

*By email*

N-11014/4/2023-PESA  
Government of India  
Ministry of Panchayati Raj  
(Policy Division)

11th Floor, JP Building, New Delhi  
25 Kasturba Gandhi Marg,  
New Delhi-110001  
Date: 8th April, 2024

To,  
All Members of the Committee


**Subject:** Minutes of the Second Meetings of the 'Advisory Committee to examine the issue of Women Pradhans being represented by the male members of their families and also examine other issues related thereto' held on 22nd March, 2024— reg.

Madam/Sir,

I am directed to forward herewith the Minutes of the Second Meetings of the above Advisory Committee, held on 22nd March, 2024 under the Chairmanship of Shri Sushil Kumar, Secretary to the Government of India (Rtd.), for information and for action as appropriate.

Yours faithfully,

*Encl: As Above*

  
08/04/2024  
(Ajay Kumar)

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Sr. PPS to SPR/AS(PR)

**N-11014/4/2023-PESA  
Government of India  
Ministry of Panchayati Raj**

**“Advisory Committee to examine the issue of Women Pradhans being represented by the male members of their families and also examine other issues related thereto” –  
Minutes of the second meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2024**

The second meeting of the above-mentioned Committee under the chairmanship of Shri Sushil Kumar, Secretary to the Government of India (Rtd.) was held in the Conference Hall of Jeevan Bharati Building, MoPR on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024. The list of participants is placed at *Annexure – I*.

2. Ms. Mamta Varma, Joint Secretary-cum-Member Convenor of the Committee, welcomed the Chairman and members of the Committee. The Agenda-wise discussions made during the meeting, decisions taken by the Committee and officers responsible for taking action on the decisions of the Committee are mentioned in the subsequent paras.

3. The 1<sup>st</sup> **Agenda of the meeting** and discussions made during the meeting and decisions taken by the Committee are as under-

**Agenda No.1:**

Presentation on the Study conducted on the ‘Issues of Women Pradhans in India's Local Governments’ by *Shri. Sajith Sukumaran, Kudumbashree and Dr. Madhuri, NIRD&PR*.

**Discussions made during the meeting:**

Shri Sajith Sukumaran, Kudumbashree and Dr. Madhuri, NIRD&PR made a presentation on the Study conducted on the ‘*Issues of Women Pradhans in India's Local Governments*’. The study has been conducted in 17 States namely Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Rajasthan, Telangana, Tripura and Uttar Pradesh. A copy of the presentation is placed in *Annexure – II*.

The objectives of the study are-

- to examine the extent and prevalence of the Sarpanchpati system;
- the roles played by members;
- recommendations to eliminate proxy practices; and
- to enhance capacity-building measures of elected women representatives (EWRs).

The major findings of the study are-

- EWRs continue to face the continuing challenges arising out of mindsets imbued with patriarchy, family and caste elements;
- It is not easy for the EWRs to shake off the shackles of traditional social and community norms once being selected as Sarpanches, etc because they do not get any support against such steps from their society/family for the period beyond elected representatives.
- Due to inexperience in handling official matters and less familiarity with procedures, the Woman sarpanches are afraid of legal actions and contractual liabilities for the tender/contracts and reports of some police cases have caused fear for being sent to jail.

- The sheer ignorance of not knowing the procedures and systems has led to one case wherein the woman sarpanch had awarded contract to her son ignoring the proper procedures.

The recommendations made in the study to protect and increase EWRs' participation in decision-making power include-

- Setting up systems to have continuous one-to-one mentoring provision;
- preparation of detailed manuals and a system for regular production of manuals on roles and responsibilities, laws and policies and do's and don'ts in vernacular languages;
- formulation of a Model Law for States to abolish the Sarpanchpati system quoting the efforts made in states and successes obtained;
- every year continuous training on various subject matter, exposure visits, two-term reservation for EWRs etc.

