

# Service Delivery under Participatory Democracy

The Case of Gerethang-Labing Gram Panchayat of Sikkim



Prepared for

Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India

By



**Institute of Social Sciences**

Cover photo:

Members and Staff of Gerethang-Labing GP in Front of Composite Village Administrative Centre

**Authors**

**Madhulika Mitra  
Debraj Bhattacharya  
Buddhadeb Ghosh**

# Gerethang –Labing : Land, People and structure of Gram Panchayat

## Location and History

Gerethang - Labing Gram Panchayat (GP) is located in Yuksam block of West district of the hilly state of Sikkim at an altitude varying between 800 metres and 2600 metres. Gerethang is an old habitation having a history of about 250 years. The GP has two spatial units named Gerethang and Labing and thus is called as Gerethang – Labing GP.



**Map 1: Map of West District of Sikkim Showing Location of Gerethang - Labing GP**

The GP is situated at the edge of West District. The place almost being in the lap of Kachenjunga peak, is with rugged terrain. The villages are sparsely populated with hamlets here and there. Most of the houses are single storied though a few double storied buildings are also noticed. To protect themselves from rain and snow, the buildings have sloppy roofs.



**Photograph 2: Rugged Terrain around Gerethang**

Communication system of the area is not developed. The state highway running through the GP in east-west direction is the only all-weather road of the GP. A few hilly paths are there through which people commute between the villages. Some steps have been built under NREGS which are used by the villagers for moving from interior parts of the GP to the main road.

### **Demographic and Socio – economic Features**

According to 2011 census, total population of the GP is 2428 with a sex ratio 910. About three – fourth of them belong to ST category while 2.72 percent is from SC category. Other backward classes comprise more than 16 percent and 6.59 percent is from marginally backward classes. Total number of voters in the GP is 1341 comprising 55 percent of its population. Ward wise details of population are given in Table 1. Upper Gerethang is the most populous ward while population is least in Lower Gerethang. ST population is more in Labing side than Gerethang side while percentage of OBC is higher in the wards under Gerethang spatial units.

**Table 1**

**Ward wise Demographic Features of Gerethang – Labing Gram Panchayat, 2011**

Name of Ward	Total Population	% of SC Population	% of ST Population	% of OBC Population	% of MBC Population
Upper Gerethang	566	2.47	62.90	27.56	7.07
Tamatang	398	10.30	59.80	11.56	5.78
Lower Gerethang	314	0.00	71.66	28.34	0.00
Upper Labing	398	1.76	67.59	9.55	21.11
Middle Labing	330	1.21	92.73	4.85	1.21
Lower Labing	422	0.00	85.78	3.55	2.13
Total	2428	2.72	74.38	16.31	6.59

Source: Gerethang GP office

The GP covers 991.426 hectares area, 27 percent of which is covered with forest. Cultivation is the main occupation of people of Gerethang. Tourism is also one of the income generating sectors in the state and the GP also has four tourist spots including monastery, waterfalls etc. 76 percent of households belong to BPL category and for them various poverty alleviation programmes are going on. There are four schools in the GP, two primary schools, one secondary school and one junior high school and all are run by the state government. All the wards have ICDS centres but there is only one primary health centre in the whole GP.

**Structure of the GP**

The GP has six wards, three each in Gerethang and Labing sides. In Gerethang side, the wards are Upper Gerethang, Lower Gerethang and Tamatang while the wards in Labing side are Upper Labing, Middle labing and Lower Labing. Apart from six members in six wards, the GP has one member from the Zilla Parishad. One unique feature of Sikkim's panchayat is that the Secretary of the GP is chosen from its members. The last panchayat election in Sikkim took place in October 2012. The present GP President is woman, since this seat is reserved for a woman in the current term under the rotation system.

At present, there are 14 staff in the GP. Of them, four are appointed by the state government, namely, Rural Development Assistant (RDA), Gram Rozgar Sahayak, Land

Revenue Supervisor (VLO) and Veterinary Compounder. The staffs appointed by the Gram Panchayat are Panchayat Account Assistant, Typist cum Library in Charge, Barefoot Engineer, Technical Assistant, four Water Fitters, Village Level Worker (VLW) and Safai Karmachari.

