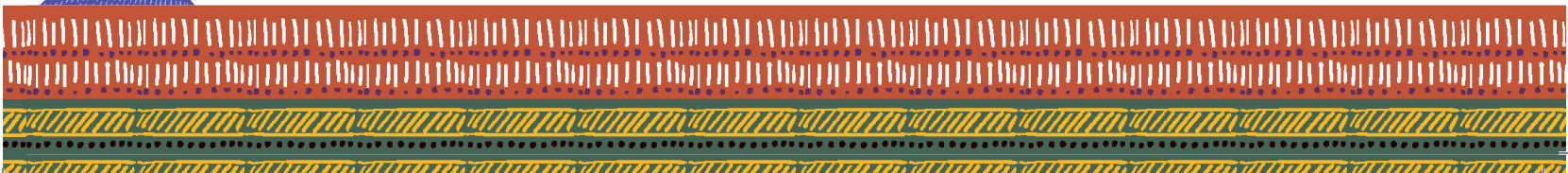


**National Conference**

# **Local Democratic Governance in India**

*Looking back and going forward on Panchayati Raj, PESA and FRA*

**21-23 June, 2023 | Chanakya BNR Hotel, Ranchi**





## Day 1 - June 21, 2023 (Utsav Hall)

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### Inaugural Session

10.00-12.30 p.m.

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The inaugural session will welcome our dignitaries and participants to the conference (including Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha representatives). This will be followed by garlanding and a welcome song.

The introductory address will be delivered by Ashok Kumar Sircar, Centre for Local Democracy, Azim Premji University, and the dignitaries present. The session will close with the national anthem.

### Dignitaries Present

- Sunil Kumar IAS, Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj
- Uma Mahadevan, Add. Chief Secretary, Dept. of Panchayati Raj, Karnataka
- Prof. Thomas Issac, Former Finance Minister, Kerala
- Vandana Dadel, Principal Secretary CMO, Jharkhand
- Rajeev Arun Ekka, Principal Secretary, Department of Panchayati Raj, Jharkhand
- Manoj P., Chief Operating Officer, Azim Premji University

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### Lunch Break

12.30-1.30 p.m.

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### Technical Session-1

1.30-3.00 p.m.

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### Representatives' Exchange - Sharing of the work of Panchayat Associations

Several associations of Gram Panchayats have emerged in states, bringing together elected representatives under a common platform for advocacy and learning. In this session, some of the representatives (part of the Gram Panchayat Associations) will share their work and experiences.

- Uday Shetty, President, Vandse Gram Panchayat, Kundapur Taluk, Udupi, District, Karnataka and President of Kundapur Taluk Panchayat Presidents' Association
  - Harin Tamsoy, President of the West Singhbhum Mukhiya Sangh, Jharkhand
  - Hema Pant, President, Ratauda Gram Panchayat, Garur Block, Bageshwar District, Uttarakhand, and President of Veerangana Federation
  - Rauma Akabarali Alarakha, Sarpanch, Manaba Gram Panchayat, Rapar Taluk, Kuchchh District, Gujarat and Secretary of Rapar Taluka Sarpanch Association
  - Moderator - Yogesh Kumar, Director, Samarthan, Madhya Pradesh
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## Day 1 - June 21, 2023 (Utsav Hall)

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Tea/Coffee Break

3.00-3.30 p.m.

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Technical Session-2

3.30-5.00 p.m.

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### Policy Exchange - Key Lessons from 30 years of Panchayati Raj

The Panchayati Raj discourse has evolved. We are seeing devolution by the state, democratic participation (especially of the marginalised), widening democratic representation, as well as, autonomy, local economy, resistance to corporate takeover of land forests etc. This session will discuss the key lessons emerging out of diverse experiences – exploring questions on the basic frame of the third tier, the possibility of a politics around Panchayati Raj and its contours, potential of deepening devolution and other issues.

- Prof. T M Thomas Isaac, Former Finance Minister, Kerala
  - C R Bijoy, Independent Researcher and Activist
  - Bijoy Panda, Bharat Jana Andolan
  - Prof. V N Alok, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi
  - Moderator - Sonali Srivastava, CEO, Anode Governance Lab, Bangalore
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## Day 1 - June 21, 2023 (Yuvraj Hall)

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### Technical Session-3

1.30-3.00 p.m.

