

RQC Unit

**IMPACT ASSESSMENT STUDY OF WOMEN IN PANCHAYAT
AND GRAM SABHA ON CAPACITY BUILDING**

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Chart 1.1

Three Tier Structure of Panchayati Raj

☞ ZP (30 Nos.)

⇒ President

⇒ Vice President

⇒ ZP Members

☞ P. Samiti (314 Nos.)

⇒ Chairman

⇒ Vice Chairman

⇒ Panchayat Samiti Members

☞ GP (5261 Nos.)

⇒ Sarapanch

⇒ Naib Sarapanch

⇒ Ward Members

Impact Assessment Study of Women in Panchayat and Gram Sabha on Capacity Building

Introduction

The world's largest number of poor people live in India and a significant percentage of them are women. As per the official statistics about 35 percent of the population is below poverty line (Planning Commission, 1993-94) and most of these people belong to Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes. Women constitute 48.3 per cent of the total rural population and 30 per cent of rural household is headed by women being invisible and overburdened with abject poverty, unaccounted domestic work. Women could not benefit from country's socio-economic and industrial development because of social and cultural conditions, stereotyped perception and unequal opportunities. Their survival mainly depends on wage labour or contractual labour with no land or assets of any sort. Most of the rural women work on others' land on wage basis. They have no easy access to natural resources like forest products and water resources. Often they have to walk a few kilometers in fetching **fuel wood** and **drinking water**.

Recalling the prevailing scenario in mid-1980s Shri Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister said "*the experience of the vast majority of our people at the grass roots has been that at the interface between people and administration, the administration is unresponsive, inefficient, unsympathetic, often callous, sometimes even cruel to those who they are meant to serve*".

Realising that the absence of democracy at the district-level was at the roots of the lack of responsiveness seventy-third Amendment in the form of self-government was brought out as an alternative institution to the existing bureaucratic district administration.

The new Panchayati Raj Institutions came as a boon to thousands of unprivileged women for awakening and insight. Decentralisation of power in the process of development activities is a landmark in equal opportunity and participation of communities from all segments. People's participation in the development process is a stepping stone towards equal distribution of resources as well. Mahatma Gandhi and many other social and political reformers advocated for rural self governance. Gandhi ji's idea of **Gram Swaraj** in every village may be mentioned here. Panchayats always existed in this country in some form or other. These were also popularly known as **local bodies**.

Any social or economic decisions taken for the village were first placed before the village communities and people's representatives known as **Village Panchayat** in earlier days. As time passed the Panchayat System became weak and defective. People are no more integrated on common cause. Indifferent attitudes of urbanised traits have also influenced the village culture.

It was 1957 **Balwantrai Mehta** committee report suggested peoples participation is the key to success. It was felt that the rural poor people were not involved in the planning and development programmes of community welfare programmes. People continued to depend on the government subsidies and material resources. The committee believed that powers should be shared between village communities through Panchayat.

Thus the Panchayati Raj system was formally introduced in 1959 with two main objectives -

- democratic decentralization and
- local participation in planning process

But because of lack of **clarity** and **indifference** attitudes of officials the Panchayati Raj System declined after 1965. Between 1965-88 several committees were appointed to look after the working of Panchayat system. During 1989 under the chairmanship of V.N.Gadgil the new Panchayati Raj system came into existence with several constitutional amendments. This committee suggested **three tier** system of Panchayats for five years fixed term and reservation for **Scheduled caste, Scheduled tribes** and **women**. This was finally passed in the parliament in 1993 and came into force. One of the major features of this amendment was introducing one third reservation of women in Panchayat and recognising **Gram Sabha** as an **important institution** in all development activities.

Special Features of the New Panchayati Raj Institution Act

The Amendment of Panchayat Act is a landmark in the democratic process. It has provided legal right to local self government at the **district, Taluka,** and **village** levels for decentralised planning and development. It is recognised fact that the delivery of public goods and services is most effective when the responsibilities of discharging their functions are shouldered by the functionaries closest to the people. In the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution, there are about 29 items listed as the functions of the third level of the Panchayati Raj governance mostly related to developmental activities and social responsibilities. Article 243 G is a revolutionary step in the democratic

decentralisation process which enlists the **power, authority and responsibilities** of Panchayats as below:

Subject to the provisions of this constitution, the legislature of a State may, by law, endow the Panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government and such law may contain provisions for the devolution of powers and responsibilities upon Panchayats at the appropriate level, subject to such conditions as may be specified therein, with respect to: (a) the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice; (b) the implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them including those in relation to the matter listed in the Eleventh Schedule.

India has three levels of governance - national, state and the grassroot levels. The grass-root levels are the Panchayati Raj Institutions that cover the village, the tehsil, taluk and the district.

Three Tier Model

The main objective of this amendment was to improve the **participation** of the people in the process of development. With the enactment of this Act the quality of the implementation of development programmes is expected to improve a great deal. Three-tier structure of the Panchayati Raj Institutions may be seen in the Chart 1.1. The main features of this structure are described below:

- The **Gram Panchayat** at the village level
- The **Panchayat Samiti** at the block level; and
- The **zilla parishad** at the district level.

The state has the overall responsibility of the Local-Self-Government. The state has the freedom to decide the structures of PRIs with reference to methods of election, powers and function and different financial support systems. It is implied that the state governments are to delegate adequate functions, finances and powers to make sure that various developmental programmes are implemented in a better ways.

Reservation of Seats

The Act provides for reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in every panchayat in proportion to their population. One third of seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will also be reserved for women. Not less than one third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election shall be reserved for women. Direct election to the Panchayat is one of the distinguishing features of this. All the seats in a Panchayat shall be filled by persons chosen by direct election from territorial constituencies. The chairperson at the village level shall be elected in such a manner as the legislature of the state may provide. The chairperson at the samiti and the Zilla parishad levels shall be elected by and from amongst the elected members. The duration of Panchayats will be for five years.

It is widely agreed and felt that the condition of the poor can improve only if they are directly involved in the process of formulation and implementation of decisions affecting their lives. It is recognised that Gram Sabha can be a reliable vehicle of local good governance than a relatively unaccountable bureaucracy or elected representatives. Good governance implies honest, transparent, pro-poor and non-populist governance. It can be achieved if bureaucracy and elected representatives are made responsible and accountable to people through the statutory institution of the **Gram Sabha**.

Since the Gram Sabha constitutes the entire electorate to whom all elected representatives of the local bodies, state legislature as well as Parliament are accountable, it is believed that the active functioning of the Gram Sabha could ensure a vibrant democracy with a great extent of community participation and control as well as transparency and accountability. The statutory employment of Gram Sabha is first achieved by the 73rd Amendment Act in 1993.

Role of Gram Sabha

Gram Sabha as the lowest unit of panchayat has many important roles to play for the better and effective functions of panchayats. These may be the following-

- identifying the problems and needs of the villagers
- providing suggestions for efficient functioning of the panchayats
- questioning the decisions of the panchayats
- discussing the Annual Financial Statements of the panchayat
- supervising and assessing the implementation of various developmental schemes
- Providing feedback and suggestion for improvement in working of the panchayat.
- Any other matter suggested by panchayat Samiti or zilla parishad to be implemented at the village may first be discussed and placed before the Gram Sabha

Two meetings in a year of the Gram Sabha need to be convened with a provision for extraordinary meetings.

In fact, the Gram Sabha may act as a watch dog on the working of Gram Panchayats.

Devolution of Powers and Functions

The amendment has provided a list of functions under the provision of the Eleventh Schedule, it has not mentioned clearly the level of PRIs which would perform a particular type of function. The term 'appropriate level' has created an ambiguity about the responsibility of institutions at the three levels.