## II

### **Nature of Good Practices**

The good practices of the GP that have attracted the attention of many observers may be divided into two categories. Some of the good practices relate to the innovative measures taken to improve the infrastructure, systems and processes of administration and the second category of good practices relate to some innovative initiatives taken or innovative projects executed by the GP in recent years. Both of these categories of good practices are described in this section.

#### **A. Innovative Administrative Practices**

##### **Composite Village Administrative Centre**

Earlier, the GP had a small office comprising only two rooms which could accommodate only the GP members. People had to go to different places to meet village level officials of different state government departments like rural development, forest, social welfare etc. It was really difficult for the villagers to cross the hilly terrain particularly during monsoon to go to far off places frequently to get services. To overcome this problem the GP wanted to bring all these offices under one roof for which they needed a large building. The GP was looking for the fund and luckily they got the opportunity. During his visit to Sikkim on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2006, Sri Mani Shankar Aiyar, the then Union Minister – in – Charge, Panchayati Raj,

declared a cash award of Rs. 15 lakh to Gerethang GP as the best performing gram panchayat of Sikkim. With this, the GP also added fund of SGRY and Twelfth Finance Commission (TwFC) and constructed the ground floor of the building and it was inaugurated by Dr. Pawan Chamling, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Government of Sikkim on 30<sup>th</sup> December, 2011. With a vision of a composite administrative centre, the GP constructed the first floor of the building comprising eight rooms with MGNREGA fund and named it as 'Rajiv Gandhi Sewa Kendra'. The total expenditure for the construction of the building was Rs. 29,63,000 the details of which is given in Table 2.

Table 2

**Amount of Money Spent on the Construction of GP Administrative Building**

<b>Source</b>	<b>Amount (Rs.)</b>
SGRY/Award Money/ TwFC	19,63,000
MGNREGA	10,00,00
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,63,000</b>

Source: Gerethang GP

Presently, the GP administrative centre has 16 rooms comprising the following:

- **Room for the Zilla Parishad member:** In Sikkim, Zilla panchayat member from a particular constituency is also the member of all the GPs under that constituency. One room in the office of this GP is reserved for the member.
- **R. B. Subba Memorial Village Library:** The GP has set up this library in 2008. Presently, the library is housed in one room of the building. The typist of the GP is also in charge of the library and her remuneration for this work is paid by the GP. The membership charge of the library is Rs. 200 per annum and presently, the library has 69 members.



**Photograph 3: M S Subba Memorial Village Library**

- **Media Section:** The GP has given much effort to establish a data bank for which it has set up the media section. It keeps record of GP level data and presently is concentrating on the collection and recording of the household level information. The GP has also established GIS based information system and its own website ([www.grethang.org](http://www.grethang.org)). All these works are handled by the media centre. There is a Technical Assistant, appointed by the GP to work in the media centre and his salary is also paid by the GP from its own fund.
- **Photo Gallery:** So far, the GP has received a number of awards and at the same time has presented many awards to different persons for their achievement in different fields. The GP has set up a photo gallery to keep a record of all such award receiving or award giving occasions. The gallery also contains the photographs of former members of the GP along with those of the first doctor, engineer and the first woman civil engineer from this GP. The GP has also kept photographs of different persons who have donated land for religious purpose or for other public purpose.





**Photograph 4: Photo Gallery of Gerethang G P**

Other rooms are used for various activities of the GP, such as, Office, including rooms for President, Vice President, members etc, meeting rooms and conference halls and the village Assembly hall where gram sabha meetings are held. Besides, some rooms have been given to the various line departments. The village Assembly hall was constructed in 2011-12 by converging funds received under BRGF and Central Finance Commission. A part of the expenditure has been met from public contribution.

### **Making Administrative System effective: Some innovative measures**

To run the administration effectively and to make it people friendly, Gerethang GP has taken the following measures:

#### **Single Window System**

Earlier, people had to go to the district and block administrative centres if they wanted to get some usually required documents like trade license, birth and death certificates etc. It involved not only spending long time, but also incurring considerable expenditure on travel. People also faced difficulties to cross the hilly terrain mainly during monsoon. It was also a

great harassment for the aged people living in difficult circumstances to go to the district and block offices to get even a routine job done. Keeping all these difficulties in mind, the state government has decentralised the responsibility of issuing certificate to the GP. The single window system started in this GP in 2010. Under this system, to get a specific document people need to submit the required documents along with a nominal charge to the single window cell of the GP. The Cell then sends it to the GP Pradhan for recommendation from where it goes to the concerned department like block administrative centre or district administrative centre. It then comes back to the GP and in turn to the single window cell from where the applicant receives the certificate. GP generally takes 15 days for processing and then issues it to the applicant. For special case, less time is taken by the GP to do the job. It has helped people save their time, money and hazards, as they need not go to the district and block administrative centres anymore for getting certain works done.