**Decisions taken during the meeting:**

On this presentation, the Committee has made the following suggestions to be incorporated in the study-

<b>Committee Member</b>	<b>Suggested that</b>
Shri Sushil Kumar, Chairman	i. The terms of reference for the TNA should include with Training Need specific to segmented social sections viz. SCs, STs, OBCs, General etc. ii. Synergy and forging partnerships with the District Legal Aid Society to handhold and acting as mentors to guide EWRs in legal matters and build protective systems to assure them. iii. Establish a mechanism for continuous follow-up on the lessons learnt and impact of the National Workshops for EWRs rather than just registering attendance as participation. iv. Concretize and details the method of convergence for EWRs. v. Consult with non-governmental organisation SEWA Ahmedabad to enhance the empowerment of women. vi. For training set up Learning Management Systems for continuous learning. vii. Consider devising easy system-driven approval processes with check signals at each stage to guide the user. viii. Partnerships with Open School to enable EWRs to obtain Board Examination certificates ix. Partnerships with NIELIT for building computer skills for EWRs.
Shri V.K. Bhasin, Member	i. Data needs to be compiled on how many legal cases were filed against the woman sarpanches for financial irregularities/ violation of Panchayat laws and also whether sarpanches were jailed for violations of impropriety in the discharge of the functions under Panchayat laws, if so how many woman sarpanches were jailed including the seriousness of offences. ii. Standing Legal Support from the State side may be made available to the EWRs, especially for finalising the award of contracts for development in the villages and other matters having legal implications. As the executives at the Central

	<p>Government level, State Government level and District Government have the support of standing legal department, this arrangement at the Panchayat level for woman sarpanches would help in taking decisions in accordance with law.</p> <p>iii. EWRs Association at all three tiers of PRIs to be structured i.e at the national level/ state level and district level</p> <p>iv. If found feasible the model of cooperative societies supplying milk to the National Dairy Development Board may also be studied for structuring the federation of EWRs.</p>
Dr. Anita Brandon, Member	<p>i. Some of the recommendations need to be more focused and detailed.</p> <p>ii. Higher honorarium linking with care giving roles and transportation costs for the EWRs.</p> <p>iii. Uniform remuneration for EWRs across GPs, Block Panchayats and District Panchayats in all States/UTs.</p> <p>iv. Helpdesk for Women Sarpanches and Members for mentoring and guiding support.</p> <p>v. Two-terms reservation for EWRs to be seriously considered.</p> <p>vi. Basic education level for the Sarpanches to be set to ensure accountability.</p>

**Action, on the decisions of the Committee, to be taken by:**

Shri Sajith Sukumaran, Kudumbashree and Dr. Madhuri, NIRD&PR.

4. The 2<sup>nd</sup> **Agenda of the meeting** and discussions made during the meeting and decisions taken by the Committee are as under-

**Agenda No.2:**

A Report on the Road Ahead in Strengthening SHG Convergence into PRI Leadership with Specific Recommendations – assigned to Shri. Sajith Sukumaran, Kudumbashree.

**Discussions made during the meeting:**

It was proposed that a discussion on the Report may be made in the next meeting of the Committee.

**Decisions taken during the meeting:**

The Committee has decided to make discussion on the report in its next meeting.

**Action, on the decisions of the Committee, to be taken by:**

Shri Sajith Sukumaran, Kudumbashree.

5. The 3<sup>rd</sup> **Agenda of the meeting** and discussions made during the meeting and decisions taken by the Committee are as under-

**Agenda No.3:**

Discussion on the Questionnaire *designed by Dr. Anita Brandon* 'To elicit responses from all States and UTs on empowering women elected representatives and covering proxy participation'.

**Discussions made during the meeting:**

It was observed that major contents of the "Questionnaire" designed by Dr. Anita Brandon" have been covered in the detailed "Consultative Paper" prepared by Shri V. K.Bhasin". Therefore, it was proposed to merge these two documents for circulation with States and other stakeholders. After making changes therein of drafting/ consequential nature the detailed "Consultative Paper" may be issued accordingly.

**Decisions taken during the meeting:**

The Committee also decided that new point, if any, mentioned in the "Questionnaire" be merged with the " above detailed Consultative Paper" and thereafter it may be circulated to all States and other stakeholders for their comments/suggestions, if any.

**Action, on the decisions of the Committee, to be taken by:**

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (Policy Division).

6. The 4<sup>th</sup> **Agenda of the meeting** and discussions made during the meeting and decisions taken by the Committee are as under-

**Agenda No.4:**

To push the inputs of MoPR from the study in the selected Aspirational Block of the State of Maharashtra - *Discussion on the tasks assigned to Dr. Mallinath Kalshetti, DDG, YASHADA.*

**Discussions made during the meeting:**

It was discussed that Dr. Kalshetti will make a presentation on the assigned tasks in the next meeting and also prepare Template-driven IEC Strategy for National/State/District/Block and GP level. He will also create WhatsApp group at Block and District level to capture the works undertaken by EWRs independently or through their proxy participation.