The functions enlisted in the State Panchayat Acts are classified into three categories –

- (i) Administrative Functions
- (ii) Developmental and Social
- (iii) Maintenance

The three levels of PRIs are at (i) village level (Gram Panchayat), (ii) Block or Taluka level (Panchayat Samiti) and (iii) District level (Zilla Parishad)

(i) Village Level (Gram Panchayat)

At the village level, the general administrative functions involve –

- Preparation of annual plans for the development of village Panchayat
- Preparation of annual budget
- Mobilising relief for natural calamities
- Removal of encroachment on public properties
- Organising Voluntary labour and contribution for community works
- Maintenance of statistics of village, like – number of unemployment, maintenance and upkeep of records, registration of birth, death and marriages, *etc.*
- Any other function entrusted by the Panchayat Samiti or Zilla Panchayats on an emergency basis.

With regards to Developmental and Social functions the concern responsibilities

are –

- Agriculture
- Social Forestry
- Animal Husbandry
- Drinking water
- Rural Housing Education
- Social Welfare
- Women and Child Development
- Poverty Alleviation

Maintenance Responsibilities of the Village level Panchayats are –

- Rural Electrification
- Sanitation
- Establishment of Markets and Fairs
- Maintenance of Community Assets
- Promoting Culture and Sports activities

(ii) Block level (Panchayat Samitis)

At the Panchayat Samitis functions mentioned in the Panchayat Acts of the major

States are again classified into three heads –

- (i) Administrative
- (ii) Development and Social
- (iii) Maintenance functions

Major administrative functions assigned to this middle tier are relating to relief activities during natural calamities and other works entrusted by the Zilla Parishad, Central or State Governments.

Social and Developmental responsibilities of Panchayat Samitis are also common to village panchayats, like agriculture, forestry, drinking water, animal husbandry, education *etc.*

(iii) District level (Zilla Parishad)

Major responsibility of administrative function at the district level is overall supervision, co-ordination, consolidation, integration and implementation of developmental programmes at block and district level. Among other responsibilities preparation and execution of plans for economic-development, social justice and public works are included. Developmental functions as agriculture, horticulture, dairy and poultry, social forestry, minor forest produce, fuel and fodder are common among others.

From the above note it is clear that responsibilities and functions of PRIs at three levels are common and overlapping. **Maintenance functions** in few cases of community assets and the public distribution systems, establishment of market, fairs, cultural activities and sports are different. Demarcation of responsibilities and power of functionaries of different levels of PRIs is necessary for assuming assigned responsibilities. At the present situation no commitment and accountability exist between these levels of functionaries. Moreover devolution of entrusted power and authority to PRIs by the parallel administrative bureaucracy is yet to take place which is a stumbling block at the development planning and process of decentralisation of democracy.

Aims and Objectives

The special cell of Panchayati Raj Department under the Ministry of Rural Development has spent an exorbitant sum towards **capacity building** training for members in Panchayati Raj Institutions ever since the new panchayat act has been introduced and one third women members are included. The present study is an attempt to review the impact of training provided in carrying out day to-day's functioning of Panchayats and role realisation of women members' in conduct, disbursement of duties and extent of participation of Gram Sabha members in need assessment and implementation of developmental activities.

Main objectives of the present study were to review:

- the impact of training given to members of Panchayats and Gram Sabhas relating to **capacity building**.
- skill of women Panchayats in processing and delivering the required jobs.
- identification of selection procedure of beneficiaries for development programmes.
- the percentage of women members in Panchayats and their role in decision making process.

Methodology

The study covered three districts of Orissa – Cuttack, Mayurbhanj and Sambalpur. We explored data from Village Panchayats in terms of distance from the district headquarter. Sample comprised of **Vice President, Zilla Parishad (ZP); Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Members, Panchayat Samiti (PS); Sarpanches, Naib Sarpanches, Wards, and Women members of electorates**. Based on the population and

distance three to four blocks were covered. Three hundred and forty cases were selected from different levels of Panchayati Raj Institutions. See Table 2.1 and Maps of respective districts and blocks covered under the study.

Table 2.1
Sample Design

Category of Respondents	Educational Status	Total Number
President (ZP)*	Graduate	1
Vice President (ZP)	Graduate	2
Chairperson (PS)**	Graduate (2) Intermediate (1)	3
Vice Chairman (PS)	Graduate (2) Class V (1)	3
Member (PS)	Class X (4) V (1)	5
Sarpanches	Graduate (2) Class X (8)	10
Naib Sarpanches	Class X (6)	6
Ward Members	Class V	54
Gram Sabha	Class III-V	164
Members	Illiterate	92
	Total Respondents	340

* ZP Zilla Parishad

** PS Panchayat Samiti

An interview schedule was used for interviewing members and probing was done on the basis of responses. Group interview was conducted using PRA method for comprehensive and cross-reference data in a short available given time. Individual members were also interviewed in specific cases. Interview schedule was used in data collection covered variables like; specific role of elected members, their responsibilities, coordination with other line administration in discharging their tasks. Panchayat's role in

coordination with other line administration in discharging their tasks. Panchayat's role in selection of beneficiaries and implementation of welfare activities was specifically reviewed. Involvement of Gram Sabha members in such activities was assessed through probe questioning and participatory observation. Whether training was imparted to women members for conducting meetings, account keeping and auditing was also verified. Impact of training in general was analysed and discussed with various government functionaries like PD; DRDA; BDOs; DPOs and some training Personnel at the state level. Responses of these officials are recorded and noted for detailed analysis.

See Table 2.11 for the total number of elected members in Orissa.

Table 2.2
Number of Elected Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institution

RANKS	MALE MEMBER	FEMALE MEMBER
ZILLA PARISHAD PRESIDENT	30	10
P.S. CHAIRMAN	314	284
Z.P. MEMBER	824	284
P.S. MEMBER	4945	1150
SARPANCH	5261	1802
WARD MEMBERS	81077	28604

District Profile

Data collected from three districts of Orissa – **Cuttack, Mayurbhanj** and **Sambalpur** are analysed in terms of **demographic** and **socio-economic** variables under such district profile. Variables like population, caste, sex and literacy rate are described and presented in a tabular form.

Table 2.3
District Profile of Cuttack, Mayurbhanj and Sambalpur District

Districts	Name of the Blocks	No. of GPs	No. of Wards	No. of Women Member	No. of GP Selected
Cuttack	Sadar Cuttack	21	-	N.A.	2
	Tangi	20	282	N.A.	10
	Barang	13	223	N.A.	3
Mayurbhanj	Baripada	10	157	57	4
	Morada	18	270	96	2
	Khunta	12	169	59	6
	G.B. Nagar	12	116	58	2
Sambalpur	Dhankauda	13	198	73	4
	Maneswar	15	230	82	2
	Jujumura	16	216	82	3
	Jamankira	19	257	92	2

Cuttack

Among three districts selected for this study **Cuttack** was the nearest from Bhubaneshwar, the capital city of Orissa. Distance is only 30 Kilo meters from Bhubaneshwar. The closest to Cuttack City was **Sadar block**.

We selected **Baranga, Tangichoudwar** and **Sadar** Blocks. The total number of villages under these blocks are 21, 13 and 20, respectively constituting 54 total villages.

Barang block 18 Kilometers away from Cuttack City has 71,765 total population. There are 13 Gram Panchayats and 223 ward members and 78 revenue villages. The total literacy rate is 64.7 per cent. There are 9079 families under below poverty line list according to 1992 survey.

Tangi block, 22 Kilometers away from Cuttack City has 20 Gram Panchayats and 282 wards. There are 178 revenue villages constituting 1,29,431 total population.

Literacy rate among female is 23 per cent and among male is 44 per cent. There are 15,660 families under below poverty line list. The **average income level** of villagers was between Rs.3000-10000 per month. Educational level of **women sarpanch** and other members was between graduation to high school. Most villages we selected have had nuclear family ranging 5-6 members in a family. Source of income is mainly from business and service as reported. Men and Women were found engaged in traditional occupation. Tasar Silk sarees and handicrafts of **brass** and **silver** metal are very popular in Cuttack. Women were found engaged in these traditional occupations. Most of these articles are sold in Cuttack City and are also exported. Silver jewelry and brass articles are of high quality. In **Baranga block** women are engaged in making leather articles. Home based industries of leather goods and other fashionable articles are available in Cuttack. The village women are very active and have business entrepreneurship.

