

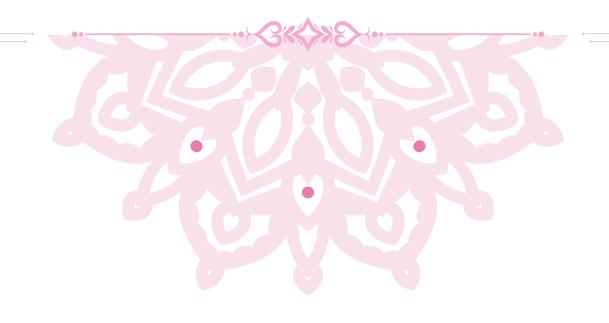






Report of the Advisory Committee on Transforming Women's Representation and Role in Panchayati Raj Institutions: Efforts to Eliminate Proxy Participation Annexures





Report of the Advisory Committee on Transforming Women's Representation and Role in Panchayati Raj Institutions: Efforts to Eliminate Proxy Participation

Annexures

VOLUME - II

FEBRUARY 5, 2025 ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN PRADHANS

List of Annexures

Annexures	Headings	Pg. No.
I	Order of the Hon'ble Supreme Court	3 - 4
II	O.M. of the Constitution of the Advisory Committee and its Terms of Reference and Annexures IIA, IIB & IIC.	5 - 16
III	Consultative Paper prepared by Shri. V.K. Bhasin, Former Law Secretary, GoI (Rtd.)	17 - 23
IV	Compilation of all State PR Departments' input on Consultative paper	24 - 63
V	Compilation of all State Commission for Women's input on Consultative paper	64 - 73
VI	Report on Experiences of Elected Women Representatives in India prepared by Kudumbashree and NIRD&PR.	74 - 189
VII	Questionnaire Shared with States for inputs and feedback	190
VIII	Detailed Report of Madhya Pradesh Workshop	191 - 200
IX	Detailed Report of Tripura Workshop	201 - 244
X	Detailed Report of Uttar Pradesh Workshop	245 - 252
XI	Detailed Report of Karnataka Workshop	253 - 255

ITEM NO.16 COURT NO.2 SECTION PIL-W

SUPREME COURT OF INDIA RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Writ Petition(s)(Civil) No(s). 615/2023

MUNDONA RURAL DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

Petitioner(s)

VERSUS

UNION OF INDIA

Respondent(s)

(FOR ADMISSION and IA No.113183/2023-EXEMPTION FROM FILING O.T.)

Date: 06-07-2023 This petition was called on for hearing today.

CORAM:

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SANJAY KISHAN KAUL HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SUDHANSHU DHULIA

For Petitioner(s) Ms. Swati Jindal Garg, AOR

Ms. Arushi Kulshrestha, Adv.

Mr. Sowmya China, Adv.

Ms. Sanskriti Shakuntala Gupta, Adv.

Ms. Shobha Gupta, Adv.

Ms. Nidhi Kumar, Adv.

For Respondent(s)

UPON hearing the counsel the Court made the following O R D E R

The petitioner-foundation seeks to flag the issue of the manner in which the 50% reservation of women in Panchayati Raj institution is working. It is not that the petition gives some solution to the problem flagged i.e. a proxy process being followed in election of these Pradhans. It is her submission that actually Signethroughen behind the women are operating the Panchayats. We did put

this scenario as you cannot preclude a section of women merely because they are willing to lend their shoulders to this scenario. Her submission is that a Committee be constituted to look into the problem. We believe this is not the function of this Court.

We feel that it is for the respondent-Ministry of Panchayati Raj to look into the grievance raised by the petitioner as to whether there is a better mechanism to implement the object of women reservation.

Thus we permit the petitioner to make a representation to the respondent which should naturally look into the issue flagged by the petitioner-foundation.

With the aforesaid observation, the petition stands disposed of.

Pending application(s) also stands disposed of.

(RASHMI DHYANI PANT)
COURT MASTER

(POONAM VAID)
COURT MASTER

(By email)

File No. N-11014/4/2023-PESA (Comp. No. 30103)
Government of India
Ministry of Panchayati Raj
Policy (PESA & PRI) Division

11th Floor, Jeevan Prakash Building 25, K.G. Marg, New Delhi-110001 Date: 19th Sept., 2023

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject: Setting up of an 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-reg.

A Public Interest Petition before the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, vide W.P. (Civil) No. 615/2023 highlighting the menace of Pradhan Pati, had been filed. After hearing the case, the Hon'ble Court, in its Order dated 06.07.2023, directed the Petitioner to seek remedy from the Ministry of Panchayati Raj in the first instance. Accordingly, the petitioner filed a representation dated 08.09.2023 before the MoPR vide which following two remedies have been proposed for MoPR for consideration-

- (i) To constitute a committee of experts to examine the issue of Women Pradhans being represented by the male members of their families and also examine other issues related thereto for making the reservation for women meaningful to promised by Part IX of the Constitution of India and also Panchayati Raj Acts passed by various State Govts. of India.
- (ii) Taking into account the report submitted by this committee Govt. of India may take further steps as may be considered necessary to implement the suggestions made by the Committee.
- Having regard to the Orders of Hon'ble Supreme Court, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj bas decided to constitute an Advisory Committee as under-

S. No.	Composition 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	Designation
1.	Sh. Sushil Kumar, Secretary (Rtd.), Ministry of Mines	Chairperson
2.	Sh. V.K. Bhasin Secretary (Rtd.), Ministry of Law & Justice	Member
3.	Ms. Nesha Oraon, Director, Dept of Panchayati Raj, Jharkhand	Member
4.	Dr. Anita Brandon Senior Consultant, UNFPA India.	Member
5.	Sh. Satish Kumar Singh, Senior Advisor, Centre for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ), New Delhi	Member
6.	Sh Sajith Sukumaran Chief Operating Officer, Kudumbashree	Member



7.	Dr. N. V. Madhuri Head, Centre for Gender Studies, NIRD&PR, Hyderabad	Member
8.	Dr. Mallinath Kalshetti Deputy Director General, YASHADA, Pune	Member
9.	Dr. P. P. Balan Consultant, Ministry of Panchayati Raj	Member
10.	Ms. Mamta Varma Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj	Member Convener

3. The Terms of Reference of the above said Committee are as under-

- (i) To suggest measures for eliminating proxy practices and ensuring good governance including effective implementation of the clauses under Article 243 of the Constitution of India which were inserted through 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 to increase women representation in the grass root democratic set up.
- (ii) To examine the legal framework to overcome the practices being followed in the Panchayats where women have been elected as Pradhan/Mukhiya/Chairperson for the name sake and their male family members are handling the day to day work of the Panchayat.
- (iii) To provide suggestions/recommendations for empowering Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) of Panchayats and insuring their participation in political process and decision making at the grass root level for effective implementation of reservation for EWRs in Panchayats.
- (iv) To suggest Capacity Building Needs of EWRs for empowering them with competencies for effective political leadership in PRIs including the Training programmes for their rights and duties, particularly the Laws passed by the States/Centre for the benefits of EWRs of Panchayats including relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure.
- (v) Assessing ability of EWRs to plan, prepare the agenda, mobilise participation and conduct the Meetings of Ward Sabha, Mahila Sabha, Gram Sabha and Panchayat General Body Meetings.
- (vi) To suggest IEC campaign for promoting change in social mindsets for eliminating Gender Based Discrimination and proxy practices
- (vii) To suggest measures for empowerment of rural women through intensifying Panchayat SHGs – CBOs Convergence.

4. Power of Committee:

- (i) Committee will engage with all stakeholders of this issue including civil organizations, associations, forums etc. for wider consultation.
- (ii) The Committee will also have power to co-opt other members and also the power to recommend any study relevant to the ToRs.



5. Timeline:

Committee will submit their recommendations to the Ministry within a period of 9 months from the date of its First meeting.

6. TA/DA entitlements of non-official members of the Committee:

The TA/DA entitlements of non-official members of the Committee would be governed in terms of Department of Expenditure's O.M. No. 19047/1/2016-E.IV dated 14.09.2017 (copy enclosed).

7. Payment of sitting fee to the non-official members of the Committee:

The payment of sitting fee to the non-official members of the Committee would be governed in terms of Department of Expenditure's O.M. No. 19047/10/2016-E-IV dated 12.04.2017 (copy enclosed).

8. Manpower & Infrastructure:

The manpower, infrastructure and the budget will be provided to the Committee in terms of GFR, DFPR and other financial instructions issued by the Ministry of Finance from time to time.

9. This issues with the approval of Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj.

Encl: As above

(Ajay Kumar)

Under Secretary to the Government of India Ph- 011-23356124

Email: ajay.k42@nic.in

Copy to:

All members of the Committee.

Copy, for information, to:

- (i) PS to Hon'ble Minister of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj
- (i) PS to Hon'ble Minister of State for Panchayati Raj
- (iii) Sr.PPS to Secretary (Panchayati Raj)
- (iv) Sr.PPS to Additional Secretary (Panchayati Raj)

F.No. 19047/1/2016-E.IV Government of India Ministry of Finance Department of Expenditure

> North Block, New Delhi. Dated: 14.09.2017

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject: TA/DA entitlements of Non-officials of Committees/Boards/Panels etc.

The undersigned is directed to state that the issues related to payment of TA/DA to Non-officials of Committees/ Boards/ Panels etc. have been examined in D/o Expenditure. It has been decided that TA/DA entitlement of Non-officials may be regulated by the Administrative Ministries/ Departments in the following manner:-

(I) Retired Govt, officials nominated as Non-official in the Committees/Boards/Panels etc. :

TA/DA entitlement of these Non-officials will be same as per their entitlement at the time of retirement as per revised rates mentioned in this Department's O.M. No.19030/01/2017-E.IV dated 13.07.2017.

(II) Persons from various fields nominated as Non-official in Committees/Boards/ Panels etc. :

TA/DA entitlement of these Non-official will be same as admissible to officers in Pay level-11 (Pre-revised Grade Pay of Rs.6600/-) in the Pay Matrix. TA/DA Entitlements will be as under:-

- i) Travel entitlement within the country Economy class by Air or AC-II by train.
- ii) Reimbursement for hotel accommodation/guest house of up to Rs.2250/- per day.
- iii) Reimbursement of non-AC taxi charges of up to Rs.338/- per day for travel within the city.
- iv) Reimbursement of food bills not exceeding Rs.900/- per day.

(III) Eminent personalities nominated as Non-official in the Committees/Boards/Panels:

TA/DA entitlement of these Non-officials will be same as admissible to officers in Pay level 14 (pre-revised Grade pay Rs.10,000/-) in the Pay Matrix. TA/DA Entitlements will be as under:

- i) Regarding travel entitlement of these Non-officials, Secretary in the Administrative Ministry, in consultation with the FA, may allow eminent personalities who are Non-officials in the Committees/Boards/Panels etc., to travel in Executive class in the Domestic airlines within the country subject to the following conditions:-
 - Where a Non-official is or was entitled to travel by air by Executive class under the rules of the organization to which he belongs or might have belonged before retirement.
 - b) Where the Administrative Ministry is satisfied that the travel by Executive class by air is the customary mode of travel by the Non-official concerned in respect of journeys unconnected with the performances of Govt. duty.
- ii) Reimbursement for hotel accommodation/guest house of up to Rs.7500/- per day.
- iii) Reimbursement of AC taxi charges as per actual for travel within the city.
- iv) Reimbursement of food bills not exceeding Rs.1200/- per day.

Contd..2/-

- 2 In respect of Non-officials who are local, Mileage Allowance at the following rates will be admissible:
 - i) For retired Government officers- TA/DA as per their entitlement at the time of retirement as per revised rates mentioned in this Department's O.M. No.19030/01/2017-E.IV dated 13.07.2017.
 - ii) Other Non-officials nominated from various fields Reimbursement of non-AC taxi charges of up to Rs.338/- per day for travel within the city.
 - iii) For eminent personalities nominated as Non-officials Reimbursement of AC taxi charges as per actual for travel within the city.
- 3. The TA/DA entitlements mentioned in Para I above will be subject to the following conditions:-
 - These TA/DA entitlements will be applicable in case of Non-officials coming from outside. Local Non-officials will not be entitled for TA/DA.
 - ii) Local Non-officials will be entitled for Mileage Allowance only.
 - iii) Cases seeking deviation from the above entitlements may be referred to M/o Finance giving full justification for seeking deviation.
- 4. These instructions will be effective from the date of issue of this O.M.
- 5. This is issued with the approval of Finance Minister.

(Nirmala Dev) Deputy Secretary (EG) Telefax. 23093276

- 1. Secretaries of all Ministries/ Departments (as per standard list)
- 2. Financial Advisors of all Ministries/ Departments as per standard list

No.19047/10/2016-E-IV Government of India Ministry of Finance Department of Expenditure

North Block, New Delhi. Dated: 12.04.2017

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject: Delegation of powers to Ministries/ Departments for payment of Sitting Fee in respect of Non-officials of Committees/ Panels/ Boards etc.

The undersigned is directed to state that the issues related to payment of Sitting Fee to Non-officials of Committees/Panels/Boards etc. have been examined in D/o Expenditure. It has been decided that Administrative Secretaries of the Ministries/Departments may decide the Sitting Fee in respect of Non-officials of Committees/Panels/Boards etc. in consultation with their Financial Advisors and with the approval of their Ministers.

- 2. While considering the proposals for payment of Sitting Fee to Non-officials, the Ministries/Departments are directed to keep in view the following instructions/guidelines:-
- 2.1. <u>Categorisation of Committees:</u> For the purpose of payment of Sitting Fee, Committees/Boards/panels are categorized into following three categories:-
 - (i) High Level Committee: In terms of Cabinet Secretariat Circular No. 1/16/1/2000-Cab. dated 15.04.2002, a High Level Committee is a Committee set up with the approval of Hon'ble Prime Minister through the Cabinet Secretary and presided over by a high ranking dignitary e.g. a Minister, a Judge of the Supreme Court of India, a Vice-Chancellor etc. including prominent persons in public life as Members.
 - (ii) Technical or Expert Committee: A Technical or Expert Committee is a Committee constituted to discharge functions as prescribed under Acts/Rules/Subordinate legislation on the subject. Such Committee is to be set up with the approval of the Minister of the concerned Ministry. In case any Member of Parliament is included in the Committee, the prior approval of Prime Minister to their inclusion is to be obtained in terms of Cabinet Secretariat Circular No.1/16/1/2000-Cab. dated 15.04.2002.
 - (iii) Other Committees: All other Committees will be covered under this category. These Committees will be constituted with the approval of the Administrative Secretary or Minister.
- 2.2 <u>Definition of a Non-official</u>: For the purpose of grant of Sitting Fee only such persons are to be considered as Non-officials who are not employed in any institution/ organisation/body funded by the Central Government.

- 3. Rates of Sitting Fee: On the basis of categorisation of Committees viz. High Level Committee, Technical or Expert Committee and Other Committees, The Ministries/Departments shall ensure that the maximum rates of Sitting Fee to be paid to Non-official Chairman/ Members will not be more than the following:-
 - (i) High Level Committee : Not more than Rs.10,000/- per day of Sitting.
 - (ii) Technical or Expert Committee: Not more than Rs.6000/- per day of Sitting.
 - (iii) Other Committees : Not more than Rs.4000/- per day of Sitting.
- 4. For arriving at the rates of the Sitting Fee to Non-official Chairman and Members of the Committees/Boards/Panels, the Ministries/Department shall observe the following conditions:
 - i. While considering the amount of Sitting Fee, the Ministries/Departments have to keep in view facts such as nature and scope of the Committee, importance of the subject assigned to the Committee, category of the Committee (i.e. High level Committee, Technical or Expert Committee or other Committee), level/ status of Chairperson/ Members, duration of the Committee, frequency of meetings, Terms of Reference of the Committee etc.
 - ii. In no case, the ceiling should exceed 10 meetings in a month in respect of all categories of Committees viz. High Level, Technical or Expert Committees and Other Committee. It is presumed that such committees are constituted for a limited duration specified in the order.
 - iii. It is clarified that the Govt. employees nominated to such Committees/ Boards/ Panels etc. will not be entitled to Sitting Fee.
 - iv. Cases seeking deviation from the above norms may be referred to M/o Finance giving full justification for seeking deviation.
 - 3. These instructions will be effective from the date of issue of this O.M.

This is issued with the approval of Finance Minister.

(Nírmala Dev) Deputy Secretary to the Government of India Telefax. 23093276

1. Secretaries of all Ministries/ Department (as per standard list).

2. Financial Advisers of all Ministries/ Departments (as per standard list).

3. Cabinet Secretariat - For information.

(By email)

No. N-l1014/4/2023-PESA (Comp. No. 30103)
Government of India
Ministry of Panchayati Raj
Policy (PESA & PRI) Division

11th Floor, Jeevan Prakash Building 25, K.G. Marg, New Delhi - 110001 Date: 13 April, 2024

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject: Setting up of an 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 – (*Co-opting two members in the Committee*)-reg.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj, in pursuance of the Order dated 06.07.2023 of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in W.P. (Civil) No. 615/2023, has constituted an Advisory Committee on 19.09.2023 (vide O.M. of even number dated 19.09.2023 placed at Annexure-I), under the Chairmanship of Shri Sushil Kumar, Secretary to the Govt. of India (Rtd.), to examine the issue of Women Pradhans being represented by the male members of their families and also to examine other issues related thereto.

- 2. The Advisory Committee, vide para-4 (ii) of the above said O.M. dated 19.09.2023, is empowered to co-opt other members in the Committee.
- 3. The Advisory Committee, in its 2nd meeting held on 22.03.2024 (Minutes of the meeting are placed at **Annexure-II**), has decided that, for wider consultation, one representative each from 'National Commission for Women' (NCW) and 'National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), Ministry of Rural Development' may be co-opted in the Committee. MoPR may request these two organisations to nominate an officer to function as a co-opted member of the Committee.
- 4. This Ministry had requested these organisations to nominate their officers to function as a co-opted member of the Committee. In response, these organisations have nominated their officers.
- 5. Therefore, the Advisory Committee, in pursuance of para-4 (ii) of the above said O.M. dated 19.09.2023, co-opts following two members in the Committee with immediate effect, as under-

S. No.	Name of the Member	Designation
1	Ms. Meenakshi Negi	Co-opted
1.	Member-Secretary, National Commission for Women	Member
2.	Ms. Smriti Sharan Joint Secretary, NRLM, Ministry of Rural Development	Co-opted Member

6. The Terms of Reference and other conditions, prescribed in the above-mentioned O.M. dated 19.09.2023, will also be applicable, with immediate effect, to the co-opted members of the Advisory Committee.

Encl: As Above (Annexure-I & Annexure-II)

(Ajay Kumar)

Under Secretary to the Government of India

Ph- 011 23356124

Email: ajay.k42@nic.in

To,

(1) Ms. Meenakshi Negi

Member-Secretary

National Commission for Women

Plot-21, Jasola Institutional Area, New Delhi - 110025

(email ID: ms-ncw@nic.in,)

(2) Ms. Smriti Sharan

Joint Secretary

National Rural Livelihoods Mission

Ministry of Rural Development, Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi - 110001

(email ID: jsrl1-mord@nic.in)

Copy, for information, to:

- (i) Members of the Advisory Committee
- (ii) Sr.PPS to Secretary (Panchayati Raj)/Additional Secretary (Panchayati Raj)

No. N-11014/4/2023-PESA (Comp. No. 30103)
Government of India
Ministry of Panchayati Raj
Policy (PESA & PRI) Division

11th Floor, Jeevan Prakash Building 25, K.G. Marg, New Delhi - 110001 Date: 15th October, 2024

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject: Co-option of three members in 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 - reg.

Ministry of Panchayati Raj, in pursuance of the Order dated 06.07.2023 of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in W.P. (Civil) No. 615/2023, has constituted an Advisory Committee, under the Chairmanship of Shri Sushil Kumar, Secretary to the Govt. of India (Rtd.), on 19.09.2023 (vide O.M. of even number dated 19.09.2023 and read with O.M. of even number dated 19.04.2024 and 16.05.2024 placed at Annexures-I, II and III), to examine the issue of Women Pradhans being represented by the male members of their families and also to examine other issues related thereto.

- 2. Advisory Committee, vide para-4 (ii) of O.M. no. N-11014/4/2023-PESA dated 19.09.2023 is empowered to co-opt other members in the Committee.
- 3. Accordingly, in the 3rd Meeting of the Advisory Committee Meeting, the Chairman of the Committee has decided to co-opt Shri. Mayank Kharbanda, Consultant, MoPR as a member of this Committee (MoM enclosed in Annexure IV). The Chairman of this Committee has also desired to integrate UNICEF's knowledge and best practices in strengthening the approach of the Advisory Committee to address the issue of proxy women participation in PRIs in the following two key areas:
 - (i) Social Policy and Social Protection; and
 - (ii) ICT and Digital Innovation
- 4. Therefore, the following three members may be co-opted in the Advisory Committee with immediate effect as under:

Sl. No.	Name of the Member	Designation		
1	Ms. Hyun Hee Ban, Chief, Social Policy and Social Protection, UNICEF-India	Invitee Member		
2	Mr. Gibson Michael Riungu, Chief, CT and Digital Innovation, UNICEF- India	Invitee Member		
3	Mr. Mayank Kharbanda, Consultant, MoPR	Co-opted Member		

5. The Terms of Reference and other conditions, prescribed in the O.M. of even number dated 19.09.2023, will also be applicable, with immediate effect, to the newly invitee/co-opted members of the Advisory Committee.

Encl: As Above

(Ajay Kumar)

Under Secretary to the Government of India

Ph - 011 23356124

Email: ajay.k42@nic.in

To,

- i. Ms. Hyun Hee Ban, Chief, Social Policy and Social Protection, UNICEF-India
- ii. Mr. Gibson Michael Riungu, Chief, CT and Digital Innovation, UNICEF-India
- iii. Mr. Mayank Kharbanda, Consultant, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, GoI

Copy to:

- i. Members of the Advisory Committee, for information.
- ii. Sr.PPS/PPS to Secretary /Joint Secretary (MV), (Panchayati Raj), for information.

185692/2024/POLICY

(By email)

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

> 11th Floor, Jeevan Prakash Building 25, K.G. Marg, New Delhi - 110001 Date: 16th May, 2024

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject: 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 - reg.

In partial modification of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj's O.M. of even number dated 19th September, 2023 (*copy attached*) on the subject mentioned above, the undersigned is directed to say that the tenure of this Advisory Committee has been extended to enable the Final Report of the Committee to be submitted by 18th January, 2025.

2. This issue with the approval of the Competent Authority.

Encl: As above

Under Secretary to the Government of India Ph- 011-23356124

Email: ajay.k42@nic.in

To

All Members of the Advisory Committee

Copy to

Sr. PPS to SPR/Sr. PPS to AS (PR)

CONSULTATIVE PAPER ON THE ISSUE OF WOMEN PRADHANS/WOMEN SARPANCHES BEING REPRESENTED BY THE MALE MEMBERS OF THEIR FAMILIES AND ALSO EXAMINE OTHER ISSUES RELATED THERETO.

1.0 Reservation of Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions:

Attention is invited to paragraph 2 of the Statement of Objects and Reasons appended to the Constitution (Seventy-second Amendment) Bill, 1991 which was enacted as the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992 which reads as under:

"2. Article 40 of the Constitution which enshrines one of the Directive Principles of State Policy which lays down that the State shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government. In the light of the experience in the last forty years and in view of the short-comings which have been observed, it is considered that there is an imperative need to enshrine in the Constitution certain basic and essential features of Panchayati Raj Institutions to impart certainty, continuity and strength to them."

[Refer to Paragraph 2 of the Statement of Objects and Reasons appended to the Constitution (Seventy-second Amendment) Bill, 1991 which was enacted as the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992, annexed as Annexure-1 to this Consultative paper]

2.0. In view of above, Accordingly, a new PART IX relating to Panchayats was inserted in the Constitution inter alia to provide for-

- (a) Gram Sabha in a village or group of villages;
- (b) Constitution of Panchayats at village and other level or levels;
- (c) Direct elections to all seats in Panchayats at the village and intermediate level, if any, and to the offices of Chairpersons of Panchayats at such levels;
- (d) Reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population for membership of Panchayats and office of Chairpersons in Panchayats at each level;
- (e) Reservation of not less than one-third of the seats for women;

However not less than one-third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women. It is also provided that the number of offices reserved under this clause shall be allotted by rotation to different Panchayats at each level

- (f) Fixing tenure of 5 years for Panchayats and holding elections within a period of 6 months in the event of supersession of any Panchayat;
- (g) Disqualifications for membership of Panchayats;
- (h) devolution by the State Legislature of powers and responsibilities upon the Panchayats with respect to the preparation of plans for economic developments and social justice and for the implementation of development schemes;

- (i) Sound finance of the Panchayats by securing authorisation from State Legislatures for grants-in-aid to the Panchayats from the Consolidated Fund of the State,
- (j) Assignment to, or appropriation by, the Panchayats of the revenues of designated taxes, duties, tolls and fees;
- (k) Setting up of a Finance Commission within one year of the proposed amendment and thereafter every 5 years to review the financial position of Panchayats;
- (l) Auditing of accounts of the Panchayats;
- (m) Powers of State Legislatures to make provisions with respect to elections to Panchayats under the superintendence, direction and control of the chief electoral officer of the State;
- (n) Application of the provisions of the said Part to Union territories; excluding certain States and areas from the application of the provisions of the said Part; continuance of existing laws and Panchayats until one year from the commencement of the proposed amendment and barring interference by courts in electoral matters relating to.