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#### Academic Exchange - Socio-political Impact of Local Democracy

This session will discuss to what extent the establishment of local democratic governance institutions has led to enhanced and deepened citizen participation, expanded voice of the marginalised, democratised political representation, improved service delivery, and established a local state.

- Prof. Ashwani Kumar, Dean, School of Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai
  - Prof. D Rajasekhar, Director, Institute of Social and Economic Change, Bengaluru
  - Prof G. Pallanidurai, Dean, Student Welfare, Gandhigram Rural Institute - Deemed University, Dindigal
  - Moderator - Prof. Suraj Jacob, School of Development, Azim Premi University
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### Tea/Coffee Break

3.00-3.30 p.m.

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### Technical Session-4

3.30-5.00 p.m.

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#### Representatives' Exchange - Experience of the Association of Women Elected Representatives

Elected women representatives have come a long way from simply being elected on a reserved seat. Examples are not hard to find of effective leadership of women in the Panchayati Raj institutions. It is heartening to find that elected women representatives have also formed their own associations for sharing, learning and advocacy. This session will highlight their experiences of struggle and achievements.

- Seema Bohra, Upa Sarpanch, Salarhi Gram Panchayat, Bhimtal Block, Nainital District, Uttarakhand and Vice President of Veerangana Federation
  - Pushpa Kamath, President, Manchi Gram Panchayat, Bantval Taluk, Dakshina Kannada District, Karnataka
  - Rani Sathappan, President, Rayavaram Gram Panchayat, Thirumayam Taluk, Pudukottai District, Tamil Nadu and ex-President of Tamil Nadu Women Panchayat Presidents' Federation
  - Vekariya Pritiben Mullji, Sarpanch, Vadasar Gram Panchayat, Bhuj Taluka, Kachchh District, Gujarat and Secretary of Bhuj Taluka Sarpanch Association
  - Moderator - Shahina Perween Qumrush, The Hunger Project, Bihar
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## Day 1 - June 21, 2023 (Darbar Hall)

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### Technical Session-5

1.30-3.00 p.m.

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#### Good Practices Exchange - Overall development of a Gram Panchayat

A number of Gram Panchayats have shown exemplary work in overall development of the Gram Panchayat and communities. Most often this has happened due to a visionary leader or a group of leaders who could gather larger social consensus on welfare and development. This session is a sharing of experiences of some of the representatives of those Gram Panchayats.

- Rabindranath Bera, Ex-President, Digambarpur Gram Panchayat, Patharpratima Block, South 24 Parganas, West Bengal
- Kamakhya Singh, Ex-President, Pinderkon Gram Panchayat, Padma Block, Hazaribagh District, Jharkhand
- Sudhir Raturi, President, Rani Pokhari Grant Gram Panchayat, Rishikesh Tehsil, Dehradun District, Uttarakhand
- Suresh Chhanga, Vice President, Kunariya Gram Panchayat, Bhuj Taluka, Kachchh District, Gujarat
- Moderator - Dr. Anjan Kumar Bhanja, NIRD, Hyderabad

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### Tea/Coffee Break

3.00-3.30 p.m.

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### Technical Session-6

3.30-5.00 p.m.

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#### Good Practices Exchange - Social Innovations by Gram Panchayats

Several Gram Panchayats have become known for their social innovations to address issues of local relevance. This includes promotion of Dalit rights, making Gram Panchayats more women friendly, and others. The work of these Gram Panchayats and their leaders must be celebrated and this session provides the opportunity to share their works.

- Kesuram Meghawal, President, Kalyan Singh Ki Sid GP, Bap Block, Jodhpur District, Rajasthan
  - Savitaben Rathod, Ex Sarpanch Katodiya Gram Panchayat, Bhavnagar District, Gujarat
  - Jinat Priyadarshini, ex-President, Bharatpur Gram Panchayat, Kendrapara Sadar Tehsil, Kendrapara District, Odisha
  - Moderator - Binoy Acharya, Director, Unnati, Gujarat
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## Day 2 - June 22, 2023 (Utsav Hall)

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### Technical Session-1

09.30-11.00 a.m.

