

# 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*