



# ಸುಗ್ರಾಮ

ಗ್ರಾಮ ಪಂಚಾಯತ್ ಚುನಾಯಿತ ಮಹಿಳಾ ಪ್ರತಿನಿಧಿಗಳ ಸಂಘ-ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ (ಲಿ)

## UNDERMINING POWERS OF THE GRAMA PANCHAYATS

SUGRAMA is an association representing the rights and interests of Grama Panchayat elected women representatives of Karnataka. SUGRAMA, a membership based organization, is also a platform where women members can come together in solidarity and support each other to bring about change and advocate for people centered policies. SUGRAMA has formed 51 Taluk associations in 17 Districts and enjoys a membership base of more than 3600 elected women representatives.

The newly elected Congress Government has brought in an amendment with regard to the disqualification of Grama Panchayat members for not conducting Ward/Grama Sabhas, which is against the spirit of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment. Despite strong opposition by the opposition parties and the speaker of the House, the bill was passed amidst walkout and stage protests with modifications to the bill. The modified Bill states that heads and members will face termination if they fail to hold two consecutive meetings of ward/grama sabhas. Regional Commissioners have been empowered to initiate disciplinary action against both Presidents/members and PDOs – for failing to perform duties.

The bill tries to usurp the powers of the elected representatives by giving penal powers to the officials thus making it an '**official driven system**'. In view of this, the interest behind passing the bill by the Government to '**empower Grama Panchayats**', seems a fallacy. The bill has taken an undemocratic turn by vesting powers at the hands of the executives to disqualify duly elected representatives. This tries to supersede the powers of the community as it is the community which elects the representatives and not the government officials.

SUGRAMA urges the Legislative Assembly to revoke the **Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Bill, 2013**. SUGRAMA further wishes to bring to the notice of the Government the following suggestions, which, we, elected women representatives feel that if implemented shall give a new spectrum to good governance and decentralization:

1. We demand for a full five year term for the post of the President as is constitutionally mandated for Presidents across the country.
2. We urge the Government to amend the Act and ensure the provision of Mahila Grama Sabhas on the lines of Child Grama Sabhas.
3. We advocate for increased honorarium for President, Vice President and Ward Members. Honorarium should increase to Rs 5000/-, Rs 3000/- and Rs 2500/- respectively.

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4. Reservation should be extended upto two terms for elected women functionaries as this would ensure better governance.
5. We demand that the approval of development projects, selection of beneficiaries and social audit be done by the Grama Sabhas. Grama Sabhas should be strengthened to make them 'decision makers' on all matters pertaining to the GPs. This will ensure direct democracy & participation of the community.
6. Devolution of 3 Fs to Grama Panchayats – All the 29 subjects along with funds, functions and functionaries must be transferred to the Panchayat Raj Institutions based on the principle of Subsidiarity (which means that what is best done at the lower levels of government should not be centralized at higher levels). This enables in decentralization of power to the Panchayats.
7. There is a need to strengthen the planning processes at the GP level. The State Government should take necessary steps to enable GPs to formulate Village Development Plans/Activity Mapping.
8. We demand the Government to look at formula based allocation of grants to the GPs. This can be worked out through the constitution of a panel and looking at the population and the north-south divide in the state. This will in turn help in allocation of funds to the northern districts.
9. We demand the Government to allocate considerable amount of funds as 'untied grants'. The GPs shall have the right to levy taxes from time to time and revenues generated from such taxes should be under the ambit of the GPs.
10. Implementation of the Women's Component Plan through Panchayats. There is also a need to ensure that Gender Budget Cells are set up in the departments at the taluk & district levels.
11. Ensure Sexual Harassment complaints committee is set up at the G P level as mandated under Vishaka Judgment of Supreme Court of India.
12. There is a need to set up a monitoring group at the taluk level which shall comprise of representatives of civil society organizations, women's groups & GP members to address issues of women.
13. We urge the Government to make suitable amendments to the act to ensure 50% reservation for women at Grama Panchayat level.