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#### Academic Exchange - Local State Capacity in India

The local state has a complex institutional design in the form of district, block development office, and line department administration on the one hand, and elected bodies of the Panchayati Raj on the other.

In most states, these entities are connected with each other, however this is not done in a clear chain of command, or as a part of a clearly defined institutional network. Financial devolution, levels of autonomy and professional capacities of local bureaucracies also vary across and between states.

This session will explore question such as, 'what is needed to improve the capacity of the local state in this setting? Do we move towards a clearly defined structure of collaborative governance or follow the classical model of devolution? etc.' It will bring together the different perspectives that aim to address local state capacities in India.

- Uma Mahadevan, Add. Chief Secretary, Dept. of Panchayati Raj, Karnataka
- Prof. V. N Alok, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi
- Avani Kapur, Senior Fellow, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi
- Prof. Bhaskar Chakrabarti, Public Policy and Management, Indian Institute of Management, Kolkata
- Moderator - Sham N Kashyap, Faculty, School of Policy and Governance Azim Premji University, Bengaluru

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### Tea/Coffee Break

11.00-11.30 a.m.

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### Technical Session-2

11.30 a.m.-1.00 p.m.

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#### Policy Exchange - Key lessons from 15 Years of FRA

The policy framework provides for the community's self-governance of forest resources, while the practical institutional mechanisms to make such governance happen is just evolving. While this is a practical question, the institutional mechanism of Panchayati Raj and forest governance still has design issues to be addressed. The session will discuss these issues.

- Parimal Singh, Ex-Deputy Secretary, Governor's office, Maharashtra, in charge of FRA implementation
  - Shomona Khanna, Lawyer, Supreme Court of India
  - Y Giri Rao, Chief Functionary, Vasundhara, Odisha
  - Moderator - Mohan Bhai, Vrikshamitra, Gadchiroli, Maharashtra
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## Day 2 - June 22, 2023 (Utsav Hall)

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**Lunch Break**

1.00-2.00 p.m.

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**Technical Session-3**

2.00-3.30 p.m.

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### **Policy Exchange - Key Policy Lessons from 25 years of PESA**

The journey of 25 years of PESA has been a mixed experience. Rules framed by some of the states reflect inadequate appreciation of the PESA context and the states' desire to severely limit the possibilities of the community's self-governance under PESA. Community's self-governance mechanisms, on the other hand, have weakened over the decades, also what exists is often not compatible with Constitutional morality. Several other contradictions arise out of the Adivasi way of life and the states' interest in forest and mining. The session will discuss these aspects from a policy lens.

- Ashwini Kange, Sarvoday Adivasi Samaj, Chhattisgarh
  - Lalsu Nogoti, ZP Member of Gadchiroli District, Maharashtra
  - Mamta Varma, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj. Govt of India
  - Moderator - Prof Bipin Jojo, School of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences
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**Tea/Coffee Break**

3.30-4.00 p.m.

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**Technical Session-4**

4.00-5.30 p.m.

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### **Representatives' Exchange - Experience of Elected Women Representatives from various states**

This session highlights the journey of some of the elected women representatives who made their mark in breaking the patriarchal barriers as well as systemic barriers and became legitimate leaders of the community.

- Savithriben Arjunbhai Baria, Elected Member, Megha Muvadi Gram Panchayat, Devgadbaria Taluka, Dahod District, Gujarat
  - Anita Kumari, Up Mukhia, Keshopur Gram Panchayat, Jajha Block, Jamui District, Bihar
  - Lokamma, Elected member, Hokrana Gram Panchayat, Bidar Talu, Bidar District and member of Sugrama Federation
  - Hansa Lodhhyal, President, Dhanachuli Van Panchayat, Dhari Block, Nainital District, Uttarakhand
  - Krishnaveni, Ex President, Thalayiuthu Gram Panchayat, Manur Taluk, Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu
  - Moderator - Sushma Iyengar, Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan, Gujarat
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## Day 2 - June 22, 2023 (Yuvraj Hall)

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### Technical Session-1

09.30-11.00 a.m.

