

Identification and Assessment of Children with Special Needs under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan: Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions

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Abstract

“Empowerment of Disabled” is one of 29 delegated responsibilities upon Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). For implementation of the empowerment schemes knowledge of target group is essential. Identification and assessment is first step to know the target group. S.S.A. Scheme can be made successfully implemented by proper identification and assessment of children with special needs. This paper is an attempt to study the roles and responsibilities of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in identification and assessment of children with special needs (CWSN) in Eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Key Words: *Identification and assessment, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Children with Special needs*

Introduction

Since Independence there has been a phenomenal expansion of education of children with special needs in our country. The Government of India seems committed to provide educational opportunities for the children with special needs in general schools. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) scheme, launched by the Government of India in 2001, aims to achieve the goal of education for all. According to Census 2001, there are 2.19 crore disabled individuals in India and they constitute 2.13 percent of the total population. It has created a realization that without the inclusion of disabled children the goal of UEE cannot be achieved. SSA is an extensive scheme to provide education to all through district based, decentralized special planning and implementation. This scheme has incorporated the philosophy that through decentralization of power any scheme can be made successful as (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 of the constitution envisages. This act states to establish a three-tier system of strong, viable and responsive Panchayats at the village, intermediate and district levels. It has delegated the responsibilities upon Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to take care of 29 subjects including “Empowerment of Disabled.” Identification and assessment is essential for the planning of educational and rehabilitation program of any scheme in general and in SSA in particular. Therefore PRIs role is important in identification and assessment of children with special needs.

Need of the Study:

Padmnabham (2003) reported that “Even with all the schemes not more than 2% of the children with disability could be covered”. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan launched in 2001, includes decentralization and convergence of service delivery at village, block and district levels to reach the unreached. Panchayati Raj System is an institution of administration which seeks to involve the people at the grass-root level in planning and administration. With out proper identification and assessment rehabilitation is not possible. Timely identification of impairment is a secondary prevention measure and can reduce its impact upon the functional level of an individual and thus prevent profound disability. At grass root level it is PRIs responsibility to ensure that all the children with disabilities are identified and assessed. But the percentage of CWSN identified by SSA is as low as 1.54% as compared to 2.19% of census data, 2001.

On the basis of above discussion following questions arose: (i) Is it possible to provide education to CWSN without proper identification and assessment? (ii) How effectively PRIs's are playing role in identification and assessment of CWSN? Hence, to find answers to these questions the present study was undertaken with the focus on the "Identification and Assessment of Children with Special Needs under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan: Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions"

Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of the study were as follows;

- 1) To study the role of Panchyati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in identification of children with special needs.
- 2) To study the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions(PRIs) in assessment of children with special needs.

Methodology:

In present study descriptive survey method was adopted.

Population:

The universe of the study comprised of all three tiers of Panchyati Raj Institutions in eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Sampling Method and Sample

Multi stage sampling method was adopted to select the sample for the study. The sample for the study was drawn as mentioned below :

Stage I

Selection of Districts – In eastern Uttar Pradesh selection of five districts from five divisions i.e. Azamgarh, Basti, Gorakhpur, Mirzapur and Varanasi Division was made on the basis of consideration of head quarter of the divisions. From each division of Eastern Uttar Pradesh one District was selected (the head quarter of that division).

Stage II

Selection of Blocks – The total number of blocks in Azamgarh, Basti, Gorakhpur, Mirzapur and Varanasi district is 22, 14, 19, 12 and 8 block and out of them approx 10% of blocks from each district head quarter have been selected randomly

Stage III

Selection of Village Panchayats – The 10% of total number of Gram Panchayats from selected blocks have been selected randomly and from each gram panchyat 10 villagers have been selected purposively for cross validation of data obtained by Panchyati Raj Institutions representatives.

Selection of Respondents –

The sample of respondents has been drawn from PRI representatives (Gram Panchayat, Kshetra and Zila Panchayat. The list of Zila Panchayat members was obtained from the officials of respective districts of Uttar Pradesh. Similarly, the list of Kshetra and Gram Panchayat members was obtained from the officials of blocks of Uttar Pradesh. Following representatives/authorities at all three tiers i.e. Zila, Kshetra and Gram Panchayats were contacted.

Table 1: Representatives/ Authorities at all three tiers contacted for data collection

	Level/Tier	Public Representative	Government Representative
1.	District	President (District Panchyat)	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
2.	Block	Block Pramukh	Block Development Officer (BDO)
3.	Village	Gram Pradhan	Village Development Officer (VDO)

In all 126 representative and authorities filled the questionnaire. Out of 126, the number of representative and authorities at Gram Panchayat level: 102, that of Block level: 14 and that of Zila Panchayat level: 10 and 510 villagers were interviewed to obtain the information regarding role played by PRIs in inclusion of children with special needs under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

Tools of Data Collection:

The researcher used 2 self developed tools for collecting the data;

1. Questionnaire for PRIs representatives. Questionnaire having 44 questions both open as well as close ended related to different dimensions of rehabilitation of children with special needs.
2. Structured interview schedule for collecting informations from Villagers regarding the role being played by PRIs representatives in inclusion of children with special needs under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan. It consists of 24 open as well as close ended questions.

