables, for which water is pumped through, bore wells. The farmers need the support of mechanics during pump repairs and other electrical problems. The mechanics provide services to the neighboring villages too.

The GP had the practice of hiring the mechanics based on whoever was available when needed. But the mechanics were not completing the work on time and hence the pumps would need more than 8-10 days of time to be functional again. Besides, every mechanic would complain that the mechanic engaged earlier had not repaired the pump properly. The mechanics would also extract more money to replace the pump parts. This was costing the GP as much as Rs. 2 to Rs. 2.5 lakh per year. This practice continued till 2010. When the newly elected body came to power, the Panchayat Development Officer highlighted the issue to the elected representatives. The elected body decided to hire one regular mechanic, instead of hiring them based on the need. In the beginning, they decided that a monthly honorarium of Rs. 1000 can be paid to the mechanic for overall maintenance. Other than this an amount was fixed for each pump repair. For a 3 phase pump, the amount fixed was Rs.2000 and for a single phase pump, it was Rs.800. This method of hiring mechanics was not only expensive but was also not working well. There was no accountability from the mechanics. GP members held a meeting to find an alternative strategy.

In April 2012, the Gram Panchayat invited all the electrical mechanics for a meeting and asked them to apply, if interested in providing services to the GP. The GP explained the norms for hiring as follows:

- The selected mechanic will be solely responsible for the repair and maintenance of all the 24 pumps and he must repair the pump as and when required, even if the pump needs to be repaired several times. Pumps have to be repaired in two days.
- GP will pay a fixed amount as the annual maintenance cost. Other than this one time investment, no other amount will be paid and the mechanic is responsible for replacing the tools, etc.
- The person with the lowest quotation will get the service contract and a formal agreement would be reached between both the parties.

This strategy worked out well for the GP. The contract was given to the person who quoted the least. The annual maintenance cost was broken into 12 months and the mechanic is being paid on a monthly basis.

The service has improved considerably, since one person is solely responsible for the repair of the pumps. The complaints have got reduced. The cost for the repair too has come down from Rs.2.15 lakh to Rs. 1.44 lakh. Since all the pumps are managed by a single person, he is maintaining them well, so that he can save his cost and time.

## **e. Role of GP in strengthening School Development Management Committee**

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There are 3 Lower Primary Schools and 3 Higher Primary Schools in Ghatboral GP. One of the thandas named Redu Thanda has one higher primary school. The thanda people belong to the scheduled caste community. Within the community, there are subgroups (Ratod and Jadav). Both the groups have strong political influence. The thanda has a SDMC. The SDMC's President was an influential person in the community and he was holding the President's position for many years. Moreover, he had donated the land for the school. The committee had very few parents and the president was single handedly taking all the decisions. In January 2012, the president's term was over and the school wanted to nominate a new SDMC president. But, both the groups competed for the president's post. The person who donated the land wanted to continue in his position. Whereas, the other group felt that a new president from their group was necessary as the previous president was there in the position for many years and change was required. The SDMC faced pressure from the community to involve more parents, whose children were studying in the school. The school took the help of the Gram Panchayat to form the SDMC. The GP attempted to form the committee about two or three times, but could not succeed.

The Gram Panchayat held discussions with both the groups and explained the SDMC norms in detail to them. The GP stressed that, as per the SDMC norms, more parents must be part of the SDMC. The GP, very tactfully, kept aside all the influential persons and involved only the parents in the committee. They nominated a GP member, whose children were attending the school, as the SDMC president. So the problem got resolved. Now the SDMC meetings are being conducted effectively. The parents are taking the decisions. The decisions are being taken democratically and unanimously. The GP is also consulting the children with regard to school development.

The GP has not stopped here. By using this learning, which was derived from one school, it has made sure that all the SDMCs follow the norms in accordance with the RTE. The GP has taken personal interest and was present during the SDMC formation in all the schools. Also, the GP conducts a quarterly meeting, where all the SDMCs come together, at the Gram Panchayat office. They discuss issues related to the school and put in all efforts to resolve the issues. For example, in one of the schools, there was teacher shortage. The GP influenced the BEO and an extra teacher was appointed.