Panchayats

- 2.1. Copy of the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992 is annexed as Annexure-2 to this Consultative paper.
- 3.0. In pursuance of the above, all the States and Union territories have enacted Panchayat Acts for their States and Union territories. Out of all such States and Union territories, 21 States have made 50% reservations for women and the remaining States have made 50% reservations for women.

4.0 Need For This Consultation Paper:

- 4.1. A Petitioner Mundona Rural Development Foundation, by a Writ Petition (Civil) No(s). 615/2023 in which the Union of India was made a Respondent, flagged the issue of the manner in which the 50% reservation of women in Panchayati Raj institution is working. Their submission in the above Writ petition before the Hon'ble Supreme Court was that actually, the men behind the women are operating the Panchayats. Hon'ble Supreme Court inter-alia observed "as to what can judicial intervention do in this scenario as you cannot preclude a section of women merely because they are willing to lend their shoulders to this scenario".
- 4.2. The Respondent submitted in the above Writ petition before the Hon'ble Supreme Court that a Committee be constituted to look into the problem.
- 4.3. Hon'ble Supreme Court in its Order in the above writ petition felt that it is for the Respondent-Ministry of Panchayati Raj to look into the grievance raised by the petitioner as to whether there is a better mechanism to implement the object of women reservation and permitted the petitioner to make a representation to the Respondent which should naturally look into the issue flagged by the petitioner-foundation.

- 4.4. The Petitioner made a representation dated 08/09/2023 to the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, inter alia vide which the following two remedies have been proposed for MoPR for consideration-
 - (i) To constitute a committee of experts to examine the issue of Women Pradhans being represented by the male members of their families and also examine other issues related thereto for making the reservation for women meaningful to promised by Part IX of the Constitution of India and also Panchayati Raj Acts passed by various State Govts. of India.
 - (ii) Taking into account the report submitted by this committee Govt. of India may take further steps as may be considered necessary to implement the suggestions made by the Committee
- 4.5. The copy of the Order dated 06-07-2023 of the Hon'ble Supreme Court is annexed as **Annexure-3** to this Consultative Paper.

5.0 Setting up of an 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.

In view of the above, the Government of India in the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has constituted, by its Office Memorandum NO. N-110141412023-PESA (Comp. No. 30103) an Advisory Committee. [Copy of the above Office Order is annexed as Annexure-4 to this Consultative Paper].

5.1. The above Advisory Committee, in its First meeting held on 19th October 2023 at New Delhi, inter alia, decided to solicit the views/suggestions of the State Governments and Union Territories and other stakeholders on the subject, in particular on the following issues relating to Panchayats in the respective States, namely:-

(A) IDENTIFICATION AND RECORDS OF PANCHAYATS WHERE AT SAPANCHES ACT THROUGH PROXY:

Sufficiency of mechanism/establishment for recording data at a more micro level so that number of Panchayats, where women only act as a proxy, can be identified for taking suitable measures for eliminating proxy in such panchayats.

(B) COLLECTION AND RECORDING DATA OF THE QUALITATIVE DATA ON THE ASPECTS OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVE AT PANCHAYAT:

Sufficiency of mechanism for recording data of qualitative data on the aspects of active participation of elected women representatives at panchayat including the utilization of the decision-making functionality provided to them.

(C) ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES FOR ELIMINATING PROXY PRACTICES ADOPTED IN RELATION OF ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVE:

Additional measures for eliminating proxy practices adopted in relation to elected women representatives because it is reported that certain women got elected into the panchayats, but they acted merely as the mouthpiece of their male family members. This indicates that there could be the possibility of on-roll women participation to be higher than what it actually exists on the ground.

(D) LEGAL MEASURES I.E. AMENDMENTS, IF ANY, REQUIRED IN THE EXISTING LEGAL FRAMEWORK REQUIRED FOR ELIMINATING PROXY PRACTICES ADOPTED IN RELATION TO ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES:

Amendment, if any, in the legal framework required to overcome the practices being followed in the Panchayats where women have been elected as Pradhan/{Mukhiya/Chairperson for the namesake and their male family members are handling the day-to-day work of the Panchayat.

(E) IMPLEMENTATION OF EFFECTIVE RESERVATION FOR ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVE IN PANCHAYATS.:

Measures for empowering elected women representatives of Panchayats and ensuring their participation in the political process and decision-making at the grassroots level for effective implementation of reservation for elected women representatives in Panchayats.

(F) INTRODUCTION/STRENGTHING OF EXISTING TRAINING PROGRAMMES TO MAKE THE ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVE AWARE FOR THEIR POWERS AND DUTIES UNDER THE AFORESAID PROVISIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION AND PANCHAYAT ACTS:

Evaluation of Adequacy of the existing training programmes (including the intervals at which such training programmes are conducted, the distance for travelling to training centres for such training, duration of training period etc) or introduction of new training programmes elected women representative for to make the elected women representative aware for their powers and duties under the aforesaid provisions of Constitution and Panchayat Acts.

(G) CAPACITY BUILDING OF ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVE:

Measures required for capacity building of elected women representatives for empowering them with competencies for effective political leadership in Panchayats,

(H) INTERACTION AMONGST ENLIGHTENED RURAL ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES AND ILLITERATE ELECTED WOMEN LEADERS:

Promotion and encouragement of interaction amongst enlightened rural elected women representatives and illiterate elected women leaders. Inter alia –

- (i) by taking out elected women representatives to the urban areas and their interaction with educated urban elected women representatives;
- (ii) increasing emphasis on ensuring the participation of women in the meetings of panchayat at all the levels so as to promote and enhance their leadership qualities and self-confidence so as to it help them to perform better in panchayat to ensure their participation in the meetings.

(I) INTRODUCTION OF INCENTIVE SCHEMES FOR PANCHAYATS:

Feasibility of introduction of incentives in ensuring the participation of elected representatives in decision-making for successfully implementing the developmental scheme by publicizing their leadership qualities and honouring them in public meetings.

(J) INTRODUCTION OF INCENTIVES BY WAY OF HONORARIUM FOR WOMEN SARPANCHES/ WOMEN PRADHANS:

Feasibility of introduction of award of honorarium at public functions to Women Sarpanches/ Women Pradhans for the efficient conduct of meeting of panchayats.

(K). USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY FOR ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVE OF PANCHAYATS:

In the context of Digital India, utilizing digital technology for elected women representatives of Panchayats to be actively involved in their own self and village development.

(L) COMPULSORY AVAILABILITY OF BROADBAND TO EVERY VILLAGE:

Measures/steps for compulsory availability of broadband to every village so as to digitalisation of Panchayat functions and meetings.

(M) PROVISION OF MOBILE PHONE TO EVERY WOMEN SARPANCHES/WOMEN PRADHANS:

Feasibility of making provision for providing mobile phone once in three years to every Women Sarpanches/ Women Pradhans.

(N) CO-ORDINATION AMONGST ALL PANCHAYATS IN EVERY DISTRICT:

Establishing a mechanism of co-ordination all Panchayats in every District on matters relating to conduct of meetings of panchayat in each village and development activities in each village of Panchayats.

(O) VIDEO RECORDING OF MEETINGS OF PANCHAYATS AND PUTTING THEM IN PUBLIC DOMAIN:

Feasibility and implementing of Video recording of meetings of Panchayats and uploading the same on the District website or other appropriate websites of the competent authority.

(P) AVAILIABILITY OF LITERATURE IN LOCAL LANGUAGE CONTAINING POWERS AND FUNCTIONS PANCHAYAT UNDER LAW RELATING TO PANCHAYAT:

Distribution of literature in the local language containing the various provisions of relating to Panchayat under Panchayat law so as to educate the elected women representatives about their powers and functions.

(Q) PUNITIVE MEASURES FOR PERSONS ACTING AS PROXY FOR ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES:

Feasibility of punitive measures for husbands or other members of the family of elected women representatives or any other person (not being a person authorized to act as proxy under any law for the time being in force) acting their proxy.

(R) ENHANCEMENT OF CAPACITY OF SARPANCHES TO ASSUME HIGHER RESPONSIBILITY AS LOCAL LEGISLATORS:

Mechanism for systematic awareness for enhancing rural women's capacity to take up their new responsibility as local legislators.

(S) TRAINING TO ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVE TO INTERFACE WITH OTHER LAYERS OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNANCE WITHIN THE STATE:

Imparting training to elected women representatives so as to develop leadership qualities and also to train them, find ways and means to interface with other layers of local self-governance within the State and claim the Panchayat's entitlements.

(T) TRAINING IN RELATION TO ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS RELATING TO PANCHAYATS:

Imparting special training for enhancing the ability of elected women representatives-

- (i) To plan, and prepare the agenda of Panchayat meetings,
- (ii) Mobilise and encourage the participation of other elected women representatives;
- (iii) Conduct the Meetings of \Yard Sabha, Mahila Sabha, Gram Sabha and Panchayat General Body Meetings.

(U) ROLE/RESPONSIBILITY OF MEMBERS OF LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES AND MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT IN RELATION OF PANCHAYATS SITUATE IN THEIR CONSTITUTES:

Defining the role of Members of Legislative Assemblies and Members of Parliament and their responsibility in capacity building and leadership qualities of Women Sarpanches/ Women Pradhans in relation to panchayats situated in their constituency and discharge of functions by the elected women Representatives in Panchayats and Women Sarpanches Women Pradhans.

(V) INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN FOR ELIMINATING GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION AND PROXY PRACTICES:

Suggesting or creating new mechanisms, as the case may be, for information, education and communication campaigns for promoting change in social mindsets for eliminating Gender-Based Discrimination and proxy practices.

(W) CONVERGENCE AMONGST PANCHAYATS, SELF-HELP GROUPS AND COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANISATIONS:

Evolving measures for empowerment of rural women through intensifying Convergence amongst Panchayats, Self Help Groups and Community-Based Organisations.

(X) USE OF DOOR DARSHAN CHANNEL AND SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CREATING AWARENESS AMONGST ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES:

Feasibility of using Door Darshan Television channel and social media such as YouTube etc. for promoting the functioning of Panchayat meetings, powers and functions of Sapa Women Sarpanches/ Women Pradhans and legal provisions relating to Panchayats and other elected women representatives and uploading live meetings of Panchayats.

(Y) CREATING NETWORK AMONGST NETWORKS OF ALL PANCHAYATS:

Creating network amongst Networks of all Panchayats for interaction amongst elected women representatives.

(Z) PERIODIC HOLDING OF MEETING OF WOMEN SARPANCHES/WOMEN PRADHANS TO BE PRESIDED BY INCHARGE OF CONCERNED DISTRICT/ CONCERNED CHIEF SECRETARY/ CONCERNED CHIEF MINISTER OF THE CONCERNED STATE AND SOLICITING PRESENCE ONCE A YEAR OF HON'BLE PRIME MINISTER IN SUCH ANNUAL MEETING:

Feasibility of holding of meeting of-

- (i) All Sarpanches in a District at intervals of end of every quarter to be presided by the Administrative in-charge of a District,
- (ii) All Sarpanches in all Districts of a State at interval of six months to be presided by the Chief Secretary of the State;
- (iii) All Sarpanches in all Districts of a State to be convened annually to be presided by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of that State where at Hon'ble Prime Minister or in Union Minister In charge of Panchayat Ministry be the Chief Guest in such meetings.

(ZA) TENURE OF WOMEN SARPANCHES/ WOMEN PRADHANS:

Feasibility of limiting tenure of a woman elected as Women Sarpanches/ Women Pradhans for two terms so as to give opportunity to other women to be elected as Women Sarpanches/ Women Pradhans of Panchayat.

(ZB) ANY OTHER SUGGESTION:

Any other suggestion which would strengthen Panchayat Institutions, encourage elected women participation in Panchayat proceedings and eliminate the practice of proxy for elected women representatives and Women Sarpanches/ Women Pradhans.

Views and Suggestions from State Panchayati Raj Departments

\neg	Contonto of	A 1 0	· · · · · ·			CITIA	TTADA	I IIIMACIIAI	TANANTI O		IZ A DALATTA	LZED A
(A)	Contents of Consultative Paper	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJA- RAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & Kashmir	JHARKHAND	KARNATA- KA	KERA LA
-	IDENTIFICA-	It seems that	Clause (3) of Article	Nil	There are	Nil	Nil	No such incident	The present	the Consultative	Video record-	
- 1	TION AND		243-D of the Consti-	INII	87 Village	1/11	1111	of proxy has been		Paper drafted	ing of GP	1111
	RECORDS OF	no observed	tution of India ensures		Panchayats			reported. However,	recording data at		general body	
	PANCHAYATS		participation of women		in which			there is need to de-	the micro-level	Committee	meetings,	
	WHERE AT	among the	in Panchayat Raj Insti-		Sarpanchas			l	leave much to be	ı	Gram Sabhas,	
	SAPANCHES	Panchayats in	tutions by mandating		are women.			to identify such		Women Prad-	Ward Sabhas	
		this Union	not less than one-third		It is further			panchayat where	from proper	han is in line	can be made	
	PROXY:		reservation for women.		informed			women only act as	identification	with the present	mandatory	
ľ	I KOA I.	Territory so rar	In Andhra Pradesh,		that women			a proxy.	of Panchayats	scenario. This	to identify	
- 1			according to the pro-		Sarpanchas			a proxy.	where women	will develop bet-	where elected	
- 1			visions of the Andhra		do not act				act as proxies.	ter mechanism	women only	
- 1			Pradesh Panchayat Raj		as proxy				We felt it neces-	in dealing with	act through	
- 1			Act and instructions is-		as no such				sary that a cen-	other issues re-	proxy.	
- 1			sued by the Government		incident has				tralized digital	lated to Women	proxy.	
- 1			of Andhra Pradesh,		been report-				platform must be			
- 1			most of the Women Sar-		ed to this				developed and	ever, detailed		
- 1			panches are attending		Directorate.				implemented for			
- 1			day-to-day adminis-		Directorate.				recording and	and question-		
- 1			tration and conducting							naire needs to		
- 1			meetings statutorily and						data. it must	be developed		
- 1			efficiently.						be available at	so that further		
- 1			omerenci).						the block level	engagement in		
- 1			The Provisions of APPR						for real-time	this regard can		
- 1			Act, 1994 provides	1					updating and	be adopted.	1	
- 1			the responsibility of	I					validation ton		I	
			conducting the Gram	I					enable accurate		I	
- 1			Panchayat Meeangs at	1					tracking and re-		1	
- 1			least once in a month to	1					medial action in		1	
			the Sarpanch.	I					respect of proxy		I	
			·	I					practices. Eg:		I	
			According to G.O.Ms.						live streaming of			
			No.227 PR&RD Depart-						Gram Sabhas.			
			ment Dt:13.04.1995,									
			Gram Panchayats shall									l
			conduct meeting at									
			least once in a month.									
			Implementation of this									
			Govemment order is									
- 1			very useful to involve all									
- 1			Elected Representatives									
			in conducting the Gram									
			Panchayat meeting,									
			based on which the									
			capabilities of each Sar-									
			panch can be assessed									
			and thereby detect the									
			cases where proxies are									l
			engaged.									
			0 011 10									l
			Gram Sabha and Gram									
			Panchayat meetings are									l
- [recorded and uploaded								1	
			in egramswaraj website which can be considered	I							I	
			as an online mechanism	I							I	
			established to record the	I							I	
- [data which shows that								1	
			Women Sarpanches are	I							I	
- 1			rendering their duties									
			independently without	I							I	
			the support of proxy								1	1
			duly coordinating with	I							I	
			the field functionaries of	I							I	
			Panchayat Raj Depart-	I							I	
			ment.	I							I	
				1							1	
			In Andhra Pradesh, the	I							I	
			incidents of hus-	I							I	
			bands and relatives of	I							I	
			Women Representatives	1							1	
			participating in Gram	1							1	
			Panchayat Adminis-	I							I	
			tration are tracked and	I							I	
			brought to the notice of	1							1	
			inspecting authorities	1							1	
			to take necessary steps	I							I	
- 1				I	I	ı I		I	l	I	I	I
			for discouraging such	l		!		l		ı	1	
			for discouraging such practices.									

MADHYA Pradesh	MANIPUR	MEGHALAYA	MIZORUM	ODIS- HA	RAJAS- THAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman	NAGA LAND
	The State is ready to follow and adopt any suggestion issued by the MoPR or Advisory Committee.	the Panchayati Raj system does not apply to the State of Meghalaya. Since the State falls under the Sixth Schedule Area. Hence the information in respect of Com- munity and Rural Development Department, Government of Meghalaya may please be treated as 'NIL'.	MIZORUM There are no records of Village Councils where at Sarpanches act through proxy			the State of Sikkim fully agrees to the consultative paper drafted by the Advisory Committee on the issues of Women Pradhan and that the state has no suggestions as such.		Nil	Nil	"Presently West Bengal manages portal (https://wbpms. in/) based data base of the PRI body members covering differ- ent information including educational qualification, profession, previous back ground, previous exposure as Pradhan or oth- erwise in any tier etc. at micro	and Daman & Diu The Women Sarpanches take active participation in all Gram Panchayat related activi- ties and make decisions independently after discuss- ing with all the Ward members or Committee members. Further, No Male family members of Women Prad- han/Women Sarpanches represent	Nil

COLLECTION AND RECORD- ING DATA OD THE QUALITA- TIVE DATA ON THE ASPECTS OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF ELECTED WOMEN REPRE-	Elected Women Representative for the post	«1 In An II D 1 1		GOA	RAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & KASHMIR	JHARKHAND	KARNATA- KA	KE L
AND RECORD- ING DATA OF THE QUALITA- TIVE DATA ON THE ASPECTS OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF ELECTED	Representative	"1. In Andhra Pradesh,	Nil	There are	Nil	Nil	As proposed.	The existing	i e	"Karnataka	N
ING DATA OF THE QUALITA- TIVE DATA ON THE ASPECTS OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF ELECTED			1,111		l ''''	1,111	I Proposed.		I		1 '
THE QUALITA- TIVE DATA ON THE ASPECTS OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF ELECTED	Ifor the post	there are 85,593 of		191 Village	l		I	approaches	I	has initiated	ı
THE QUALITA- TIVE DATA ON THE ASPECTS OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF ELECTED		women Elected Repre-	I	Panchayats				for collecting	l	the process	ı
TIVE DATA ON THE ASPECTS OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF ELECTED		sentatives (ERs) in PRIs		,					l	, .	
THE ASPECTS OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF ELECTED	of Pradhan	` ′		in the State	I		I	qualitative	I	of biometric	1
OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF ELECTED	of the Gram	out of total number		of Goa and				information on	l	capturing	
OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF ELECTED		i.e., 1,54,414 as shown		in these 191				the question of	l	of the	
PARTICIPATION OF ELECTED									l	1	
OF ELECTED	actively leading	below:		Village Pan-				active involve-	l	acceptance	
OF ELECTED	the Gram	Women Sarpanches in		chayats 87				ment of elected	l	of decisions	
									l		
WOMEN REPRE-		the State: 7434		Sarpanchas				women repre-	l	by all ERs of	
	other meetings	Women WArd Members		and 106 Dy.				sentatives are	l	Panchayats.	
									l	,	
SENTATIVE AT	1	in the State: 72177	I	Sarpanchas				non-satisfactory.	l	Sitting Fees	
PANCHAYAT:	Panchayat.	Women MPPs in the		are women				The Commit-	l	of members	
	Also, the other	State: 414	I	as on date;				tee strongly	l	has also been	l
			I	as on date,					l		l
	elected women	Women MPTcs in the	I					recommends	l	increased.	l
	representatives	State: 5627						undertaking	l	Their actual	l
			I					a comprehen-	l	participation	l
		Women ZP Chairper-							l		l
	various com-	sons in the State: 7						sive survey	l	in the discus-	l
	mittees formed	Women ZPTcs in the						and feedback	l	sions could	l
	1								l		
	/constituted at	State: 355			I		I	mechanism to	I	be captured	1
	Panchayat level	l .			I		I	obtain firsthand	I	if all the GP	1
		2 Daganda/Dagata			l		I		I		ı
		2. Records/Registers			I		I	information	I	meetings	1
	their active	are maintained in every					I	from the women	I	are video	1
		Gram Panchayat, and	1		l		I			recorded as	ı
					I		I	representatives	I		1
	the committee	Video recording of	1		l		I	about the process		suggested	ı
	meeting. The	Gram Sabha and Gram	1		l		I	of their partici-		above. This	ı
			1		l		I				ı
		Panchayat meetings up-			I		I	pation, problems,	I	would	1
	the meetings	loaded in egramswaraj			I		I	and needs. Such	I	provide an	1
		website. Through this			I		I	an exercise may	I		1
					I		I		I	opportunity	1
	and signed by	mechanism the active			I		I	be supplemented	I	to judge the	1
	, ,	participation of elected			I		I	with periodic	I	participation	1
					I		I		I		1
		women representatives			I		I	audits to ensure	I	of all elected	1
	Women Rep-	and their decision			I		I	that the data	I	representa-	1
					I		I	submitted is	I		1
		making functionality are			I		I		I	tives in the	1
	records. Also,	tracked."			l		I	accurate and	I	panchayat	ı
	videography of	i .			l		I	reliable, so that	I	meetings."	ı
		i .			l		I		I	meetings.	ı
	the Gram Sabha	i .			l		I	a clear picture of	I	l	ı
	is done which	l	I	I I	I		I	the nature and	I	I	1
		l	I	I I	I		I		I	I	1
	is a recorded	l .			I		I	extent of their	I	I	1
	proof of active	l	I	I I	I		I	involvement in	I	I	1
	1	i	I						l	1	
	participation	i						Panchayati activ-	l		
	of Elected	i						ities is brought	l	1	
	1	i							l		
	Womnen	i						out.	l		
	Representatives	i						1	l	1	
		i							l		
	at Panchayat.	i						1	l	1	ı
		i							l		
		i						1	l	1	
		i						1	l	1	l
		i							l		l
		i .			l		I	1	I	l	ı
		l	I	I I	I		I	1	I	I	1
		i .			l		I	1	I	l	ı
		l .			I		I	1	I	I	1
		i .			l		I	1	I	l	ı
		l .			I		I	1	I	I	1
		l	I	[I		I	1	I	I	1
		l .			I		I	1	I	I	1
		l	I	[I		I	1	I	I	1
		l .			I		I	1	I	I	1
		l	I	[I		I	1	I	I	1
	1	i .			I		I	1	I	I	ı
		i .			l		I	1	I	l	ı
		l .			I		I	1	I	I	1
		l	I	[I		I	1	I	I	1
		l .			I		I	1	I	I	1
		l	I	[I		I	1	I	I	1
		i .			l		I	1	I	l	ı
		l	I	I I	I		I	1	I	I	1
		i .			l		I	1	I	l	ı
		l	I	I I	I		I	1	I	I	1
		i .			l		I	1	I	l	ı
		l .			I		I	1	I	I	1
		l	I	I I	I		I	1	I	I	1
		i .			l		I	1	I	l	ı
		l	I	I I	I		I	1	I	I	1
		i .			l		I	1	I	l	ı
		l .			I		I	1	I	I	1
	1	l	I	I I	I		I	1	I	I	1
	1	i .			l		I	1	I	l	ı
		1			I		I	1	I	I	1
			1	I	l		I	1	I	l	ı
					1		1	Ī	I	I	1
											ı

MADHYA PRADESH	MANIPUR	MEGHALAYA	MIZORUM	ODIS- HA	RAJAS- THAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL Nadu	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NAGA- LAND
The gender forums established by MPSRLM at GP level work closely with panchayat; Village organization of SHGs are also formed at GP evel; these two organizations shall be used as a olatform to identify GPs where proxy sarpanches act. Panchayat Extension Officers shall be a source of feedback on the effective participation of women sarpanch based on their observations from GP visits. Proper recording of minutes of meeting at GP level (committee meetings, GP general pody meeting, gram sabha meeting, and gram sabha meetings) reflecting the discussions and how it was actilitated. However, measures need to be taken to ensure the internalized biases of the officers don't reflect in the feedback thereby further affecting the women's confidence. Assessment of Panchavats to get perception of ward members on WER truly leading banchayats. Comparisons of Panchavats on the basis of funds utilization with banchayat led by WER."			"EWRs are being actively participated at Village Council. However, there is no mechanism to collect and record data on the aspect of their participation."	Nil	Nil	Nil	Collection of qualitative data on active participation of women representatives will be highly useful in analyzing the current scenario. The collection and recording may be done by outsiders like College Students or NGOs as it would ensure unblased data collection.	Nil	Nil	"We don't have any mechanism for recording qualitative data in respect of proxy at present. However, in addition to the point noted above, attendance (percentage) of the Women Office bearers may also provide chance of having proxy. It may be analysed through study"		Nil

