

SUGRAMA
GRAMA PANCHAYAT CHUNAYITHA MAHILA
PRATHINIDHIGALA SANGHA - KARNATAKA

ANNUAL REPORT
2009- 2010

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The year 2009-2010 has been a very promising year to SUGRAMA. This report is done from the completion of SAMAVESHA 2009 upto the commencement of SAMAVESHA 2010. During the year, SUGRAMA obtained its registration under the Societies Registration Act, 1960 and saw the appointment of the Director. It also found an office space and is in the process of registration under Section 12 A of the Income Tax Act as well as obtaining exemption under 80G.

SUGRAMA, during the year undertook several important steps to advocate for policy changes thereby keeping up with its objectives of representing the rights and interests of the Elected Women Representatives of the State. The activities mentioned below were all conducted through the partners viz., ASED, Gauribidanur; Jana Shikshana Trust (JST), Mangalore; ORBIT, Bidar; ODP, Mysore; SUMANA, Mysore and VIKASANA, Chickmagalur.

Further, SUGRAMA through the partner organizations conducted two programmes – one day orientation programme and two day taluk level federation election to the newly elected women representatives across the districts of the state.

The table below gives in nutshell the activities/programmes carried out under the aegis of The Hunger Project:

Date	Meetings and Press Meets	Advocacy efforts	Other activities
June	Steering Committee meeting – June 30 – July 1, 2009	Media Workshop at Mangalore Press Club – June 26, 2009	
July	Steering Committee – July 26-27, 2009	Hakkottaya Andolan – July 27, 2009	
August	Steering Committee Meeting – August 26,		

	2009 Training of Trainers on SWEEP – August 27-30, 2009		
September	Training of Trainers on SWEEP – September 14- 15, 2009 Training of Trainers on SWEEP – September 19- 20, 2009		
October	Steering Committee Meeting on SWEEP – October 23, 2009		
November	Steering Committee Meeting – November 17, 2009		
December	Working Group Meeting – December 9-10, 2009	Press Meet – December 24, 2009	
January	Steering Committee Meeting – January 5, 2010		
February	Working Group Steering Committee Meeting – February 23-24, 2010		
March			Registration of SUGRAMA
April			
May	Internal meeting with SKL and THP Delhi on 18 th and 20 th Working Group Meeting		

	– May 19-20, 2010		
June			
July	Visit of THP Delhi – July 14 - 16, 2010	Advocacy research on President's term commences – Mangalore district – July 18-21, 2010 Press Meet at Bangalore – 33% reservation on July 27, 2010	Setting up of an office space – July 27, 2010
August	Visit of THP Delhi team – August 11-13, 2010 Steering Committee Meeting – August 27, 2010	Advocacy Research	
September	SAMAVESHA – September 22-23, 2010	Advocacy Research – September 6-8, 2010 at Koppal September 14-16, 2010 Chickmagalur	

ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED:

Steering Committee and Working Group Meetings:

The members of the Steering Committee met at regular intervals and during the year six Steering Committee meetings and three working group meetings were conducted. The Steering Committee members discussed on various issues especially conducting of pre-election campaign in the state. The members also discussed about the ways of strengthening SUGRAMA and sustaining it in the future.

SWEEP Campaign:

SWEEP (Strengthening women's empowerment through electoral processes) is one of the most crucial interventions. It is a very imperative process as women get a chance to contest/vote/participate in the election process. It is also a critical period for identifying the women we shall be working with in the coming five years- those who win more obviously but those who loose as active Gram Sabha members. The basic premise of the campaign was to make women 'aware' voters and increase the participation of women as candidates. SUGRAMA took the lead during the pre-election campaign in 18 taluks of Karnataka. This campaign enabled women to know more about the elections, procedures, women as polling agents, candidate agents and select/choose suitable candidates. A documentary film named '*Namma Thirmana*' was produced by The Hunger Project which was shown to the women. Apart from this, SUGRAMA led a rigorous poster campaign - four posters depicting women's rights as a contestant, as a voter, etc. was pasted in the villages and involved the local media to support their campaign. This too enunciated interest amongst the women and as a result of these campaigns, more women participated and contested for elections.