Data Analysis:

The data obtained on interview schedule and questionnaire was analyzed by using frequencies and percentages.

1. THE ROLE OF PRIs IN IDENTIFICATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The first objective of this study was, 'to study the role of Panchyati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in identification of children with special needs'. The data obtained in this respect have been reported with frequency and percentage. The related results based on them have been given below in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of item, frequency and percentage of public and government representatives

S. N	Statement of the Items	Representation type	Responses											
			Village				Block				District			
			Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes		No	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
i	Surveys to identify CWSN	Public	21	41	30	59	2	29	5	71	1	20	4	80
		Govt	18	35	33	65	2	29	5	71	1	20	4	80
ii	Training for early Detection & identification	Public	00	00	51	100	0	0	7	100	0	0	5	100
		Govt	00	00	51	100	0	0	7	100	0	0	5	100
iii	Arrange equipments for identification	Public	00	00	51	100	0	0	7	100	0	0	5	100
		Govt	00	00	51	100	0	0	7	100	0	0	5	100
iv	Aware school teachers About general symptoms	Public	00	00	51	100	0	0	7	100	0	0	5	100
		Govt	00	00	51	100	0	0	7	100	0	0	5	100
v	Detect and identify of CWSN	Public	30	59	21	41	4	57	3	43	0	0	5	100
		Govt	28	55	23	45	3	43	4	57	0	0	5	100

Interpretation:

The above table reveals the status of participation of PRIs representatives regarding the early detection and identification of children with special needs under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan scheme. Knowledge of target group is essential to make any program successful. Hence, Survey must be conducted to identify the children with special needs. On role of conducting survey to identify children with special needs, at the village level 30 i.e. 59% of public representative members reported that no such role had been undertaken while 21 i.e. 41% reported that they had surveyed to identify children with special needs. Similarly, 33 i.e. 65% of government representatives reported of no survey have been conducted while 18 i.e. 35% reported of conducting survey. At the block level 5 i.e.71% of public as well as government representative members reported that no such role had been undertaken while 2 i.e. 29% reported that they had surveyed to identify children with special needs. At the district level 4 i.e. 80% of public as well as government representative members reported that no such role had been undertaken while 1 i.e.20% reported that they had surveyed to identify children with special needs.

Regarding arrangement of training for personnel conducting the work of identification of children with special needs, public as well as government representatives of panchayati raj members at all three tiers stated that no such work had been done by them.

Public as well as government representatives of panchayati raj members at all three tiers reported that no provision regarding the arrangement of equipments for identification of children with special needs has been made.

Awareness of school teachers regarding general symptoms of disability can be the best measure to prevent disability. Regarding, the role of creating awareness among school teachers about the general symptoms of disability all surveyed public as well as government representatives of panchayati raj members reported 'no'.

On the issue of detection and identification of children with special needs, at the village level 21 i.e. 41 % of public representatives of panchayati raj members reported that no such work had been done while 30 i.e. 59 % reported that identification work had been done. At the block level 3 i.e.43 % of public representatives of panchayati raj members reported of no such work in this regard while 4 i.e 57 % reported that identification work had been done. Similarly when same questions were asked to government representatives of PRIs, at village level 23 i.e. 45 % reported that no such work had been done while 28 i.e. 55 % reported that identification work had been done. At the block level 4 i.e. 57 % of public representatives of panchayati raj members reported that no work had been done in this regard while 3 i.e. 43 % reported that identification work had been done. All 5 i.e. 100 % of district level representatives including both public as well as government said no work of identification had been done at their level. All the representatives reported in affirmation said that this work was being conducted by Primary health centers.

Discussion: The above result clearly shows that the intervention strategies adopted by the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Eastern Uttar Pradesh of India for early detection and identification of disability are not satisfactory. More than half of the representatives reported of not conducting survey. On the other hand, some surveyed children had only been recommended to Primary Health Centers for identification. Further, No work had been done at any level regarding arrangement of training for personnel involved in identification, arrangement of equipments for identification and creating awareness among school teachers regarding general symptoms of disability. Panchayats are government at their own level and must be accountable to the citizen of all kind. By identification of children with special needs over all needs of this area can be assessed but

this work is not being done by PRIs. The results are supported by remark of Hirway (1989) that, Panchayati Raj structures set up in our country were not doing very well and there was a need to revitalize them. It is also supported by the findings of research conducted by Misra (2002) which reports that local administration and rural development programmes were minimal and targets set by the government were not achieved at all.

