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Warwat Khanderao**

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A Note on Panchayat-level Official Databases in Warwat Khanderao *

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The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 was a watershed in the history of democratic decentralization, giving a constitutional status and devolution of 29 functions to the Panchayati Raj Institutions, as the third tier of governance. Functioning of the panchayat needs local level databases for their own use. A particular type of dataset is required, which relates to basic functions such as preparation of panchayat plans for economic development and social justice, implementation of these plans, assessment of panchayat finance and self-governance of panchayat.

However, the National Statistical Commission under the Chairmanship of Dr. C. Rangarajan, argued in 2001 that 'as there was little or no local level planning for provision of public goods and facilities, there seemed to be little or no need or demand for local level databases.'¹ Following the recommendation by Rangarajan Commission, the Central Statistical Organisation constituted the Expert Committee on 'Basic Statistics for Local Level Development (BSLLD)' to consider different aspects of the problems of databases for local level development.² The most essential recommendation made by this Expert Committee is expressed in an assertion that 'the Gram Panchayat should consolidate, maintain and own village level data.'³ This recommendation is quite simple but obviously epochal because it sheds light on potential of village level data sources and identifies a new statistical domain that is open for discussion.⁴

The Expert Committee on BSLLD found that some of the village level records are maintained by the village level functionaries, such as Anganwadi, ANM, Panchayat Secretary, school

* This paper was presented at the consultation meeting on FAS-PARI Maharashtra round survey, organized by the Foundation for Agrarian Studies, at Mumbai, October 8-9, 2011.

¹ National Statistical Commission (2001), para 9.2.17. 'A major weakness of the Indian database is its near total insensitivity to the requirements of planning from below.' [Isaac, Thomas T. M. and Richard W. Franke, *Local Democracy and Development: people's campaign for decentralized planning in Kerala*, LeftWord, 2000, p. 106]

² The committee was constituted in 2002 under the chairmanship of S.P. Gupta, Member, Planning Commission. Subsequently Abhijit Sen, Member, Planning Commission was appointed as Chairman of the committee in 2004. [Central Statistical Organisation, Social Statistics Division of Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, *Report of High Level Expert Committee on Basic Statistics for Local Level Development*, 2006]

³ Central Statistical Organisation (2006), p. 1.

⁴ Planning Commission points that 'the key to the new approach is to link up data collection with the Panchayats.' Planning Commission, Government of India, *Manual for Integrated District Planning*, 2008, p. 16.

teacher, *Patwari*, village headman, and knowledgeable person etc.⁵ But those village level databases have to be reorganized and reinforced. The village level databases in India were evolved to suit the requirements of highly centralized systems of administration and planning⁶, but now in the post-constitutional amendment regime, new type of databases are required at the village level.

Thus, we will introduce a topic on village-level databases available in Warwat Khanderao gram panchayat in Maharashtra, and will discuss a shift of requirement of village-level databases under the post-constitutional amendment regime.

Village-level birth records: A Topic on Village-level Databases

In order to assess the village level-birth records for use in local level development, we have conducted a micro level discrepancy analysis, comparing each and every birth event recorded in the Civil Registration System (CRS) in Warwat Khanderao in the years from 2002 to 2007 with the corresponding person in the PARI database. Furthermore, we conducted interviews with all households in which children were born in the years from 2002 to 2007 and whose names were not in the CRS but present in the PARI database⁷. The major findings of our investigation are as follows;

The major fact that emerges out of this study of CRS in the village of Warwat Khanderao is, that even if we assume 100 per cent registration, it gives information only about the births occurring within the village, whereas in majority the cases parents go to their native villages or go for institutional delivery at the nearest town. As shown in Table 1, out of 130 children of the 0-5 age group in 2007 in the PARI database, only 22.3 per cent of total children were registered under the CRS at the gram panchayat in Warwat Khanderao. 63.1 per cent of total children were not registered at the gram panchayat in Warwat Khanderao but registered at the other gram panchayats or the local bodies outside Warwat Khanderao. Therefore the majority of registered children of the 0-5 years in the PARI database were registered outside Warwat Khanderao. Those children were either born at certain medical facilities outside the village; or their mothers temporary returned for delivery to her natural parents' places outside the village

⁵ Central Statistical Organisation, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, *Basic Statistics for Local Level Development: Instructions for Data Recordist* (For official use), Volume I, p. 3.