Radio Programme:

Prior to the elections, SUGRAMA undertook a radio programme wherein the contents ranged from the history of PRI system, introducing the PRI system, women's rights, elections, nominations to elections, etc. Besides, the radio programme spoke about the need for federation, objectives, vision/mission of SUGRAMA, benefits of joining SUGRAMA. This created a ruckus amongst the women and enabled them to participate and contest for elections. The programme was undertaken for a 4-week period over a month.

Grama Panchayat Elections:

The Grama Panchayat elections were conducted in two phases across the districts of Karnataka. SUGRAMA members were also ably supported by the THP personnel who made field visits to witness the elections. Due to the successful pre-election campaign, a large number of women especially SUGRAMA members recontested the elections. They received support from the SHG members as a result of their canvassing at SHG meetings. The Steering Committee members also worked hard to

motivate other women to contest in the elections. 10 members of the Steering Committee re-contested and nominated themselves of the election. 3 SUGRAMA members won the elections and have been re-elected viz., Renuka, President; Lalithamma, Treasurer and Kamala, Member. SUGRAMA members who were not willing to contest motivated other women to contest the elections.

The Steering Committee members also shared the challenges faced during the pre-election and election period at the Working Group Meeting held on May 20-21, 2010. The members revealed various facets of challenges and harassment faced by them while contesting or nominating and motivating other women members. In some GPs, the community leaders went against the achievements of the EWRs preferring to nominate their own candidate and brought in 'SAMARAS' instead of the normal elections.

Documentation:

As part of strengthening SUGRAMA, two pamphlets were produced wherein one pamphlet highlighted the vision/mission, objectives, current status and benefits of joining SUGRAMA. The basic premise of the pamphlet was to enunciate the interests of the newly elected Elected Women Representatives into SUGRAMA.

The second pamphlet highlighted more on the various facets of SUGRAMA – governance structure, elections of the taluk federation office bearers, elections to the Steering Committee, etc. Apart from the two pamphlets, a membership form and an ID card was developed which gives in brief the details of the member. A database of membership is being worked out.

Membership:

The primary objective of SUGRAMA during the year was to enunciate the interests of the newly elected women representatives as members of SUGRAMA. Accordingly, with the assistance of the partners, the membership of SUGRAMA was raised. The table below gives the district wise membership of SUGRAMA

District	No. of Members
Chickballapura	177
Koppal	84
Tumkur	124
Mysore	

Mandya	
Chamarajanagara	
Kodagu	
Bidar	
Gulbarga	
Chikmagalur	
Hassan	
Shimoga	
Davanagere	
Dakshina Kannada	
Udupi	
Bijapur	
Kolar	

Orientation Programme:

The primary objective of the orientation programme was to assist the currently elected women members be familiar with SUGRAMA and its objectives. The purpose of the Orientation Programme is as follows:

- To introduce the currently elected women members to know about SUGRAMA
- To reinforce the need for collectives of elected women members to enable them to address issues of governance and development in an united way
- To develop strategies for initiating change

Accordingly, a one day programme was organized by each of the partners in the taluks and districts finalized by them. This programme highlighted the objectives, vision/mission, goals and benefits of SUGRAMA. This facilitated in raising the membership of SUGRAMA.

The Orientation Programme thus paved way for increased participation of women in the development of their village and SUGRAMA helped them to exercise their leadership roles, rights and decision making power as an elected woman.

Taluk Level Federation Election:

The primary objectives of the Taluk Federation are as follows:

- To educate the EWRs to know more about SUGRAMA especially the governance structure.
- To reiterate the need for collectives of elected women representatives to enable them to address issues of governance in the GP and thereby look at the development of the GP.
- To support them to assert their voices and rights in a confident manner, thus encourage elected women representatives to be active and effective leaders in Grama Panchayats
- To develop strategies for initiating change

The taluk federation enabled the newly elected women representatives to know more about SUGRAMA – introducing SUGRAMA, introducing the governance structure of SUGRAMA, election and selection of office bearers of the taluk level federation.

The formation of Taluk Level Federation enabled them by providing a platform for advocacy and brings about a change in the policies, rights of elected women, violence against women, etc. A taluk level federation forms the main crux of SUGRAMA. This in turn leads the newly appointed Presidents of each taluk federation to contest for the posts in the Steering Committee.