**Table 3**  
**Average Number of Documents Issued per Month during Last Three Years**

Year	Marking Order	Certificate of Identification	Most Backward Class	Other Backward Classes	Birth Certificate	ST Certificate	Death Certificate	Unmarried Certificate	Married Certificate
2010 – 11	103	279	7	11	41	43	11	29	37
2011 – 12	46	40	0	1	17	2	1	11	18
2012 – 13	40	42	6	5	23	15	1	11	2

Source: Gerethang GP

Table 3 gives an idea of the number of certificates issued by the GP per month under single window system during the last three years. Nine types of certificates are issued by the GP, namely, marking order (no objection certificate issued by the GP for cutting trees), identification certificate, most backward class certificate, OBC, SC, ST certificates, birth and

death certificates, and married and unmarried certificate. In most cases, identification certificates and marking orders are issued by the GP while the numbers are very few in cases of OBC and most backward class certificates. The GP had issued much more number of certificates in every category in 2010 – 11 than the next two years.

### **Record Keeping System**

With the introduction of single window system, Gerethang GP has also given much emphasis on keeping records of all the certificates the GP issues to the citizens. The certificates are categorised in the following manner:

- Certificates of Individuals (COI)
- OBC/MBC/SC/ST
- Marking Order – this is the no objection certificate issued by the GP for cutting trees
- Birth certificate
- Death certificate
- Trade license
- Land sale and purchase
- Others

Separate files are maintained for different categories, a glance of which is shown in the photograph. It has helped the GP to work more efficiently and systematically.

### **Functional Standing Committees**

In Sikkim, the state Panchayat Act has given GP the power to form standing committees for de-concentrating its own functions and for facilitating democratic decision making. The number of standing committees to be formed is at the discretion of the respective GPs. Gerethang GP has formed 12 standing committees, the number being higher than many other GPs in the state.



**Photograph 5: Files for Maintaining Records**

The committees are as follows:

- Gram Vigilance cum Social Audit Committee
- Gram Planning Forum
- Village Water and Sanitation Committee
- Gram Finance Committee
- Gram Standing Committee for Agriculture, Land Reforms, Soil Conservation, Minor Irrigation Water Management, Animal Husbandry, Dairy and Poultry, Fisheries, Minor Forest Produce And MG-NREGA.
- Gram Standing Committee for Food Processing Industry, Khadi & Village Small Scale Industries, Rural Housing, Drinking Water, Timber& Cattle Feedings, Non-conventional Sources Of Energy, Poverty Distribution System, Co-Operative.
- Standing Committee for Roads, Culverts, Bridges, Rural Electrification and Electricity Supply Protection of Public Property

- Standing Committee for Primary & Secondary Education, Vocational Education, Adult and Non- Formal Education, Libraries, Cultural Activities and Press–Media and Sports (Rural), Aganwadi Centers (ICDS Centre) ASHA
- Standing Committee for Hospital, Primary Health Sub Centre, Dispensary, Health and Sanitation, Family Welfare, Women And Child Welfare, Welfare for Mentally & Physically Retarded, Sc & St And Weaker Section of Society Welfare
- Schools and Aganwadi Kendra Panchayat Education Centre Inspection Committee
- Gram Taxi Driver’s Welfare Committee.
- Work Schemes Supervision Committee

Apart from the panchayat members, villagers are there in all the committees while the social audit committee is entirely in the hand of the villagers. The number of members varies from one committee to another. All the committees are very active; the members meet on regular basis and take necessary decisions.

### **Improving Revenue Generation**

Giving emphasis on revenue generation is one of the good practices of Gerethang GP. It has identified a number of sources from where revenue can be generated and it also mobilized people to pay tax. The GP considers generation of resources as an integral part of development, because it contributes towards achieving the following objectives.

- Developing habit among people in contributing towards development of society
- Creating a sense of belongingness among people
- Generating additional resources for facilitating development.

