

# Consultation on Panchayati Raj Institutions and Tourism

## Co-organised by Centre for Responsible Tourism, Council for Social Justice and Peace and EQUATIONS

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Centre for Responsible Tourism (CRT), Council for Social Justice and Peace (CSJP) and EQUATIONS collaborated on a study on Panchayati Raj Institutions and tourism with the objectives of studying the role of Gram Sabhas and Panchayats at every stage of tourism development, to identify gaps in functions, functionaries and funds (Fs) and to examine role of elected women representatives (EWRs) in tourism. This study was conducted in Agonda and Candolim. Initial findings of the study in Goa indicate the lack of awareness among people about Panchayati Raj as an institution, the link between PRIs and tourism, lack of devolution of 3 Fs and lack of social and political support for EWRs.

In context of governance, the Panchayats are seen as an implementing agency of the state and centrally sponsored schemes and not as an authority having power to influence the development of the village. There is an unwillingness to devolve power to the Panchayats, which was corroborated by Director of Panchayat on grounds of lack of technical expertise of the Panchayats. However, technical errors made by other departments such as Department of Tourism, Town and Country Planning Board in granting permission on disputed lands or developing plans without understanding ground realities are not seen from the same lens. This attitude has resulted in people bypassing Panchayats to get their work done. Adding to the situation is the non-clarity people have on governance and how they are governed influences their lives in the most fundamental ways. There is lack of confusion among the Panchayats and Department of Tourism about the jurisdiction of beach area caused by lack of understanding about the definition of local authority mentioned in the Goa Prohibition of Construction (GPC) Act, 1995. Focus of the Gram Sabha is limited only to infrastructural plans and not on influencing the overall development of the village. This has resulted in loss of faith in the spirit of the space. There is a laid back attitude to form committees such as supervisory committee, ward development committee, vigilance committee and social justice committee which are meant to influence the development plan for their areas and monitor the work undertaken by the Panchayats.

The absence of effective people's participation through the committees and Gram Sabha has paved a way for corruption and violation of rules and regulations in the place thereby contributing to the creation of a parallel governance process for tourism development. Without involving the Panchayats, the Department of Tourism has granted licenses to shack owners and small and medium guest houses and is working to a small extent on the issue of waste management. People approach line departments such as the Town and Country Planning Board directly for no objection certificates (NoCs) which are granted without getting an approval from the Panchayats. Sadly, the Panchayats have also not raised the issue, thereby, allowing unregulated development. Given the situation, passing the buck onto each other is easy and has led to complete abdication of responsibility.

The inability of the Panchayats at the village and zilla levels to influence tourism and line departments bypassing the Gram Sabha are issues that need serious attention. This is more so in view of the effective engagement of people in the past in both the sites of the study, who had influenced the nature and form of tourism development successfully. However, over time, economic gains from tourism has taken over their concern for the well being of the society. In this backdrop, it is required to discuss about the changes that has taken place over the years, understand people's aspirations in the changed scenario and chalk out the ways to strengthen people's voices in governance. A consultation is planned to have a collective interaction on the issues and explore the possible ways to strengthen the role of PRIs in tourism development.

### Objectives:

- Discussion on impacts of tourism (social, cultural, economic and political)
- Experience sharing on the specific challenges faced by the people and the Panchayat officials and identify the issues to work with
- Build awareness about the Panchayati Raj as an institution and their role in tourism development
- Exploring ways such as legal literacy programme and formation of tourism council to address the issues faced by the Panchayats in context of tourism

Participants: Representatives of Panchayat & Gram Sabha from 25 coastal villages in Goa.

**Expected Outcomes:**

Vision and strategies to advocate for the role of PRIs in tourism development  
Initial thoughts on the legal literacy programme + formation of tourism councils  
Report of the Consultation

For further details, contact :

1. Surabhi Singh, EQUATIONS, +918105234444  
[surabhi.s@equitabletourism.org](mailto:surabhi.s@equitabletourism.org); [www.equitabletourism.org](http://www.equitabletourism.org)

2. Vigilia Desa, CRT CSJP, +919175744413  
[vigiliadesa@yahoo.com](mailto:vigliadesa@yahoo.com), <http://responsibletourismgoa.com/>

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