Advocacy:

33% Women's Reservation Bill:



Though 33% reservation for women bill has been passed in Raj Sabha, however it is yet to be tabled in Lok Sabha and passed. Hence, a campaign called Alliance for 33% was undertaken by several NGOs and civil society organizations converged on July 6th to plan a

demonstration in Delhi on 29th July, 2010. The campaign initiated by several groups at national level demanding the bill to be tabled and passed in this monsoon session. As part of the campaign, SUGRAMA undertook a massive signature campaign through its partners in the taluks. These posters/banners were a part of the banners of other NGOs and were displayed at the demonstration.

Research:

As part of advocacy efforts, SUGRAMA also looked at the tenure of the Presidents in the Grama Panchayats. The members of SUGRAMA reiterated the need for increasing the term of Presidents' from two and a half years to five years. Hence, it was decided to undertake a research based advocacy and hence with the assistance of THP, an evidence based research has been taken up wherein 17 taluks of 7 districts of Karnataka. The research emphasized the need for organizing focus group discussions with the representatives both male and female as well as an in-depth interview with the affected representatives. Further, discussions with the community and other stakeholders in the field were also envisaged. The research was initiated in July 2010 with Mangalore and currently the research has been completed in ---- taluks of --- districts.

50% reservation for women:

After the successful attempt in urging the Government to conduct timely elections, SUGRAMA urged/demanded 50% reservation for women at the Grama Panchayat level. SUGRAMA has been urging for 50% reservation since December 2009. In January 2010, the Steering Committee members strategized to campaign for implementing 50% reservation for the Grama Panchayat elections.

Memorandums to the Chief Minister and the RDPR Minister were submitted separately demanding 50% reservation for women. A signature campaign of around 11,000 signatures was undertaken by SUGRAMA and sent to the Chief Minister and the RDPR Minister. Further, a post card campaign of around 200 post cards was also made. Ms. Shilpa, Secretary, SUGRAMA filed an RTI application to the office of the Chief Minister in January. SUGRAMA also received a reply from the office of the Chief Minister stating the status of the issues raised by SUGRAMA. Press meets both at the state level as well as at the taluk levels were held by SUGRAMA urging the need for 50% reservation and urged the media to pressurize the government and support their demand.

The Steering Committee members met the RDPR Minister Shri. Jagdish Shetter thrice to present their demands and also met Shobha Karandlaje, the Ex. RDPR Minister.

SUGRAMA observed that 50% reservation for women would facilitate more women to enter politics and public sphere and pave way for empowerment of women. This would also make panchayats more inclusive and effective institutions, improve the quality of local self governance and public service delivery systems. In this regard, SUGRAMA also conducted a press meet in February. Further, letters were sent to the Chief Minister urging the need for 50% reservation for women. The State Government then announced 50% reservation for women at the local self government during the budget session, which was welcomed by SUGRAMA. Further, SUGRAMA also urged the need for making amendments in the Panchayat Raj Act. But due to the technical and other hurdles, this ordinance could not be brought into effect at the Grama Panchayat elections. However, an assurance has been made by the State Government to introduce 50% reservation at the taluk panchayat and zilla panchayat elections.

Holding timely elections of the Grama Panchayat

The elections of the Grama Panchayat scheduled to be held between February and March was postponed and the State Election Commission failed to hold the elections on time. Instead, the State Government committed to terminate the roles and powers of the current elected representatives and appoint an Administrator in lieu of elections in the Grama Panchayats. SUGRAMA joined the network called the Grama Panchayat Hakkotaya Andolana lobbied and brought in huge pressure on the State Government for conducting the Grama Panchayat elections on time. A series of press meets were held in Bangalore urging the need to conduct the elections of the Grama Panchayats at the earliest. At the same time, SUGRAMA members made an appeal to the District Collectors asking for immediate action. The network also obtained support of Mr. Raghunandan, a member of the Andolan as well as the Former Joint Secretary to the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India who spoke strongly about the slipshod efforts of the State Government as well as of the State Election Commission. These protests bore fruit and the state government and the election commission took action to conduct timely elections. The elections were held in two phases – May 8, 2010 and May 12, 2010.

Transferring of powers of selecting the beneficiaries of Asharaya Scheme:

The State Government sought to make an amendment to the Karnataka Panchayat Raj to transfer the powers of selecting the beneficiaries of Ashraya Schemes and other housing schemes to the MLAs. As per section 3 of the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, the Grama Sabhas are the deciding body with the regard to the selection of beneficiaries for housing and other schemes. This is the only platform that recognises the right of every citizen to participate in decision making, a major step towards realising self governance and this amendment revokes this right.