The GP collects taxes from five sources:

1. Drinking water @ Rs. 10 per family per month
2. Animal transaction @ Rs. 30 per goat, Rs. 100 per cow and buffalo and Rs. 200 per bullock sold from GP area
3. Hat or periodical market @ Rs. 20 per hawker per hat within the GP jurisdiction
4. Permanent shop Rs. 30 per month per shop

5. Garbage management @ Rs. 30 per month per household situated roadside from Labing to Gerethang market

In addition, it collects fees from a large number of sources like library membership, work permission, vehicle parking, construction of sheds, establishment of private school, sale of plantation, sale of tender forms etc. Fees collected for issuing different kinds of services by the GP are a major source of revenue in Gerethang GP. It also collects rent from the commercial and industrial centres like guest house, industrial units, milk collection centres (lease rent) etc.

The GP has been successful in convincing people to take part in revenue generation by paying taxes, fees, user charges etc. As GP follows a transparent functioning process, it declares in Gram Sabha meeting how the revenue generated, is spent every year.

**Table 4**

**Revenue Income and Expenditure of Gerethang GP in last three years**

Year	Opening Balance (Rs.)	Revenue (Rs.)	Interest Earned (Rs.)	Expenditure (Rs.)	Closing Balance (Rs.)
2010 – 11	40,370	1,29,130	36	1,28,970	40,566
2011 – 12	40,566	4,80,801	2,239	1,73,130	3,50,476
2012 – 13	3,50,476	6,53,710	13,240	7,50,264	2,67,162

Source: Gerethang GP

The outcome of this initiative is the increase in the amount of revenue income of the GP. In the financial year, 2010 - 11, the amount of revenue received by the GP was Rs. 1, 29,130 which increased to Rs. 4, 80,801 in 2011 – 12 and further to Rs. 6, 53,710 to the next financial year (Table 4). Now, the villagers pay taxes and fees willingly. Even they themselves come to GP office to take information on the pending amount of revenue.

The own source revenue generated by the GP is spent on various purposes. Payment of salaries of staff appointed by the GP (such as, Typist cum Library In-Charge, Panchayat Technical Assistance, Office Runner, Office Helper, Drinking Water Management Fitters and the Safai Karmachari etc) claim lion's share of total expenditure. During the last three

financial years, the GP spent Rs. 1.24 lakhs, 1.73 lakhs and Rs 1.37 lakhs in the years 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13 respectively for this purpose. The GP also gives different types of awards from its own source revenue. In 2012 – 13, it spent more than Rs. 10,000 for giving the Best Teacher Award, Best Panchayat Award, Merit Award to three students and Utkrista Kketiwala Award.

## **Towards empowered deliberative democracy**

Empowered deliberative democracy (EDD) has been termed as a system of governance that seeks to deepen democracy. It is ‘radically democratic’, because it puts ‘reliance on the participation and capacities of ordinary people, deliberative because (it) institutes reason-based decision-making, and empowered since (it) attempts to tie action to discussion’<sup>1</sup>. It is felt that the initiatives taken by the GP in creating gram planning forum, instituting participatory planning process and strengthening gram sabha are important steps towards realization of the goals of EDD.

### **(i) Participatory Planning**

Planning process in Gerethang GP is truly participatory. It has adopted a bottom up approach for any planning related activity. In all the six wards, there are Ward Development Committees under the leadership of the respective ward panchayat member (President of the committee). At the GP level, the Gram Planning Forum is in the charge of planning activities. This is the most powerful standing committee at the GP with 34 members of the following categories:

- District panchayat member, who is the Chairperson of the committee
- Panchayat President, also the President of the Committee
- Vice President of the GP, also the Vice president of the committee
- Panchayat Secretary, also the member secretary of the committee
- All other panchayat members
- Teacher representatives,

---

<sup>1</sup> See Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright, Deepening Democracy: Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance, in *Politics and Society*, Vol 29, No 1, March 2001

- NGO representatives
- Line department officials
- Head of the schools
- Anganwari workers
- President of Joint Forest Management Committee
- Other members

At the first stage, planning is done by the ward level committee, and then these are compiled at the GP level and finally passed by the Gram Planning Forum (GPF). The decisions of all other committees are also brought to the GPF for final approval. Even the composition of all the committees is approved by the GPF.