Mayurbhanj

In Mayurbhanj district **Baripada Sadar, Morada, Khunta G.B.Nagar** blocks were selected. In these blocks there are ten Gram Panchayats out of which 7 are reserved for Scheduled Tribes. There are **four lady sarpanches** out of which three are scheduled tribes. There are four Samitee members and 56 **lady ward members** in **Baripada block**. **Morada** block has 18 Gram Panchayats in which there are six lady sarpanches, (3 ST) and 96 ward members comprising 44 ST women. **Khunta** and **G.B.Nagar** blocks consist of 12 Gram Panchayats and four women Sarpanches in both the blocks. The total number of women **ward** members consists of 59 and 58 respectively.

Income source of the villagers is from Sabai, **Sabai grass** and **Sal leaf** which are dominant **local resources** available in abundance and tribals make their living based on that. The average monthly income of villagers is Rs,1312/- reported.

Education of Women members ranged from Graduation to class V. The family size fall between 5-10 members. Most of the families are below the poverty line.

Sambalpur

Four blocks namely - **Dhankauda, Maneswar, Jujumura and Jamankira** having 13,15, 16 and 19 Gram Panchayats respectively were selected. There are five lady sarpanches and **seventy three** ward members in Dhankauda. In Maneswar two Sarpanches and **eighty two** ward members, in Jujumura and Jamankira **nine** sarpanches and **sixty six** ward members each comprise the list. Number of villages in each of the above mentioned blocks are 84 (Dhaukauda) 230 (Maneswar), and 183 (Jujumura).

A substantial number of people from these blocks fall under below poverty line (BPL). According to recent survey done it is reported that 65.39 percent in Dhaukauda and 61.86 percent in Maneswar. The average per month income of the respondents reported is Rs.2054. (See Table 2.4).

Table 2.4
Socio-economic Profile of the Respondents

Monthly Income Range	No of Respondents in each category				Average Family Size			
	Cuttack	Mayurbhanj	Sambalpur		Cuttack	Mayurbhanj	Sambalpur	
000-200	28	51	54		07	07	6.5	
300-800	40	33	49		7.8	07	4.9	
900-1500	24	07	08		5.6	8.1	6.2	
1600-3000	09	04	06		8.1	5.6	10	
4000-6000	05	06	09		17	6.3	6.8	
7000-10000	02	00	02		13.5	00	04	
15000+	02	00	00		12.5	00	00	

Analysis

Attempt has been made to present data collected through interview schedule and personal observation as far as possible in realistic and simple format without distorting the originality. In order to put them in systematic and objective manner analysis has been done through some cases wherever it was felt necessary. Analysis has been made in the context of sub-themes.

Socio-economic profile of villagers

Most of the villagers under study were very poor specially, in Mayurbhanj and Sambalpur districts. Illiteracy, poverty and large family size without any land resources they live on daily wage or some local based occupation. It is presented in the table 2.4 showing their monthly income and family size. The government institutions like **Anganwari**, Mid-day-Meal Schools, Primary Health Centre and Public Distribution System are there without much help so far as these village people are concerned.

Case 1

Sindurponk G.P. with a population of 5550 and closer to (15 Km.) the city has the largest number of poor people. The total fund received by this G.P. during the current year was shown as Rs.88,580 of which only Rs.56,933 was spent on construction work. Under the JRY fund Rs.2,35,967 was received and the expenditure incurred upto August 1999 was Rs.2,74,355. Respondents we contacted about 20 told that they do not get any ration under the PDS like, rice, sugar, and kerosene.

Case 2

Sarkaree Sansthans like **Anganwari**, **mid-day** meal schools are existing but nobody gets anything from these centres. No one sends their children there. They are mostly landless labourers with no assets to depend on their daily survival. Some of them told, when some day they do not get any work they have to sell some essential household items like **utensils** for making a day's living. (See in the Map **Sindurpank**).

Case 3

Another poor and populous (9878) village with 60 per cent literacy is **Sasan** only 12 Kilometers from Sambalpur town. Sarpanch is a graduate lady seemed totally unaware of her role and Panchayat's activities. She obeys her Secretary for everything. Villagers mostly, SC and ST, do not get **ration** from fair price shops. There is no fund in the G.P. said the Sarpanch. We visited this Panchayat along with PD (DRDA) and DPO. (See in the Map **Sasan**).

Case 4

In Sambalpur district Gram Panchayat **Sasan** has 12 Revenue Villages. The total number of population under this GP consists of 9878 out of which 2714 are SCs and 3080 are STs. The lady Sarpanch is a graduate from upper caste being ignorant about activities or schemes operating under the GP. Under the income generating scheme **Kendu Patta Yojana** is approved and there is no forest nearby no Kendu leaf is collected. The villagers specially women folk we met are very poor, mostly landless wage earners and single household heads. No PDS is functioning in that areas. They don't get anything under PDS. Houses under **Indira Awas Yojana** distributed are having one hall with four walls and a roof in a very poor condition. Almost all villagers are under **BPL**.

Attitudes of the Government Officials toward Women Empowerment

Journey towards greater decentralisation through new Panchayat Act is not easy to achieve. There are many **hardles** and **barriers** in this journey owing to huge concentration of power in the hands of lined administrators. Bureaucracy, in general, trust their own fraternity. Their additional responsibility and accountability towards elected representatives have created disturbance in easy going set up. They are used to **authority** and **control** which are no longer accepted by the common people. Their cynicism and mind set about women's active participation in politics have created **role ambiguity** among women members. They are reluctant to share power with elected representatives. Their fear of encroachment of authority and devolution of power has been the major problem in ensuring effective implementation of developmental schemes. Most of the officers at the **district** and **block** level we interacted gave negative feedback about women's performance ascribing their **stereotyped sex roles, low literacy, lack of political awareness** and reluctance to authority. One of the respondents remarked – "the fact that bureaucracy did not like flourishing local leadership and found it to be serious threat to their influence and power."

Asoka Mehta Committee Report also made similar observation. It said – "Bureaucracy had probably its own role in dissociating PRIs from the development process. Several facts seem to have conditioned their perception. The size of line hierarchy would find favour with them as an organisational principle. The officers would feel that they are primarily accountable for results and financial proprieties to the State Government. The officials knew no better than to trust their own fraternity. They would, on the other would not easily get adjusted to working under the supervision of elected representatives."

Case 5
Sex Stereotype

Officer at the Block level said women can perform better at home. Their efficiency lies in household management but that does not mean that they can run the administration with little education and knowledge. How can a women deal with village dispute? She can not attend meeting in the evening in case of emergency. They are just dummy members.

Case 6
Role Ambiguity

A lady Sarpanch being a graduate belonging to high caste feels subjugated under the high profile administration. She has never tried to assume her role as elected representative shouldering certain responsibilities. She is fully ignorant about the role and responsibility of Sarpanch while interviewed. She has accepted her secondary role by delegating all authority to the **Secretary**.

Role Awareness

Women Panchayat members are not aware of their responsibilities as representatives of the constituency. Their lack of association with government machineries hinders opportunities for learning. Transparency and increased participation of people at the village level is absent. It is expected that elected members being people's representatives will be able to identify needs and aspirations of local people.

Sufficient advance notice for Gram Sabha meetings are not given. Campaigning for such meetings are claimed to be done through **drum beating, pasting posters**. But fault lies in the policy. The rule itself invites malpractice as it was said - *calling Gram Sabha meeting and getting one tenth quorum is not possible. So according to the rule second time no quorum is needed. For getting anything passed by Gram Sabha it is the easiest way not to get one tenth quorum in the first meeting. Generally all the bills are passed in second*

meeting representing the allied group only. As a result the local people have no trust in such meeting and decision-making body.