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#### Policy Exchange - Lessons from Emerging Experiences

Several recent experiences have opened up new policy possibilities. The session will discuss some of them such as West Bengal's experiments in Panchayat's interventions in health and nutrition, a nationwide capacity building initiative, and others.

- S. M. Vijayanand, IAS ret'd. Ex Chief Secretary, Govt. of Kerala
  - Dilip Ghosh IAS (ret'd.) Ex-Secretary, Government of West Bengal
  - W R Reddy, Ex-Director, National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad
  - Gurjit Singh, Mission Manager, National Resource Cell for Social Audit Dept of Social Justice and Empowerment, Govt. of India
  - Moderator - Zulfiqar Haider, Azim Premji Foundation
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### Tea/Coffee Break

11.00-11.30 a.m.

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### Technical Session-2

11.30 a.m.-1.00 p.m.

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#### Academic Exchange - Evolution of citizen participation in local democracy

The session will discuss the evolution of citizen participation from being 'asked to participate' to slowly evolving into informed participation, which expresses itself in demand, grievances, planning, execution, social audits and occasional resistance. The discussion will also take stock of the journey so far, and delve into the question as to what extent wider participation has led to overall development, social accountability and social justice outcomes.

- Prof. Ashwani Kumar, Dean, School of Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai
  - Prof. Jose Chattukulam, Director, Centre for Rural Management, Kottayam, Kerala
  - Rakshita Swamy, Director, Social Accountability Forum for Action and Research
  - Moderator - Dr. Anshuman Karol, Lead, Governance and Climate Action, Participatory Research in Asia, New Delhi
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## Day 2 - June 22, 2023 (Yuvraj Hall)

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**Lunch Break**

1.00-2.00 p.m.

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**Technical Session-3**

2.00-3.30 p.m.

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### **Representatives' Exchange - Sharing of experiences of Elected Representatives**

While there are nearly 3 million elected representatives in India, there are not many who make a mark in their work. This session will bring a few of such leaders whose works need to be celebrated and also shared with the larger community.

- Sarmi Bai, Ex-President, Nichlagarh Panchayat, Abu Road Tehsil, Sirohi district, Rajasthan and delegate of Panchayat Samiti
  - Maheshwari Jakhubhai Gangabhai, Ward member, Ratnal Gram Panchayat, Anjar Taluka, Kachchh District, Gujarat and Vice president of Anjar Taluk Panchayat Association
  - Jyotiraj Kullu, Mukhiya, Kesalpur Gram Panchayat, Pakar Tanar Block, Simdega District, Jharkhand
  - Ranjit Dehury, President, Saharpur Gram Panchayat, Banspal Tehsil, Keonjhar District, Odisha
  - Moderator - Neeta Hardikar – Executive Director, Anandi, Gujarat
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**Tea/Coffee Break**

3.30-4.00 p.m.

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**Technical Session-4**

4.00-5.30 p.m.

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### **Academic Exchange - From Panchayati Raj to PESA and FRA- deepening local democracy**

This session will discuss the trajectory of expansion of local democracy in the fifth schedule areas and forests. From the idea of creating a third tier of governance, the story of local democracy expanded into the realm of the community's self-governance in PESA and forest settings, requiring a new institutional framework where the state and communities must find ways of working together towards a common future.

- Prof. Virginius Xaxa, Visiting Professor, Institute for Human Development
  - C R Bijoy, Independent Researcher and Activist
  - Prof Kamal Nayan Chaube, Dyal Singh College, University of Delhi
  - Moderator - Dr Venkat Ramanujam, Senior Research Associate, Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology & The Environment, Bengaluru
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## Day 2 - June 22, 2023 (Darbar Hall)

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### Technical Session-1

09.30-11.00 a.m.

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#### **Good Practices Exchange - Welfare and FRA implementation through local democratic institutions and processes**

Welfare and rights are entitlements that are expected to be implemented through democratic processes. The good practices to be highlighted in this session refers to Service Delivery through Nagarik Sahyata Kendra, and the work of the FRCs in implementing forest rights. How these are done on the ground in Jharkhand, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu will be shared by the Gram Sabha representatives.