Contents of Consultative Paper	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJA- RAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & KASHMIR	JHARKHAND	KARNATA- KA	KEF L
ADMINISTRA-	To eliminate	"1. The Government	Nil	"No such		There	No such incident	<u> </u>	-	"It is essential	N
			NII		Account-		1	"The following			IN.
TIVE MEASURES	proxy practices	of Andhra Pradesh		measures	ability	is no	of proxy has been	are the rec-		to provide	
FOR ELIMINAT-	among elected	vide Circular Memo		were re-	mecha-	statutory	reported.	ommended		capacity	
ING PROXY	women rep-	No.27712/Mdls.		quired to be	nisms:	provision	^	administrative		building	
PRACTICES	resentatives,	III/1996-1 Dt:24.07.1996		taken by the	Establish	regarding		measures, which		training to	
ADOPTED IN	administra-	directed all the Chief		Director-	clear	the female		could eliminate		elected wom-	
RELATION	tive include	Executive Officers /		ate in the	account-	sarpanch		such proxy		en members	
OF ELECTED	Information,	District Panchayat		absence of	ability	represent-		practices.		specially in	
WOMEN		Officers in the State to		any proxy	mecha-	ed by their		1		improving	
		ensure that only the						TT		the self	
REPRESENTA-	Communi-	,		Sarpanch."	nisms to	sarpanch		Training			
TIVE:	cation (lEC)	elected representatives			address	pati or any		Programs: Com-		confidence,	
	activities that	of the Mandal Parishads			com-	other male		pulsory training		assertiveness,	
	inform them of	/ Gram Panchayats,			plaints	mem-		programs are to		and ability to	
	their roles and	Special invitees/invitees,			and	bers in		be completed		participate	
	responsibilities.	authorized officials shall			prevent	Haryana		by women		actively in	
	Additionally,	attend the General Body			proxy	Pancha-		representatives		the local	
	regular training	Meetings in Mandal			adminis-	yati Raj		to enable them		governance.	
	and awareness	Praja Parishads, Gram	I		tration.	Act, 1994.		to discharge	1	Training and	1
			1		audon.	The State	ĺ	their duties ef-	I		l
	programs are	Panchayats and no						1		counselling	
	conducted at	other persons shall be	1			has not	ĺ	fectively. Women	I	enhances the	l
	the state, block,	permitted to attend the	1			issued any	ĺ	representative	I	zeal of elected	l
	and Gram Pan-	said meetings.	I			guidelines	1	training must	I	women in the	ı
	chavat levels		I			or instruc-	1	contain pro-	I	administra-	ı
	· /	2 Vanning of the set	I				1		I		ı
	to encourage	2. Keeping in view of	I			tions to		grams relating	1	tive matters.	1
	their active	the Gender specific	1			improve	ĺ	to governance,	I		l
	participation	needs of elected women	I			the		leadership and	1	It is also	ı
	in Panchayat	representatives, suitable	1			situation	ĺ	decision-making	I	suggested to	ı
			1				ĺ	U	I	formulate	l
	activities.	infrastructure facilities	I			of women	1	processes.	I		ı
		like good quality toilet,	1			represen-	ĺ	I	I	rules to	l
		rest room, feeding room	I			tatives	1	Monitoring and	I	initiate action	ı
		etc., alongwith trans-	1			in the	ĺ	Evaluation: Es-	I	against such	l
		portation/ conveyance				Panchayat		tablish a periodic		elected wom-	
		facilities should be				system.		mechanism to		en members	
		provided to women	I				1	monitor and	I	who	ı
		Elected Representatives	1				ĺ	evaluate Pan-	I	allow their	ı
		to enable their active						chayat meetings		family male	
		participation in Pancha-						to ensure that		members to	
		yat administration."						women represen-		Act through	
								tatives are active		Proxy. Action	
								and making de-		should also	
										be taken	
								cisions. This can			
								include surprise		against male	
								inspections and		members	
								audits by some		who act in	
								independent		proxy."	
								authority.			
								· '			
								Penalties against			
								undue influence:			
								Disproportion-			
								ate influence			
								or acting on			
								behalf of women			
			I					representatives	1		ı
			I					by male family	1		l
								members take			
								penalties against			
								such practices to			
			I					ensure that they	1		ı
							ĺ	are discouraged	I		ı
			l .		i	1	l	and reported	I		ı
								TOTAL PEDOLICA	I		
									1		
								promptly."			

MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- PUR	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJAS- THAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman	NAG.
Provision for actions			"Not Appli-	"Govt. of Odisha	Order dated		In Tamil	Nil	"In case,	"Training and	& Diu	Nil
gainst the complaint			cable as there	vide letter dated	26 February		Nadu, as	INII	the	capacity building		1111
elated to proxy in PR			are no proxy	02/12/2023 has	2010 & 2nd		per the			of the women		
ct already exists.			practices	suggested follow-	June 2020		directions			office bearers is a		
ict uncuciy exists.			adopted in	ing actions to be	with clear		of the State			focus area under		
Mass awareness program			relation of	undertaken in	direction		Govern-			Centrally Spon-		
round thisshould be			EWRs.	response to such	to criticize		ment, the		perform	sored Scheme		
organized.			EVVICS.	allegations:	and prohibit		District		, L	RGSA (Central:		
organizeu.				anegations.			Collectors/		duties in	State share =		
Focus on administrative				1. In the event of	proxy presence of		Inspector of			60:40) fund pro-		
accountability to reduce				receiving such	male family		Panchayats			vided by MoPR.		
				allegations under	members				women			
proxy leadership.					of women		conduct			The "Training of		
D: 0				your adminis-			meetings			Elected Woman		
Differential process				tration, prompt	Elected		with Wom-			Representatives		
protocols of major				actions must be	Representa-		en elected			of Gram Pan-		
campaigns (schemes,					tives. In both		representa-			chayats towards		
programmes) for the				cordance with the	its order		tives once		Pancha-	achieving Wom-		
GPs led by WERS - like				relevant Acts and			every three		yats, the	en Friendly Vil-		l
provision of additional				Rules governing	dated 26th	1	months.		following	lage" and "Special	1	
facilitator to support in				the Panchayati	February	1	At the			Care Programme	1	
the process of GPDP				Raj system.	2010 and	1	meetings,		are avail-	of Lady Sabhpatis		
					3618 dated	1	the District			& Sahakari		
Administrative support				2. Upon receipt	02nd June	1	Collector		tarakhand	Sabhapatis (at	1	
hrough provision of				and verification of		1	and PRI of-			Block level)" have	1	
nelp-desk for GPs led by				such allega-	State Pan-		ficials assure		Raj Act,	been taken up in		l
WERS.				tions, necessary	chayati Raj	1	to handhold		2016:	approved annual	1	
				warning may	Depart-	1	women rep-		Section	action plan of	1	
SRLM can play a major				be issued to the	ment has	1	resentatives			2024-25; together		
role in creating and				erring Sarpanches	categorically		through			these cover		l
sensitizing women lead-				stating that action	highlighted		their ad-			15.2% of total		l
ers. Many women from				shall be taken	that under		ministration		mem-	training plan of		
SHGS, VOs and CLFs				against them as	Section 28 of		and all the		bership	2024-25.		
got elected as women				well as the Proxy	the Pancha-		queries of		of Gram	Suggestion:		
members. Use the plat-				Sarpanches.	yat Raj Act,		the women			i) A lady officer		
forms with support from					1994 action		elected			as Consultant/		
State Election Commis-				3. Further,	should		representa-			Mentor may		
sion to run a campaign				charges may be	be taken		tives with			be engaged as		
to sensitize women in				drafted against	against the		respect to			an additional		
he GPs through SHGs.				the Sarpanch for	concerned		Administra-		member-	administrative		
				initiation of dis-	women		tion will be		ship of	measure (in cases		
Gram Sabhas shall be					Chairperson/		discussed.		Kshetra	of reservation)		
encouraged to discuss				against the erring	officer bearer		The Women		Panchayat	subject to reso-		
and take resolution				Sarpanch.	if her male		represen-		and	lution of General		
against proxy leadership				Î	relative is		tatives		Section	Body of the Gram		
n all GPs.				4. Necessary	representing		are also		90(1)(p):	Panchayat.		
				criminal action	her. Simul-		reiterated			ii) Management		
Government order				may also be	taneously,		about their			Development		
suggesting-government				initiated against	under CCA		powers and			Progragramme		
offices to not allow the				the Proxy	Rules action		responsi-			(MDP) may be		
proxies to participate/				Sarpanches."	will also	1	bilities to			arranged for lady	1	
sit in the meetings; if any				Parienco.	be brought	1	the people			office bearers	1	
person accompanying					against the	1	who elected			of the GPs;	1	
he women sarpanch,					officer/em-		them and			presently MDP		l
ne may wait outside the					ployed who		the Impli-			is being arranged		l
neeting venue only.					cooperates	1	cations of			for all office		
						1				1		
The government officers					in this	1	letting their			bearers of Zilla		
visiting the GPs should					behaviour.	1	male family			parishad and	1	
peak office matters to						1	members			Panchayat Samiti	1	
he women sarpanch						1	dominate			by institutions	1	
only.						1	them.			like IIM, IIT."	1	
						1					1	
The officers enforcing						1					1	
hese suggestions should						1					1	
e sensitive enough to						l	1				1	
ensure that the women												l
arpanch are not held						1						l
back completely by the						1						l
amily from performing						1						l
oublic duties due to						1					1	
he officer's firm stance						1					1	
regarding this issue."						1					1	
egarumg uns issue.						1					1	
						1					1	
						1						
						1						
						1					1	
	l	I	1			l						1

I. MH RI TI FI RE	LEGAL MEASURES I.E. AMEND-	Nicobar Islands	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJA- RAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & Kashmir	JHARKHAND	KARNATA- KA	KER LA
I. MH RI TI FI RE	MEASURES	To effectively	Government of Andhra	Nil	"No such	Nil		As proposed.	"Legal Frame-		As explained	Ni
I. MH RI TI FI RE				1111		1111		113 proposed.		1		I
MI RI I I FI RE	.E. AMEND-		Pradesh provides		measures		laws &	I	work: Inscribe	l	above.	l
RI I FI RE		practices relat-	50% Reservation for		were re-		policies		frameworks of			
RI I FI RE	ENTS, IF ANY,	ed to elected	women to be elected		quired to be		to prevent	1	legal institutions			l
I FI RE								1	, v			l
FI RE	EQUIRED IN	women repre-	as representatives in 3		taken by the		& punish	1	for strengthening			
FI RE	THE EXIST-	sentatives, it is	tiers of Panchayat Raj		Director-		Sarpanch-	1	women repre-			
FI RE	ING LEGAL	proposed that	Institutions. They phys-		ate in the		Patis.	1	sentatives by way			
RE							raus.	1				
	RAMEWORK	legal authority	ically take oath of being		absence of			1	of amendment			
	EQUIRED FOR	be granted to	a Sarpanch to the Gram		any proxy			1	of laws to define			
L CI	LIMINATING		Panchayat, attend the					1				
					Sarpanch.			1	and crimialize			
PI	ROXY PRAC-	utive Officer of	meetings of the Gram		"			1	proxy practices			
TIC	CES ADOPTED		Panchayat on par with					1	transparently,			1
								1				1
	N RELATION	the Executive	their male counter-parts					1	vesting women			1
T	O ELECTED	Officer of Pan-	and take decisions of the					1	representatives			1
1470	OMEN REPRE-	chayat Samitis,	Gram Panchayat as per					1	with authority			1
								1				1
S	ENTATIVES:	and Panchayat	Law. There is no provi-					1	and autonomy in			1
ı		Secretaries.	sion in AP PR Act which					1	the perfor-			
1				1				1				1
1		They would	permits the relatives of					I	mance of their	l		1
1			the women represen-					I	duties; compliant	l		1
1			tatives to intrude into					I		l		1
1		to question						I	redressal mech-	l		1
1		and report the	Gram Panchayat admin-					I	anism; setting	l		1
1		participation	istration. No legal frame					I	up a strong and	l		1
1								I		l		1
1		of spouses	work is additionally					I	transparent sys-	l		1
1		of elected	needed at present except					I	tem of complaint	l		1
1		representatives	creation of adequate					I	redressal on	l		1
1								I		l		1
1		in Panchayat	awareness in women	l				1	issues concern-			1
1		activities. Con-	representatives to take					I	ing practices	l		1
1								I		l		1
I		tinued proxy	up the opportunity	l				1	of proxy. This			1
1		practices, de-	provided to them as per					I	should create a	l		1
1			the provisions of Indian					I	telephone help	l		1
1				l				1	, , ,			1
1		could result in	Constitution.					I	lone and support	l		1
1		the removal of	·	l				1	centers where			1
1		the concerned	·	l				1				1
1			·	l				1	women represen-			1
1		elected women	1					1	tatives can seek			
1		representatives	'					I	help.	l		1
1			'					I	Ib.	l		1
1		from their	1					1				1
1		posts.	1					1	Legal Support:			1
1		r	1					1	Extend legal			1
1			1					1				1
1			1					1	support and			1
1			1					1	counselling to			1
1			1					1				1
1			1					1	women represen-			1
1			1					1	tatives who suffer			1
1			1					1				1
1			1					1	from coercion or			
1			1					1	undue influence,			
1			1					1				
1			1					1	and enable them			
1			1					1	to resort to the			
1			1					1				
1			1					1	courts or law			
1			1					1	against such			
1			1					1	practices"			
ı			1					1	practices			
1		I	'					I	I	l		1
1		I	'					I	I	l		1
I		I	'					I	I	l		1
I		I	'					I	I	l		1
l		I	'					I	I	l		1
l		I	'					I	I	l		1
l		I	'					I	I	l		1
l			·	l				1				1
1		I	'					I	I	l		1
			·	l				1				1
1		I	'					I	I	l		1
1		I	'					I	I	l		1
1		I	'					I	I	l		1
1		I	'					I	I	l		1
		l	'	I				1	I	l		ı
1		I	'					I	I	l		ı
1		I	1	I				I	I	I	[1
		I	'					I	I	l		ı
		I	1	I				I	I	I		1
		l	'	I				1	I	l		ı
		I	1	I				I	I	I		1
		I	'					I	I	l		1
		I	'					I	I	l		ı
		l	'	I				1	I	l		ı
		I	'					I	I	l		1
		I	1	I				I	I	I		1
		l	'	I				1	I	l		ı
			'					I	I	l		1
			1	1				1				1
			1					I	I	I		l l
			1									
								1	l			

MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- PUR	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJAS- THAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL Nadu	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NAGA LANI
State suggest sensitive and ling of the cases of that women elected expresentatives don't core punitive action but on the rit prevents the roxies from usurping owers illegally. Jecessary provisions are ready included in the cit; rather than amendants state will focus on diministrative measures. The state shall focus on increasing administrative countability to eliminate proxy leadership and holding support and strict non-engagement policies in case of roxy leadership. Jean and the state of th			Not required as there are no proxy practices adopted in relation to EWRs.	Nil	Nil		The Government shall consider making legal framework to protect the rights of wormen elected representatives and rules shall be framed in such a way that the male family members, If proven to interfere with the day-to-day operations and decision-making functions of the Panchayat, be made punishable under law.		Nil	Like other two tiers, viz. Panchayat Samiti & Zilla Parishad, where office bearers take executive actions through the "Executive Officer" for day-to-day work, a similar officer may be posted in Gram Panchayat by amendment of State Panchayat Act for smooth function of Gram Panchayats.	Daman & Diu	Nil

(E)	Contents of Consultative Paper	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	ANDHRA Pradesh	BIHAR	GOA	GUJA- RAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & KASHMIR	JHARKHAND	KARNA- TAKA	KERA- LA
	IMPLEMEN-	"In the Andaman	"Under section	Nil	"The Section 7 of Goa Panchayat	Nil	Nil	H.P. Govt. has	Nil		Capacity	Nil
	TATION OF	and Nicobar	9 of APPR Act,		Raj Act 1994 provides as under:-			provided 50%			building	
	EFFECTIVE RESERVATION	Islands, effective reservation for	1994, 1/3rd of total number of		Constitution of Panchayat- (4) In every Panchayat, seats shall			reservation to women in			training focusing on	
	FOR ELECTED	elected women	seats are reserved		be reserved for the Scheduled			three tiers			leadership	
	WOMEN REPRE-	representatives	for women.		Castes and the Scheduled Tribes			of PRIs and			devel-	
	SENTATIVE IN	(EWR) in Pan-	Government		and the number of seats so			reservation			opment,	
	PANCHAYATS.:	chayats is already established.	vide G.O.Ms.		reserved shall bear as nearly as			is effectively			literacy	
		According to	No.77 Panchayat Raj and Rural		may he, the same proportion to the total number of seats in the			being imple- mented.			programme for illiterate	
		the Á&N Islands	Development		Panchayat as the population of			incirco.			women	
		(Panchayat)	(Ele. &Rules)		the Scheduled Castes and the						represen-	
		Regulation 1994,	Department		Scheduled Tribes in the Panchayat						tatives are	
		an initial reservation of	Dt:07.04.2011 provided 50%		area bears to the total population of the Panchayat area						suggested.	
			reservation for		Provided that Government may							
		for women was	women in all		by notification reserve any seat							
		implemented	offices and seats		reserved for Scheduled Castes and							
		across all levels of Panchayati Raj,	in PRIs.		Scheduled Tribes for women be- longing to the Scheduled Castes or							
		including Gram	In Andhra		as the case may be, the Scheduled							
		Panchayat, Pan-	Pradesh, there		Tribes:							
		chayat Samiti, and			(6) Not less than one third							
1		Zilla Parishad.	women Elected Representatives		(including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to							
		Following amend-			Scheduled Castes or Scheduled							
		ments in 2019,	of total number		Tribes) of the total number of seats							
		this reservation	i.e., 1,54,414 as		to be filled by direct election in							
		has been increased to 50%. The	shown below: Women Sar-		every Panchayat shall be reserved for women:							
		distribution and	panches in the		Provided that the seats reserved							
		criteria for wom-	State: 7434		under sub-section (4), (5) and							
		en's reserved seats	Women WArd		(6) shall be allotted by rotation to							
		are as follows: Distribution of	Members in the State: 72177		different wards in the Panchayat area:							
		Women's Reserved			Provided further that nothing							
		Seats:	in the State:		contained in this section shall be							
		1. One-third of	414		deemed to prevent a woman or a							
		Total Seats: Calcu- lated separately for			person belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes or							
		each Panchayat.	5627		Backward Classes from contesting							
		2. Ward Reser-	Women ZP		for elections to any non-reserved							
		vation: Seats are	Chairpersons in		ward in such Panchayat.							
		distributed among various wards.	the State: 7 Women ZPTcs		The Section 45 of Goa Panchayat							
		Criteria for Wom-			Raj Act 1994 provides as under-							
			355"		Reservation of office of Sarpanch							
		1. Rotational Res-			and Deputy Sarpanch: - The Gov-							
		ervation: Reserved seats will rotate			ernment may by general or special order reserve,-							
		among different			(c) not less than one-third of							
		wards every two			the total number of offices of							
		consecutive terms. 2. Random			Sarpanch and Deputy Sarpanch of Panchayats in the State from							
		Selection: Seats			each of the categories which are							
		reserved for wom-			reserved for persons belonging to							
		en will be selected			the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled							
		randomly.			Tribes and Backward Classes and of those which are non-reserved							
		Additional Provi-			for women:							
		sions:			Provided that the offices reserved							
		Minimum Repre-			under this sub-section shall be							
		sentation: 2 women mem-			allotted by rotation to different Panchayats.							
		bers in Panchayats										
		with 6-10 mem-			Further, it is informed that total							
		bers.			strength of Village Panchayat							
		3 women mem- bers in Panchayats			Secretaries in the State of Goa is 226 out of which 38 of Panchayat							
		with 11-15 mem-			Secretaries are Women. The							
		bers.			Panchayat secretaries are recruited							
		4 women mem-			by the Government in which there							
		bers in Panchayats with 16 or more			is no such reservation policy for women Panchayat Secretary.							
		members.			In view of above it is seen that,							
1		These measures			the Government of Goa has made							
		aim to enhance			provisions in the Goa Panchayat							
		women's partici- pation and repre-			Raj Act, 1994 itself for effective implementation for reservation for							
		sentation in local			elected female representatives."							
		governance."			·							
_												

MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- PUR	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJAS- THAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Dam- an & Diu	NAG LAN
ngagement with polit-			As per the	Nil	"Due to		"In fact,	In Tripura,	"The res-	"West Bengal		Nil
al parties to sensitize			existing VC		reservation		at present,	women have	ervation	Panchayat Act,		
nem on the issue of			Act, i.e., The		system of		56% of the	a significant	system for			l
roxy leadership and its			Lushai Hills		seat alloca-		total elected	representa-		subsequently		l
dverse impact on devel-			District (Vil-		tion, women		represen-	tion in rural	not less	amended,		
ping women leaders to			lage Council)		representa-		tatives 1.e.	local bodies,	than 50	envisages that as		
e taken up. Discussions			Act, 1953,		tives are not		7012 Village	driven by	percent in	nearly		
rith political parties are			33% of the		having direct		Panchayat	the con-	relation to	as practicable		
equired to ensure inclu-			total seat is		chance to		Sarpanch,	stitutional	the total	one-half but not		
on and development			reserved for		elect again		242 Pancha-	mandate for	posts/	exceeding one-		l
f more women leaders			Women		at her own		yat Union	reservation.	places	half of the total		
against the token					because next		Chairper-	Approx-	in the	number of seats		
presentation.					term will		son, 20	imately	three-tier	(Section-4) as		
*					not remain		District	50% of the	Pancha-	well as total		
ampaigns for political					reserved for		Panchayat	seats in	yats is	number of offices		
lucation of women					women."		Chairper-	Panchayati		of Pradhan and		
mportance of political							sons and	Raj Institu-	in the	Upa-Pradhan		
articipation, chal-							67,756 Ward	tions(PRIs)	state."	in the Districts		
nging gender norms							Members	in Tripura	state.	(Section-9) are		
garding leadership,							are Women.	are reserved		reserved for		
aring stories of							In Tamil	for Women.		women.		
aring stories of					1		Nadu, the	This		Also, as per		
							represen-	reservation				
oPR, SRLM, and State							, A			Section-32 of the		
ection Commission							tation of	policy aims		West Panchayat		
rough SHGs.							Women in	to empower		Act,1973, in case		l
NINTE 1 d							Panchayats	Women and		of Nari, Sishu		
se NYKs and other							had been	ensure their		Unnayan O		
uth clubs to spread the							increased	involvement		Samaj Kalyan		
essage.							from one	in decision		Upa-Samiti		l
							third to 50%	making pro-		(Women, Child		
ecialized training							of the total	cess at the		Development &		
ogrammes for women							local body	grassroots		Social Welfare		
ected representatives							posts are	level.		Sub-Committee)		
be developed; the							reserved			Sanchalak		
aining programme							for Women.			(Chairperson) of		
ould be designed to							The posts/			said Upa-Sami-		
ldress the challenges							offices			ti is		
ced by women who							reserved for			elected from		
ave never held a public							women are			EWRs and 50%		
ffice before. The train-							also rotated			members of the		
ng content and delivery							every term			said Upa Samiti		
nethodology should							to provide			are women.		
lign with adult educa-							effective			Towards em-		
on principles and help												
ne women overcome							opportu- nity to all			powering EWRs		
							,			regular training		
ocietal stereotypes by							women."			imparted to ERs		
eing more aware.										so that they can		
										participate in		
egularization of Stand-										the development		
g committee meetings										process, decision		
nd documenting WER										making		
articipation										process, through		
					1					leadership devel-		
rovision of special										opment/		
nds for the wards led										Communication,		l
WER.										as contributing		
										members of		
					1					Gram		
										panchayats"		
					1					l '		
												1
					1					1		
					1					1		
					1					1		
					1					1		
												l
					1					1		
												l
					1					1		
												l
					1					1		
												I
							1				i	
		l										ı

(E)	Contents of sultative Paper	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJARAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & KASHMIR	JHARKHAND	KARNATAKA	KERALA
INTRODUCTS STREI OF EX TRAIL PROOF TO M ELEC' EN RI TATIV FOR T POWI DUTI THE A PROV THE C	RO- CTION/ ENGTHING XISTING INING GRAMMES MAKE THE CTED WOM- LEPRESEN- IVE AWARE THEIR /ERS AND IES UNDER AFORESAID VISIONS OF CONSTI- ION AND CHAYAT S:	regarding their powers and duties under the relevant constitutional provisions and Panchayat Acts, it is essential to increase the frequency of training programs. Additionally, organizing exposure visits to states that showcase successful practices of elected women representatives can provide valuable insights and inspiration. This approach will help empower them and improve their effectiveness in local governance."	"In the State of Andhra Pradesh, majority of trainings are carried out under RGSA (Rastriya Grama Swaraj Abhiyan). The content of training includes various statutory and non-statutory matters covering several aspects of Panchayat Administration. APSIRD (Andhra Pradesh State Institute of Rural Development) /ETCS (Extension Training Centres) /DPRCS (District Panchayat Resource Centres) &BPRCS (Block Panchayat Resource Centres) provide necessary trainings. As a special initiative, the PR&RD Department has prepared Training Manuals with an emphasis/ focus to educate Semi-literate Women Representatives also to learn and adopt the best practices in their day to work. All major activities are covered in appropriate pictorial presentations in the Training Manual. After fruitful training, Women Elected Representatives in PRIs perform their day-to-day duties independently as per Administrative Procedure prescribed in Gram Panchayats, Mandal Praja Parishads and Zilla Praja Parishads and Zilla Praja Parishads. The Women Elected representatives of Gram Panchayats are trained on topics such as conduct of Gram Sabha, Meetings of Gram Panchayats are trained on topics such as conduct of Gram Panchayats, Levy & Collection of Taxes & non taxes, active functioning of SWM (Solid Waste Management) sheds for proper sanitation, JJM (Jal Jeevan Mission) activities and supply of protected water through PWS (Public Water Scheme), optimized power consumption in street lights for proper maintenance of LED lights and good governance as per APPR Act, 1994. More training programmes exclusively for women to equip them with leadership skills, communication technique and knowledge of Panchayat functioning are required. Instead of subjecting them to take long travel, online training programmes are also planned."	Nil	Nil	Strengthening gender training: Provide gender sensitization training for officials and Sarpanchs to understand the importance of women's empowerment and leadership.	Nil	Training is being provided to all the elected PRI representatives at regular intervals. As per TMP (training Management Portal) 100% of women representatives have been given training at State, District, Block and Gram Panchayat level. However, there is need to increase the frequency of training.	Nil		"Same as above along with training programs on various provisions of the State Panchayat Acts. However these are broadly covered in all the training programs conducted for the newly elected panchayat members. Duration of the training programs should not exceed 5 days and can be held in three phases of 5 days, 3 days and 2 days with exposure visits of at least two days. Training centers at the block level are ideal."	

MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- PUR	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJAS- THAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NAGA LANI
External evaluation of he training programmes content, methodology, renue distance and omfort, issues faced by arpanches who mothers of young children during raining are, capacity of trainers, duration, anguage etc.) can be arried out through organizations with expertise in local governance. This would help nevising the training programmes and developed method in point not of (state suggestion). Audio-visual training contents should be developed with the diverse ducational background of women representatives in mind. Expecial training around inancial procedures and elated portal Differential training modules and gender undits of overall training lesign e.g. designing raining calendar keeping gender aspects."			EWRs are observed to be aware of their powers and duties under the VC Act as they have been provided training in this regard under RGSA.	Nil	"Women elected representative who came firstly after having seat reserved for women, need huge training and support of local women groups."		Periodic training programmes are already being conducted by the state and regional training institutes exclusively for Women elected representatives. It is suggested that the duration of the training period shall be kept less than 3 days per training and the location of the training programme shall be easily accessible to encourage more participation. Women representatives from Tamil Nadu show huge interest in participating in state level and National level training programmes also.	Nil		"Special training of EWRs on all aspects of functioning of Gram Panchayats for carrying out statutory functions as well as discretionary & obligatory duties of gram panchayat including schematic and social welfare programmes are conducted in a regular interval with a process of evaluation. Special initiatives are taken for imparting training to the Women Pradhans on Leadership Development, Gender issues including Gender Budget etc. For capacity building and leadership quality of women Pradhans, experience sharing by the Eminent Personalities are practiced. Efficacy of the training programmes may be studied and suitable proactive measures may be taken."		Nil

(G) Conter		Andaman & Nicobar Islands	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJARAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & KASHMIR	JHARKHAND	KARNATAKA	KERALA
CAPACIT' BUILDING ELECTED EN REPRE TATIVE:	G OF WOM-	and various line depart-	"Majority of trainings are carried out under RGSA action plan. The training includes various statutory and non statutory matters covering several subjects of Panchayat Administration. APSIRD/ETCS/DPRCS/BPRCs provide necessary trainings regularly. The following measures are required to empower women elected representatives for promoting political leadership effectively in Panchayats. i. Develop mobile apps to provide Women Elected Representatives with easy access to information, resources, and communication tools. ii. A user friendly LMS (Learning Management System) Platform may be created in local languages with the help of latest technology, so that they can access at any time and it will give them more space to learn and implement. iii. Best Case studies to be recorded in the form of videos particularly on regulatory activities of the Gram Panchayat. iv. Ensure availability of trainers/ handhold supporters to the WERs, instead of asking them to attend a training center by traveling a vast distance. v. A handholding support system mostly from BPRCS/PLCs. vi. A cross learning platform at District, State and Union level shall be established and periodical visits may be organized."	Nil	Nil	Capacity building: Provide capaci- ty-building programs for women Sarpanchs to enhance their skills and confi- dence.	building	Exposure visits within and outside the State are regularly be- ing conducted and training being provid- ed at regular intervals.	CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMS: DESIGN AND IM- PLEMENT CAPACI- TY-BUILD- ING PROGRAMS ON LEADER- SHIP, GOV- ERNANCE, AND LEGAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN REPRESEN- TATIVES. SUCH PROGRAMS ON LEADER- SHOULD AIM AT DE- VELOPING THEIR CON- FIDENCE TO DEAL WITH PANCHAYAT AFFAIRS INDE- PENDENTLY. THESE MAY INCLUDE WORK- SHOPS, SEMINARS AND ON- THE-JOB- TRAINING.		as mentioned above.	Nil

MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- PUR	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJAS- THAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NAG LAN
Training modules hould be revamped and			EWRs are being given	Nil	"Women elected		As per the instructions	"more and more capac-	"Capacity development	"All training centres have the	Daman & Diu	Nil
pecialized trainings			training un-		represen-		given by the	ity building	trainings	facility of creche,		
be proposed under			der RGSA. It		tative who		Government, a	programs	need to be	mother-child		
GSA. Modules to								should be				
			may be more		came firstly				implemented	room, attendant		
ddress leadership			beneficial		after having		was developed	required	more effec-	for child, sanitary		
kills, communication -			for EWRs if		seat reserved		specially for	to conduct	tively and	napkin vending		
ormal and non-formal,			a topic on		for women,		women elected	for Elected	on a regular	machine etc. for		
ommunity mobilization			'Political		need huge		representa-	Women	basis to en-	smooth training		
addition to subject			Leadership		capacity		tives through	Represen-	hance solid	of the EWRs.		
natter information on			in Pancha-		building and		SIRD&PR and	tatives for	leadership	Ice-breaking ses-		
RIs, their powers, role			yats / Village		support of		the training was	strength-	capacity on	sions are very		
nd responsibilities,			Councils' is		local women		conducted peri-	ening them	the subjects	effective for em-		
igital literacy etc.			incorporated		groups."		odically during	with com-	such as deci-	powering them		
· .			in the train-				the 2023-34, 269	petencies	sion making	to become		
pecial training around			ing module.				no of women	to become	capacity,	effective political		
ender and governance			State				representatives	effective		leader. Also, ex-		
or women elected			can take				were attended	leaderships	of lists/re-	posure visits are		
epresentatives. But			necessary				the training	in Pancha-	quirements,	conducted for		
is crucial that other			action in this				programme.	yats.	clarification	enhancing the		
takeholders also be			connection				In the training	I'	of goals,	competency"		
ensitized to ensure a			depending					Training	effective im-	competency		
							I	Training		1		
ealthy and constructive			upon the				incorporated the		plementation	1		
orking environment for			need.				subject like the	Pancha-	of programs	1		
ne WERs.							skill develop-	yati Raj	and schemes,	1		
							ment, how to	Department,		1		
ach district must have							trouble shoot	Tripura	and targeted	1		
ne PLC in the GPs led								have been	and robust	1		
/ WERs							Presidents etc.,	providing	action plan	1		
							Further, we have	Education	for future	1		
isseminate informa-							also conduct-	and Training	plans, etc.,	1		
on regarding courses/							ed refresher	for Women	due to the	1		
etwork/mentoring for							training to the	Pradhans to	lack of wom-	1		
VERS developed and							women elected	build their	en Panchayat	1		
cilitated by non-gov-							representatives	confidence	represen-	1		
nment organizations as							every year.	and skills in	tatives in			1
rell such that the WERS							Measures have	Governance	certain			
ave access to more re-							I		1			
								through out	important			
ources which are easily							en by the Gov-	the year."	activities			
vailable."							ernments under		towards			
							RGSA to impart		empow-			
							technical and		erment in			
							social skills to		Panchayats			
							Women elected		due to male			
							representatives.		represen-			
							Such measures		tatives			
							shall be further		(proxy)."			
							strengthened by		(1//			
							providing online					
							training sessions					
ļ							and inviting suc-			1		
							cessful eminent	I				1
ļ							women leaders			1		
							to interact with	I				1
ļ							them in their			1		
							local language.	I				1
							1	I	1	1		
								I				1
							1	I	1	1		
							1	I	1	1		
							1	I	1	1		
							1	I	1	1		
							1	I	1	1		
								I				1
							1	I	1	1		
								I				1
							1	I	1	1		
								I				1
ļ							1	I	1	1		
							1	I	1	1		
								I				1
							1			1		
								I				1
ļ			1				1			1		
												i .
							l		l			l .

(H)	Consultative Paper		ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJARAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & KASHMIR	JHARKHAND	KARNATAKA	
	INTERACTION AMONGST ENLIGHTENED RURAL ELECTED WOMEN REP- RESENTATIVES	Yes, Programs facilitating interaction between educated rural elected women representatives and illiterate elected women leaders can enhance learning about their roles and responsibilities. It is important to note that in this Union Territory, the elected women representatives are generally	Cross-learning exercises are consciously promoted among women Elected Representative during training programmes conducted at APSIRD, ETCS, DPRCS, BPRCS etc., duly allowing the illiterate women representatives to learn and gain knowledge and experience from the interaction with the enlightened Elected Representative counter parts and experienced resource persons.	Nil	Nil	Nil	ANA Nil	PRADESH As proposed.	KASHMIR Nil		Paraspara Kalika (Mutual learning) program has been implemented in Karnata- ka, the best performing GP's are being visited by weaker per- forming GP's in general, this can be followed for women in particular. In Rastriya Grama Swaraj Abhi- yana program provision can be made for mutual learn- ing program.	Nil

MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- PUR	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJAS- THAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NAGA LANI
There is a marked dif-			There is no	Nil	Nil		It is true	Nil	Nil	"Publicity of	Daman & Diu	Nil
erence in the way rural			record of				that some		l	success stories of		
nd urban local govern-			illiterate				rural women		l	EWRs in local		l
ents function. In this			EWRs as			1	representatives		l	Cable channels,		l
ontext focus should			on now.				are unaware of		l	awarding them,		l
									l			l
e on more interaction			However, it				their powers		l	taking		1
nongst elected women			will be more			1	and willingly		l	interviews of		I
presentatives from			beneficial				let their male		l	successful EWRs		1
iral areas across the			if Guided				family members		l	etc. may be done		1
ountry. Visits to urban			Interactive				Interfere in the		l	at Block level.		1
eas should be more			Session is				administration		l	Exposure visit		1
om the perspective of							while others are		l			1
A A			organized for						l	/ Field Visit for		1
eveloping their aspira-			ERWs from				well aware of		l	experience shar-		1
ons for their village.			more devel-			1	their powers in		l	ing, case study		I
			oped and less			1	governing the		l	sharing for peer		I
Interaction of WERs			developed				panchayat. It		l	learning may be		1
ith other successful			areas during			1	is necessary to		l	taken for more		I
vomen from across			the training				promote inter-		l	interaction.		1
rofessions should also			programmes.						l	I		1
							action among		l	Coordination		1
e considered to raise			State				su Informed		l	training of Prad-		1
heir aspirations, and	l	1	may take		1		women repre-		l	hans by EWR of		1
onfidence.	I	1	necessary			1	sentatives and	1	I	higher	1	1
	I	1	action in this			1	illiterate women	1	I	tiers will be very	1	1
Collaborate with Civil	I	1	regard.			1	representa-	1	I	effective in this	1	1
Society Organizations/	I	1				1	tives ch help	1	I	respect."	1	1
NGOs to create a	I	1				1	them perform	1	I	I sopect.	1	1
	l	1			1				l			1
etwork of women	I	1				1	better in the	1	I	1	1	1
arpanches/elected	l	1			1		administration.		l			1
nembers at block or							Identification of		l			1
listrict level to facilitate							such empowered		l			1
imonthly/quarterly							leaders and		l			1
neetings in which they							literate women		l			1
						1			l			I
an discuss their practi-							feaders may be		l			1
al challenges faced. This							done by mecha-		l			1
latform could facilitate						1	nisms discussed		l			I
ross-learning, and for						1	above and inter-		l			l
nentoring by experts on						1	actions among		l			l
ocal governance."						1	them may be		l			l
ocai governance.									l			l
							facilitated by		l			l
						1	the District and		l			l
							State Adminis-		l			l
						1	tration.		l			l
									l			l
									l			l
						1			l			l
									l			1
						1			l			I
						1			l			l
						1			l			l
						1			l			I
									l			1
						1			l			I
									l			1
						1			l			I
						1			l			I
	I	1				1	1	1	I	1	1	1
	I	1				1	1	1	I	l	1	1
	I	1				1	1	1	I	1	1	1
	I	1				1	1	1	I	l	1	1
	l	1			1		1		l			1
	I	1				1	1	1	I	l	1	1
	I	1				1	1	1	I	l	1	1
	l	1			1		1		l			1
						1	1	1	I	l	1	1
	l				I	1	1	1	I	l	1	1
						1	1	I	I			1
						1		l	l			
												1

)	Contents of	Andaman &	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJARAT	HARY-	HIMACHAL	JAMMU &	JHARKHAND	KARNATAKA	KERAL
Co	onsultative Paper	Nicobar Islands					ANA	PRADESH	KASHMIR	,		
	TRODUCTION FINCENTIVE	In the Andaman and Nicobar Islands,	"The Government of Andhra Pradesh have been incentiv-	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Panchayat Awards are	Nil		Karnataka has already started	Nil
		·	izing the Gram Panchayats,					given every			the process of	
			where the total seats are					year to the			paying a daily	
			unanimously elected. The					best perform-			Attendance	
			following Incentives have					ing Gram			fee of Rs.300	
		yats are honored by the	been provided to the Gram					Panchayats.			per person per	
		Hon'ble Lt Governor	Panchayats as per the					But special			day for all ERs	
		during Independence	orders of GOAP issued vide					awards may			of Panchayats	
		Day and Republic	G.O.Ms.No.34 Panchayat					be started for			who participate	
			Rural Development (E&R)					GP's having			in the Training	
			Department, Dt:26.01.2021.					women heads.			programs. Ad-	
		effective decision-mak- ing in implementing	GPs having population less								ditionally other incentives	
		various government	than 2,000 Rs.5.00 Lakhs								for the best	
			2. GPs having population								performing	
		outstanding elected	between 2,001 to 5,000								Panchayats	
			Rs.10.00 Lakhs								in specified	
		(Gram Pradhan) are	3. GPs having population								sectors can also	ŀ
		recognized in these	between 5,001 to 10,000								be considered.	
			Rs.15.00 Lakhs								Like Women	
1		be nominated for	4. GPs having population								Sarpanch GPs	1
		national-level awards	above 10,001 Rs.20.00 Lakhs								can be assigned	1
		for their significant	Cimilinal set 1 to 11 to								special	
		contributions to the	Similarly, it is desirable to promote competition among								weightage in National	
1		implementation of gov- ernment initiatives.	Pomen elected representative								Panchayat Pu-	
		ermnent mittatives.	duly earmarking some of								raskar Awards/	
			the incentives exclusively								honoring best	
			among them. Such measures								performing	
			may help to promote healthy								women	
			competition, thereby encour-								sarpanchs on	
			aging them to participate in								international	
			public meetings."								women's day	
											national girl	
											child day (No	
											girl child out	
											of school, No child marriage	
											or Prevented	
											child marriage	
											to happen,	
											No girl child	
											labour, no	
											anaemic girl	
											adolescent etc).	
											Special awards	
											for solid and	
											liquid waste	
											management,	
											convergence and other	
											income gener-	
											ating activities	
											with national	
											livelihood	
											mission. Even	
											states can be	
											advised to	
											honor the	
											best Women	
1											Sarpanchs for	
											their leadership	'
1											qualities on	
											special days with the theme.	
1											In Rastriya	1
											Gram Swaraj	
											Abhiyana	
											program this	
											project can be	
											included.	
- 1												
		i	ı	ı						1		1
												1

MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- PUR	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJAS- THAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NAGA LANI
Districts shall felicitate ne women leader from ach block annually for heir leadership qualities nd outstanding perfornance in governance as whole or in a particular rogramme or scheme at ecided by the district. he selection shall be one based on criteria et by the district and he event should be eld at district level with participation from lected representatives of oth block and district anchayats. The name of the winners should e publicized through acal newspapers and adio, official WhatsApp roups and other social nedia platforms."			Publicizing leadership qualities of ERs through media and honouring them in public meetings is feasible. However, instruction of Incentive Schemes for such Panchayats may be challenging mainly due to financial constraint.	Nil	Nil		The paper seeks opinion on the feasibility of introducing Incentive steps to acknowledge empowered women representatives. The Government feels that it is feasible to implement moral incentives like publicizing the stories of powerful women representatives in Newspapers, honoring them in state level/ district level official functions which would greatly inspire other women representatives to follow their footsteps, hence break away from patriarchal domination.	Nil	Nil	"1. In terms of sub-rule 6 A of rule 3 of the West Bengal Panchayat (Constitution) Rules, 1975, Pradhan is a full time Office Bearer, who also comes under definition of Public Servant as per Section 199 of the West Bengal Panchayat Act,1973. 2. There is already a system of standardized honorarium for all ERs. 3. Women Pradhans having leadership quality may be promoted through participation in different programmes in Radio/ Doordarshan for sharing their opinions, for narrating their success stories and giving their suggestions for betterment of the existing system. They may also be invited in the high-level meetings."		Ni

(j)	Contents of Consultative Paper	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJARAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & KASHMIR	JHARKHAND	KARNATAKA	KERALA
	OF INCENTIVES BY WAY OF HONORARIUM FOR WOMEN SARPANCHES/ WOMEN PRAD- HANS	local governance. This initiative is designed to empower women in leadership roles and promote gender	"The Government of Andhra Pradesh is providing honorarium and various incentives to the elected representatives of PRIs vide orders issued in G.O.Ms. No.89 Panchayat Raj & Rural Development (PTS.III) Department Dt:07.09.2015. In addition to the honorarium, incentives as suggested in point (1) may be provided encouraging women Elected Representatives to participate actively in public meetings and Panchayat meetings."		Nil	Nil	Nil	Honorarium is being provided to all the elected members of PRIs every month.	Nil		Nil	Nil

(K)	Contents of Consultative Paper	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJARAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & KASHMIR	JHARKHAND	KARNATAKA	
	WOMEN REPRESENTA- TIVE OF PAN- CHAYATS:"	by elected women representatives in this Union Territory, are digitally empowered. Fund receipts and payments are conducted through the Public Financial Management System (PFMS), and user fees are collected via GPay and other online modes. This digital integration enhances transparency and efficiency in financial transactions, supporting the effective functioning of local governance.	"In Andhra Pradesh, Women Elected Representatives are being trained on par with men elected representative in all digital Panchayat services such as e-gramswaraj, CFMS (State Portal) (Comprehensive Financial Management System), PFMS (Public Finance Management System), en angement System). The gramswaraj Platforms. Further, there is a need for providing more rigorous hands-on training for achieving 100% results towards total digitalization. Hence, there may be a session on these aspects in all training programmes along with self-learning AV modules and recordings."	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	As proposed. However digital technology is being implemented in the G.Ps of the State.	Nil		Nil	Nil

MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- PUR	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJAS- THAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NAGA- LAND
"State shall consider special meeting allowance to the women sarpanches/ and women elected representatives to ease the financial burden off women. GPs shall make use of OSR also to cover the travel/meeting expenses. Gram Sabha shall take this resolution."			All Sarpanches inclusive of EWRs are being given honorarium by the State	Nil	Nil		It is suggested that, in order to encourage Women Sarpanches to act Individually, Implementing moral incentives like honoring empowered women representatives as discussed in the point above would be more effective than monetary Incentives like honorarium. However, incentivizing all Women representatives may also help towards attracting more women to contest in the elections.	Nil		"Other than the existing system of honorarium, additional incentive in the manner of award may be given to the successful Women Pradhans based upon PDI data analysis"		Nil

MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- PUR	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJAS- THAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NAGA- LAND
"Special capacity build-		ĺ	Priority will	Nil	Nil		In Tamil Nadu,	Nil	For imple-	"Digital literacy		Nil
ing trainings of EWRs to			be given to				panchayat		mentation	for Office Bearers		
be included under RGSA			training of				accounting, tax-		of work	as well as		
to cover using smart			EWRs of				ation and related		related to	Members of		
phones, computers, basic			Panchayats				activities have all		Mobile	three-tier		
digital literacy, intro-			on digital				been made dig-		App	panchayats has		
duction to government			technology				ital in the past		covering	already		
portals/MIS to encour-			under RGSA				one year. Both			been introduced		
age use, usage of digital							men and women		business	in West Bengal.		
signatures etc. These							representatives		activities	Specific		
trainings shall be done							are periodi-		in Pancha-	curriculum may		
in a phased manner.							cally trained		yats, activ-	be made for		
Educational profile of the							on all digital		ities can	women Pradhans		
WERs shall be analyzed							applications like		be easily	as		
and the training content							PFMS, e-Gram		conducted	per their need."		
and design developed							Swaraj, VPTAX		through			
accordingly.							(Tax collection		vocational			
							portal), TNPASS		training			
Introduce them to							(Panchayats		and this			
government portals like							Accounting Por-		can lead			
LMS and encourage							tal), Online PPA		to unex-			
self-learning pro-							(Online building		pected			
grammes related to PRIs.							plan approval		beneficial			
							portal). There-		results in			
SATCOM and e-learning							fore, the elected		women's			
classrooms to be pro-							representatives		enthu-			
moted for training and							in Tamil Nadu		siasm/			
handholding support.							are becoming		morale			
							more digitally		towards			
Mobile based help desk							literate. Such		their work			
for WERs for regular							mechanisms		etc.			
handholding support."							may be imple-					
- **							mented in other					
			1				states also	l	I			

(L)	Contents of Consultative Paper	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJARAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & KASHMIR	JHARKHAND	KARNATAKA	KERALA
	AVAILABILITY OF BROADBAND TO EVERY VIL- LAGE:	access to BSNL broad- band connections, ensuring that every village is connected. This availability of broad band is essential for enhancing commu- nication and supporting various developmental initiatives.	"The Andhra Pradesh Government have provided Fiber Net connectivity to all PRIs and this facility is more useful to carryout Panchayat functions and conduct meetings while uploaag in Vibrant Gramsabha Portal & gramswaraj websites. The Scheduled Areas i.e. PESA (Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas) Panchayats shall be equipped with the broadband facility (max- imum availability of signals and such network facility) which enables them towards digitalization of Panchayat Functions and meetings."	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Steps are being taken to connect the left out GPs regarding the same.	Nil		In many remote Panchayats the broadband connectivity is still a major issue. This has to be addressed by the Union and State governments with special concern.	Nil

(M	Contents of Consultative Paper	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJARAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & KASHMIR	JHARKHAND	KARNATAKA	KERALA
	PHONE TO EVERY WOMEN SARPANCHES/	provision for providing mobile phones to wom- en Sarpanches/Women Pradhans. However, they do have access to landline phone connections and typi- cally possess their own smart phone, enabling them to communicate effectively and carry out	"Women Elected Representatives possess their own mobile phones and their phone numbers are recorded and displayed in panchayat profile. The Women ERs may be provided with Cell Phone facility and monthly bill charges with internet data facility for entire term i.e. 5 years, which enables them to become more digital friendly and acquainted with its operation too."	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	In 11.P elected women already have their mobile phones and there is no need to provide mobile from State budget.	Nil		There is a need to provide mobile phone to EWRS along with CUG numbers for them with central assistance.	Nil

MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- PUR	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJAS- THAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NAGA- LAND
"Internet connectivity in all GPs can be ensured; broadband connectivity in all GPs can be undertaken in a phased manner as state lacks infrastructure presently to ensure broadband coverage. State has plans to ensure provision of computers and 100% internet connectivity in all."			Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL) is coordinating with Local Administration Department to cover all Village Councils in Mizoram with Internet Broadband.	Nil	Nil		In Tamil Nadu, all the Village Panchayats have been provided with computers and printers and TN-PASS (Panchayat Accounting Portal) has been implemented. Further, the Government was brought in high speed connectivity through TANFINET (Tamil Nadu FiberNET Corporation), wherein Bharat net has been expanded upto the end villages. All the Village Panchayats are being connected by underground or aerial fiber-net cables through which every Village Panchayat office will be able to access internet at a very high speed		at the Pan- chayat level,	"Each and every Gram Panchayat of West Bengal has internet facility equipped with broadband. Additionally, all GP offices have BSK (Bangla Sahayata Kendra), an internet kiosk for giving advantages of Government schemes to general public"		Nil

MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- PUR	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJAS- THAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NAGA- LAND
"State can plan to provide mobile phones to all Women Sarpanches.			As of now, provision of Mobile Phone to ev-	Nil	Nil		In Tamil Nadu, all Village Panchayats have been provided	Nil	strong interest	"Decision may be taken in this regard."		Nil
GPs shall be encouraged to generate OSR and buy mobile phones for use by sarpanch.			ery Women Sarpanches / Women Pradhans				with computers with high technical specifi- cations. Further,		in this regard should be made available with smart			
GP shall also buy a SIM/ issue separate official number for sarpanch			seems to be unfeasible due to financial				all women representatives already have mobile phones.		phones, tablets etc. Along with selecting wom- en represen-			
which shall then be publicized in the Gram Panchayat.			constraint.				There are around 12,525 Village Panchayats in Tarnil Nadu		tatives doing excellent work in each devel- opment block,			
The phone will be entered as an asset in the GP register.							and with the introduction of TNPASS system, all Panchayat		and providing them formal certificates on an annual basis			
The mobile phone must be deposited with the GP at the end of the tenure."							Presidents have been provided with user ID and Password for day to day transac-		as an incentive.			
							tions. Hence, the requirement to provide mobile phones to Wom-					
							en Panchayat Pradhans do not arise.					