Women sarpanches and ward members are working in neck to neck with power group elites to be in the power commented by some government official. **“Now for Samitee election or Panchayat election a huge sum of money is spent, how can they find that money if not supported by political party”?** told by another official. It is told that for getting one bill passed under any scheme some percentage of **token fee** is fixed.

There are reasons why some women committed samiti members and Sarpanches are not effective as they face **intimidation** and **hostility** from administration as well as power group lobby operating at the village level. Their security is at stake. With continuous threat and lack of support mechanism women members are not likely to tackle this increasing power abuse.

Abuse of power in the Panchayati Raj system, if not tackled in time, can be another mini parliamentary constituency and it will represent the interests of the rural elite at the cost of the needs of other vulnerable section of population. It is obvious that those who are in power will like to consolidate their position using the support of politically advanced elite. At this stage bureaucracy can play a pivotal role in supporting **committed and sinecure women members** through various mechanisms and interacting with villagers, mobilising public opinion in favour of local common needs. Overwhelming enthusiasm and spirit seen among some women members undertaking many serious tasks against all odds. Administrative hurdles and uncooperation did not deem their sense of responsibility in implementing certain developmental activities. Some of them are very optimistic about their role assumption and shared responsibilities.

However some effective leaders at the **Village** and **Samiti** level made our observation different and optimistic against all discouragement and pessimism. Here are some cases of committed women members and their actions.

Case 7

In Cuttack and Sambalpur districts we met with some committed young women Panchayat members who have been able to create a difference in the village administration in terms of controlling **liquor shops**, regulating **Anganwaries**, fixing **tube wells** and construction of school and Panchayat buildings. It has been possible with their unstinted commitment and sincerity. One of the Sarpanches in Cuttack Sadar was considered to be very powerful and named as "Mamta Banerjee". They organise village meeting regularly at fixed intervals and also interact with local people informally keeping themselves informed. To our surprise it was told that they meet block level and district level officials for clearance of bills or any such need. Their access to higher level officers is not restricted as **women members** nor are they ignored as reported by others and government functionaries as well. In many occasions these members felt constrained under bureaucratic procedures and delayed release of funds.

Case 8 Committed Officer

DPO, Sambalpur, along with PD (DRDA) received us with a smile and remained with us till mid night when we returned after visiting the village Panchayats and finishing our discussion about issues referred by the villagers. Next day we were surprised to know that the DPO's only son studying in Cuttack was missing from the school and he received that news from the Principal of the school on that very day when we were to visit. Despite this incident he did not let us even know the slightest of his mental worries through his behaviour. Moreover he treated us all through the day normally with apparent ease. We only learnt about this fact from another officer the next day with the message of his son's return. This proves that such a dedicated officer is still available in the government.

Case 9
Responsive Administration

Our experience in Morada block of Mayurbhanj district is significant to refer. The BDO, A Pattanayak was very much informed about village Panchayat's activities and has had good cordial relationship with Panchayat functionaries and villagers as well. He showed us relevant records and documents under **JRY** and **Indira Awas Yojana** which were done under his supervision and in close vigilance with the village community. Political interference and involvement of Panchayat functionaries were dealt with administrative procedures taking village people's decision as primary source. He seemed to be popular among local people as well as in administration.

Case 10

The Sarpanch of **Sindurponk GP of Maneswar Block** is served a notice by the Collector for having five children. During the election she was already a mother of **four children**. Thereafter she has given birth to another child ignoring the official declaration that having more than two children will disqualify to be a Sarpanch. She is educated up to Vth standard and is a wife of an ex-Sarpanch.

Political Interference and Violence

The new panchayat system has raised aspiration for power among politically sensitive people in the villages. Villagers are no more integrated on common needs of the local community. No close sincere relationship exists between different segment of population. They are divided on caste, class and politics much more now than before. There are some village **Dadas** closed to political power dominate the village resources in their favour. They are also influential members in the village who play a significant role in functioning and affairs of panchayats. As per the policy matter every 'Scheme' to be implemented in the village may be first discussed in the **Gram Sabha**. This rule is manipulated in favour of socio-politically privileged people by not making the quorum in

the first meeting. Sufficient propaganda or campaigning is not done before Gram Sabha meetings are called. It is organised in a cursory manner so that limited members can attend such meetings and in the second meeting as there is no quorum needed, everything gets passed as preplanned.

If some sincere officers like women Sarpanches, Samiti members, raised objection they were intimidated and threatened. They are often not consulted in many important matters if **secretary** agrees with local **Dadas** on the assumption of lack of awareness and literacy among women electorates. With increasing **Social insecurity** and lack of people's support and trust it may not be sufficient motivation for many Sarpanches to continue in their struggle for village development.

There are cases reported in Sambalpur where murder has taken place and attempts have been on others who did conform to others' demand. The perceived stereotyped attitudes of men towards women members are playing significant role in dividing community. Women are not taken seriously by women members also. Under such situation those who are sincere and committed feel neglected. They also feel demotivated under continuous **hostility** and **intimidation**. These have been reasons to comply under the pressure and withdraw from power in a few cases. In some cases false corruption charges were made. The general atmosphere was quite tense in Orissa, specially in **Mayurbhanj** and **Sambalpur** areas where in general, public lost faith in government. They ridiculed the activities of Panchayat and its working norms. Young educated youths do not feel encouraged to work for integration or communal harmony as they blame the government departments and officials for inefficient management and patronising political masters.

Capacity Building at Various Levels

Men and women both are important members in the society. Their roles and responsibilities are different. This rational ideology should prevail in the minds of young educated people, government officials and village level political workers. Sharing power with women members seems to be difficult by majority of people in position. The **mindset** of general common people needs to be altered with systematic value based knowledge and information. Informal discussions, open meetings with various levels of village community may be effective for awareness generation. Functional or Adult education should be revived for developing skill to manage personal resources, handling small economic transactions. Economic benefits from on-going income generating schemes may be worked out. Special attention to **sanitation** and **health** is essential at the village level. Role of 'VLW' may be effective in awareness building among the villagers. Special attention may be given to such priorities. Education and training may be provided to all functionaries, village level workers and women, for unity and team building. Common stereotypes and preconceived notions may be replaced by positive role citation and cases with success stories. Women members should be supported and helped for the long term healthy society. This message may be imparted through various fora to local people. Village problems and important issues may be dealt objectively in such training workshops.

Institutional Support Mechanism

Institutional support at all levels of administration is essential for PRIs success. No organisation can survive in the absence of cooperation and proper coordination at various levels. PRIs for its full development as a **self-governance** inter-organisational support between core organisations like Centre, State and District levels as well as other independent organisations, such as Police, Forest, Agriculture and Irrigation, would be a

landmark for integrated social and economic development of the country. Devolution of power and authority may be achieved by delegated power sharing among lined administration with proper monitoring and evaluation. Self-discipline and a sense of belonging to social unit as PRI can bring about desired change in attitudes and perceptions of people in the country.

Training

An integrated approach of training may be provided taking all such matters that depend on each and other's coordination and cooperation. Men and women both may be asked to participate in **training workshop** along with block level administrators. There should be constant monitoring and support in implementing village level schemes by the block and district level authorities. It should be made mandatory for concerned MLAs and MPs to be present in such training workshops for mutual role assumptions and responsibilities. VLW's role may be highlighted and made important in organising villagers for better coordination and information sharing. Police officials at the local level may also be trained along with Panchayat functionaries to develop awareness and responsibilities to protect the village resource and common needs.