## **f. Effective Implementation of Waste Management**

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The drainage cleaning in the GP area was undertaken once in six months, for which Ghatboral GP used to engage a contractor. The contractor used to take around 10-15 days to complete the cleaning work. The cost for this was around Rs.36000. The PDO observed this and suggested to the elected members that alternative like hiring one person (on a daily basis) from the village itself could be explored. The suggestion was taken well by the elected

members. The idea was placed before the Gram Sabha. As per the discussion held in the Gram Sabha, it was decided that one full time person could be hired for the purpose. The person was responsible for cleaning the drainages and for collecting waste from 500 households. Each house has to pay Rs.10 per month. The GP will provide a push kart to collect the waste and make arrangements for a place to dispose the waste. This was agreed upon by both the GP and the Gram Sabha. One person was hired in the month of February 2011. As a result, the drainages are much cleaner than before and this has improved the health conditions of the people. The people are also accountable and they pay Rs.10 per month to the person. They are careful not to throw the garbage on the road, in drainages, etc. This has brought about a much cleaner environment in the GP. The people are aware and they monitor the work of the person. They are showing keen interest in keeping their area clean. Since, the people are paying the money to the person; there is no need for the GP to pay salary to the person.

### **Contributing factors that have facilitated all the above practices and successes:**

The newly elected body and the Panchayat Development Officer took over the functions of the panchayat at the same time. All the elected members were new. They were not aware of the rules and regulations of the panchayat including its functioning. Hence, the PDO had to orient them on the rules and regulations. The ideas of the PDO were taken well by the panchayat members, as they wanted to make new and unique contributions to the panchayat. The PDO (Mr.Sudesh Kumar) is a B. Sc graduate and has worked in a high school for 3 years, in the Jal Nirmal project for around 4 yrs and in the Rajiv Gandhi Housing Corporation Limited for one and half year. Work experience in the government project had helped the PDO to provide ideas, so that schemes for the GP can be tapped. The elected representatives were happy to have an experienced and enthusiastic PDO amongst them. The PDO is also one of the resource persons for the district, where he conducts TOT programmes as part of SIRD. Some of the trainings, which he has conducted, are Panchatantra, Total Sanitation Campaign, Role of Presidents and Vice Presidents in the GP etc.

Secondly, the elected representatives themselves discovered that individual approach does not work and hence they have to work as a team. They approach various officials, political leaders and local donors as a team. This has helped them to generate funds for various purposes.

The people belonging to this GP are very much knowledgeable about the role and functions of the GP. They are also aware about all the works undertaken by the GP. They visit the GP frequently and consult the PDO or the GP members. The GP members and the PDO are very patient, listen to the people, understand their problems and attempt sincerely to resolve their quickly. The PDO is appreciated highly by the people belonging to this GP.

### Whether the Award money is useful to the GP....?

This question was put forth to the GP members and the PDO. According to them the award money is not of great help, since they could not use of the money for the panchayat's needs.

Since this GP is at the hobbli level, there was no community hall for conducting any functions. But the state government had issued a strict guideline, wherein the GP was supposed to use the money for a specified purpose. The GP tried to influence, but it was not possible to undertake any other activity. The GS and the GP members exerted pressure to construct a community hall. Hence, a GP meeting was organized again on 10/8/2012. In the meeting, the members discussed found that all the permissible projects were of not much relevance to them or not practical.

For example, since the Jal Nirmal project is already sanctioned, installing solar water pumps was of no use. More over it was difficult to monitor solar systems, as the GP experienced frequent theft of batteries. There was no demand from the community to develop a rural marketing system in the panchayat either. The other works like solid waste management and rainwater harvesting could be taken up only on an experimental basis. But there was no technical expertise available in the GP. Thus, by all means, the guidelines for utilizing the award money were not helpful to the GP. All these points were noted down and this was sent to the government. But this too did not yield the required result.

Finally, based on the Gujarat model, the GP decided to centralize the solar street lights. They contacted the industries and got the quotations. But the executive engineer was not authorized to approve any work that costs more than Rs. 50,000. Thus, he did not give the technical approval. The PDO then consulted the Nirmiti Kendra. The officials there did not move the files for one month and later they washed their hands off. The ZP, TP and GESCOM discouraged the GP by advising them to just follow the guidelines and undertake some easy work, rather than trying out something new and innovative. None of the efforts helped the GP to undertake a qualitative development work, with the help of the award money. Finally, the GP had to implement an activity as specified by the guideline.

The GP strongly feels that whether the GP should not be left to decide how it would like to utilize the award money or else the notion of empowerment of the local governments remains only on paper.

### **Conclusion:**

Despite the backwardness of the district and the poor management systems (at all the levels), Ghatbora GP has put in its best efforts in order to provide basic amenities to the poor. The greatest learning from this GP is that the team work of the elected representatives for achievement of common good. This clearly shows their commitment and accountability to the people. Having understood that they cannot fight the system as individuals, the members

united themselves for a common goal, even if this required them to travel that extra mile in order to achieve that goal. The enlightened approach of effectively leveraging the political influence of the local MLA – not for some personal gain – but for the larger welfare of people has been the hallmark of GP’s functioning.

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