$\overline{}$	Contonto	A 1 0	<u> </u>			Г	I I A DV	Limacitat	I TANANTI O		1	
(N)	Contents of Consultative Paper	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJARAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & Kashmir	JHARKHAND	KARNATAKA	KERALA
	CO-ORDINA- TION AMONGST ALL PANCHA- YATS IN EVERY DISTRICT:	are conducted with all elected representatives, including women elected representatives. These meetings focus on assessing developmental works at the Panchayat level and reviewing various schemes implemented through Gram Panchayats. This platform provides an opportunity for all elected women representatives to coordinate and	"In Andhra Pradesh, the APPR Act, 1994 provided an interlinkage among three tiers of PRIs i.e., Gram Panchayats/Mandal Praja Parishads/Zilla Praja Parishads by allowing the Elected Representatives to repesent as permanent invitees in other tiers of Panchayats. At Gram Panchayat level: The MPTC (Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituency) members are made permanent invitees to the meetings of the Gram Panchayat. At Mandal Praja Parishad level: The Sarpanches of the Gram Panchayats and the ZPTC (Zilla Praja Parishad (District Panchayat) are made permanent invitees to the meetings of the Grilla Praja Parishad (District Panchayat) are made permanent invitees to the meetings of the middle tier of panchayat i.e., MPP (Mandal Praja Parishad). At Zilla Praja Parishad level: The MPPs (Mandal Parishad President) are made permanent invitees to the ZPP (Zilla Praja Parishad) meetings. These arrangements provide organic linkage among 3 tires of PRIs, which enable Co-ordination among all the Panchayat representatives."		Nil	Nil	Nil	Regular meetings of the Gram Panchayats is conducted at Block Level at regular intervals where all the issues including developmental activities are discussed.	Nil		Co-ordination at Block level is very effective.	Nil

(O)	Contents of Consultative Paper	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJARAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & KASHMIR	JHARKHAND	KARNATAKA	KERALA
	RECORDING OF MEETINGS OF PANCHAYATS AND PUTTING THEM IN PUB- LIC DOMAIN	are ensuring the video recording of meetings, along with maintaining written proceedings and photographing the meetings and other	In Andhra Pradesh, Government have established a mechanism for implementing Video recording of meetings of Panchayats and uploading the same in Vibrant Gram Sabha Portal and GS Nirnay app.	Nil	Nil	Compulsory uploading of videos with elected representatives of panchayats in gram sabhas conducted by gram panchayats on GS NIRNAY portal.		As proposed.	Nil		Karnataka has already initiated the process.	Nil

MADHYA PRADESH MANI- PUR LAYA MIZORUM ODISHA RAJAS- THAN SIKKIM TAMIL NADU TRIPURA UTTRA- KHAND WEST BENGAL Data & Naga: Haveli and	NAGA- LAND
Towarterly network meetings of GPs can be held at district level block wise or in phases in which Sarpanch and gram sevalk participate and share presentations of understeen the which sand share presentations of understeen the which and share presentations of understeen the which and share presentations of the week-open and share presentations of the week-open mental projects. It might be made mandatory to conduct State Level meetings conduct State Level meetings and understeen the with selected elected representatives from a did stircts in understeen the with selected elected representatives from all districts in order to facilitate co-ordination and convergence. At block level, panchayat extension officers and other departmental of the de	Nil

MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- PUR	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJAS- THAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NAGA- Land
"The state shall explore the capacities of the district website, their IT teams to manage therecording and uploading of videos from large number of GPs. It is possible to open youtube/facebook/ whatsapp channels for each district and to upload video recording on them."		1	Depending upon the situation and need, it may be feasible to implement video recording of meetings of Panchayats and uploading the same on the appropriate websites.		Nil		Video recording of meetings of pan- chayats and putting them in public do- main through Dis- trict website or the Panchayat's website is feasible. Though it requires much work on the technical side, this would highly Increase the transparency in pan- chayat administra- tion, also preventing out side influence in conducting Panchayat meetings. A pilot Panchayat may be taken up in certain states and then scaled up based on the learnings.			Department of P&RD, West Bengal has intro- duced a portal named West Bengal Panchayat Management System in which data regarding all types of meetings in connection with GPs are uploaded along with copies of resolution of the meetings. Regarding video recording of the meetings and uploading the same in public do- main there are some dif- ficulties like availability of cloud space and other portal related issues.		Nil

(P)	Contents of Consultative Paper	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJARAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & KASHMIR	JHARKHAND	KARNATAKA	KERALA
	AVAILIABILITY OF LITERATURE IN LOCAL LANGUAGE CONTAINING POWERS AND FUNCTIONS PANCHAYAT UNDER LAW RELATING TO PANCHAYAT:		"In Andhra Pradesh, necessary steps are being taken to train the newly elected representatives of PRIs regarding all aspects and topics relevant to three tiers of PRIs. Training modules are prepared and supplied in local language (Telugu) containing photographs, charts, tables for easy understanding by the elected representatives. The following training modules are provided to the Elected Representatives; 1. Handbooks for Sarpanches of Gram Panchayat - 03 Volumes. 2. Appendix to the 03 volumes of Sarpanches Hand books regarding Gram Panchayat administration. 3. Handbook for Gram Panchayat members - 1 volume. 4. Handbook for representatives of MPPS-02 Volumes 5. Handbook for representatives of ZPPS-02 Volumes. These books are prepared in Telugu and contain comprehensive training content which is easy to understand and is handy for elected representatives enabling them to perform their functions effectively."	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	As proposed.	Nil		"Good suggestion. In Karnataka ANSSIRD & PR, the training center for PRI Elected members and officers and officers and officers local language briefing the Karnataka Gram Swaraj and Panchaytat Raj Act, 1993, the powers and functions of elected women representatives with illustra- tions."	Nil
(Q)	Contents of Consultative Paper	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJARAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & KASHMIR	JHARKHAND	KARNATAKA	KERALA
	PUNITIVE MEASURES FOR PERSONS ACT- ING AS PROXY FOR ELECTED WOMEN REPRE- SENTATIVES:	So far, no punitive measures have been necessary, as proxy practices for elected	"The Government of Andhra Pradesh vide Circular Memo No.27712/Mdis.III/1996-1 Dt:24.07.1996 directed all the Chief Executive Officers / District Panchayat officers in the State to ensure that the elected representatives only of the Mandal Praja Parishads / Gram Panchayats, Special invitees/invitees, authorized officials shall attend the General Body Meetings in Mandal Praja Parishads, Gram Panchayats. Visitors if any including the relatives and spouses of women elected representatives may sit in the visitors gallery without disturbing the meeting proceedings. The said instructions do not provide punitive measures towards the proxy acting on behalf of the Elected Women Representatives. Creation of adequate awareness among all women representatives to utilize the opportunity provided by the Constitutional provisions and accordingly exercise their powers and functions as enacted by Panchayat Raj Act is the important step in this direction."	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	As proposed. However no such incident reported.	Nil		"They should be made liable for disqualification if found guilty after the due enquiry process is completed. In this regard the Karnataka state has already issued the letter dated: 10.06.2022 wherein it is instructed to women elected representatives for not involving their family members in the day to day affairs of the Panchayat Raj Institutions. Further it is also warned that if any such complaints are received in this regard, the Government is going to take action under Section 43(a) of Karnataka Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj Act, 1993 to disqualify them from the membership."	

MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- PUR	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJAS- THAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NAGA- LAND
"State shall work with SIRD and technical support organizations/ NGOs to develop information materials on panchayats in local dialects/ language - written and audio content. Pictorial resource books on functions and powers of panchayats will also be quite useful and can be developed with support of technical support organizations/SIRD."			A copy of the existing Village Council Act i.e., The Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act, 1953 has been distributed to all Village Councils and copy of the same can also be downloaded from Local Administration Department's Website.	Nil	Nil		In Tamil Nadu, all important acts like Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act, 1994 and related rules made under the act are all available in Tamil and are put up in public domain in the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj department's official website.	Nil	Nil	"Different handbooks on different issues like – Acts, Rules, formation of Panchayats, powers & functions of Office Bearers, works related to Subcommittees & all related matters are already available and distributed to EWRs for proper learning and empower them to discharge their functions. In W.B, all the handbooks are available in vernaculars like Bengali; a few are available in Nepali; translation work in Nepali and Alchiki (Santhali) has already been taken up."		Nil
MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- PUR	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJAS- THAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NAGA- LAND
"A system has to be developed to verify that proxy sarpanch is operating in any GP; the system should be sensitive, and aware of the structural inequalities and ensure that no personal biases influence the verification process. Relaxation in certain provisions related to financial irregularities wherein WERs are not removed for discrepancies committed by the proxies. There should be systems to investigate the presence and action of proxies in such cases and take action against them instead of the WERs."			As there are no records of practices of proxy in Village Councils so far, there is no punitive measures for persons acting as proxy for EWRs. It seems that this is not required for Mizoram as of now	Nil	Nil		Implementing punitive measures in the form of fines against male members of the family acting as proxy for women elected representatives would be a welcome suggestion which the Government may consider, as it will definitely act as a doterrent against such activities.	Nil	Nil	"Nothing to opine"		Nil

_			Г		İ		114.037	I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I I	TANDAT O		i	
(R)	Contents of Consultative Paper	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJARAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & KASHMIR	JHARKHAND	KARNATAKA	KERALA
	OF CAPACITY	Regular capaci- ty-building programs representatives (EWR) are essential to prepare them to assume greater responsibilities as local legislators. These programs should focus on increasing their awareness of their pow- ers and duties, ensuring they areequipped to effectively fulfill their roles in governance.	"In Andhra Pradesh, some of the legislators in the State have got previous work experience as Sarpanch/MPP/ZPTCs. Higher responsibilities may be assigned to them in two ways. 1. Enabling the Sarpanches to participate in Local policy making functions in the form of making Bye-Laws and their implementation locally. ii. Improving the awareness of Local Sarpanches to upgrade their skill set and gradually upgrade their skill set and gradually upgrade their stature to compete and get elected as legislators in due course of time. It may be considered to take up policy reforms in the State legislative setup. A quota may be fixed exclusively for represe atives of PRIs to contest in the election conducted to Elect Members of State Legislative Council and the members of Rajya Sabha. At present, the local body quota of MLCs seats are filled up with people not connected with the PRIs. It is advantageous to send experienced PRI elected representatives to Legislative Council and Rajya Sabha. Similar quota may be fixed up in Rajya Sabha also for elected representatives of PRIs"		Nil	Monitoring and supervision: Regularly monitor and supervise Gram Panchayat activities to ensure women Sarpanchs are exercising their authority and decision-making powers.	Nil	As proposed.	Nil		Suggestion given in the above columns.	Nil
(S)	Contents of Consultative Paper	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJARAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & KASHMIR	JHARKHAND	KARNATAKA	KERALA
	TRAINING TO ELECTED WOM- EN REPRESEN- TATIVE TO INTERFACE WITH OTHER LAYERS OF LO- CAL SELF-GOV- ERNANCE WITHIN THE STATE:	Under the training component of the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA), various training programs are periodically offered to elected women representatives (EWRs) at all levels of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. These programs aim to help EWRs understand and interface effectively with other layers of local self-governance. Additionally, EWRs are encouraged to take on roles as resource persons or chairpersons, which helps develop their leadership qualities.	The Andhra Pradesh Government have conducted a number of training programmes by APSIRD and SERP to elected women representatives so as to develop leadership qualities which helped them to represent effectively with other layers of local self-governance within the State, to secure the entitlements due to the Panchayats.	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Already being implemented	Nil		Already explained in earlier columns.	Nil

MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- PUR	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJAS- THAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NAGA LAND
"Phased training programmes with systematic mentoring process can be developed. SPRC/DPRC/BPRC shall be made responsible for providing this mentorship support. A mentoring team consisting of governance expert, finance expert, Engineers, and social development expert/NGO representatives shall be formed at block/cluster levels to provide this handholding support. Interaction with district and block ERS/MLAs/MPs through the networks/quarterly meetings for experience sharing to give new perspectives towards development and develop women elected representatives' political aspirations as well. Gender sensitive training programmes for WERs to be developed."			There is no systematic mechanism as such for enhancing women's capacity to take up new responsibility as local legislators as of now. However, EWRs of Village Councils are being given training on women empowerment under RGSA	Nil	Nil		Being a local body representative is a stepping stone in assuming higher legislative positions for many current and former legislators. Awareness programmes under the leadership of eminent people who started from the grassroots may be conducted for women elected local body representatives to encourage them to aspire for new roles and responsibilities.	Nil	Nil	"As per West Bengal Panchayat Act,1973 mechanism already exists for increasing awareness and capacity of rural women by incorporating SHG women into Upa-samiti (Subcommittee) so that they can perform higher responsibilities. 2nd Saturday meeting is there for betterment of these groups."		Nil
MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- PUR	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJAS- THAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NAGA LAND
"Trainings can be organized through SIRDS. Modules to be evaluated and revised to include topics like interconnectedness of PRIs, powers of panchayats as enshrined in the PR act, and coordinating with line departments for better management and utilization of resources (HR, infrastructure, funds)"			This Leader- ship Training session is being incorporated under CB&T.	Nil	"Women elected representative who came firstly after having seat reserved for women, need huge training and support of local women groups."		State and Regional training Institutes are already involved in training Women Representatives and are working towards imparting leadership skills to them. Other layers of Local Self-Governance like Block Panchayats and District Panchayats have also been trained to work in co-operation with Village Panchayats.	Nil	Nil	"Special training of EWRs on all aspects for carrying out statutory works as well as discretionary & obligatory duties of Gram Panchayat including schematic and social welfare programmes are convened in a regular interval with a process of evaluation. Integrated training of 3-tier Panchayat Members on institutional matters and SDG thematic trainings are also done for better interaction."		Nil

(T)	Contents of Consultative Paper	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJARAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & KASHMIR	JHARKHAND	KARNATAKA	KERALA
	TRAINING IN RELATION TO ADMINISTRA- TIVE MATTERS RELATING TO PANCHAYATS:	"In this Union Terri- tory, elected women	"A Special training programme may be designed and imparted to the Women Elected Representatives on conduct of various meetings at Panchayat Level. (Planning process (GPDP), preparation of meeting agenda, basic meeting procedure, chairing meeting, moving resolutions and voting processes in Panchayat meetings). As per the directions of the Government of India, Mahila Sabha, Ward Sabha, Gram Sabhas are conducted every year during planning process. In Andhra Pradesh, a training Manual especially on ""Common Administrative Procedure" is prepared and circulated to all Elected Representatives including Women Elected Representatives, which provided a comprehensive solution on administrative procedures in Gram Panchayats."	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	As proposed.	Nil		"Imparting Special training on the issues through the following media:- youtube training. face to face training in block level samarthya Soudhas. Districts Training Co-ordi- nators, Master Trainers visit and train the EWRs at Gram Panchayat level."	Nil
(U)	Contents of Consultative Paper	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJARAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & KASHMIR	JHARKHAND	KARNATAKA	KERALA
	ROLE/RESPON- SIBILITY OF MEMBERS OF LEGISLATIVE	"In the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, there is no Assembly.	"In Andhra Pradesh, according to the various Act provisions, the MLAs, MLCs and MPs, are	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	As proposed.	Nil		"This suggestion is	Nil

MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- PUR	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJAS- THAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and	NAGA- LAND
The specialized training programmes mentioned against point 'e'should cover these aspects The training should be a mix of theory and practical aspects of governance like PRIs and 3Fs, interconnectedness of PRIs, planning, chairing meetings, mobilizing community, written and verbal communication in formal and informal settings, gram sabha, mahila sabha and other meetings etc. Separate trainings for WERs shall be proposed under RGSA. The training modules need to be revamped completely with a gender sensitive lens. State shall seek support of technical support organizations for revising the modules and training to be rolled out through SIRDS/DPRCs/BPRCs.			Special Training in this regard can be organized for EWRs depending upon the need	Nil	Nil		Being a local body representative is a stepping stone in assuming higher legislative positions for many current and former legislators. Awareness programmes under the leadership of eminent people who started from the grassroots may be conducted for women elected local body representatives to encourage them to aspire for new roles and responsibilities.	"Every Gram Panchayat/ Village Committee of our State conducts Mahila (Women) Sabha to provide a platform to women to address their female-centric issues/ demands; which has become a key weapon in order to attain the Theme-9 of LSDG i.c. ""Women Friendly Village An SOP for conducting Mahila Sabha is attached herewith."	Nil	"Responses have already been given in para C; additional trainings can also be arranged."	Daman & Diu	Nil
MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- PUR	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJAS- THAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and	NAGA- LAND
"The proposed quarterly meeting of the network of ERs should have participation of MLAs, MPs, district and Janpad level ERs from the constituencies in which the GPs are located. The meeting shall be a platform for discussions on development issues and practical challenges faced by women ERs in discharging their duties. The MLAs and MPs shall play the role of 'influencers/motivators' for the WERs by sharing their stories and other stories from around the country. MPs and MLAs shall consider the development needs raised by EWRs while allocating funds for development. The active WERs should be invited as speakers in the trainings/induction programmes of Women sarpanches/WERs"			This can be incorporated under CB&T	Nil	Nil		"Members of Leg- islative Assemblies and Member of Parliaments may review the func- tioning of pan- chayats situated in their constituen- cies. Already funds from the Constitu- ency Development Funds are also channelized by the MPS and MLAS towards the needs of the Village Pan- chayats towards infrastructure works. A small portion of their Constituency De- velopment Funds may be earmasked towards providing capacity building and leadership trainings to Wom- en Sarpanches of their constituency."	Nil	Nil	"As per West Bengal Panchayat Act,1973, Members of Legislative Assemblies and Members of Parlia- ment (MLA, MP) are ex-officio Members of Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad. Also, Pradhans are ex-officio Members of Panchayat Samiti and as such there is statutory scope of interaction between Pradhans and Members of Legislative Assemblies and Members of Parliament in respect of capacity building and leadership qualities of Women Pradhans."	Daman & Diu	Nil

EDUCATION AND COM- AND COM- MUNICATION CAMPAIGN FOR ELIMINATING GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINA- TION AND PROXY PRAC- TICES: 100 A Mission (NRLM) scheme, pamphlets and posters are distributed at the Panchayat level to disseminate information about eliminating gender-based discrimination and proxy practices. These efforts aim to empower women and promote equality within local governance EDUCATION AND CM- AND COM- MUNICATION CAMPAIGN FOR ELIMINATING GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINA- TION AND Additionally, under the National Rural Liveli- hoods Mission (NRLM) scheme, pamphlets and posters are distributed at the Panchayat level to disseminate information about eliminating gender-based discrimination and proxy practices. These efforts aim to empower women and promote equality within local governance EDUCATION Swaraj Abhiyan to enhance already educating the elected members of the Panchayat Raj Institutions and the officers of the Panchayat Raj Institutions and the officers of the Panchayat Raj Institutions and also the representatives of NGOs, SHGs and othe organization so as to disseminate information among the Rural mass on eliminating and monitoring of GPDP by convening Mahila Sabhas prior to the Gram EDUCATION (EC) campaigns already educating the elected members of the Panchayat Raj Institutions and the officers of the Hambe											
EDUCATION AND COM- AND COM- MUNICATION CAMPAIGN FOR ELIMINATING GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINA- TION AND PROXY PRAC- TICES: 100 A Mission (NRLM) scheme, pamphlets and posters are distributed at the Panchayat level to disseminate information about eliminating gender-based discrimination and proxy practices. These efforts aim to empower women and promote equality within local governance EDUCATION AND CM- AND COM- MUNICATION CAMPAIGN FOR ELIMINATING GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINA- TION AND Additionally, under the National Rural Liveli- hoods Mission (NRLM) scheme, pamphlets and posters are distributed at the Panchayat level to disseminate information about eliminating gender-based discrimination and proxy practices. These efforts aim to empower women and promote equality within local governance EDUCATION Swaraj Abhiyan to enhance already educating the elected members of the Panchayat Raj Institutions and the officers of the Panchayat Raj Institutions and the officers of the Panchayat Raj Institutions and also the representatives of NGOs, SHGs and othe organization so as to disseminate information among the Rural mass on eliminating and monitoring of GPDP by convening Mahila Sabhas prior to the Gram EDUCATION (EC) campaigns already educating the elected members of the Panchayat Raj Institutions and the officers of the Hambe	(V)				BIHAR		PRADESH	KASHMIR	JHARKHAND		KERALA
Tion and princy practices."		INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND COM- MUNICATION CAMPAIGN FOR ELIMINATING GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINA- TION AND PROXY PRAC-	Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaigns are conducted about raise gender-based periodically discrimination among elected women representatives (EWRs). Additionally, under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) scheme, pamphlets and posters are distributed at the Panchayat level to disseminate information about eliminating gender-based discrimination and proxy practices. These efforts aim to empower women and promote equality within local	"The Government of India, in 2018 launched Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan to enhance PRIs' capacities for response rural governance, leveraging technology and resources for sustainable solutions aligned with SDG themes in which Women Friendly Village is one of the themes. It also incentivized women's participation in PRIs. Further, the guidelines of the GPDP emphasize the women empowerment which include proactive participation of women in Budgeting, planning, implementing and monitoring of GPDP by convening Mahila Sabhas prior to the Gram	Nil		!			"Well sug- gested. Karnataka is already educat- ing the elected members of the Panchayat Raj Institutions and the officers of the Panchayat Raj Institutions and also the representatives of NGOs, SHGs and othe organization so as to dissemi- nate the infor- mation among the Rural mass on eliminating Gender-Based or Discrimina- tion and proxy	Nil

MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- Pur	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJASTHAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NAC LAI
Citizen journalists,			There are no	Nil	"State of Rajas-		IEC campaigns	"We are	Nil	"More and more	Zuman & Dill	N
ommunity radio sta-			records of	·	than has recon-		like awareness	conducting		involvement		
ons, AIR, FM channels,			gender-based		stituted GPPCC		rallies, signature	awareness		of women		l
			discrim-							1		l
cal cable networks etc					(Gram Panchayat		campaigns,	campaigns		office bearers in		l
an be explored to dis-			ination		Planning and		publishing of short	throughout		non-statutory		l
minate the messages.			and proxy		Coordination		films etc., may be	the years		and social activ-		l
istrict shall take lead in			practices in		Committee)		implemented to	to change		ities are keys for		l
lentifying such media.			Mizoram		with increased		promote changes	Societal		empowerment.		l
nd the state shall coor-			Village		representation of		in social mindsets	attitudes		IEC activities		l
					, i							ı
nate the development			Councils.		different women		for eliminating	towards		may be taken		ı
content, messages etc.			Therefore,		groups of GP.		proxy practices.	women in		up with such		ı
ne content should be			IEC Cam-		(Order dated			leaderships		targets."		ı
ritically monitored to			paign specif-		28.9.2023)			roles. This		~		l
sure clear, non-biased			ically in this		,			includes				l
essaging for more					State of Rajasthan			educating				l
			regard is not					0				l
npact and less conflict			required as		and rejuve-			commu-				l
discomfort for			of now		nated women			nities				l
omen on ground.					participation by			about the				l
Ö					reconstituting			importance				l
ate shall use SHGs and					Mahila Shakti			of women's				l
										I		1
eir federations also to					Samuh to ensure			leadership		I		1
read these messages.					active and par-			and the		I		1
-					ticipative role of			negative		I		1
reate videos, and other					women in GPDP			impact		I		1
line content under					and develop-					I		1
					Ι			of proxy	1	1		I
GSA component and					ment aspects of			representa-		I		1
oadcast through a set					gram panchayat.			tion."		I		1
social media platforms					This action will							l
cluding youtube and					support the GPs							ı
					led by Women							ı
hatsapp channels.												l
nese messages/videos					Elected Repre-							l
all be played in gram					sentatives. (Order							ı
bha meetings.					dated 27.12.2023)					1		1
										I		1
ate shall also consider					State of Rajasthan							l
												l
romoting opening					has initiated							l
ages on social media					and innovative							l
latforms in a phased					program on							l
nanner through which					ENGAGING							l
anchayat can start					SATHINS AS							l
												l
ublishing information					'PANCHA-							l
elated to development					YAT LEVEL							l
orks, meeting informa-					TRAINERS'							l
on, public contribution					FOR VIBRANT							ı
quirements etc too for					BAL SABHA							ı
1												l
formation dissemi-					AND MAHILA							l
ation amongst public					SABHA with							l
nd to promote their					technical support							l
articipation."					from UNICEF							l
articipation.					and having provi-							l
												l
					sion under RGSA					I		1
					(Rashtriya Gram				1	1		1
					Swaraj Abhiyan).					I		1
					SATHIN (a					I		1
					female cadre of					I		1
										I		1
					GP level worker							l
					in Rajasthan,							l
					department of							ı
					Women Empow-					I		1
									1	1		1
					erment having					I		1
					presence in all					I		1
										I		1
					Gram Panchayats					1		1
					Gram Panchayats							
					Gram Panchayats of Rajasthan).							
					Gram Panchayats of Rajasthan). SATHIN will lead							
					Gram Panchayats of Rajasthan). SATHIN will lead to strengthen							
					Gram Panchayats of Rajasthan). SATHIN will lead to strengthen capacity and							
					Gram Panchayats of Rajasthan). SATHIN will lead to strengthen							
					Gram Panchayats of Rajasthan). SATHIN will lead to strengthen capacity and role of women							
					Gram Panchayats of Rajasthan). SATHIN will lead to strengthen capacity and role of women and children in							
					Gram Panchayats of Rajasthan). SATHIN will lead to strengthen capacity and role of women and children in Panchayati Raj							
					Gram Panchayats of Rajasthan). SATHIN will lead to strengthen capacity and role of women and children in Panchayati Raj which give more							
					Gram Panchayats of Rajasthan). SATHIN will lead to strengthen capacity and role of women and children in Panchayati Raj							
					Gram Panchayats of Rajasthan). SATHIN will lead to strengthen capacity and role of women and children in Panchayati Raj which give more strong hands to							
					Gram Panchayats of Rajasthan). SATHIN will lead to strengthen capacity and role of women and children in Panchayati Raj which give more strong hands to Women leader-							
					Gram Panchayats of Rajasthan). SATHIN will lead to strengthen capacity and role of women and children in Panchayati Raj which give more strong hands to Women leader- ship especially							
					Gram Panchayats of Rajasthan). SATHIN will lead to strengthen capacity and role of women and children in Panchayati Raj which give more strong hands to Women leadership especially where elected							
					Gram Panchayats of Rajasthan). SATHIN will lead to strengthen capacity and role of women and children in Panchayati Raj which give more strong hands to Women leader- ship especially							
					Gram Panchayats of Rajasthan). SATHIN will lead to strengthen capacity and role of women and children in Panchayati Raj which give more strong hands to Women leadership especially where elected representative are							
					Gram Panchayats of Rajasthan). SATHIN will lead to strengthen capacity and role of women and children in Panchayati Raj which give more strong hands to Women leadership especially where elected							
					Gram Panchayats of Rajasthan). SATHIN will lead to strengthen capacity and role of women and children in Panchayati Raj which give more strong hands to Women leadership especially where elected representative are							
					Gram Panchayats of Rajasthan). SATHIN will lead to strengthen capacity and role of women and children in Panchayati Raj which give more strong hands to Women leadership especially where elected representative are							

(W)	Contents of Consultative Paper	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJARAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & KASHMIR	JHARKHAND	KARNATAKA	KERALA
	Consultative Paper CONVERGENCE AMONGST PANCHAYATS, SELF-HELP GROUPS AND COMMUNI- TY-BASED OR-	Nicobar Islands "Since 2020, effective convergence between Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) has been observed. SHGs and their federations (Community-Based Organizations) prepare Village Poverty Resilience Plans (VPRP) annually for incorporation into the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP). Elected women representatives (EWRs) actively support SHGs and their federations in this process.	"Self Help Groups (SHGs) are vibrant in Andhra Pradesh. There is convergence between Self-Help Groups and Panchayat Raj Institutions in terms of their functions. Functional committees of Gram Panchayats consist of members of Self-Help Groups and they participate in the concerned thematic subject matters. In the day-to-day administration, a good number of programs are drawn up and implemented through PRIS-SHG interface. Establishment & strengthening joint planning committees is taken up with representatives from Panchayats, SHGs, and CBOS (Community Based Organisation) to ensure coordinated planning and implementation of development programs addressing women's needs."	Nil	GOA	GUJARAT Community engagement: Engage with the community to raise awareness about the importance of women's leadership and participation in Gram Panchayats.					KARNATAKA The issues have already been addressed Pby the Panchayats in Karnataka. Solid waste management in rural area is handled by the Gram Panchayat level federation and mt promoting economic empowerment of SHG ng Women members through income generating elf activities like poultry, pisciculture, integrated ed farming, catering services, solid waste management, in convergence with Grama Panchayaths.	Nil

MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- Pur	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJASTHAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NAG.
There is a very enabling pace now ever since he SHGS/VOs and GPs collaborated integrate GPDP-VPRP The initiative under GRLM like GP level gender forums to oversee gender related issues at GP level and formation and strengthening of coordination committee o monitor VPRP implementation can be further trengthened. Capacity building pro-			As a matter of fact, this activity needs to be strengthened despite there exists good cooperation between Village Councils and SHGs / CBOs in certain projects.	Nil	State will conduct state level consultations and discussions in technical partnership with UNICEF, ARAVALI and other NGOs, CBOs working with experience and understanding on this issue. State will support in local testing of ideas, generating ways to combat and will also		The State is trying to establish a convergence between Panchayats and Self- Help Groups through many means. Most of the women ward members are members of local self-help groups. SHGs are actively involved in creating Village Panchayat Development plan (VPDP) every year, selection of works	Nil	Nil	"Different activities are taken for establishment of convergence between Panchayats & SHGs by constitution of Sub-Committee of Panchayats as SHG Members are Members of Sub-Committee. SHG Members are also involved in 2nd Saturday meeting held at Gram Panchayat, GPPFT team,		Nil
grammes of GP ERs and WERs shall be improved o include these commitees and their functions and how they shall improve governance. These committees serve is a platform to improve convergence as different ine departments and					remain open to accept best prac- tices of other stats on this issue.		under MGNREGS and State Gov- ernment Schemes like AGAMT 11. SHG Panchayat level Federation members are also involved in conducting door to door surveys to find eligible ben-			Para Baithak and act as VPRP in GPDP."		
Provisions for Mahila Sabhas in PR act shall be explored to create mandatory specialized olatforms for engagement with women in the							eficiaries for the schemes. Further, they are Involved in various training programmes conducted by the Panchayats,					
community. VOs/SHGs hould mobilize women nto these meetings. Monthly mahila sanvad with elected representatives especially WERs can be planned at the GP evel to improve PRI-VO convergence. The issues liscussed at such forums												
ascussed at such forums an further be taken up in the Gram Sabha/GP general body meeting etc. Gram Sabhas will liscuss the issues raised by SHGs/VOs and esolutions taken will												
pe recorded in meeting minutes and commu- nicated back to SHGS/ /OS. So, regularizing heir meetings, ensuring GP participation, especially that of women elected representatives, and monitoring of these meetings by CEO Janpad												
Panchayat shall ensure petter convergence be- ween PRIs and VOs."												

Contents of Consultative Paper Nicobar Islands ANDHRA PRADESH BIHAR GOA GUJARAT ANA PRADESH KASHMIR JHARKHAND KARNATAKA KER ANDHRA PRADESH Markhand Markhand	(X)										
DARSHAN CHANNEL AND SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CREATING AWARENESS AMONGST ELECTED WOMEN EN REPRESENTATIVES: TATIVES: TATIVES: Darshan and covered in local newspapers, show-casing the commendable work of EWRs in their communities. This media engagement effectively raises awareness and promotes the achievements of women in local governance, encouraging greater participation and designed and an operation and social and print media, plays a significant role in highlighting the positive activities undertaken by Panchayats led by elected women data National level and also state levels. A weekly duestion and danswer session representatives (EWRs). Owned Door Darshan channels on dexhibit the initial stages, Governments may consider utilizing the State representatives get benefited through cross learning and gain local newspapers, show-casing the commendable work of EWRs in their communities. This media engagement effectively raises awareness and promotes the achievements of women in local governance, encouraging greater participation and		Consultative Paper		ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR		PRADESH	KASHMIR	JHARKHAND		
	U I S S I I I	USE OF DOOR DARSHAN CHANNEL AND SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CREATING AWARENESS AMONGST ELECTED WOM- EN REPRESEN-	In the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Door Darshan, along with social and print media, plays a significant role in highlighting the positive activities undertaken by Panchayats led by elected women representatives (EWRs). During the SHS Campaign. mass events were broadcast by Doo1 Darshan and covered in local newspapers, showcasing the commendable work of EWRs in their communities. This media engagement effectively raises awareness and promotes the achievements of women in local governance, encouraging greater participation and	exclusive TV Channels in favour of promoting local governance, where PRIs and Municipalities can participate in these channels and exhibit their best practices. In the initial stages, Governments may consider utilizing the State owned Door Darshan channels towards promoting local governance. Women elected representatives get benefited through cross learning and gain good experience to build their future career as Elected Women representatives in higher tiers of Governance.	Nil					slots to be given for this both at National level and also state levels. A weekly question and answer session every week on panchayat issues can be considered both in Door Darshan and Radio chan-	Nil

MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- PUR	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJASTHAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	IANI
Social media has eached most of the rura reas except for some emote pockets. The state will work on insuring that all GPs ave computers and internet connectivity. It that shall develop hort duration videos, learning content on PRIs, 3 Fs, etc. and gramabha meetings which an be broadcasted using outube, and other social nedia platforms. The state shall also eneavour to promote diseminating resolutions f gram sabha through ocial media including whatsapp to ensure all ram sabha members are ware of the decisions. The state shall open a separate channel on popular ocial media platforms including WhatsApp to disseminate related in ormation to WERs. The nessages need to be tailored to fit the platforms elected. The language, one of message, content to shall be vetted by the overnment. The sovernment can seek the support of NIC, that data center, and rganizations providing echnical support to OoPR in creation and dissemination of such nessages and to devise vays to live stream neetings through social nedia.	PUR		This seems to be feasible and State will take necessary action depending upon the need.	Nil	Nil	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU The State Institute of Rural Development, Tamil Nadu, has a YouTube Channel and many short films regarding functioning of Panchayat meetings. empowerment of women representatives etc., which have already been uploaded. More such short films and Programmes may be broadcast through Doordarshan and all social media so as to enhance behavioral change and increase their reach.	Nil Nil		"There is a periodic journal called 'Panchayatti Raj' and a radio programme named 'Panchayat-oGramon-nayaner Asor' is broadcasted. Previously, a programme named 'Panchayat Darpan' was launched on using Door Darshan in West Bengal providing a platform for taking interviews, giving opinions on different Panchayat matters, telling success stories etc. by elected representatives as well as Govt Officers. The same may be continued in future"	Daman & Diu	I TAN

(Y)	Contents of Consultative Paper	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJARAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & Kashmir	JHARKHAND	KARNATAKA	KERALA
	CREATING NETWORK AMONGST NET- WORKS OF ALL PANCHAYATS:	Creating a network among all Pancha- yats can facilitate better Communication, resource sharing, and collaborative problem-solving. This network can enable Panchayats to share best practices, discuss chal- lenges, and coordinate	It is essential to create network of networks. To some extent the organizational structure of 3 tier PRIs system enables Elected women representatives to express their views and opinions. However, systematic organizations of Elected Representatives may be planned for and implemented.	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	As proposed.	"Social and Cultural Interventions Awareness Campaigns: Conduct awareness campaigns for the community to make them realize the importance of women's active participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions. It can bring forth the benefits brought about by women leadership and the ills suffered from the proxy practices. Community Outreach: minimize patriarchal norms challenging women's roles in governance at the local level. This would be achieved through community meetings, dialogues with local influential leaders and publicity given to the success stores of women Pradhans."		This can be considered. Along with this a Federation of ERs at Block, District and State levels can also be considered with the office bearers being elected by the EWRs themselves.	Nil
(Z)	Contents of	Andaman &	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJARAT	HARY-	HIMACHAL	JAMMU &	JHARKHAND	KARNATAKA	KERALA
	INCHARGE OF CONCERNED DISTRICT/ CON- CERNED CHIEF SECRETARY/ CONCERNED CHIEF MINIS- TER OF THE CONCERNED STATE AND SOLICITING	Every year in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, various meet- ings are conducted, including DISHA meetings, MGNRE- GA SEGC meetings,	"The issue shall be brought to the notice of the State Government for implementation. The meetings as proposed in a,b& c can be held as per the decision of the State Government."	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	PRADESH Such meetings can be held upto District level and funding for such meeting be provided under RGSA or any other scheme	KASHMIR		This should be considered.	Nil

MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- PUR	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJASTHAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	NAGA- LAND
"Network of women elected representatives will be very beneficial. Directorate of Panchayati Raj shall depute one officer of rank no less than Deputy Director for this. Similarly, a network of organizations, experts, academia which work on local governance shall also be formed which can act as a reference group for the state and mentor for the ER network. Government shall collaborate with CSOs/NGOs for formation of both the alliances and to facilitate their meetings/design functions."			All Mizoram Village Council Association is actively functioning in respect of creating networks of all Village Councils.	Nil	Nil		A network amongst all Panchayats may be established online through telegram channels. Establishing an offline network among 6000+ women representatives from 37 districts may be challenging. It can be tried by taking them on exposure visits where they can interact among each other and establish a network by themselves.	"We have established support networks for women leaders, including mentorship programs to provide them with guidance and encouragement, we are conducting Women Sabha frequently wherein they can raise their female-centric issues before the women leaderships. Thus participation of women in decision making increases and leadership quality develops."	Nil	"Nothing to opine"		Nil
MADHYA PRADESH	MANI- PUR	MEGHA- LAYA	MIZORUM	ODISHA	RAJASTHAN	SIKKIM	TAMIL NADU	TRIPURA	UTTRA- KHAND	WEST BENGAL	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and	NAGA- LAND
"Network of women sarpanches would be a great platform to facilitate mutual sharing and dialogues on practical challenges faced by them. While quarterly district level meetings are feasible through close collaboration with non-government organizations/civil society organizations, it would be better to have one state level meet of all women sarpanches at state level. The state meet can be planned in a way that Honorable CM/Union Minister/PM are chief guests and the secretaries of different departments along with CS will participate. The meeting can be planned in such a way that it is interactive, State shall take support of the CSOs/NGOs providing technical assistance in organizing and designing such events."			This may be feasible provided there is fund provision for organizing / holding periodic meetings as the Village Councils from the Village will be in need of TA/DA for attending the meetings at District / State Level.	Nil	Nil		As discussed above in poiC), periodic meetings are already being conducted at the district level by the District Collectors exclusively for Women elected representatives. Meeting at higher levels is also a welcome suggestion which the state may explore in the near future.	Nil	Nil	"Nothing to opine"	Daman & Diu	Nil

(ZA)	Contents of Consultative Paper	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	ANDHRA PRADESH	BIHAR	GOA	GUJARAT	HARY- ANA	HIMACHAL PRADESH	JAMMU & KASHMIR	JHARKHAND	KARNATAKA	KERALA
	TENURE OF WOMEN SARPANCHES/ WOMEN PRAD- HANS	In the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the tenure of elected women representatives (EWRs) is the same as that of male elected representatives in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). This ensures equal terms of office or all representatives, promoting gender parity in local governance.	"The issue may be brought to the notice of the State Government as the above said provision is not incorporated in AP PR A 1994. Limiting the number of	Nil	Nil	Nil	ANA Nil	In the State 50% reservation is provided to women on roaster system. Frequency of rotation may be after 10 years.	KASHMIR Community Outreach: minimize patriarchal norms challenging women's roles in governance at the local level. This would be achieved through community meetings, dialogues with local influential leaders and publicity given to the success stores of women Pradhans.		The Karnataka State has already provided reservation for the women elected members in the posts of Adhyaksha and Upadyaksha in all the three tiers of PRIs. Period of reservation is for five years. This period of reservation is divided to two terms (30 Months) so as limiting the tenure of elected women Adhyaksha/ Upadhyaksha for 30 months. Another elected women belongs to the same reservation category can be elected as Adhyaksha/ Upadhyaksha.	Nil

Views and Suggestions from State Women Commission

	State Women Commissions	issions													
SI. Points from	Andhra Pradesh	Assam	Goa	Gujarat	Karnataka	Kerala	Madhya	Mizoram	Nagaland	Rajasthan	Sikkim	Tamil Nadu	Telangana	Tripura	West
	The initiative by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj to seek views and suggestions from the Andhra Pradesh Women's Commission on empowering Elected Women Representatives at the local body level is commendable, as it fosters synegy and expedites the	mmission for munission for munission for monen agrees with st of the pects/sections/poin as laid down in the d Consultative per. It has given views on Point Qof per e Consultative per						<u> </u>		- Z		As the Consultative paper recommends, it is necessary to establish mechanisms to identify and record data of the number of Panchayats where women representatives only act as proxy, so that targeted training and empowerment programmes can be taken up in such Panchayats. Mechanisms such as survey with the people of the Village Panchayet, unannounced inspections by PRI officials may be implemented.	<u> </u>		
B (B) COLLECTION AND RECORDING DATA OF THE QUALITATIVE DATA ON THE ASPECTS OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION CAE LIFETED		Ē	Ē		z Z	Ē	Ž	Ī	<u> </u>	Ē		Collection of qualitative data on active participation of women representative will be highly useful in analyzing the current scenario. The collection and recording may be done by outsiders like College Students or NGOs as it would ensure unbiased data collection.	ž	Ē	Ē
C (C) E MEASURES FOR ELIMINATING PROXY PRACTICES ADOPTED IN RELATION OF ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIV E: Additional measures for eliminating proxy practices were adopted in relation to elected women representatives because it is	Accelerate I investment in Capacity-Building: - Increase funding for training programs to enhance the skills of elected women representatives (EWRS) Regularly assess and improve the quality of training to empower EWRs in their roles Provide training on digital technology to jamchayat responsibilities. Promote collaboration with	Z .	₩	Σij	N. I.	Z Z	ı.	Ī	Z N N N N N N N N N N N N N N N N N N N	Nil		In Tamil Nadu, as per the directions of the State directions of the State Government, the District Collectors/Inspector of Panchayats conduct meetings with Women elected representatives once every three months. At the meetings, the months assure to handhold women representatives through their administration and all the queries of the women elected the representatives with respect to Administration will be discussed. The Women representatives are also reiterated about their powers and responsibilities to the people who elected them and the implications of letter their male family members dominate them.	ī	<u>-</u>	₩

(D) LEGAL MEASURES I.E. AMENDMENTS, IF ANY, REQUIRED IN THE EXISTING LEGAL FRAMEWORK REQUIRED FOR ELIMINATING PROXY	1 8 6 0 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	NII.	Ī	<u> </u>	=	Ē		Ē	Ī	Ē	The Government shall consider N making legal framework to protect the rights of women elected representative and rules shall be framed in such a way that the male family members, if proven to interfere with the day-to-day operations and decisionmaking functions of the Panchayat, be made punishable under law.	<u> </u>		Ē
E (E) IMPLEMENTATI ON OF EFECTIVE RESERVATION FOR ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVE IN PANCHAYATS.: Measures for empowering elected women representatives of Panchayats and ensuring their	NIII	II.	ΪZ	iz z	- I	₹	NII N	ĪZ	₹	Ī	In fact, at present, 56% of the Notal elected representatives i.e. 7012 Village Panchayat Sarpanch, 242 Panchayat Union Chairperson, 20 District Panchayat Chairpersons and 67,756 Ward Members are Women. In Tamil Nadu, the representation of Women in Panchayats had been increased from one third to 50% of the total local body posts are reserved for Women. The posts/officers reserved for women are also rotated every term to provide effective opportunity to all women.	II.	Ī.	Ī
F (F) INTRODUCTION STRENGTHING OF EXISTING TRAINING PROGRAMMES TO MAKE THE ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIV E AWARE FOR THEIR POWERS AND DUTIES UNDER THE AFORESAID PROVIESIONS OF THE	To effectively train NII women leaders in Institutions (PRIs), a parachayd list and training methodologies should be employed. In Andhra Pradesh, significant efforts significant efforts women sarpanches on various aspect such as: - Leadership skills - Governance and administration administration and administration administration and administration and administration and administration are parachased administration and admini	Ī	Ē	Ē	Ē	<u> </u>	Ī	Ē	Ī	Ī	Periodic training programmes are IN already being conducted by the State and regional training institutes exclusively for Women elected representatives. It is suggested that the duration of the training period shall be kept less than 3 days per training and the location of the training period shall be easily porgramme shall be easily accessible to encourage more participation. Women representatives from Tamil Nadu show huge interest in participating in State level and participating in State level and participating in State level and programmes also.	<u> </u>	Ē	Ī

=	=
	N. C.
2	Z
Z Q	
As per the instructions given by the Government, a training module was developed specially for women elected medical programment and the training was conducted periodically during 2023-24, 269 no. of women representatives were attended the training programme. In the training module we have incorporated the subject like the skill development, how to trouble shoot the how to trouble shoot the how to trouble shoot the problems as Presidents etc. Further, we have also conducted refresher training to the women elected representatives every year. Measures had be further and social skills of Women elected Representatives. Such measures shall be further strengthened by providing online training sessions and inviting successful eminent women leaders to interact with them in their local language.	It is true that some rural women representatives are unaware of their power and willingly let their male family members interfere in the administration while others are well aware of their powers in governing the panchayat. It is necessary to promote interaction among such informed women representatives and illiterate women representatives to help them perform better in the administration. Identification of such empowered leaders and illiterate women leaders may be done by mechanisms discussed above and interactions among above and interactions among above and interactions among them may be facilitated by the District and State Administration.
ī	Ē
Ī	Ē
₩.	J. J
2	<u> </u>
<u>ia</u>	<u>Z</u>
==	E
NII.	≅
	<u> </u>
<u>z</u>	
II.	
Andhra Pradesh has INII further bolstered the efficiency of women in political alreadership by reserving seats for women in Panchayats.	Exchange visits - Reciprocal visits - Joint workshops on best practices and leadership skills - Initiating collaborative projects on health and sanitation - Creating online platforms for regular communication between urban and rural areas - Capacity building grants - Peer leadership group learning.
(G) CAPACITY Andhra Prade BUILDING OF further bolste ELECTED efficiency of v WOMEN in political Measures women in required for representatives Of elected women in representatives Of elected women in representatives Of elected women in representatives Of effective panchayats. Of offective political Panchayats. Panchayats. Panchayats. Panchayats. Of offective political Panchayats. Panchayats. Of offective political Panchayats. Panchayats. Of offective political Panchayats. Panchayats. Offective Panchayats.	(H) Recharder visit workst AMONGST RULGHTENED Bedership ski WOMEN - Initiating REPRESENTATIV Collaborative E5 AND Projects on he ILLITERATE and sanitation ELECTED - Creating only WOMEN Department of the Promotion and between urbs encouragement rural areas of interaction - Capacity build amongst grants enlightened group learning women rural elected group learning women representatives
υ	т