Summary and Conclusion

Women members in Panchayats and Gram Sabhas we interviewed belonged to different castes, economic and educational background. One third representation of women in panchayats is achieved in Orissa. These representatives are very much aware of their political position and rights. There are certain structural defects in the system which need to be tackled at the administrative and policy levels. Women, in general, were found very active in their role, performing assigned tasks against the bureaucratic procedural **barriers**. The support **mechanisms** at the **local level** are yet to be established. Dealing with various impediments and interferences at different levels women functionaries face the situation with courage and optimism. Lack of information and knowledge are not primary reasons of **ineffective function**. It is the lack of their legitimate **power** often put a barrier between initiatives and actions. Administrative line authorities along with political masters need to be made realised on 'issues' that affect smooth functioning of local self governance. Devolution of power and authority has to come from district authorities in form of supportive, coordinated and integrated tools for strong village administration. Training workshops on **gender sensitisation** at various levels of administration along with political and village level representatives are of primary needs of the hour. Stereotyped gender role as women's primary and only responsibility is **child care** and **household activities** perpetuate low self esteem and negative attitudes among women. A balanced and interdependent supportive working culture may be created in the interest of larger social gain. Men and women both may be involved in creating a harmonious and healthy social norms for becoming healthy and progressive beings.

Capacity building of women members should be given priority as one of the important tasks of the district level administration. Day-to-day's functional and technical 'know how' should be provided in a 'package form' so that they feel involved and find relevance to perform their routine functions. The apparent barrier in attitudes and perception needs to be changed for creating **learning centre** instead of making Panchayats as superfluous **extra bodies repeating** the same functions that of other administrative machineries with little motivation and accountability.

People's participation in the Gram Sabha can only be achieved by looking into certain **needs** at the local level. **Distance of Panchayat; meeting place and time; sufficient campaigning; village level representatives and incentives to people in need** are some of the factors need immediate attention. Incentives can be in cash or kind for those who survive on day's wage. Cash flow through various agencies and political parties has to be monitored and checked. Disintegrated village dwellers have to be organised with human approach and less control. Interests of village elites and better off people need not be protected at the cost of majority's social security and economic loss. Special attention may be paid towards social integration and village level security empowering common people and protecting their needs. Government Institutions like Anganwadi, Public Distribution System, health centres, **community centres** and **schools** should be made functional and working. Constant vigilance and monitoring may be done by the concerned authorities to check on pilferages. In order to set everything right micro planning at the grass root levels is necessary. Involvement of local people in planning should be the most viable step in this journey. A sincere effort and persuasions will help to get over the difficulties of present form of local governance.

Recommendations

For developing village resources and human potentials through proper education, health and capacity building, different government departments should work on mutually supportive mechanisms. The following recommendations are suggested for effective local governance.

- Grassroot level planning and implementation through PRIs should be the first step towards **capacity building**. Delegation of authority and timely needed support will be effective **tool** to empower local governance.
- Small scale agro-based industries and women entrepreneurship may be encouraged ensuring marketing and storage facilities.
- Encouragement of local skill and craftsmanship is necessary through government institutions by imparting training and organising 'mela' for promoting traditional handicrafts and village resources. This would also involve community in making efforts to be **self reliant**.
- Special attention to be given to such 'Panchayats' that are under poverty line. Integrated family oriented schemes may be provided for eligible living conditions. 'Food for Work' may be the alternative arrangement to be thought of. Available government institutions may be made functional and more effective, like, Anganwaries, Mid-day-meal schools & Public Distribution System.
- Secretary of the Panchayats should also be elected for one term. Policy interventions in this regard may be brought out at the earliest for effective implementation and increased accountability.

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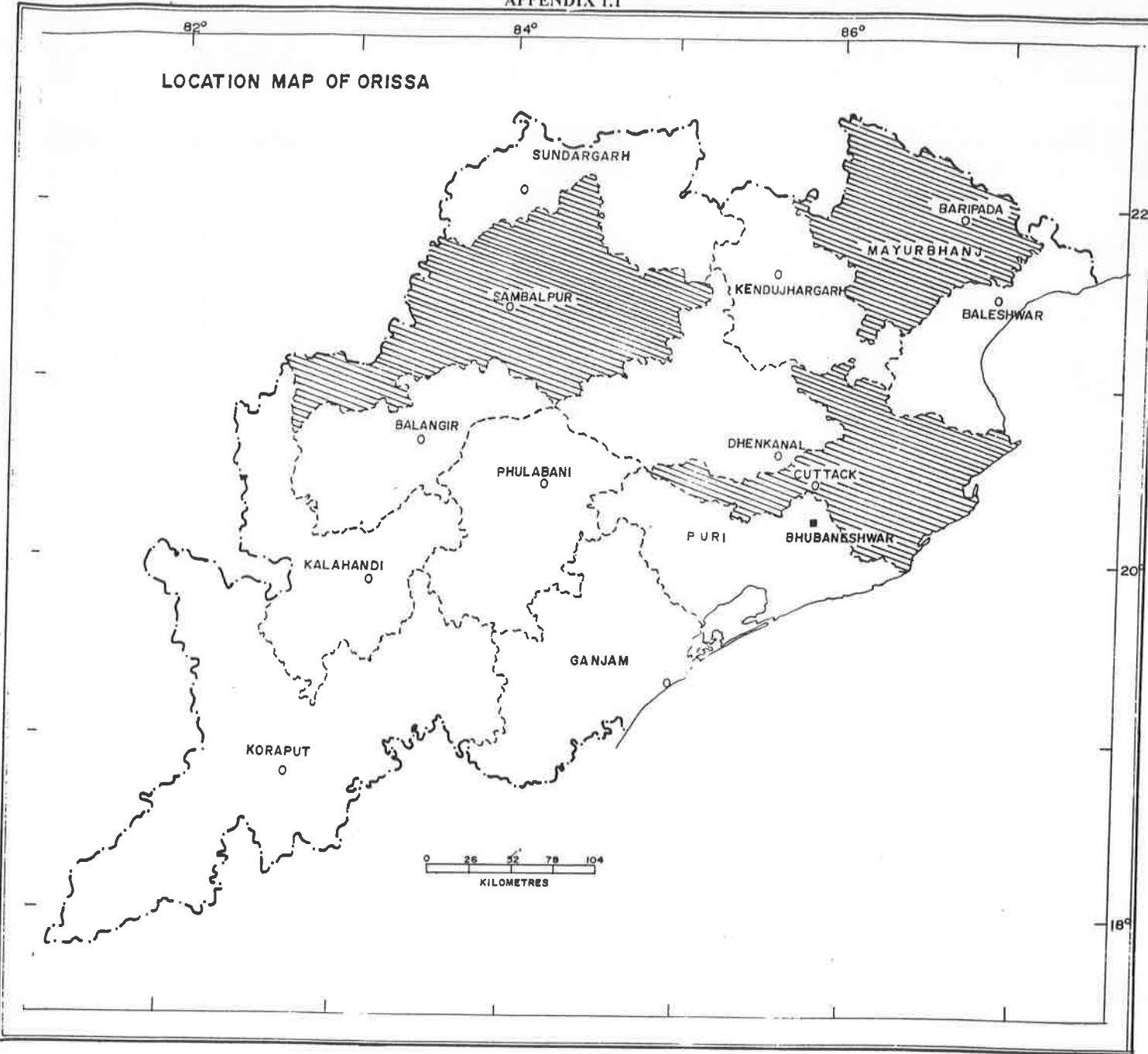
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List of Officers met

Date	
25.8.99	Shri Baya Director (PRI) Secretariat Bhubaneswar
	D.P. Dhal Dy. Secretary (PRI) Bhubaneswar
	Director (SIRD) Bhubaneswar
	DPO Cuttack
	BDO Sadar Block
	Panchayat Samiti Member
26.8.99	BDO Tangi Chowdar
27.8.99	BDO Barang Block Members, PS and Panchayats
28.8.99	DPO, Mayurbhanj
30 & 31 August'99	Addl. P.D. (DRDA) Shri J.N. Patel, BDO (Dhankauda) Shri B. Behera, APD (Sambalpur) Shri S.N. Dhal, APD Shri Ramesh Chandra Bagh (GPEO) Shri P.K. Mishra, Addl. P.D. Shri S.C. Sahoo, DPO Shri G.B. Mishra (DRDA) Smt. A. Pradhan, Vice President, ZP
1.9.99	Shri K.K. Pattanayak Director Institute of Social Sciences Bhubaneswar