- James Herenj, State Convenor, Jharkhand NREGA Watch, Jharkhand
- Premanand Ramesh Madhavi, and Diwakar Ramchandra Alam, Gram Sabha Representatives, Panchgaon, Karveer Taluka, Kolhapur District, Maharashtra
- Murugeshan Saidiyan, Forest Rights Committee Member, Kodiyur, Karamadai Taluk, Coimbatore
- Moderator - Asavari Raj Sharma, Azim Premji Foundation

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### Tea/Coffee Break

11.00-11.30 a.m.

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### Technical Session-2

11.30 a.m.-1.00 p.m.

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#### **Representatives' Exchange - Experiences of FRA implementation by Gram Sabha/Sangh members**

Much of the implementation of FRA rests on the Gram Sabha and Forest Rights Committee. The process is complex involving many steps and multiple stakeholders. Some of the Gram Sabha members have done commendable work in FRA implementation navigating these complexities. They will share their experiences.

- Ramlal Kale, Member, Payvihir Gram Sabha, Gram Sabha Federation (Melghat) Facilitator, Amravati District, Maharashtra
  - Manoj Sakshi, Zilla Parishad Member, Dhamtari District, Chhattisgarh
  - Pavana Kumari, President Forest Rights Committee, Multhan Taluk, Kangra District, Himachal Pradesh
  - Bamaniyabhai Tuliyaabhai Vasava, Secretary, Forest Rights Committee, Dediapada Taluka, Narmada district, Gujarat
  - Moderator - Asavari Raj Sharma, Grant Maker and Manager, Azim Premji Foundation
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## Day 2 - June 22, 2023 (Darbar Hall)

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**Lunch Break**

1.00-2.00 p.m.

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**Technical Session-3**

2.00-3.30 p.m.

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### **Good Practices Exchange - Special Initiatives at the state level**

Several state level initiatives in widening the scope of local democratic institutional processes leading to welfare and development outcomes deserves attention. This session will discuss diverse such examples from West Bengal, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Kerala.

- Anuradha Nair, Social Policy Specialist, UNICEF, Maharashtra
  - Dilip Ghosh IAS (retd.) Ex-Secretary, Government of West Bengal
  - Dr. Monish Jose, Centre for climate change and sustainability, Kerala Institute of Local Administration, Kerala
  - Rakshita Swamy, Director, Social Accountability Forum for Action and Research
  - Moderator - Yogesh Kumar, Director, Samarthan, Madhya Pradesh
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**Tea/Coffee Break**

3.30-4.00 p.m.

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**Technical Session-4**

4.00-5.30 p.m.

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### **CSO exchange - Experience of CSOs in furthering the processes of local democracy**

Several CSOs have taken upon themselves in working towards deepening and widening the institutional processes of local democracy by mobilizing Gram Sabhas, providing technical support to the Gram Panchayat offices, building capacities of Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha representatives, facilitating Gram Panchayat Development Planning and other activities. Leaders of some of the CSOs will share their experiences in this session.

- Anirban Ghoshe, Co-Lead, Transforming Rural India Foundation, Delhi
  - Sukanta Sarkar, Team Leader, PRADAN, Jharkhand
  - Neeta Hardikar, Executive Director, Anandi, Gujrat
  - Johnson Topno, Regional Head, Partnering Hope into Action Foundation, Jharkhand
  - Moderator - Naveen Das, Registrar, Azim Premji University, Bhopal
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## Day 3 - June 23, 2023 (Yuvraj Hall)

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### Technical Session-1

09.30-11.00 a.m.

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#### **Media Exchange - Narratives on local democracy in Indian media**

How does mainstream media reflect matters of local democracy? For the last few decades the narratives have mainly focussed on election, corruption, violence, elite capture, assertions, and some feel good stories of welfare and development along with heroic leaders. The session will have an introductory address followed by a panel discussion by diverse media persons.

