

**SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC
CHANGE MONOGRAPHS**

52

**Institutions, Governance
and Development
A Study of Selected
Grama Panchayats in
Karnataka**

**D Rajasekhar
M Devendra Babu
R Manjula**



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*A Study of Selected Grama
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Foreword

Decentralisation is expected to contribute to efficient allocation of resources and thereby to improved service delivery and economic development. Relevant policies and programmes have been initiated towards democratic decentralisation in rural areas and were introduced in India as well as in Karnataka, after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. Karnataka state government initiated policy reforms at the Grama Panchayat (GP) [the lowest of the three-tier Panchayat Raj Institution (PRIs)] level towards strengthening of decentralization. These policy reforms, introduced in the decade of 2000-2010, strengthened the administrative staff and assigned additional functions and activities to grama panchayats in addition to providing role clarity between the three-tiers. The reforms not only enhanced fiscal transfers but also provided guidelines for decentralised planning and developed a model plan for grama panchayats as a ready reckoner. These reforms were expected to enable GPs to provide effective participatory governance leading to improved assessment of resources, needs, development vision and planning and welfare outcomes.

This Monograph, authored by D Rajasekhar, M Devendra Babu and R Manjula, analyzes the quality of governance in the post-reform period using the data collected from 10 grama panchayats in five districts of Karnataka state. The impact of decentralised governance on the provision of basic services (drinking water, sanitation, streetlights), infrastructure (roads and housing) and livelihood (through wage employment scheme of MGNREGS) is analyzed.

The results have indicated that there has been a considerable improvement in the governance at the local level with people attending Grama Sabha meetings increasing from 94 to 117, and the number of GP meetings increasing from eight to 12 during the period 2005 to 2012. The quality of governance has been effective in Coastal and Bombay-Karnataka regions while there is considerable scope for improvement in North Karnataka region. There has been only modest change in the quality of planning after the introduction of decentralisation reforms. The standing committees (production, amenities and social justice) meetings of the GPs and annual Jamabandi (social audit) were yet to improve planning, transparency and accountability.

After the introduction of decentralisation reforms, the proportion of villages covered with individual sanitation increased from 13 to 17 per cent, drainage from 17 to 23 per cent, streetlights from 70 to 75 per cent, and roads from 9 to 14 per cent although regional disparities in the delivery

of basic services persisted. The delivery of drinking water service and planning process in the identification and prioritization of needs were yet to improve. Decentralisation leading to a reduction in regional inequalities is yet to make a mark.

The introduction of reforms in the decentralised governance thus requires development of capacities, proper devolution design, coordination between the line departments and freedom to handle resources. This Monograph is an outstanding contribution to the existing literature on governance, planning and development by PRIs, to enable the policy makers to devise programmes towards development and welfare of rural areas.

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