### **(ii) Strengthening of Gram Sabha**

The GP has given much effort to strengthen the Gram Sabha. The three scheduled dates of Gram Sabha in Sikkim are 26<sup>th</sup> January, 24<sup>th</sup> April and 2<sup>nd</sup> October. In addition, Gerethang GP calls Gram Sabha if needed. Earlier, people did not show much interest to participate in the Gram Sabha meeting. The GP faced problems even to ensure the quorum of the meeting. To bring the villagers to the meeting, the GP had to take a strict step. It gives a notice that all the members of Gram Sabha should attend the sabha positively. If anybody fails to attend it, he or she should inform the GP showing the cause of absence in writing. The GP also did not have proper infrastructure to conduct the Gram Sabha. It was difficult for the GP to conduct it in open space during monsoon and also in winter. This had prompted the GP to construct a village assembly hall in 2011 – 12, using the fund of BRGF and 13<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission. The most important point is that it could mobilize public contribution of Rs. 2 lakh for the construction of the hall. All these measures have ensured people's participation in Gram Sabha meeting. Now, Gram Sabha attendance is almost 80 percent.





**Photograph 6: Hall Constructed by GP for Gram Sabha**

In Gerethang, Gram Sabha has been given highest power. All the proposals of GP, approved by the Gram Planning Forum are ultimately passed by the Gram Sabha. Even the beneficiary lists of all schemes are passed by it. The shelf of work under MGNREGA also gets final approval at the Gram Sabha. The Gram Sabha has the power to send back any decision of GP on any development project for reconsideration/rectification, even if the same is approved by the GPF.

## **B. Innovative Initiatives**

### **Motivation of Youth**

One of the pioneering initiatives undertaken by the Gerethang Gram Panchayat is recognizing and motivating youth. Actually, it is a part of GP's initiative to present different types of awards for encouraging people in their respective fields. Five types of awards are presented by the GP, namely, Gram Merit Student Award, Gram Utkrista Khetiwala Award, Gram Best Youth Award, Gram Best Teacher of the Year Award and Best Panchayat Member of the Tenure Award. Of these, the most important award is the best youth award.

### ***a) Conceiving the Idea***

The idea was conceived by the GP in 2005. The three reasons behind the idea were as follows:

- i) The GP wanted to give importance to the contribution of youth in the development of the local areas
- ii) They wanted to develop a competitive attitude among the youth
- iii) The GP wanted to increase participation of youth in GP affairs.

### ***b) Planning and Implementation***

After taking decision on it in the GP meeting, the then GP Pradhan declared the 'Best Youth Award' to be given after every five years with a cash prize of Rs. 5000 and a certificate in a public function held on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2005. The GP asked the Sports and Youth Affairs Standing Committee to work on it and submit nominations. The standing committee fixed up some criteria for giving the award. The recipient has to be educated, self employed and should have done some commendable work which can be an example to other youth. After discussing with the Ward Development Committees, the Sports and Youth Affairs Standing Committee submitted four proposals to the Village Planning Forum. The Forum selected **Mr. Shiva Luitel** as the Best Youth of the GP and awarded him in 2010.

#### Reasons for Giving Award to Shiva Luitel

Mr. Shiva Luitel, a 36 years old man, is from a poor family of Tamatang village. He studied upto class VIII in different schools of the GP. In class IX, he joined a school in another GP but could not appear for the final examination as he could not pay the fees of only Rs. 235 due to poor economic condition of the family.

After coming back home, he spent some days in a very depressed mood. He moved from one place to another and asked relatives and friends for some help. Then he realized that seeking help could not be a solution. He started working as a porter in 1994 and carried load in tourist season in Yuksam for two years. In 1995, he worked as Office Helper in Mahayana Travels in Gangtok for few months. Then he started trekking and worked in the company



**Photograph 7: Shiva Luitel, Best Youth Awardee**

as Assistant Tourist Guide. In the meantime, he learned English as he needed to communicate with the tourists. In 1997, he went to Delhi and joined World Expedition, a travel agency for one year. In 1998, he went to Darjeeling, and completed the basic course on mountaineering which was followed by the advanced course in 2000. In the meantime, he started one NGO with his friend and organized some awareness programme on different issues like child education, sanitation etc. He also studied up to graduation meanwhile. After 2000, he came back home, married and settled in the village.