	Incentives are crucial Nil	IiN	Ϊ́Ν	Nii.	IIN IIN	Z	N	N III	- IIN	The paper seeks opinion on the Nil	ijŻ	Ϊ́Ν
INTRODUCTION	_									feasibility of introducing incentive		
OF INCENTIVE										steps to acknowledge		
SCHEMES FOR	participation of									empowered women		
PANCHAYATS:	women Sarpanches									representatives. The Government		
Feasibility of	by providing certain									feels that it is feasible to		
introduction of	incentives such as:									implement moral incentives like		
incentives in	- Grants to									publicizing the stories of powerful		
ensuring the	Panchayats for									women representatives in		
participation of	achieving specific									Newspapers, honoring them in		
elected	development									state level/district level official		
representatives	milestones									functions which would greatly		
in decision-	- Stipends for time									inspire other women		
making for	and efforts toward									representatives to follow their		
successfully	Gram Panchayat									footsteps, hence break away from		
implementing	- Specialized training									patriarchal domination.		
the	programs											
INTRODUCTION	INTRODUCTION Andhra Pradesh has Nil	Nil	ΙΪΝ	- I	ΞZ	Ē		II.	- IZ	It is suggested that, in order to Nil	Ē	Ē
OF INCENTIVES	recognized the									encourage Women Sarpanches to		
BY WAY OF	achievements of									act individually, implementing		
HONORARIUM	women Sarpanches									moral incentives like honoring		
FOR WOMEN	through various									empowered women		
SARPANCHES/	awards such as:									representatives as discussed in		
WOMEN	- Best Gram									the point above would be more		
PRADHANS:	Panchayat Award									effective than monetary		
Feasibility of	- Best Lady Sarpanch									incentives may also help towards		
introduction of	Award									attracting more women to		
award of	- Swachh Bharat									contest in the elections.		
honorarium at	Mission Award											
K USE OF DIGITAL	In Andhra Pradesh, Nil	IN	Nii	Nil Nil	Nil Nil	ïZ _		N:I	ΞN	In Tamil Nadu, panchayat Nil	Ē	Ξ
TECHNOLOGY	the usage of digital									accounting, taxation and related		
FOR ELECTED	technologies in									activities have all been made		
WOMEN	Gram Panchayats is									digital in the past one year. Both		
REPRESENTATIV	REPRESENTATIV actively promoted									men and women representatives		
FOF	through:								-	are periodically trained on all		
PANCHAYATS:										digital applications like		
In the context of										PFMS,eGramSwaraj, VPTAX (Tax		
Digital India,	automate Panchayat								-	collection portal), TNPASS		
utilizing digital	functions									(Panchayat Accounting Portal),		
technology for	- Mee Seva, a									Online PPA (Online building plan		
elected women	statewide platform								-	approval portal). Therefore , the		
representatives									-	elected representatives in Tamil		
of Panchayats to										Nadu and becoming more		
be actively										digitally literate. Such		
involved in their										mechanisms may be		
own self and	monitor government									implemented in other states also.		
village	programs. - Digital payment for											

_	COMPULSORY	Key initiatives to Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	ΞZ	ΞZ	ΞZ	Ē	Nil	ΞZ	In Tamil Nadu, all the Village	Nii	ΞN	Ī	
	AVAILABILITY	improve broadband										Panchayats have been provided				
	OF BROADBAND connectivity to	connectivity to										with computers and printers ad				
	TO EVERY	facilitate digital										TNPASS (Panchayat Accounting				
	VILLAGE:	inclusion in Andhra										Portal) has been implemented.				
	Measures/steps	Measures/steps Pradesh include:										Further, the Government was				
	for compulsory	- AP Fibre Grid										brought in high speed				
	availability of	Project										connectivity through TANFINET				
	broadband to	- BharatNet										(Tamil Nadu FiberNET				
	every village so	- Mobile network										Corporation), wherein Bharat net				
	as to	and internet services										has been expanded upto the end				
	digitalisation of	- Community digital										villages. All the Village Panchayats				
	Panchayat	centres										are being connected by				
	functions and	- Establishment of										underground or aerial fiber-net				
	meetings.	village secretariats in										cabies through which every				
		AP to cater to the										Village Panchayat Office will be				
		needs of villages at										able to access internet at a very				
		the Gram Panchayat										high speed.				
		level through digital														_
Σ	PROVISION OF		Ī	Ī	ΞZ	Ē	Ē	Ē	ī	Ē	Ē	In Tamil Nadu, all Village	Ē	Ξ	Ē	
	MOBILE PHONE phones to	phones to										Panchayats have been provided				
	TO EVERY	Sarpanches,										with computers with high				
	WOMEN	including Elected										technical specifications. Further,				
	SARPANCHES/W Women	Women										all women representatives				
	OMEN	Representatives										already have mobile phones.				
	PRADHANS:	(EWRs), for better										There are around 12525 Village				
	Feasibility of	communication										Panchayats in Tamil Nadu and				
	making											with the introduction of TNPASS				
	provision for											system, all Panchayat Presidents				
	providing mobile											have been provided with user ID				
	phone once in											and Password for day to day				
	three years to											transactions. Hence, the				
	every Women											requirement to provide mobile				
	Sarpanches/											phones to Women Panchayat				
	Women											Pradhans do not arise.				
	-	_	_	_	_			_	_							_

=	=	N.
<u>z</u>	<u> </u>	2
\[\frac{1}{2} \]	Ē	= Z
<u> </u>	Z	Ē
un for om might will be for on might with the formal of th	is of incit it i	rt acts Acts, de ole in olic pment
Meetings have been conducted at INII the State level in Tamil Nadu for selected representatives from every district, their opinions sought on orgoing and new developmental projects. It might be made mandatory to conduct State level meetings every 6 months with selected elected representatives from all districts in order to facilitate co-ordination and ensure uniformity in executing their duties. Similarly, District level co-ordination meetings are conducted by the District Collectors and Project District Collectors and Project District Collectors and Project District well co-ordination meetings have to be conducted for all the Village Panchayat Presidents. It may be ensured that equal opportunity is given to all representatives by sending them on rotation basis.	Video recording of meetings of Panchayats and putting them in public domain through District website or the Panchayat's website is feasible. Though it requires much work on the technical side, this would highly increase the transparency in parchayat administration, also preventing out side influence in conducting Panchayat may be taken up in certain states and then scaled up based on the learnings.	In Tamil Nadu, all important acts like Tamil Nadu Panchayats Acts, 1994 and related rules made under the act are all available in Tamil and are put up in public domain in the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department's official website.
il in Tai seenta asenta asenta asenta al projong 2 al pro	ng of r nd putit n through sible. I sible. I h work h work this v this v transpa minist at side anchay ayat m states a	i, all im du Pan ited ru are all put up Rural it Raj D
Meetings have been concluded the State level in Tamil Na selected representatives selected representatives ought on ongoing and me developmental projects. I be made mandatory to co. State level meetings ever months with selected eller representatives from all cin order to facilitate co-or and ensure uniformity in executing their duties. Sir District level co-ordination meetings are conducted to District level co-ordination meetings are conducted to District Level co-ordination meetings are conducted to be conducted for all the Panet Co-ordination meeting to be conducted for all the Panethay at Presidents. It has all insisted upon that regula insisted upon that regula level co-ordination meeting to be conducted for all the Panethay at Presidents. It hence co-ordination meeting when to all representatives given to all representatives.	record ayats a domai domai e or th e is fee es muc cal side se the i se the i se the i brantage cting P Panch ertain up bas	In Tamil Nadu, a like Tamil Nadu 1994 and relate under the act ar Tamil and are pi domain in the R and Panchayat f official website.
Meetit the Sta sought develol develol develol develol month repres in orde and en and en execut meetit Distric Distric Distric to be c	Video Pancha Pancha websit websit requir techni increas pancha prever condu	In Tam like Ta 1994 a under Tamil a domai and Pa
\[\frac{1}{2} \]	Ē	Ī
=	=	=
<u>'Z</u>	Z	Z
T N	Ē	= Z
<u> </u>	Ē	Ē
		_
<u> </u>	Ē	I.
ĪZ	Z	II.
II.	<u> </u>	=
2	2	2
		_
i z	Z	Ž
	Z	<u></u>
ī	ž	Ë
n red by hayat as a ayat the ial	ng ough s or of an ne	ide to ing he m m ym the ge to lage.
nation In Gran	Video recording ronducted through mobile phones or ramers. Designation of an brifficer from the Sram Panchayat GPI responsible for ecording. Upload of videos to the district website. Highly beneficial or promoting or promoting.	are ma te exist re on t of Gra yats frc langua
Coordination between Gram parchaytas in districts can be facilitated through: - District level coordination meetings chaired by the Collector District Panchayat Office serving as a nodal agency - District Coordination and Monitoring Committees Utilisation of the District banchayat Gommittees Utilisation of the District banchayat Office as a nodal agency.	Video recording conducted through man bile phones or cameras. Designation of an officer from the Gram Panchayat (GP) responsible for recording. - Upload of videos to the district website.	translate existing literature on the powers of Gram Panchayats from the Official language to the local language.
	F G G G G G G G G G G G G G G G G G G G	ш
CO- ORDINATION ORDINATION AMONGST ALL EXEMPLEYATS IN EVERY DISTRICT: Establishing a mechanism of co ordination all Panchaysts in every District on matters relating to conduct of meetings of panchayst in each village and development activities in each village of Panchayats.	VIDEO RECORDING OF METINGS OF PANCHAYATS AND PUTINGS THEM IN PUBLIC DOMAIN: Feasibility and implementing of Video recording of meetings of meetings of meetings of meetings of meetings of an assame on the conding the same on the conding the conding the same on the conding the condition the conding the conding the conding the conding the conding the condition the cond	AVAILIABILITY OF LITERATURE IN LOCAL LANGUAGE CONTAINING POWERS AND FUNCTIONS
CO- ORDINAT AMONOS PANCHON EVERY DIST ESTABLISH I ESTA	NIDEO RECOF METI PANCT AND P THEM DOMM DOMM PEASIB Impler Video of mee	AVA OF LI IN LC LANC CON POW FUNC
z	О	۵

Ī	Nii		Ē
-	Ī	-	-
Ī	Ī	Ē	-
Implementing punitive measures in the form of fines against male members of the family acting as poxy for women elected representatives would be a welcome suggestion which the Government may consider, as it will definitely act as a deterrent against such activities.	Being a local body representative is a stepping stone in assuming higher legislative positions for many current and former legislators. Awareness programmes under the leadership of eminent people who started from the grassroots may be conducted for women elected local body representatives to encourage them to aspire for new roles and responsibilities.	State and Regional training Institutes are already involved in training Women Representatives and are working towards imparting leadership skills to them. other layers of local self-governance like Block Panchayats and District Panchayats have also been trained to work in coperation with Village Panchayats.	Special trainings on the subjects mentioned in the paper like planning and preparing Agenda for Panchayat Meeting and conduct of Gram Sabha est care already being conducted through State and Regional Training institutes of Tamil Nadu. Handbooks in local languages have also been prepared and shared with all elected representatives.
Ī	Ī	ž	Ī
Ī	Ē	Z	Z
<u> </u>	<u>=</u>	Z	Z
<u> </u>	Ī	ž	Ē
i <u>i</u>	īz	Ē	Ē
<u> </u>	\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\	Ē	<u> </u>
Ē	NII N	Ī	I Z
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	Ē	둘
=	NII	Ξ	ī.
Introduce legal Nii provisions to disqualify or penalize those elected women representatives who favours proxy representatives may be added		<u> </u>	_
SU	Z	z	Ξ Z
Punitive measures with careful planning and execution include: - Establishment a proper legal framework - Conducting awareness programs to help individuals	Ī	J.	Ī
MEASURES FOR PERSONS PERSONS PROGRING AS PROXY FOR ELECTED WOMEN FOR ESPECTED FOR PROMEN FOR ESPECTED FOR FEASIBILITY OF FEASIBLE	S S ITTY Or or ral	RAINING TO ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIV E TO INTERFACE WITH OTHER LOCAL SELF- GOVERNANCE WITHIN THE STATE:	TRAINING IN RELATION TO ADMINISTRATIV E MATTERS RELATING TO PANCHAYATS: Imparting special training for enhancing the ability of elected women representatives.
σ	<u>«</u>	N	F

Ē	Ē	₹	Ē
<u></u>	-	-	-
<u> </u>	Z	<u> </u>	Ē
=	=	=	=
nay nay Ni nay Ni nay Ni nay Ni nay Ni nay nay nay ni ni b	May C	vyats Nill vyats nit confirmation of confirmation of confirmation of confirmation or confirmat	hort Nil in the Nil in
Member of Legislative Assemblies Inii and Member of Parliaments may review the functioning of parchayats situated in their constituencies. Already funds from the Constituency Development Funds are also channelized by the MPs and MLAs or the meds of the Village Panchahats towards in eneds of the Village Panchahats towards in infrastructure works. A small portion of their Constituency Development Funds may be earmarked towards providing apacity building and leadership trainings to Women Sarpanches of their constituency.	ICE campaigns like awareness rallies, signature campaigns, publishing of short films, etc. may be implemented to promote changes in social mindsets for eliminating proxy practices.	The State is trying to establish a convergence between Panchayats and Self-Help Groups through many means. Most of the women ward members are members of local self-help groups. SHGs are actively involved in creating Village Panchayat Development Plan (VPDP) every year, selection of works under MGNREGS and State Government Schemes likes AGAMT II. SHG Panchayat level federation members are also involved in conducting door to door surveys to find eligible beneficiaries for the schemes. Further they are involved in various training programmes	The SIRD, Tamil Nadu has a YouTube Channel and many short films regarding functioning of Panchayat meetings, empowerment of women representatives, etc. which have already been uploaded. More such short films and Programmes may be broadcast through Doordarshan and all social media so as to enhance behavioural change and increase their reach.
Member of Legislative Assemand Member of Parliaments is review the Incitioning of Panchayats situation in their constituency at situation and a previous the Incitional form the Constituency are also Development Funds are also thannelized by the MPs and I towards the needs of the VIIII Panchahats towards infrastructure works. A small portion of their Constituency Development Funds may be earmarked towards providing and leaders raminings to Women Sarpand frainings to Women Sarpand of their constituency.	ICE campaigns like awareness rallies, signature campaigns, publishing of short films, etc. be implemented to promote changes in social mindsets fo eliminating proxy practices.	The State is trying to establisi convergence between Panch, and Self-Help Groups through many means. Most of the wo ward members are members local self-help groups. SHGs a actively involved in creating Village Panchayat Developmen Plan (VPDP) every year, select of works under MGNREGs and State Government Schemes II SEGAMT II. SHG Panchayat levertation members are also involved in conducting door the door surveys to find eligible beneficiaries for the schemes further they are involved in various training programmes conducted by the Panchayats.	The SIRD, Tamil Nadu has a YouTube Channel and many films regarding functioning Panchyat meetings, empowerment of women representatives, etc. which already been uploaded. Mo such short films and Program may be broadcast through Doordarshan and all social its os as to enhance behaviour change and increase their re
Member of Legislativa and Member of Parlia review the functionin penchayats situated in constituency as structed in constituency bevelopment Funds and annelized by the M channelized by the M channels to wards the needs of Panchahats towards infrastructure works. portion of their Const portion of their Const pereion of their constituency capacity building and trainings to Women S of their constituency.	npaigns signatu signatu of sing of sing social in social	gence by gence by lf-Help in heans. In heap size the size filt help of the size filt help of the size filt help in heap size filt help in heap size filt hea	The SIRD, Tamil Nadd YouTube Channel and YouTube Channel and Flilms regarding funct Painlayat meetings, empowerment of You representatives, etc. already been uploadd way be broadcast the may be broadcast that Doordarshan and all so as to enhance bethen dhange and increase
Memb and Mi review Pancha constit from ti Develo channe towarc Pancha infrast portior portior portior caparai	ICE carrallies, publish be imp change	The Sta conver and Se many r ward n hocal se occusion state G AGAM' federat involve door st door st various	The SIR YouTul films re Panche empover repressible already such shoot may be Doorda so as the change change change such shoot discounting the control of the change
ž	= Z	<u>=</u>	Ē
<u>z</u>	Z	z	Z
=	ii.	₹	=
2		<u></u>	Z
<u> </u>	Ē	E	Ē
	_	_	_
<u>=</u>	Ē	<u>=</u>	<u>=</u>
<u></u>	Ž	둘	Ī
Z	Ž	Z	\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\
=	=	=	=
<u> </u>	Ē	<u> </u>	Z
<u> </u>	Ē	Ē	Ē
Ξ	= Z	- E	Ξ.
s) ed he ds ds:	It constitutes a multi-Nii pronged approach requiring a legal framework, awareness and education initatives, capacity-buildine.		
The role and responsibility of Member of Legislative Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) and Members of Parliament (MPs) concerning Panchayats situated in their constituencies include interests and needs of their constituents in Panchayats situated in their constituencies include in their constituencies include in their constituents in panchayats at the laterests and needs of their constituents in Panchayats at the State and National Evels.	It constitutes a multi pronged approach requiring a legal framework, awareness and education initiatives, canacity-buildine.		
		_	Z
SPONSI F SS OF TIVE LIES MBERS AMBERS IAMENT TON OF YATS IN UTES: the role ers of ee es and i of	ATION, ON NICATI PAIGN	ST YATS, P AND NITY- SATION SATION ing ing ins its, Self ups and ity-	N N LAND ATING ST ST N ATIN N A OF
NECLE/RESPONSI The role and MEMBERS OF PRENDENDING CASSEMBLES ASSEMBLES ASSEMBLES ASSEMBLES AND MEMBERS OF THERE CONSTITUTES: CONSTITUTES: CONSTITUTES: CONSTITUTES: Include: CONSTITUTES: CONSTITUTES: Include: AND MEMBERS OF THE CONSTITUTES: AND MEMBERS OF THE CASSEMBLES AND	EDUCATION, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATI ON CAMPAIGN FOR	CONVERGENCE AMONGST PANCHAVATS, SELF-HELP GROUPS AND COMMUNITY- BASED OORGANISATION S: Evolving measures for empowerment of rural women through intensifying Convergence amongst Panchayats, Self Help Groups and	USE OF DOOR DARSHAN CHANNEL AND SOCIAL MEDIA POR CREATING AWARENESS AMONGST ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIV FESSIDIITY OF
	> = m < 0 O II m	S # 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8	× O O O E A A E S E E E E

Y CREATING NETWORK AMONGST NETWORKS OF ALL	The Sarpanch Samvaad App seems to be a promising platform for connecting	Ni	Į.	Nii	J.	Ē	Ë	ij	Ë	Ξ	Ξ <u></u>	A network amongst all Panchayats may be established online through telegram channels. Establishing an offline network among 6000+ women	Z	Ē
PANCHAYATS: Creating	Sarpanches and facilitating											representatives from 37 districts may be challenging. It can be		
network	collaboration. Your											tried by taking them on exposure		
amongst												visits where they can interact		
Networks of all	III for elected women											among each other and establish a		
Panchayats for												network by themselves.		
interaction	excellent. Such as	11 2	12	= 2	ii	i.Z	i.Z	I.N	ī	ij	ii	Nil	ī	i.i.
HOIDINGOF		-			-	<u> </u>		<u> </u>	<u> </u>	Ē	<u> </u>			
MEETING OF												being conducted at the district		
WOMEN												level by the District Collectors		
SARPANCHES/												exclusively for Women elected		
WOMEN												representatives. Meeting at		
PRADHANS TO												higher levels is also a welcome		
BE PRESIDED BY	BY											suggestion which the State may		
INCHARGE OF												explore in the near future.		
ZA TENURE OF	Nii	ΞZ	ΞĪ	ΞZ	ΞN	Ē	ΞZ	Ē	ī	ī	ΞZ	The paper suggests limiting the Nil	Z	ΙΞ
WOMEN												tenure of a women elected as		
SARPANCHES/												women sarpanches/Women		
WOMEN												Pradhans for two terms in order		
PRADHANS:												to give opportunity to other		
Feasibility of												women to be elected as women		
limiting tenure												sarpanches/women pradhans.		
of a woman												Since election is a democratic		
elected as												process and any number of		
Women												candidates can contest. The		
Sarpanches/												practice of limiting tenure is not		
Women												done in any level of election in		
Pradhans for												India and implementing it only for		
two terms so as	as											women sarpanches might be		
to give												considered discriminatory.		

ZB	ZB ANY OTHER	In condusion, the	Nil	There are 191	Suggestions of the	Suggestions of the Resolving the issue The		t is the irony	t present,	Jagaland K	It is the irony At present, Nagaland Kindly peruse Nil/no		Nil	It is to	The	
	SUGGESTION: views and	views and		Village Panchayats Gujarat State		of women	purpose of of our		the ,	as a th	the s	suggestions		submit	Consultativ The	he
	Any other	suggestions		in the State of Goa Women's		Pradhans/Sarpanche women's country	women's c		Panchayati	tate with S	state with Suggestions	on behalf of		that, the	that, the e paper Commissio	ommissio
_	suggestion	presented here		and in these 191 Commission for		s being represented reservation /society that Raj system	reservation /	'society that R		special re	regarding	the Sikkim		consultati	consultati drafted by n will	will
_	which would	underscore the		Village Panchayats eliminating proxy		by male family	in	after 31 year does not		status is	issue of S	State		ve drafted the		surely look
_	strengthen	importance of		87 Sarpanches and practices being		members requires a Panchayati of the 73rd exists in	Panchayati o	of the 73rd e.		under W	Women	Commission		by the	Advisory into, if any	to, if any
_	Panchayat	empowering elected		106 Dy. Sarpanches carried out in		combination of legal Raj		Amendment Mizoram.		Article p	pradhans f	for Women		Advisory	Advisory Committee such	nch
_	Institutions,	women		are women as on relation to ma	e	measures, social	Institutions of the		Instead 3	371 (A) of being	neing			Committe on the		matter is
_	encourage	representatives at		date. It is also	family members of	awareness, capacity , which Constitution, Village	. which	Constitution, V		the	represented			e on the	issues of	received in
_	elected women	elected women the local body level		informed that	women sarpanch /	building, and	was th	the problem Councils		Indian b	by the male			issue of	women	near
_	participation in and fostering	and fostering		there are 87 Village members.		support systems.	introduced of proxy		performed	Constituti n	Constituti members of			Mahila	Pradhans/ f	future
_	Panchayat	collaboration among		Panchayats in		Here are steps to	by the 73rd women		the functions on, does their families	in, does ti	heir families			Pradhan	Women according	ccording
_	proceedings and stakeholders to	stakeholders to		which Sarpanches		address this issue	Constitutio Pradhan is		and duties to not		as are under.			being	Sarpanche to the	o the
_	eliminate the	eliminate the achieve this goal.		are women but do 1. Women's		and related	nal st	still st	strengthen follow		1- Literacy			represent	represent s being decision of	ecision of
_	practice of proxy The initiatives	The initiatives		not act as proxy as representation in		concerns:	Amendme continue.		participatory the		levels play a			ed by the	ed by the represente the Board	he Board
_	for elected	undertaken by the		such, no incident	such, no incident panchayats in the	1. *Legal	nt Act 1992 The root		local self-	anchaya c.	Panchaya crucial role in			male	d by the	Meeting of
_	women	Ministry of		has been reported	has been reported state is currently 50 Measures*:		was to c	cause of the governance.		i Raj tı	ti Raj the ability of			members male		the
	representatives	epresentatives Panchayati Raj to		to the Directorate	to the Directorate percent. In villages - *Empowerment		empower F	empower Pradhan pati Village level System of Elected	fillage level S	ystem of E	lected			of their	members	Commissio
_	and Women	solicit input from		of Panchayat,	where the	Laws*: Strengthen	women at and other		administratio governan Women	overnan V	Vomen			families is of their	of their r	
_	Sarpanches/	State like Andhra		Government of	panchayatis	laws to ensure that t	the fa	family n	n in Mizoram ce.		Representativ			excellent family has	family has	
	Women Pradhan Pradesh are	Pradesh are		Goa so far.	administered by a	women	grassroots members		is carried out Instead,		e to absorb			and by	peen S	Suggestion
_		commendable steps			woman Sarpanch	Pradhans/Sarpanche level and interference through	level and ii	nterference tl		the state the	he			implemen examined		s of the
_		towards accelerating		Further to inform	and Member, the	s have the legal	improve is the		public	perates k	operates knowledge for			ting these in detail		State
_		the inclusion of		you that GSCW	>	authority and t	the socio-	the socio- socialization. elected		under its governance	overnance			recomme and it is		Governme
_		women in the		agrees to all the	illiterate or less	autonomy to make	economic The men		representativ own		processes.			ndations	found that Int and	t and
_		political process.		issue taken up on	issue taken up on educated, so their decisions		conditions include		es who form traditiona Linking EWRs	raditiona L.	inking EWRs			will	the c	other
_		Through a multi-		the Consultative	husbands or other independently.		through	women	a Village	I village with the	vith the			certainly	recommen stakeholde	takeholde
_		pronged approach		Paper which will go	Paper which will go family members run - *Anti-proxy Voting representa because that Council. The councils Shakshar	- *Anti-proxy Voting	representa b	because that C	ouncil. The	ouncils	hakshar			lead to	dation/sug rs on the	s on the



Experiences of Elected Women Representatives in India

Executive Summary

The study on "Issues of Women Pradhans in India's Local Governments" has provided a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the challenges faced by Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and the persistent phenomenon of "Sarpanch Pati," where male family members effectively control and exercise the powers associated with these elected positions. This report serves as a crucial step towards addressing a long-standing issue that has undermined the genuine empowerment of women in local governance, despite constitutional provisions and amendments aimed at enhancing their participation.