**Decisions taken during the meeting:**

The Committee agreed with the discussion made in this regard.

**Action, on the decisions of the Committee, to be taken by:**

Dr. Mallinath Kalshetti, DDG, YASHADA.

7. The 5<sup>th</sup> **Agenda of the meeting** and discussions made during the meeting and decisions taken by the Committee are as under-

**Agenda No.5:**

To undertake a comparative study of all State Panchayati Raj Acts by Shri. V.K. Bhasin, Secretary to the Government of India (Rtd.):

**Discussions made during the meeting:**

It was brought to the notice of the Committee that the consultant (Sh. Mahesh Sherwal) who had been assigned the task of preparing the comparative chart of the provisions of all the State Panchayati Raj Acts has resigned. As this job involves day to day work on full time basis, it was decided that the Policy Division of Ministry of Panchayati Raj would consult Action Research & Research Studies (AR&RS) Division of the Ministry for allocating a study for this purpose to a reputed law institute. Shri. V.K. Bhasin suggested that study may be assigned to 'National Law School University, or such other research institute which the AR&RS division might consider appropriate. Mr. Sherwal may be requested to give a draft if possible as he had been working in this field and may be inclined to give that. MoPR would acknowledge his effort if he agrees to do that.

**Decisions taken during the meeting:**

The Committee agreed with the discussion made in this regard. The decision was also taken that the Report of the Law Institute so received would be studied at the first instance by Sh. V.K. Bhasin and he would submit the same along with his observations and suggestions thereon, if any before the Committee.

**Action, on the decisions of the Committee, to be taken by:**

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (Policy Division and Action Research & Research Studies Division).

8. The 6<sup>th</sup> Agenda of the meeting and discussions made during the meeting and decisions taken by the Committee are as under-

**Agenda No.6:**

Ministry to collect information on State-wise reservation of seats for women in the post of Panchayat Secretaries.

**Discussions made during the meeting:**

It was discussed that in response to MoPR' D.O. letter, sent on 28.11.2023 to all States/UTs to collect information, only one State (Tamil Nadu) has shared the data, *inter-alia*, as under-

"..... As per the Tamil Nadu Government Servants (Conditions of Service) Act, 2016, Section 26, A minimum of thirty per cent of all vacancies which are to be filled through direct recruitment shall be set apart for women candidates irrespective of the fact whether the rule of reservation of appointment applies to the post or not. In respect of the posts to which the rule of reservation of appointment applies, thirty per cent of vacancies shall be set apart for female candidates following the reservation for Scheduled Castes and Schedules tribes, Backward Class Muslims, Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes or Denotified Communities shall be set apart for female candidates for the post of Panchayat Secretary following the reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Backward Class Muslims, Backward Classes, Most

*Backward Classes or Denotified Communities and General or Denotified Communities and General Turn. Women Candidate shall also be entitled to compete for the remaining seventy per cent of vacancies along with male candidates."*

As regards the remaining States/UTs, they may be requested by MoPR again to furnish requisite information/data.

**Decisions taken during the meeting:**

The Committee agreed with the discussion made in this regard.

**Action, on the decisions of the Committee, to be taken by:**

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (Policy Division).

9. The 7<sup>th</sup> **Agenda of the meeting** and discussions made during the meeting and decisions taken by the Committee are as under-

**Agenda No.7:**

Sending of Consultative Paper to States – prepared by Shri. V.K. Bhasin, Secretary to the Government of India (Rtd.).

**Discussions made during the meeting:**

This matter has been discussed and already covered in Agenda Item No. 3 as in Para No. 5 of this document.

**Decisions taken during the meeting:**

This matter has been discussed and already covered in Agenda Item No. 3 as in Para No. 5 of this document.

**Action, on the decisions of the Committee, to be taken by:**

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (Policy Division).

10. The 8<sup>th</sup> **Agenda of the meeting** and discussions made during the meeting and decisions taken by the Committee are as under-

**Agenda No.8:**

Selection of States for field visit/Study.