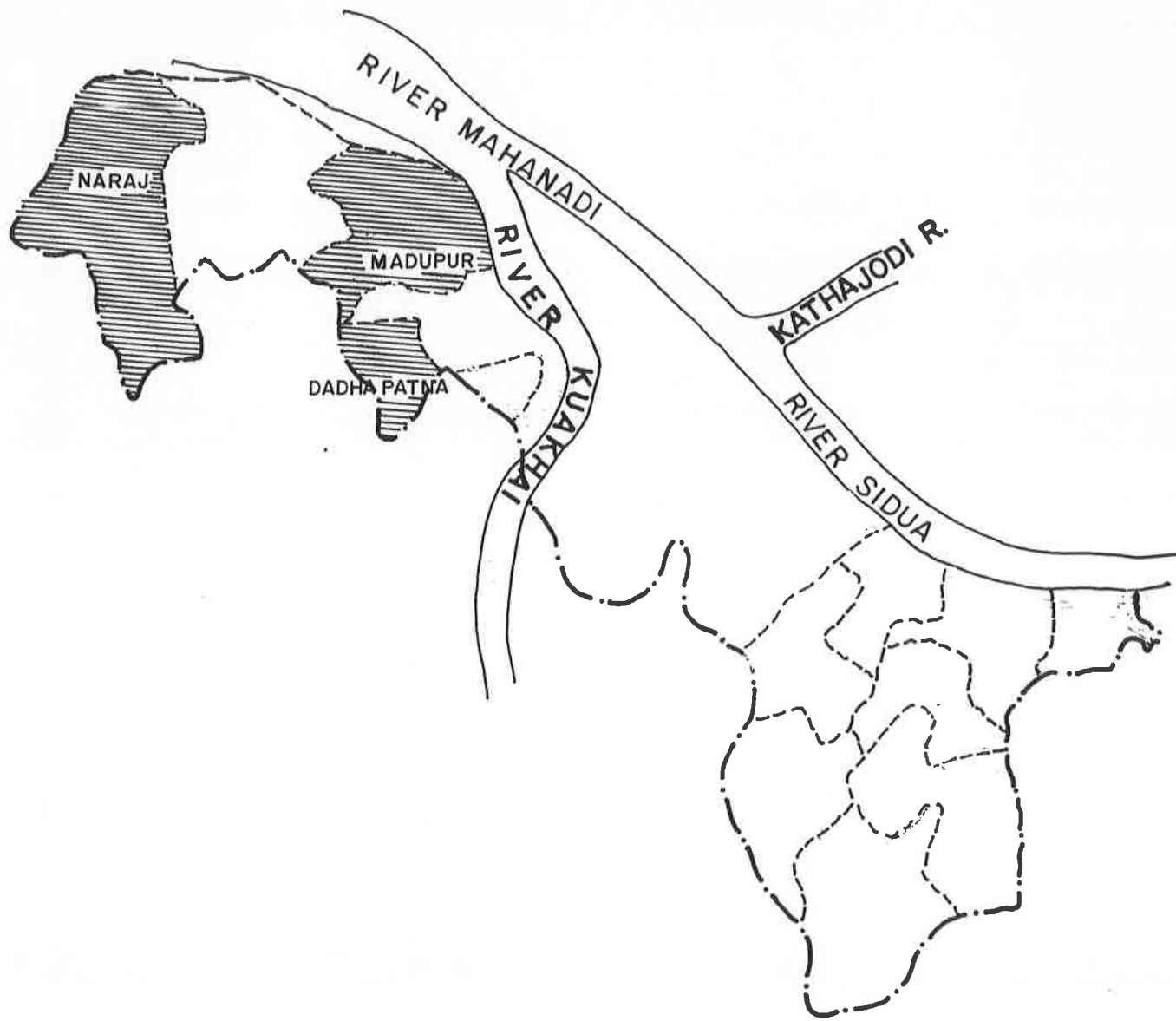
APPENDIX I.1

LOCATION MAP OF ORISSA





BLOCK BARANG

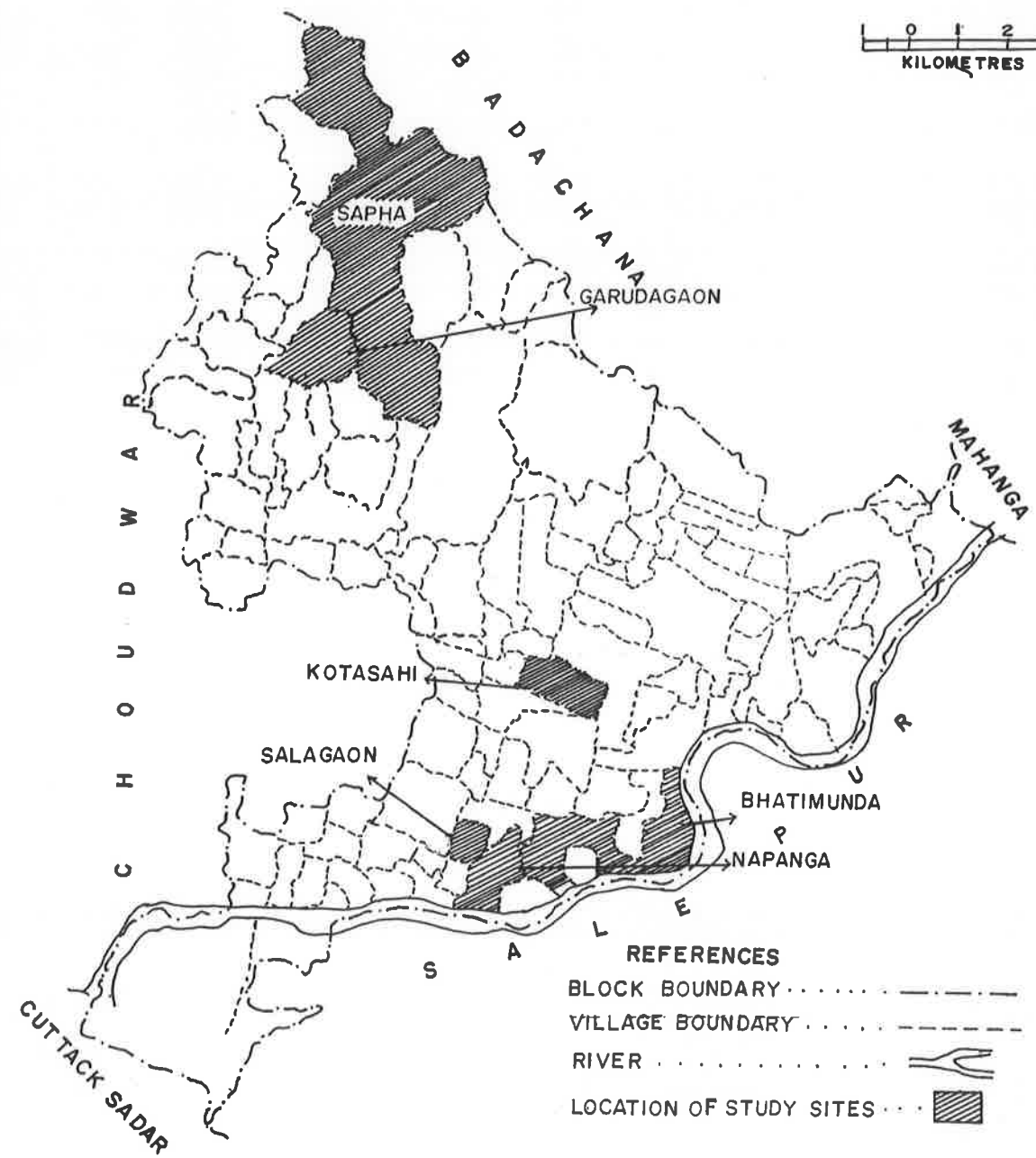
DISTRICT CUTTACK



REFERENCES

- DISTRICT BOUNDARY ····· - - - -
- BLOCK BOUNDARY ····· - - - -
- VILLAGE BOUNDARY ····· - - - -
- RIVER ····· 
- LOCATION OF STUDY SITES ····· 