- P Sainath, Eminent Journalist and Author
- Jaideep Hardikar, People's Archive of Rural India
- Anuradha Nagaraj, Faculty, Azim Premji University
- Srishti Mehra, Khabar Lahariya
- Arvind Shukla, Founder, News Potli
- Moderator - Mandira Kalaan, Co-founder, Purpose

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### Tea/Coffee Break

11.00-11.30 a.m.

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### Technical Session-2

11.30 a.m.-1.00 p.m.

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#### **Media Exchange - Strengthening capacities of communicators on local democracy**

This session will run in the form of a workshop with various regional media persons, sensitizing them about building stronger narratives in favour of local democracy.

- Saudamini Zutshi & Gupriya Singh, Purpose, New Delhi

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### Lunch Break

1.00-2.00 p.m.

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## Day 3 - June 23, 2023 (Utsav Hall)

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### Technical Session-1

09.30-11.00 a.m.

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#### Small Group Exchange - Small Group Discussions on pre-chosen topics

1. Gram Panchayat Development Planning
2. Civil Society's engagement with Local Democratic Institutions and Processes
3. Key policy questions emerging from decades of experience in local democracy

Self-selected participants numbering 10 -12 in each small group.

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### Tea/Coffee Break

11.00-11.30 a.m.

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### Technical Session-2

11.30 a.m.-1.00 p.m.

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#### Representatives' Exchange - Small Group Discussions on pre-chosen topics

1. Community Forest Rights and CFR management
2. Convergence between PRIs / Gram Sabha with line departments for local development
3. Capacity Building of Panchayati Raj or Gram Sabha representatives in the context of PESA-FRA

Self-selected participants numbering 10 -12 in each small group.

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### Lunch Break

1.00-2.00 p.m.

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### Closing Session

2.00-3.30 p.m.

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## Day 3 - June 23, 2023 (Regency Hall)

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### Technical Session-1

09.30-11.00 a.m.

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#### **Jharkhand Exchange - Implementation of the Panchayati Raj: Taking stock and going forward**

Jharkhand is a late starter in Panchayati Raj, currently the PRIs are in their 3rd term. In this short period, some progress has been seen in terms of basic infrastructure, and personnel but serious challenges remain, on which the government is currently focussed on. The session will discuss the major issues faced by Panchayati Raj Institutions in Jharkhand.

- Sudhir Pal, Chief Functionary, Manthan Yuva Sansthan, Ranchi, Jharkhand
- Nisha Oraon, Director, Department of Panchayati Raj, Govt. of Jharkhand
- Gurjit Singh, Mission Manager, National Resource Cell for Social Audit Dept of Social Justice and Empowerment, Govt. of India
- Vikas Mahato, Ex-President of Jharkhand Mukhiya Sangh, Jharkhand
- Moderator - Prof. Ramesh Saran, Ex Vice Chancellor, Vinobha Bhave University, Hazaribag, Jharkhand

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### Tea/Coffee Break

11.00-11.30 a.m.

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### Technical Session-2

11.30 a.m.-1.00 p.m.

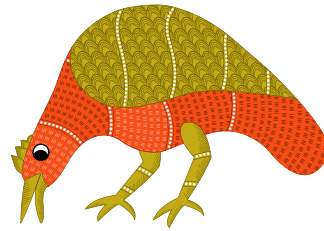
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#### **Jharkhand Exchange - Implementation of the PESA and FRA: Taking stock and going forward**

While the PESA rules are just about to be released, the implementation of FRA and PESA is done on the ground mostly by CSOs and activists. The panel will discuss some of the emerging structural issues, as well as what has been achieved on the ground so far.

- Ranendra Kumar, Director, Dr. Ramdayal Munda Tribal Welfare Research Institute, Department of Welfare, Government of Jharkhand
  - Ghanashyam Sharma, Chief Functionary, Samvad, Ranchi, Jharkhand
  - Sunil Minz, Journalist and Writer on tribal issues, Jharkhand
  - Seerat Kachhap, Researcher on Tribals & Human Rights Issues, Jharkhand
  - Moderator - Dr Joseph Marianus Kujur, Director, Xavier Institute of Social Sciences, Ranchi, Jharkhand
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