**Discussions made during the meeting:**

In view of Model Code of Conduct being in operation on account of the Lok Sabha General Election 2024, it was felt that it would be difficult for the States to make arrangements for physical field visits, thus, MoPR, in consultation with States/UTs, may organise four Regional meetings through video conferences (VC) in the month of April 2024, if feasible. Participants of the VCs meetings may include State Government Officers, Elected Representatives (ER) one each from Gram Panchayat, Block Panchayat and District Panchayat and other which the MoPR may co-opt. The committee may, if required, visit the various PRIs after the election.

**Decisions taken during the meeting:**

The Committee agreed with the discussion made in this regard.

**Action, on the decisions of the Committee, to be taken by:**

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (Policy Division).

11. The 9<sup>th</sup> **Agenda of the meeting** and discussions made during the meeting and decisions taken by the Committee are as under-

**Agenda No.9:**

The Committee may also consider co-option of other members, if any.

**Discussions made during the meeting:**

It was discussed that for wider consultation, one representative each from 'National Commission for Women' and 'National Rural Livelihood Mission, Ministry of Rural Development' may be co-opted by the Committee. MoPR may request these two organisations to nominate an officer to function as a co-opted member of the Committee.

**Decisions taken during the meeting:**

The Committee agreed with the discussion made in this regard.

**Action, on the decisions of the Committee, to be taken by:**

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (Policy Division).

12. In addition, the Chairman of the Committee has suggested the following actionable points for the Ministry:

- i. Ministry of Panchayati Raj may explore entering into Memorandum of Understanding with Open School for providing basic education to the EWRs.
- ii. Ministry of Panchayati Raj may make a reference to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (NEILIT) to study the feasibility of providing digital training both at Central and State level to EWRs in consultation with Ministry of Panchayati Raj and provide commencement of such training at the earliest. Presentation from the representative from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting may be organised in the next meeting.
- iii. Ministry to write to all State Commissions for Women to invite their insights and actions taken on prohibiting proxy women participation in the PRIs.

13. The meeting ended with a Vote of Thanks to the Chair and all the participants.



**List of Participants**

**Committee Members**

- i. Shri. Sushil Kumar, Secretary to the Government of India (Rtd.), Ministry of Mines – Chairperson
- ii. Shri. V.K. Bhasin, Secretary to the Government of India (Rtd.), Ministry of Law & Justice.
- iii. Smt. Mamata Verma, Joint Secretary, MoPR
- iv. Dr. Anita Brandon, Sr. Consultant, UNFPA (*joined online*)
- v. Dr. N. V. Madhuri, Head, Centre for Gender, NIRD&PR (*joined online*)
- vi. Shri. Satish Kumar Singh, Sr. Advisory Centre for Health and Social Justice (*joined online*)
- vii. Dr. Mallinath Kalshetti, DDG, YASHADA, Pune, Govt. of Maharashtra (*joined online*)
- viii. Shri. Sajith Sukumaran, Chief Operation Officer, Kudumbashree, Govt. of Kerala (*joined online*)
- ix. Dr. P. P. Balan, Consultant, MoPR

**Officials and Consultants from the Ministry**

- x. Dr. Chandra Shekhar Kumar, Additional Secretary, MoPR
- xi. Shri Vijay Kumar, Deputy Secretary, MoPR
- xii. Shri. Ajay Kumar, Under Secretary, MoPR
- xiii. Ms. Priyanka Dutta, SDG Consultant MoPR

# Study on Elected Women Representatives (EWR)

Presentation to the Committee, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024

# The Study

- This was proposed in the first meeting of the committee held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024
- Objectives of the Study
  - To examine the extent and prevalence of the *Sarpanchpati* system
  - To look at the impacts of the roles played by male members
  - To make suggestions/recommendations for eliminating proxy practices
  - To suggest capacity-building measures

# Key Findings

- *Sarpanchapati* system is in operation in all the states covered by the study, except Kerala
- Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) operate in complex and peculiar contexts which make them dependent on a male person in different forms.
- Women are breaking the shackles in many places; we did see EWRs who have evolved into confident leaders
  - Leaders the SHG system (HP, Karnataka)
  - From mass movements or CSOs (Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh)
  - Those who got a second term (Jharkhand)

# Typology of *Sarpanchpati* System

Power, Authority, Representation				Aware and bold decision maker
	Partial Role in Decision Making		Aware, strategic, silent decision maker	
		Aware, partially dependent		
		Physical Security		
		Social Security		
	Aware, timid, dependent		Physical Support Transportation	
Novice, unaware				Legitimate Moral Support