2. Role of Panchyati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in assessment of Children With Special Needs.

The second objective was, 'to study the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in assessment of children with special needs. The data in this respect were reported with frequency and percent and the results are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of item, frequency and percentage of public and government representatives

S. N	Statement of the Items	Re- presentation type	Responses											
			Village				Block				District			
			Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes		No	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
i	Encourage parents for proper assessment of disability	Public	17	33	34	67	2	29	5	71	0	0	5	100
		Govt	14	27	37	73	4	57	3	43	0	0	5	100
ii	Ensure assessment of identified CWSN by specialist	Public	06	12	45	88	0	0	7	100	0	0	5	100
		Govt	05	10	46	90	1	14	6	86	0	0	5	100
iii	Constitute team of experts for assessment at block level	Public	21	41	30	59	2	29	5	71	2	40	3	60
		Govt	20	39	31	61	3	43	4	57	2	40	3	60
iv	Refer to suitable places to assess disability	Public	24	47	27	53	1	14	6	86	0	0	5	100
		Govt	21	41	30	59	2	29	5	71	0	0	5	100
V	Arrange adequate tools necessary for assessment	Public	11	22	40	78	2	29	5	71	0	0	5	100
		Govt	11	22	40	78	3	43	4	57	0	0	5	100
Vi	Provide financial help for assessment	Public	09	18	42	82	0	0	7	100	0	0	5	100
		Govt	0	0	51	100	0	0	7	100	0	0	5	100
vii	Ensure that assessment team is adequately trained	Public	00	00	51	100	0	0	7	100	0	0	5	100
		Govt	00	00	51	100	0	0	7	100	0	0	5	100
viii	Arrange training for personnel involved in assessment	Public	00	00	51	100	0	0	7	100	0	0	5	100
		Govt	00	00	51	100	0	0	7	100	0	0	5	100

Interpretation

Above table 4.2, indicates the findings related to the role and responsibilities of PRIs members regarding assessment of children with special needs. At the village level 34 i.e. 67 % of public representation of PRIs members reported of not encouraging parents for proper assessment of disability while 17 i.e. 33 % reported of encouraging parents for proper assessment of disability. The positive responses are of three types-a) 9 i.e. 53% said that they encourage parents in meeting of gram panchayat, b) 7 i.e. 41 % reported of encouraging the parents as and when they meet, c) and 1 i.e. 6% reported that for encouraging the parents they visit their homes. At the block level 5 i.e. 71 % of public representation of PRIs members reported of not encouraging parents for proper assessment of disability while 2 i.e. 29 % reported of encouraging parents for proper assessment of disability. All 2 i.e. 29 % of responded who said about encouraging parents for assessment reported that they do so as and when the parents meet them i.e. they don't put any effort from their end for meeting the parents. At the district level 5 i.e. 100 % of public representation of PRIs members reported of not encouraging parents for proper assessment of disability. At the village level 37 i.e. 73 % of Government officials of PRIs members reported of not encouraging parents for proper assessment of disability while 14 i.e. 27 % reported of encouraging parents for proper assessment of disability. Government representatives at village level provided two types of responses-a) 6 i.e. 42 % reported that if all of sudden parent meets then they encourage, b) and 8 i.e. 58 % reported that they visit their (parent's) home for encouraging them. At the block level 3 i.e. 43 % of Government officials of PRIs members reported of not encouraging parents for proper assessment of disability while 4 i.e. 57 % reported of encouraging parents for proper assessment of disability. Positive responses show that they encourage if parents meet them. At the district level 5 i.e. 100 % of Government officials PRIs members reported of not encouraging parents for proper assessment of disability.

On the provision of ensuring assessment of identified children with special needs by specialist. At the village level 45 i.e. 88% Public members of PRIs were of opinion that no such provision has been made while 6 i.e. 12% opined that they had made such provisions. At the block level as well as district level 7 i.e. 100% Public members of PRIs were of opinion that no such provision has been made. Similarly, at the village level 46 i.e. 90% Government officials PRIs members were of opinion that no such provision has been made while 5 i.e. 10% opined that they had made such provisions. At the block level 6 i.e. 86% of Government officials PRIs members were of opinion that no such provision has been made while 1 i.e. 14% opined that they had made such provisions. At the District level 5 i.e. 100% of Government officials PRIs members were of opinion that no such provision has been made.