⁶ 'The data management practices and institutions in the country were evolved to suit the requirements of highly centralized systems of administration and planning. Indeed, most of the national level data are ultimately collected from the localities. But the centralized systems of planning and governance do not require that these data be made available in printed form at the local level.' [Isaac, Thomas T. M. and Richard W. Franke (2000), p. 106]

⁷ Okabe J. and Surjit V. (2008), Village-level Birth Records: A Case Study, Studying Village Economies in India: A Colloquium in Chalsa
<http://www.agrarianstudies.org/UserFiles/File/S8_Okabe_and_Surjit_Village_level_Birth_Records.pdf>

and their births were registered there. We found that almost all the institutional births were recorded as demanded by the law. However, there is no medical facility in Warwat Khanderao. They have to go to medical facilities located in neighboring town. Moreover, it is a general custom that mother returns to her parents' home for her first delivery. By contrast, the registers in CRS at the gram panchayat in Warwat Khanderao include 23 children who are registered here because their mothers, who are married to men resident in other villages, came temporarily to Warwat Khanderao for delivery. Thus the information

Category		Number (%)
All children less than or equal to age five appeared in PARI database for 2007		130 (100.0%)
Registered births in the CRS at Warwat Khanderao or elsewhere		111 (85.4%)
Registered births in the CRS at Warwat Khanderao		29 (22.3%)
Registered births in the CRS elsewhere outside Warwat Khanderao		82 (63.1%)
Unregistered births in the CRS neither at Warwat Khanderao nor elsewhere		18 (13.8%)
Other		1 (0.8%)
Registered births in the CRS at Warwat Khanderao but not in PARI database for 2007		40
Their mother came to Warwat Khanderao for delivery		23
Other		17
<i>Source: PARI Survey data, 2007</i>		

from CRS of a particular village is of less use for the purpose of obtaining data on children needed for local level planning, as it does not cover all children resident in the village.

The micro-level picture on the situation around the birth records at a village was somewhat different from a macro-level view based on the Sample Registration System (SRS). Although the CRS and the SRS have provided us with state-level macro data, we found some difficulties in using the CRS for the purpose of local-level planning. The CRS is out of focus as databases required at the village level. Certain systematic changes are required for the CRS to meet the increasing requirement and demand for decentralised databases for purposes of micro-level planning in development programmes.

Therefore, we have also examined the potential of the Anganwadi Child Registers in Warwat Khanderao. The Anganwadi Child Registers should not have the problem of an undercounting of children since all children, whether born in the village of residence (here Warwat Khanderao), or native village of their mothers or medical facilities located in neighboring town, are to be registered in the Anganwadi Child Register. There are two criteria for determining where the registration of birth should take place: the place of occurrence or the place of usual residence⁸. In principle, place of registration of

⁸ United Nations, Statistics Division (2001), *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 2*, p. 59.

the Anganwadi Child Register is the place of usual residence, whereas place of registration of the CRS is the place of occurrence. The Anganwadi Child Registers recorded in the place of usual residence intends to cover births of all children inhabited this village, so it is, indeed, very useful for the basis for planning health and family welfare programmes at the village level. Data needs for village level-birth records under the post-constitutional amendment regime shift from the CRS to a kind of records like Anganwadi Child Registers.

Tentative result of matching of children from ICDS and PARI database is shown in Table 2, the matching task is in progress now. We found that information from Anganwadi Child Registers covers more children living within the village than the CRS⁹.

Table 2 *Matching of children from ICDS and PARI database (year-wise)*

Year	Total number of children in ICDS	Children present both in ICDS and PARI	Percentage
(1)	(2)	(3)	(3)*100/(2)
2005	33	15	45.5
2006	11	5	45.5
2007	22	7	31.8

Source: PARI Survey data, 2007

A New Statistical Domain Emerging in Rural India

As was seen above, a new statistical domain is emerging in rural India, which is open for discussion. There is a shift of requirement of village-level databases since the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992. In this context, we are now carrying out a research project on 'Local-level Statistical Systems in India' to study panchayat-level databases and their potential use for the empowerment of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. It studies not only village level-birth records but the overall status of village-level data available in two contrasting gram panchayats in India, Warwat Khanderao gram panchayat in Maharashtra and Raina gram panchayat in West Bengal.

⁹ Dhar, N. S. and Okabe, J., Matching of ICDS birth register and PARI database in Warwat Khanderao, *CITS Working Paper 2011-04*, Center for International Trade Studies, Faculty of Economics, Yokohama National University, 2011.