The amendment to the Panchayat Raj Act virtually put MLAs in the driver's seat in respect of the selection of any beneficiary for any scheme. The amendment ensured that the people shall be held to ransom by our MLAs who want to usurp virtually all powers, including those given to constitutionally mandated local bodies.

Hence, the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Hakkotaya Andolan wherein SUGRAMA is also a member conducted massive protests at the state as well as district level to condemn the amendment. All the Panchayats in Karnataka remained closed on June 29 as a mark of protest against the proposed amendment to curtail the rights of the Grama Sabhas of this State. On July 5th a Bangalore Chalo was organized wherein thousands of members of the Andolana urged the legislators to take a stand against the proposed amendment to the Panchayat Raj Act.

ADMINISTRATION:

Governance Structure

The broad governance of SUGRAMA is looked after by the Steering Committee at the State Level and Taluk Federation at the Taluk Level. The members of the Steering Committee are all the members of the Grama Panchayat who have been elected to the State from the taluks of their district. They act as the medium for coordination between the state and the taluk level. Currently, there are 22 members representing 22 districts. The table below gives the names of the steering committee members.

Appointment of Director:

Advertisements were placed in newspapers, online job sites and head hunting agency describing the job profile of the Director. Of the resumes received, 8 were shortlisted and interviewed through a panel consisting of 3 steering committee members, THP Karnataka staff and Suman Kolhar, ex. Zilla Parishat Member and an activist working with the EWRs in Bijapur. Of the 8, two were selected for the final round of interviews conducted by Mr. Paul Dixelius, SKL International and Ms. Sriparna G. Chaudhuri, THP.

After the interview with the final interviewees, Ms. Padmini Ananth was selected as the Director of SUGRAMA. Ms. Padmini Ananth joined SUGRAMA on May 10, 2010. A detailed terms of reference was drawn up in collaboration with Ms. Padmini.

Orientation of the Director:

An Orientation was given to the new incumbent, Ms. Padmini Ananth by Mr. Paul Dixelius from SKL International, Ms. Sriparna G. Chaudhuri from THP. Ms. Subhadra, State Coordinator, THP Karnataka and Ms. Reshma. Ms. Padmini was briefed about SUGRAMA – its objectives, vision/mission, etc. as well as about her role as a Director.

Internal Meetings with THP India and THP Karnataka:

Ms. Sriparna G. Chaudhuri and Ms. Ruchi Yadav, THP India made regular visits to Bangalore to have internal meetings with THP Karnataka and SUGRAMA. At this juncture, the reports were shared with the THP India team and discussions were held with respect to strengthening and sustaining SUGRAMA.

Registration of SUGRAMA

March 19, 2010 was a historic day for SUGRAMA as it was officially registered under the Societies Registration Act of Karnataka 1960. Though the application was filed in December it was delayed due to bureaucratic hassles. After several efforts, SUGRAMA obtained a registration under the Societies Registration Act, 1960. A PAN Card under the name of SUGRAMA was also applied for and received on April 22, 2010. SUGRAMA is also in the process of obtaining 80G and 12A under Income Tax Act.

Opening of a Bank Account – State Level

A Bank Account has been opened with the State Bank of India, Banashankari Branch, Bangalore. After several meetings between THP India and the Bank Manager, an account was opened at the State Bank of India, Banashankari branch, Bangalore on May 20, 2010. This account shall be used to deposit the 50% funds received from the taluk level.

Email and Webpage:

After the appointment of the Director, an email ID specifically for SUGRAMA was opened – padananth.sugrama@gmail.com. Further, the process of building a website for SUGRAMA has been initiated, while a blog in the name of SUGRAMA has been created.

Office Space for SUGRAMA

There was a need to look for an office space for SUGRAMA. Hence, three localities viz., Rajajinagar, Malleswaram and Mathikere were finalized. But due to the expensiveness and problems in finding a suitable office space, this did not work out. However, after several unsuccessful efforts and attempts of finding an office space, SUGRAMA has been able to find an office space at Prashanthanagar, Vijayanagar through the Director.

SUGRAMA

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