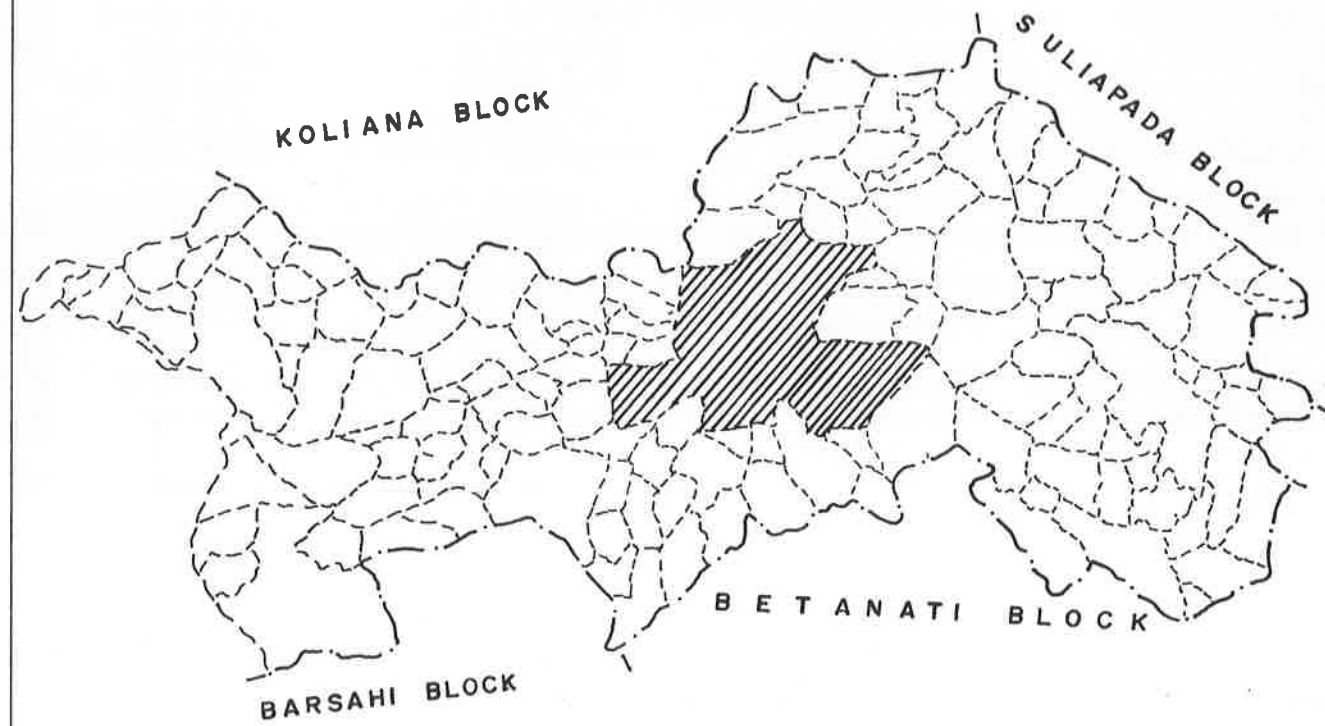
BLOCK TANGI
DISTRICT CUTTACK
ORISSA



- REFERENCES**
- BLOCK BOUNDARY
 - VILLAGE BOUNDARY
 - RIVER
 - LOCATION OF STUDY SITES


APPENDIX 1.4

BLOCK BARIPADA
DISTRICT MAYURBHANJ
ORISSA

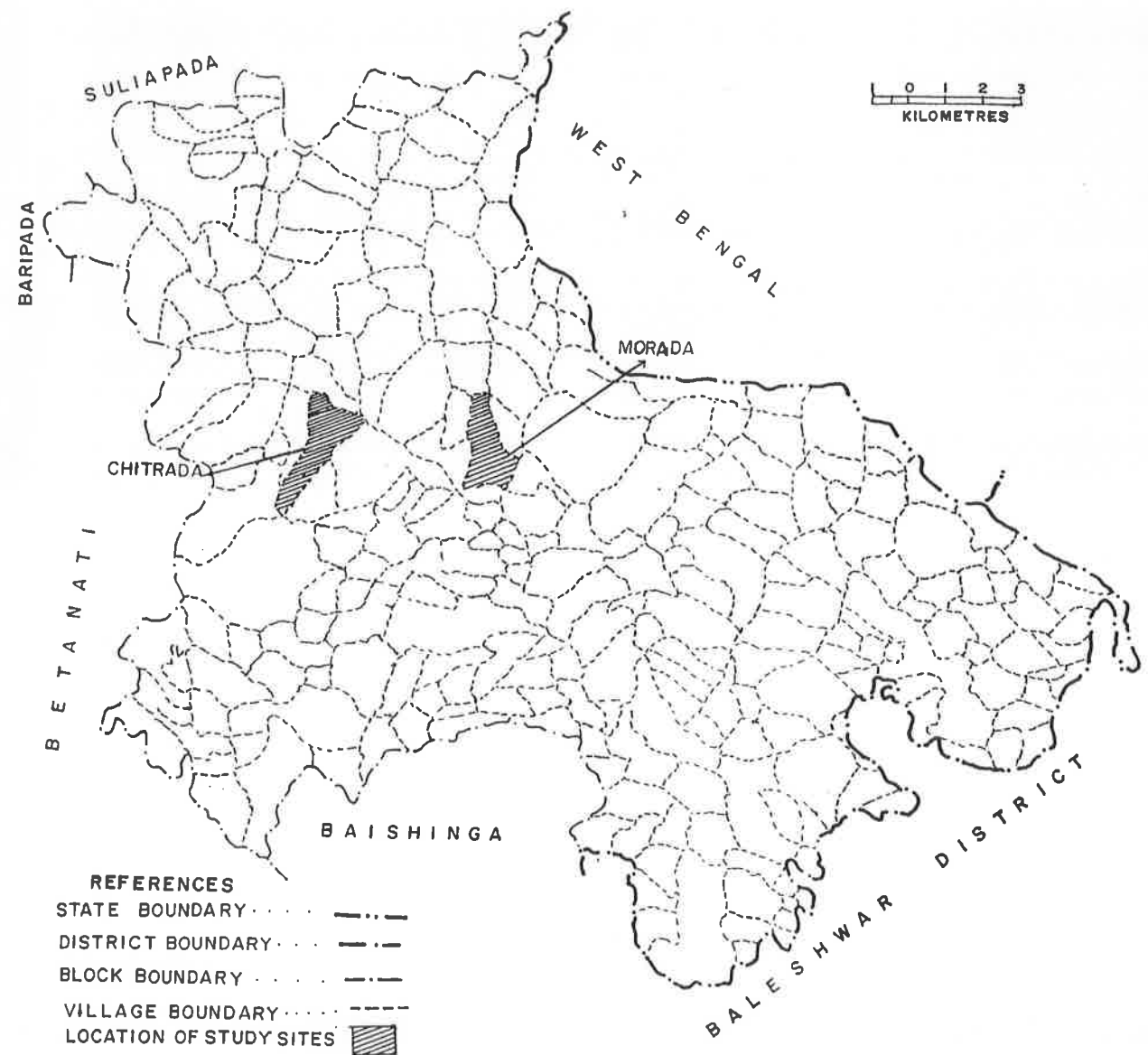