After struggling for so many years, now Mr. Luitel is a successful person with a very tight schedule. For four months of the year, i. e. March – April and October – November, he works with Mayana Travels as Guide in Sikkim; from June to September, he works with World Expedition as a Guide in Laddakh. Rest of the year, he stays at home and gets involved in crop cultivation in his own farmland. At the same time, he is also the Manager of the mini bank established under the multi -purpose cooperative society which has been set up by the GP. Now he has a permanent income. From the bank, he earns Rs. 3000 per month and during tourist season, he earns Rs. 3000 per day on which he works.



**Photograph 8: Shiva Luitel Receiving Award from the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Sikkim**

### **c) Outcome**

The introduction of best youth award by the GP has resulted in some positive outcome for the youth of the GP.

- Firstly, it has inspired and motivated the youth. Many of them do not like any more to sit idle. Instead they are trying to get involved in some economic activities. We talked to some young persons who are trying to follow the same profession as the one of Mr Luitel. They have started working as porters in the tourist season and wish to become tourist guides in future. Some have also got involved in the works of builders or those of agriculture and horticulture.
- Participation of youth in the GP affairs has increased remarkably. Earlier, young people were not much interested in the functioning of GP. They did not want to attend the gram sabha meetings. The scenario has changed after 2010. As Shiva Luitel attends the gram sabha regularly, others follow him. Now attendance of youth in gram sabha has gone up to 80 percent. Their representation in the standing committees has also increased.

## Multi-Purpose Cooperative Societies (MPCS)

With a view to provide institutional credits to the villagers, the state government took initiative to set up MPCS in 1975 – 76 but it did not work successfully. Under the new policy of the state government, all the GPs of the state had to set up a MPCS. In Gerethang, the MPCS is functioning very well and the GP has played a vital role in bringing the society in its present form. All the GP members are in the governing body of the society. The GP has invested rupees forty five thousand (Rs. 45,000) as share in the society and it is also providing support to the society to act as a better service provider to the members. Through the MPCS, the GP is trying to uplift the economic condition of people. It is providing short term loan for agriculture and animal husbandry and also working capital loan to the small contractors.



**Photograph 9: Fair Price Shop Run by Multipurpose Co-operative Society of Gerethang GP**

It has set up a mini bank, functioning under Sikkim State Cooperative Bank. At present, the bank has 1200 account holders. All the payments of GP like MNREGA, old age pension scheme, disabled pension scheme etc. is given through the bank. The bank also provides loan of maximum rupees one lakh at an interest rate of 12 percent per annum.

The GP is trying to expand the activities of MPCS in Gerethang. It has provided the society Rs. 40,000 for construction of a canteen, Rs. 30,000 for a cafeteria at Phamrong Falls, a tourist point within the GP's jurisdiction. The GP has constructed a small guest house which is also run by the MPCS. The society also helps GP to collect water user charges, and bazaar fees and transfer the collected amount to the GP's internal revenue account. Not only that, if GP needs to purchase any materials for any construction work, the contract is given to the society. The capital of the society has become Rupees twenty two lakh within a few years.

### III

#### **Outcome and Lessons**

The GP's good practices have been well recognized, as would be evident from the list of awards it has received in recent years. These are:

- On 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2006, Gerethang was declared as the Best Performing Gram Panchayat in the state and it received a cash award of rupees fifteen lakh from the then Union Minister of Panchayati Raj during his visit to Sikkim.
- In 2008, it received the Nirmal Gram Award under Total Sanitation Campaign.
- In February 2009, it received the best Gram Panchayat Unit Award with Rupees one lakh cash from the state government.
- In April 2012, the GP received the Panchayat Sashaktikaran Award under PEAIS from the central government with a cash award of rupees three lakh.

#### ***Upliftment of the Socio – economic Condition of the Village People***

Apart from the official awards, it seems that Gerethang GP has been able to create an impact upon the lives of the local people. Compared to earlier times, local people's lives have definitely become less hazardous. For example, after the composite administrative unit was put in place, people no more need to move from pillar to post for getting a simple,

but important, document like birth certificate issued within a reasonable time. They are getting their services in less time and by giving lesser efforts. Under MNREGA, the GP has



**Photograph 10: Panchayat Sashaktikaran Puraskar Received by Gerethang GP**

constructed rural roads as a result of which rural connectivity has improved considerably. The successful implementation of Total Sanitation Campaign has enabled the GP to have a cleaner environment. The establishment of cooperative bank by the MPCS has created a reliable financial institution where people can deposit their savings and from where they can take loans or receive other financial services. Earlier, people had to go to the district headquarter for banking, but now the bank is at their doorsteps. Because of this, larger numbers of villagers have been enabled to access the facilities being provided by the organized financial institution like banks.