Competent experts' team for assessment of disability at block level is necessary to cater the need of proper assessment of all suffering children. On being asked regarding this at the village level 30 i.e. 59% of public representation of PRIs members reported of no expert team had been constituted at block level for proper assessment of disability while 21 i.e. 41% reported that need of proper assessment had been fulfilled by constituted expert team. At the block level 5 i.e. 71% of public representation of PRIs members reported of no expert team had been constituted at block level for proper assessment of disability while 2 i.e. 29% reported that need of proper assessment had been fulfilled by constituted expert team. At the district level 3 i.e. 60% of public representation of PRIs members reported of no expert team had been constituted at block level for proper assessment of disability while 2 i.e. 40% reported that need of proper assessment had been fulfilled by constituted expert team. When the same question had been asked to the government representatives of Panchyati Raj Institutions members at the village level 31 i.e. 61% of PRIs

members reported of no expert team had been constituted at block level for proper assessment of disability while 20 i.e. 39% reported that need of proper assessment had been fulfilled by constituted expert team. At the block level 4 i.e. 57% of public representation of PRIs members reported of no expert team had been constituted at block level for proper assessment of disability while 3 i.e. 43% reported that need of proper assessment had been fulfilled by constituted expert team. At the district level 3 i.e. 60% of PRIs members reported of no expert team had been constituted at block level for proper assessment of disability while 2 i.e. 40% reported that need of proper assessment had been fulfilled by constituted expert team.

Regarding the role of referring the disabled to suitable places for assessment at village level 27 i.e. 53% of public members responded that no such role had been undertaken while 24 i.e. 47% indicated that such role had been undertaken. Among the 47% of responded 14 i.e. 58 % and 10 i.e. 42% reported for hospitals and for schools conducted by experienced skilled and special teachers respectively. At block level 6 i.e. 86% of public members responded that no such role had been undertaken while 1 i.e. 14% indicated that such role had been undertaken. All positive responses indicate that parents were guided to send their wards at hospitals for assessment. At district level 5 i.e. 100% of public members responded that no such role had been undertaken. Similarly, when same question has been asked to government officials of PRIs at village level 30 i.e. 59 % responded that no such role had been undertaken while 21 i.e. 41 % responded that such role had been undertaken. Among the 41% of responded 12 i.e. 56 % and 9 i.e. 44% reported for hospitals and for schools conducted by experienced skilled and special teachers respectively. At block level 5 i.e. 71 % responded that no such role had been undertaken while 2 i.e. 29 % responded that such role had been undertaken. At block level all 29% i.e. 2 respondent said that they refer to hospitals. At district level 5 i.e. 100 % responded that no such role had been undertaken.

At the village level 40 i.e. 78% of the public members reported that they did not arrange adequate tool necessary for assessment of children with special needs while 11 i.e. 22% reported of making such provision. At the block level 5 i.e. 71% of the public members reported that they did not arrange adequate tool necessary for assessment of children with special needs while 2 i.e. 29% reported of making such provision. At the district level 5 i.e. 100% of the public members reported that they did not arrange adequate tool necessary for assessment of children with special needs. Similarly at village level 40 i.e. 78% of the government representatives reported that they did not arrange adequate tool necessary for assessment of children with special needs while 11 i.e. 22% reported of making such provision. At block level 4 i.e. 57% of the government representatives reported that they did not arrange adequate tool necessary for assessment of children with special needs while 3 i.e. 43% reported of making such provision. At district level 5 i.e. 100% of the government representatives reported that they did not arrange adequate tool necessary for assessment of children with special needs. Representatives who reported about arranging adequate tools could not tell name of equipments.

Disability is closely related to poverty so Financial help to poor parent is essential for assessment of their wards. On the issue of providing financial help for assessment to financially weaker section of parents of disabled. At the village level 42 i.e. 82% of public representatives of PRIs were of opinion that no such provision has been made while 9 i.e. 18% reported that they had made such provision. At the block and district level 7 i.e. 100 % of public representatives of PRIs were of opinion that no such provision has been made. Similarly government officials of all the three tiers reported that no such provision has been made.

Public as well as government representatives at all the three levels reported that no work has been done to make sure that the assessment team is adequately trained. They also informed that there

is no such training arrangement for those personnel who are involved in assessment work.

Conclusion:

The findings related to the roles and responsibilities of PRIs members regarding assessment of children with special needs mentioned above reveal that, neither any work has been done to make sure that the assessment team is adequately trained nor training has been arranged for personnel involved in assessment work. At the grass root level it is the responsibility of PRIs to encourage parents for assessment but most of the PRIs representatives (overall 65%) had not taken any step in this direction. Almost 85% of members had not ensured assessment of identified children with special needs by specialist. No satisfactory work had been done in preparing competent experts' team for assessment of disability at block level, referring the disabled to suitable places for assessment, arranging adequate tool necessary for assessment of children with special needs, ensuring financial help for assessment to financially weaker section of parents of disabled. Surprisingly the highest level of Panchayat has taken least responsibilities on assessment issue of identified children with special needs.

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