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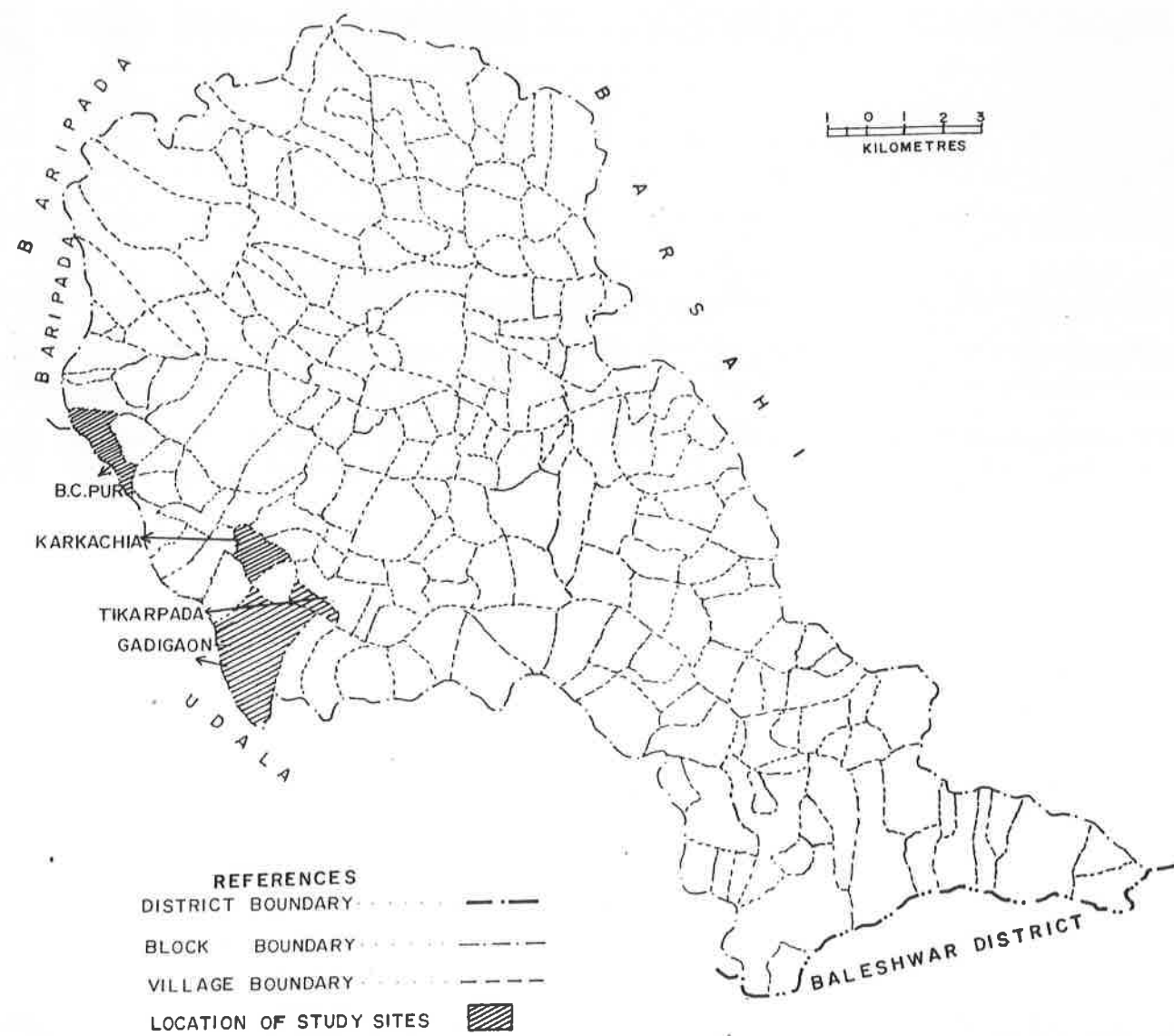
REFERENCES

- BLOCK BOUNDARY ————
- VILLAGE " ————
- LOCATION OF STUDY AREA 

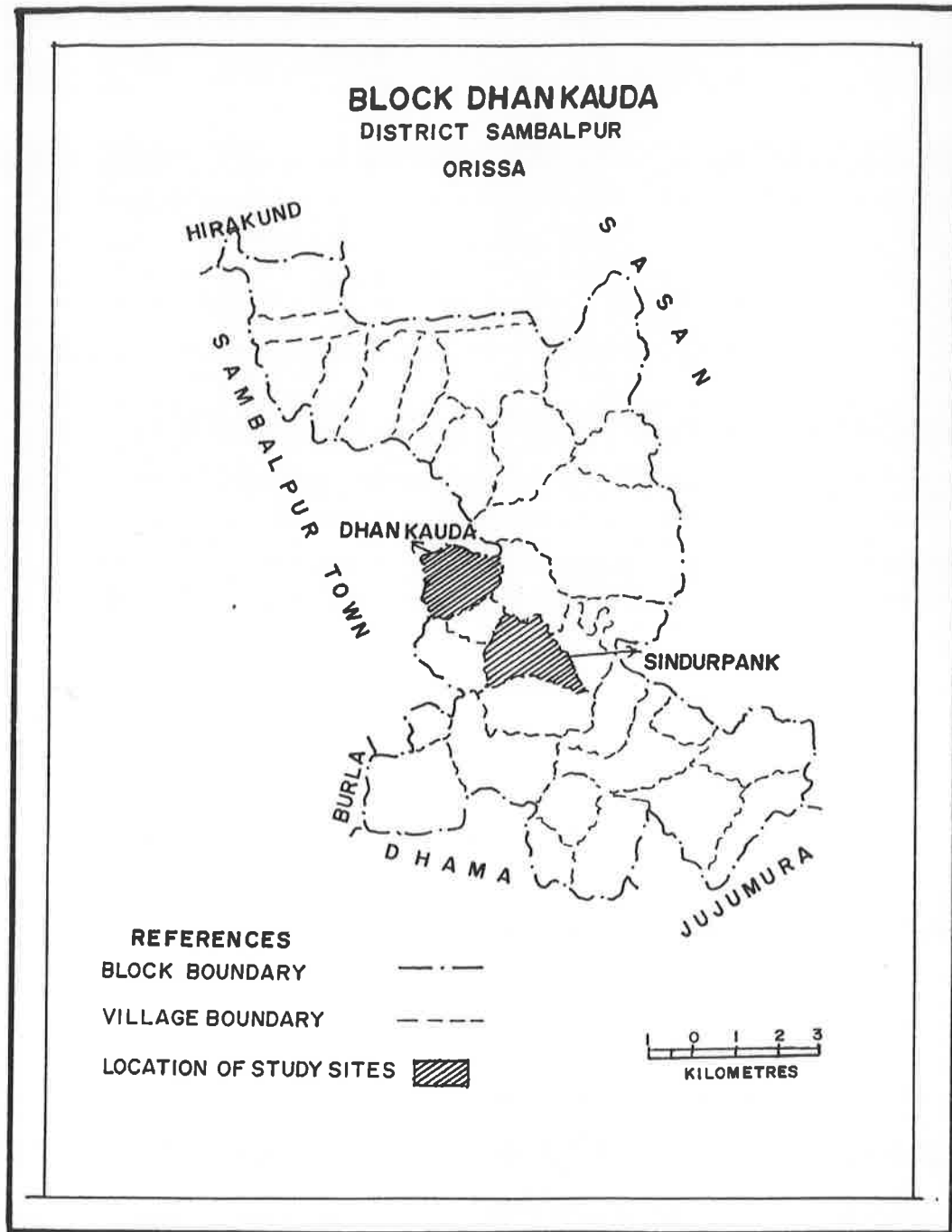
BLOCK MORADA
DISTRICT MAYURBHANJ
ORISSA



BLOCK KHUNTA
DISTRICT MAYURBHANJ
ORISSA



APPENDIX 1.7



APPENDIX 1.8