The increase in the revenue income of the GP has also created an indirect impact on the citizens. It has been possible for the GP to recruit additional staff in order to provide improved and diversified services to the people, such as running water supply system, garbage clearance and providing library services.

## Unique Features of the GP

Gerethang Gram Panchayat has some unique processes of functioning that have worked behind its success.

- The most important contributor to the success of the GP is the leadership. The last panchayat election in Sikkim took place in October 2012. Almost all the development in Gerethang took place during the last two terms. The leadership of the former Pradhan of this GP who is at present the Vice President of the district panchayat played a vital role to take all the initiatives discussed above. Even now, being the district Panchayat member, he is very much involved with this GP. He comes to the GP office frequently and provides necessary guidance to the GP members and officials. He is the chairperson of the Village Planning Forum and also of the MPCs. His enthusiasm has inspired the GP members and officials to work whole heartedly for the development of the panchayat.
- In Sikkim, model of GP-Cooperative collaboration is being promoted by the state government and all the GPs of the state had to form the MPCs. But in Gerethang, this collaboration has taken a different shape. The establishment of cooperative bank at the GP level is very unique. By involving the bank to disburse payments to the beneficiaries of various schemes undertaken by the GP, it has been possible to make the functioning of panchayat more transparent.
- GP has facilitated the formation of cooperative societies for the milk producers, employed and unemployed labours and contractors even at the ward level and also encouraged people of these professions to come under the cooperative societies. People are also getting scope to work collectively and reap benefit from the same. For example, the members of milk producers' cooperative societies can now use certain machines for improved packaging, which would not have been possible for an individual producer to own.
- One of the unique features of Gerethang GP is participatory planning process which takes into account the concerns of people's aspirations as well as requirements of the process of rational decision-making through deliberations at various levels, namely 6 ward development committees, gram planning forum, gram sabha and then the GP. Following this procedure in choosing or prioritizing development



projects together with the pivotal position given to the gram sabha in the matter of decision making are steps towards deepening democracy.

- One of the unique features of the GP is to give recognition to people in their respective fields. Motivation of youth by giving best youth awards has already been discussed. The GP also gives award to the students, best cultivator, best teacher and also the best GP member. In this way, the GP motivates people to work hard in their respective fields.

### **Replicability**

The success of Gerethang GP is the result of two things – an urge for doing good work on the part of GP members and people’s participation. Being inspired by the former Pradhan, all the members even of the present GP and also the officials work hard for providing improved and diversified services to people. GP has also been able to motivate people to take part in the GP affairs. The contribution of people to create a fund of rupees two lakh for the construction of village assembly hall is the result of that. The highest power in beneficiary selection and approval of all plans of GP is given to the Gram Sabha. The selection of the best GP member awardee is entirely in the hand of gram sabha. The winning of award by the GP from MoPR made people particularly the youth so glad that a large group of them went to Bagdogra airport to receive the then GP Pradhan when he had come back from Delhi after receiving the award. Many individuals and also the groups of self employed youth and government employees felicitated GP after winning the award in 2012.

The good practices narrated in this study are, no doubt, quite unique to Gerethang GP, but they can be replicated anywhere in the state as well as in the country. So far more than 800 panchayat members from different parts of the state have visited Gerethang GP and learnt the process of its functioning. Many GPs have already started preparation of village profile and have also been putting extra efforts for augmenting own source revenue following Gerethang example. Some have also introduced awards to the best student, youth and cultivator. The former Pradhan of this GP has been selected as a resource person by the state government in the capacity building programmes organized for the newly elected panchayat members.

## **Persons Who Interacted with the Research Team**

1. L. P. Kafley, Zilla Panchayat Member, Gerethang – Yuksam Territory
2. Lisha Limboo, GP President
3. Kaley Limboo, Vice President
4. S.K. Limboo, GP Secretary
5. L. S. Limboo, GP Member
6. B. M. Limboo, GP Member
7. S. M. Limboo, GP Member
8. Suraj Gurung, BDO, Yuksam Block
9. Nirmala Sharma, Typist cum Library Assistant
10. P. Kr. Chetri, Panchayat Account Assistant
11. B. Kr. Limboo, Technical Assistant
12. Shiva Luitel, Best Youth Awardee, 2012