

SDC 2019 Annual Meeting Abstracts

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Title: Achieving Sustainable Development Goals through Local Government

Institutions: Empirical Evidences from Democratic Decentralisation in India



With majority of world's poor staying in rural areas with limited access to education, food security, health care systems, water and sanitation, achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 largely depends upon rural development initiatives, which emphasise upon good governance, infrastructure, urban-rural linkage, inclusiveness, gender equality and sustainability. Considering importance of rural development in achieving SDGs, it is appropriate to highlight that local government institutions with their emphasis on inclusive development, ensuring social justice and deepening democracy, possess greater potentials in realising these goals. Following the 73rd Amendment to Indian Constitution, Gram Panchayats as local government institutions are expected to play key roles in the thematic areas enlisted as 29 functions in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution. Further, many of the SDG targets are within the purview of the 29 subjects devolved to the Gram Panchayats under the decentralisation process of India.

It in this context of looking towards effective and inclusive institutions for advancing sustainable development, the present paper aims to study the role of Local Government Institutions – the Gram Panchayats – in India to realise the targets of SDGs. The paper explores how institutional capacities of ensuring inclusion, participation and accountability at decentralised local government institutions play a crucial role in achieving the SDGs. Besides, the paper examines how certain local government institutions achieve SDGs when they converge and collaborate with local civil society organisations, than others who function in dis-integrated manner. Specifically, the paper looks into the convergence of local government institution with that of Self-Help Groups (Neighbourhood Women's Collectives) in producing more favourable outcomes in achieving SDGs. While investigating the role of Gram Panchayats as an effective and inclusive institution for achieving SDG, the paper focuses on five specific goals, i.e. poverty reduction, food security, health and well-being, gender equality and access to water and sanitation.

The empirical work for the present paper is carried out in selected Gram Panchayats of two states of India, i.e. Kerala and Jharkhand. Selection of field site from these two states is purposive, as Kerala provides a more successful model of integrated and inclusive local governance than Jharkhand.