# Summary of Findings

- Women cannot break social and community norms for a mere five year term when they are *Sarpanch* (Ref: Rajasamand Sarpanch)
- The risks are too many; they can land in prison. They sign cheques, approve tenders in most places (Bihar, Rajasthan)
- Triple burden on women: Governance while facing prejudices of patriarchy, family, and caste (Ref: Chhattisgarh, Bihar)
- Serious capacity gaps form hurdles in being effective (All States)

# Suggestions/ Recommendations

- A nation-wide initiative is needed in addressing skill gaps of EWRs in governance and administration – include it in NCBF
- A TNA within TNA within TNA
- A fundamental change in approach and pedagogy is necessary in capacity building
  - A training calendar considering women's other priorities
  - A gender audit of training modules and institutions (infrastructure, facilities)
  - Special focus on Functional Training for illiterate EWRs
  - State pools of women trainers; can Mountain Move to Mohammad?
  - State level dedicated help desks for EWRs

# Suggestions/Recommendations

- Capacity building (Continued)
  - Tie up with NRLM for establishing Gender Resource Centres (GRC) at Gram Panchayat level
  - Creation of 'Schools of Practice' with a 'Community of Practice' selected and specially trained from successful EWRs
  - Mentors – one-to-one for Sarpanches (NIRD PR Guwahati, SDG Mentors)
  - Detailed manuals, and a system for regular production of manuals, in languages that can be understood even by illiterate women, on
    - Roles and responsibilities
    - Laws and practices
    - Dos and Don'ts (Risks)



# Suggestions/ Recommendations - Policy

- A national campaign on Women Sarpanches and their importance
  - Message of women power; politics of performance; prestige
  - Multi-lingual, multi-media, through all government channels
  - Along the lines of 'Beti Patao, Beti Bachao' campaign.
- Formulation of a Model Law for States to abolish the Sarpanchpati system, focusing on
  - Code of Conduct
  - Conflict of Interest
- An advisory to states to promote associations of EWRs

# Suggestions/Recommendations - Policy

- A nation-wide campaign to make Gram Panchayat offices inclusive
  - Women-friendly, PwD-friendly, Elderly-friendly
- Advisory on revision of honorariums; timely disbursement; can there be a higher honorarium for EWRs?
- Advisory on an auxiliary audit system for better book-keeping at Panchayats
- Can States reserve 50% of the positions of Panchayat secretaries for women? (Positive impact: Chhattisgarh)
- Convergence with NRLM, MoRD for a special drive for ensuring livelihood support to EWRs

# Suggestions/ Recommendations - Policy

- Technology intermediation for illiterate/elderly/less-educated EWRs
  - Provision of a smart phone
  - A local community resource person trained to provide support
- Ensuring nodal staff at training institutions for training of EWRs
- Encourage state departments to implement PRI-CBO Convergence

# PRI-CBO Convergence

- MoRD had issued an advisory to the state in 2016, asking to promote convergence of SHGs with Gram Panchayats
- Pilot projects in PRI-CBO Convergence were implemented in 15 states
- A methodology that came up through pilot – VPRP and their submission to GPs for inclusion in GPDP - was taken up as a national programme
- MoPR and MoRD issued joint advisory to the states on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 for VPRP-GPDP integration

# PRI-CBO Convergence

- MoRD announced the universalisation of the PRI-CBO Convergence methodology in 2022; roll out began in April 2023.
- 15 States took up the programme during 2023-24; seven more states have included it in their Annual Plans for 2024-25.

# PRI-CBO Convergence - Suggestions

- MoPR and MoRD should discuss the current stalemate in VPRP-GPDP integration and resolve outstanding issues.
  - Methodology should be re-examined
  - Is technology taking precedence over planning?
- A National Workshop on PRI-CBO Convergence was held in 2023-24
  - Attended by both the Secretaries, Additional Secretaries, Joint Secretaries, Deputy Secretaries
  - Implementation of the recommendations of the National Workshop is the key to effective implementation of convergence between SHGs and PRIs

# Summary of Recommendations

- High level monitoring forum at the national level (MoPR and MoRD)
- Joint advisory (MoPR and MoRD) on convergence
- Model State guidelines for SHG-PRI Convergence
- Special strategies for Schedule VI and 'State Act Areas'
- SHG system can play a critical role in localising SDGs around the nine themes (Sankalp) that MoPR has formulated for GPDP
- *Detailed recommendations can be submitted to the committee*