The findings of the study paint a vivid picture of the multifaceted obstacles that EWRs encounter, ranging from limited mobility and deep-rooted patriarchal norms to a lack of education, awareness, and decision-making experience within governance processes. The prevalence of the "Sarpanch Pati" system highlights the entrenched nature of gender-based discrimination and the challenges in translating legal provisions into meaningful and substantive change.

The study also identified capacity-building gaps, such as infrequent and ineffective training programs, which fail to equip EWRs with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the complexities of local governance. Structural barriers, including societal norms, caste dynamics, and the male predominance in governance structures, further compound the obstacles faced by EWRs, hindering their effective participation and leadership in decision-making processes.

The report also sheds light on the positive role played by community-based organizations (CBOs) and self-help groups (SHGs) in supporting and empowering EWRs. These grassroots initiatives have provided exposure to essential skills, fostered community mobilization efforts, and created an enabling environment for women to assert their voices and contribute to local development.

The recommendations outlined in the report offer a comprehensive framework to address the multifaceted challenges faced by EWRs and pave the way for their genuine empowerment within local governance structures. By strengthening capacity-building initiatives, integrating dedicated training strategies, conducting comprehensive Training Needs Analyses (TNAs), and designing tailored training curricula, the report aims to equip EWRs with the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies to effectively discharge their roles and responsibilities.

The recommendations emphasize the need to leverage the support of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) by establishing Gender Corners, facilitating community forums, and developing collaborative manuals that outline the complementary roles of SHGs and EWRs. These measures not only foster convergence and networking but also create a supportive ecosystem for EWRs to thrive and contribute to local governance processes.

Recognizing the importance of an enabling environment, the report recommends addressing technology interface challenges, enhancing infrastructure and human resource support, providing financial incentives, and strengthening legal support and partnerships with relevant authorities. These measures aim to create a conducive environment for EWRs to exercise their roles effectively, without being hindered by resource constraints or systemic barriers.

The report also advocates for the implementation of accountability and transparency measures, such as establishing a code of conduct for EWRs, conducting gender audits, and launching nationwide campaigns to raise awareness and promote change in societal mindsets. These initiatives not only empower EWRs but also contribute to a larger societal shift towards gender equality and inclusivity in local governance.

By implementing the recommendations outlined in this report, a significant efforttowards eliminating proxy practices and promoting gender-responsive governance can be made. This aligns with the true spirit of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, which envisioned enhancing women's representation and participation in PRIs as a means to foster inclusive and sustainable development across India's diverse rural landscapes.

The report serves as a document for driving positive change by ensuring that the voices and perspectives of women are firmly embedded in local governance processes. It recognizes the pivotal role that EWRs can play in shaping policies, prioritizing community needs, and contributing to the overall well-being of their constituents. By addressing the challenges faced by EWRs and empowering them to participate fully in decision-making processes.

The report's recommendations extend beyond mere compliance with legal provisions; they offer a comprehensive roadmap for transforming societal attitudes, dismantling deeply entrenched gender biases, and fostering an environment where women can exercise their agency and leadership without facing discrimination or proxy control.

The study on "Issues of Women Pradhans in India's Local Governments" represents a significant step towards realizing the vision of a truly inclusive and representative local governance system. By addressing the challenges faced by EWRs and providing a framework for their empowerment, the report paves the way for a more equitable and participatory democracy, where the voices of women are heard, valued, and integrated into the decision-making processes that shape the future of India's rural communities.

Content

1.	Introduction	5
2.	The study	13
3.	Key Observations	18
4.	Key Recommendations - from officials, ERs and COB's:	25
5.	Case Studies - State-wise Experiences of Women Elected Representative	30
	5.1 Andhra Pradesh	31
	5.2 Assam	36
	5.3 Bihar	40
	5.4 Chhattisgarh	46
	5.5 Himachal Pradesh	54
	5.6 Jharkhand	62
	5.7 Karnataka	66
	5.8 Kerala	72
	5.9 Madhya Pradesh	80
	5.10 Maharashtra	85
	5.11 Manipur	88
	5.12 Meghalaya	94
	5.13 Rajasthan	98
	5.14 Telangana	107
	5.15 Tripura	111
	5.16 Uttar Pradesh	115

1. Introduction

The 73rd Constitution Amendment Act of 1992 stands as a landmark initiative in the journey towards empowering women in rural governance in India. This pivotal legislation mandated the reservation of one-third of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) across the country. Building upon the framework established by the Constitution Amendment, several states took further steps to enhance women's participation by increasing the quantum of reserved seats to 50 per cent in their respective state Panchayati Raj Acts. This proactive approach by state governments underscored the importance of gender equality and women's representation in local decision-making bodies, the amendment aimed to provide women with a platform to actively participate in grassroots democracy. Article 243D of the Indian Constitution specifically addresses the reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and women in Panchayats. Clause 3 of Article 243D is particularly significant as it mandates the reservation of seats for women, thereby ensuring their participation in PRIs. This constitutional provision serves as a strong foundation for promoting gender-responsive governance and fostering inclusive decision-making processes at the grassroots level.

While the provision of reservation for women in PRIs aimed to enhance their participation, one would come across the frequent use of practices like 'Pradhan Pati' / 'Adhyaksha Pati' (husband of the Chairperson), the 'Sarpanch Pati' (husband of the Head of the Gram Panchayat) or 'Pradhani' (Lady Head) or even the 'Member Pati' (husband of the ward member). The term 'Pradhn Pati' / 'Sarpanch Pati' / 'Member Pati' / 'Adhyaksha Pati' implies that where women are *de jure* elected, their husbands or male relatives *de facto* run the panchayat. This tendency often continues to wield influence and constitutes the main hurdle limiting the effective empowerment of women.

Often illiteracy or lack of adequate education is the impediment, with most women sounding vague about their role. Besides lack of education and ignorance, social pressures and caste also prevent women from being effective. While addressing an event on National Panchayati Raj Day in 2015, the Prime Minister called for an end to the practice of "husbands of women sarpanches" or "sarpanch pati" exercising undue influence on the work of their wives elected to power. This issue is not unique to India and reflects broader challenges faced by women in leadership roles globally, where familial or societal expectations can limit the autonomy and effectiveness of elected women representatives. This concept note is on a proposed study to explore the status and underlying reasons for the persistence of "Sarpanch Pati" in the Indian democratic setup.

The patriarchal gender norms entrenched within certain households indeed pose significant challenges to the emergence of effective female leadership. However, it's important to recognize that the institutional design of local government also plays a critical role in either elevating barriers to women in politics or perpetuating existing inequalities. Political institutions, ranging from the structure of local elections to the composition of committees, often symbolically include women but may fail to address substantive forms of structural

inequality. These institutional shortcomings contribute to the phenomenon known as "proxy politics," it is, a perverse form of representative politics in which an elected official lacks either the will or the ability to perform her or his legally required duties, leading another individual to perform them in that person's place¹.

The historical evolution of panchayat governance in India reflects shifting paradigms regarding the role of local government and the participation of women in decision-making processes. In the 1950s, the Balwantrai Mehta Committee advocated for non-political panchayats that would engage people and their representatives in implementing development programs. This approach emphasized the development of women through their participation in local governance, recognizing the importance of grassroots involvement in rural development initiatives. In contrast, the Ashok Mehta Committee, formed in the 1970s, advocated for political panchayats and decentralized power structures. It emphasized the participation of people in decision-making processes and supported rural development through program implementation and strengthened planning at the micro-level. This led to the establishment of second-generation panchayats in states like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and West Bengal. The Singhvi Committee, formed in the 1990s, recommended the Constitutionalization of Panchayats, emphasizing the need to develop these bodies primarily as units of selfgovernment. The committee proposed reservations to ensure better representation of marginalized sections such as women, Scheduled Castes (SCs), and Scheduled Tribes (STs) for the posts of chairpersons in Panchayat bodies. This recommendation aimed to provide institutional support for their participation in the local governance process, thereby promoting inclusivity and equitable representation in decision-making at the grassroots level². Importantly, the committee recognized the pivotal role of women in decision-making by recommending the co-optation of women and the reservation of seats for them in panchayats. Both committees acknowledged the significance of local governance in driving rural development and recognized the importance of women's participation in decision-making processes at the grassroots level. These recommendations laid the foundation for subsequent reforms aimed at enhancing women's representation and participation in panchayati raj institutions across India.

The history of women's reservation in India dates back to the early years of independence when the framers of the Constitution recognized the need for gender equality and women's

¹ Rachel Brule, Simon Chauchard, Alyssa Heinze, (2022) Are husbands the problem?, https://www.india-seminar.com/2022/752/752-RACHEL_SIMON_ALYSSA.htm

² Dr. Tejeswar Karkora (2015) Decentralised Governance and Political Empowerment of Women: Gram Panchayats in Koraput District of Odisha, India, Rajaqiri Journal of Social Development, Vol 7, N. 1, June

empowerment in the political sphere. However, it was not until several decades later that concrete steps were taken to address the under-representation of women in elected bodies. Some states, such as Maharashtra and West Bengal, introduced voluntary quotas for women in local governments. These initiatives, though limited in scope, laid the foundation for future reforms.

The demand for constitutional provisions to ensure women's representation gained momentum in the 1980s and early 1990s. Women's groups, activists, and political leaders advocated for reserved seats for women in legislative bodies to address the gender imbalance in politics. In 1974, the Government of India appointed the Committee on the Status of Women (popularly known as the Shah Commission) to examine various issues related to women's rights and empowerment. The committee's report highlighted the need for affirmative action to enhance women's political participation. India has recognized the Decade of Women from 1975 to 1985 and has formulated and implemented several women's development initiatives through the Five-Year Plans.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 introduced significant changes to the structure and functioning of local government bodies at the rural and urban levels, respectively. These amendments aimed to decentralize power and empower local communities by establishing Panchayats at the village, intermediate, and district levels (under the 73rd Amendment) and Municipalities at the urban level (under the 74th Amendment). This landmark amendment mandated that one-third of the seats in Panchayats be reserved for women. The objective was to enhance women's representation and participation in grassroots governance. Following the success of the 73rd Amendment, the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 extended similar provisions to urban local governments (Municipal Corporations and Municipalities). Like in Panchayats, one-third of the seats in Municipalities were reserved for women.

The Act which came into effect on April 23, 1993, made a provision of 33 per cent reservation of seats to women in Panchayati Raj Institutions. The amendment is a landmark in the history of women 's development as it is a revolutionary step towards the participation of women in the decision-making process especially at the grass-roots level. Despite the constitutional mandate, the implementation of women's reservations faced several legal and political challenges. There were debates over the extent and nature of reservations, as well as resistance from entrenched political interests. However, successive governments took steps to enforce the reservation policy.

The move to enhance reservation for women in Panchayats from one-third to 50 per cent in all tiers, including the total number of seats filled by direct election, offices of Chairpersons, and seats/offices reserved for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), represents a significant step towards promoting gender equity and inclusiveness in local governance. This amendment to Article 243 D of the Constitution aims to increase the representation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and empower them to actively participate in the public sphere. By ensuring that half of the seats are reserved for women across all tiers of Panchayats, the amendment seeks to address the historical underrepresentation of women in decision-

making roles at the grassroots level. Greater participation of women in PRIs is expected to lead to more inclusive and responsive governance, as women bring unique perspectives and priorities to the table. Additionally, it is believed that gender equity in Panchayats will contribute to improved delivery of public services, particularly those that directly impact women's lives, such as health, sanitation, early childhood care, and access to clean drinking water³.

The implementation of a two-child norm in various states for candidates contesting local body elections has raised significant debates and discussions regarding its implications. Six states (Haryana, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh) had laws mandating a two-child norm for members of the Panchayat. Since women do not necessarily control their fertility choices and are unlikely to find it worthwhile to fight their family to be eligible for the Panchayat, this policy is likely to discourage women, or members of the SCs and STs, from being candidates, even when there is a reservation⁴. Here's a summary of the situation across different states:

l.No.	State	Laws mandating a two-child norm
1	Rajasthan	The Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act of 1994 disqualifies individuals with more than two children from contesting elections as a panch or a member. However, the norm was relaxed for individuals with disabled children by the previous government.
2	Madhya Pradesh	The state followed a two-child norm for local body elections until 2005 when it was discontinued due to objections raised, arguing that such a rule was not applicable in assembly and parliamentary elections.
3	Telangana:	Under the Telangana Panchayat Raj Act of 1994, individuals with more than two children are disqualified from contesting elections. However, those who had more than two children before May 30, 1994, are exempted from disqualification.
4	Andhra Pradesh:	Similar provisions exist in the Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act of 1994, disqualifying individuals with more than two children from contesting elections.

.

³ Reena verma and Sushil kumar, 2016 in American International journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences

⁴ Raghabendra Chattopadhyay and Esther Duflo 2003 The Impact of Reservation in the Panchayati Raj: Evidence from a Nationwide Randomized Experiment by * November

l.No.	State	Laws mandating a two-child norm
5	Gujarat:	The Gujarat Local Authorities Act was amended in 2005 to disqualify individuals with more than two children from contesting elections for local self-governance bodies, including panchayats, municipalities, and municipal corporations.
6	Maharashtra:	The Maharashtra Zilla Parishads and Panchayat Samitis Act disqualifies individuals with more than two children from contesting local body elections, ranging from gram panchayats to municipal corporations. However, the enforcement of this norm faced legal challenges.
7	Karnataka:	The Karnataka (Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj) Act of 1993 does not bar individuals with more than two children from contesting elections to local bodies like gram panchayats. However, it includes eligibility criteria such as having a sanitary latrine for family use.
8	Odisha:	The Odisha Zilla Parishad Act disqualifies individuals with more than two children from contesting elections.

Source: Express News Service, | Updated: October 23, 2019, 07:26 IST, he Indian Express, New Delhi

The reservation of seats for women in local bodies has had a significant impact on women's political participation and empowerment. It has provided opportunities for women from diverse backgrounds to enter the political arena, voice their concerns, and contribute to decision-making processes at the grassroots level. The reservation of seats for women has led to a significant increase in women's participation in local governance. It has provided women with a platform to voice their concerns, influence decision-making, and actively participate in the development process of their communities. Chattopadhyay and Duflo⁵,⁶ point out there are studies to show that reservations have improved women's participation in the public sphere. Most studies reveal that women in local government pay particular attention to addressing the needs and interests of women whether this means investing more in water, nutrition or children's education.

.

⁵ Raghabendra Chattopadhyay and Esther Duflo (2004) Women as Policy Makers: Evidence from a Randomized Policy Experiment in India' Journal Article Econometrica Vol. 72, No. 5 (Sep. 2004), pp. 1409-1443 (35 pages) Published By: The Econometric Society

⁶ Raghabendra Chattopadhyay and Esther Duflo 2003 The Impact of Reservation in the Panchayati Raj: Evidence from a Nationwide Randomized Experiment by * November

While the reservation policy has brought about positive changes, there is ongoing advocacy for further reforms to enhance women's representation in higher legislative bodies, such as state assemblies and parliament. Efforts are also being made to address other barriers to women's political participation, including social norms and institutional biases. In 2020, Rajasthan's Panchayati Raj department, for instance, issued a new order dictating that where sarpanch patis are observed performing the duties of female sarpanches, the sarpanch will be removed from her elected post and 'action [will be] taken' against the husband⁷. Drawing out from a longterm study in several hundred villages since 2018, we do not believe that the hurdles women face in exercising their legally mandated roles in elected government can be reduced to a problem of sarpanch-patism, nor that sarpanch-patism constitutes the central limitation to the ability of female local officials to implement better policies⁸, 9. It's crucial to recognize the complexity of the challenges women face in local governance and not reduce them solely to the phenomenon of "sarpanch-patism." While gendered hierarchies and patriarchal norms undoubtedly influence women's experiences in political roles, the issues they encounter are multifaceted and context-specific. The mandated representation of women in local government, as per the 73rd amendment, has triggered various reactions, including resistance and magnification of patriarchal control in some instances. However, it has also fostered cooperation and support in others. Understanding the nuances of these dynamics is essential for developing effective strategies to support women in local governance. Rather than attributing all challenges to a single factor, it's necessary to consider the broader socio-cultural context, including familial dynamics, community attitudes, and institutional barriers. By addressing these complex issues comprehensively, stakeholders can work towards creating inclusive and supportive environments that enable women to fulfill their roles as elected representatives effectively.

To ensure equitable representation, women's reserved seats are rotated among constituencies in subsequent elections. This rotation ensures that multiple women from different areas can hold elected positions over time.

Studies have shown that the presence of women in local government leads to more inclusive decision-making processes, with a greater emphasis on issues such as health, education, sanitation, and social welfare. Women representatives often prioritize the needs of marginalized groups and promote policies that benefit women and children.

-

⁷ Times News Network, 'When a Sarpanch Can Lose Her Job, Not His', 6 June 2020.

⁸ Mary John, 'Women in Power? Gender, Caste and the Politics of Local Urban Governance', *Economic & Political Weekly* 42(39), 2007, pp. 3986-3993. Rachel Brulé, *Women, Power, and Property: The Paradox of Gender Equality Laws in India*. Cambridge University Press, 2020; Simon Chauchard, *Why Representation Matters: The Meaning of Ethnic Quotas in Rural India*. Cambridge University Press, 2017.

⁹ Rachel Brule, Simon Chauchard, Alyssa Heinze, (2022) Are husbands the problem?, https://www.india-seminar.com/2022/752/752-RACHEL SIMON ALYSSA.htm

The provisions for women's reservation are enshrined in the Constitution of India and are legally binding. Any amendments or changes to these provisions would require a constitutional amendment, to ensure their protection and continuity.

Despite the legal mandate, there are challenges in the effective implementation of women's reservations. These challenges include social barriers, patriarchal attitudes, lack of support structures, and resistance from male-dominated political systems.

Over the years, there has been significant progress in women's representation in local government bodies due to the reservation policy. Many women have emerged as effective leaders and change-makers, contributing to the overall development of their communities. The Indian government attempts to eliminate gender disadvantages in political experience through large-scale training programs for women, as do civil society organizations and state governments¹⁰. Yet the success of traditional training programmes is limited at best, with many female representatives retaining little-to-none of the information imparted during what are typically infrequent, hands-off sessions¹¹.

In conclusion, the reservation of seats for women in local government bodies through the 73rd and 74th Amendments has been a landmark step towards promoting gender equality and empowering women in India's democratic governance system. However, there is still work to be done to overcome existing challenges and ensure the full and meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes at all levels of governance. A table mentioning the status of Panchayati Raj in the states covered for the study is mentioned below:

States		Status of Pa	nchayati Raj
	Enforcement of the 73rd amendment	Status of Reservation for women	Local governance structure
Assam	1994	50 %	Gram Panchayats, Village Councils, and Village Council Development Committee in 6th Schedule areas
Bihar	1993	50%	Gram Panchayat and Gram Kachachari
Chhattisgarh	1997	50%	Gram Panchayats in both non- scheduled and 5th Schedule areas

¹⁰ Sreeparna Chakrabarty, 'Training for Women to Break Free from Sarpanch Pati', *The New Indian Express*, 8 November 2015

Female politician training observed and interviews conducted by Alyssa Heinze in June-July, September 2018. Sreeparna Chakrabarty, 'Training for Women to Break Free from Sarpanch Pati', *The New Indian Express*, 8 November 2015

Himachal Pradesh	1994	50%	Gram Panchayats
Jharkhand	2001	50%	Gram Panchayats in both non- scheduled and 5th Schedule areas
Karnataka	1993	50%	Gram Panchayats
Kerala	1994	50%	Gram Panchayats
Madhyapradesh	1994	50%	Gram Panchayats in both non- scheduled and 5th Schedule areas
Maharashtra	1994	50%	Gram Panchayats in both non- scheduled and 5th Schedule areas
Manipur	1994	33%	Gram Panchayat in valley areas and village council in hill areas
Meghalaya	1994	-	Village councils and Village Employment councils
Rajasthan	1994	50%	Gram Panchayats in both non- scheduled and 5th Schedule areas
Tripura	1993	50%	Gram Panchayats in non-scheduled areas and Village councils in 6th scheduled areas
Uttarpradesh	1994	33%	Gram Panchayats

2. The study

This study is on the challenges of "Sarpanch Pati" (de jure elected women and de factorun husbands or male family members). in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) aims to delve into the underlying causes and consequences of this of proxy practices. Despite constitutional provisions aimed at enhancing women's participation in local governance, the phenomenon of "Sarpanch Pati" persists, wherein husbands or male relatives of elected women representatives exert control over decision-making processes, undermining the genuine empowerment of women in PRIs.

Context

A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) before the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, vide W.P. (Civil) No. 615/2023 highlighting 'the menace of Pradhan Pati', had been filed. After hearing the case, the Hon'ble Court, in its Order dated 06.07.2023, directed the Petitioner to seek remedy from the Ministry of Panchayati Raj in the first instance. Accordingly, the petitioner filed a representation dated 08.09.2023 before the MoPR. Having regard to the Orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj constituted an Advisory Committee with ten members to examine the issue of Women Pradhans being represented by the male members of their families and also examine other issues related thereto. The Terms of Reference of the above-mentioned Committee are as under-.

- 1. To suggest measures for eliminating proxy practices and ensuring good governance including effective implementation of the clauses under Article 243 of the Constitution of India which were inserted through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 to increase women's representation in the grassroots democratic set-up.
- 2. To examine the legal framework to overcome the practices being followed in the Panchayats where women have been elected as Pradhan/Mukhiya/Chairperson for the namesake and their male family members are handling the day-to-day work of the Panchayat.
- 3. To provide suggestions/recommendations for empowering Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) of Panchayats and ensuring their participation in the political process and decision-making at the grassroots level for effective implementation of reservation for EWRs in Panchayats.
- 4. To suggest capacity building needs of EWRs for empowering them with competencies for effective political leadership in PRIs including the Training programmes for their rights and duties, particularly the Laws passed by the States/Centre for the benefits of EWRs of Panchayats including relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure.

- 5. **Assessing the ability of EWRs** to plan, prepare the agenda, mobilise participation and conduct the Meetings of Ward Sabha, Mahila Sabha, Gram Sabha and Panchayat General Body Meetings.
- 6. To suggest an **IEC campaign for promoting change in social mindsets** for eliminating Gender-Based Discrimination and proxy practices
- 7. To suggest measures for empowerment of rural women through intensifying Panchayat SHGs CBOs Convergence.

The committee in its first meeting held on 19th October 2023 decided to do further consultations and studies on the matter.

Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of the study is to find measures for eliminating proxy practices and ensuring good governance to increase women's representation in the grassroots democratic set-up. The objective of the study is to:

- To examine the prevalence and extent of the involvement of "Sarpanch Pati" in decision-making processes within Panchayati Raj Institutions by exploring the challenges faced by EWRs in exercising their roles and responsibilities and assess the role of "Sarpanch Pati" in creating or exacerbating these challenges. And suggest measures for eliminating proxy practices and ensuring good governance.
- To analyse the impact of the role played by male members (both family and political parties) and government officials in perpetuating the influence of "Sarpanch Pati."
- To provide suggestions/recommendations for policy interventions and reforms that can mitigate the influence of "Sarpanch Pati" and intensify Panchayat - SHGs - CBOs convergence to ensure their participation in the political process and decision-making at the grassroots level for eliminating Gender-Based Discrimination and proxy practices.
- To suggest capacity-building measures and IEC methods for empowering EWRs with competencies for effective political leadership in PRIs.

Research Questions

There are cultural barriers and a lack of sufficient systemic interventions, which makes their task a trying one, there could also be factors that would require a deeper understanding of the specific contexts. The important research questions to be addressed for eliminating gender-based discrimination and proxy practices are multilayered. To deal with this, the following questions will need to be investigated:

- To what extent the PRIs have been effective in enabling the women of India to play a role in policy-making? How far have the gender quotas/reservations influenced the nature of politics at the grassroots level? How effective has the presence of women in the Panchayats been? How far were they able to change their self-image after these reforms were made?
- Does the intervention of the state through the 73rd Amendment Act aid the effective participation of women at a decision-making level? How are they negotiating barriers at different levels? How do they address pervasive patriarchal forces? What are the primary challenges faced by elected women representatives in exercising their roles and responsibilities within Panchayats?
- How actively are proxy practices involved in decision-making processes within Panchayati Raj Institutions? In what ways does the presence of "Sarpanch Pati" create or exacerbate challenges for elected women representatives?
- How do government officials interact with "Sarpanch Pati" and how does this interaction affect the functioning of the PRIs?
- What could be the long-term impact of reducing the influence of "Sarpanch Pati" on the overall effectiveness of PRIs? How might empowering elected women representatives lead to positive changes in local governance and community development?
- To what extent do male members of the Panchayat influence or contribute to the perpetuation of "Sarpanch Pati"? How do community members perceive the role of "Sarpanch Pati" in the decision-making processes of the Panchayat? Are there differences in community perceptions based on factors such as education, socioeconomic status, or gender?
- How do societal expectations and traditional gender roles shape the role of "Sarpanch Pati" in the decision-making process? What cultural factors contribute to the continuation of the influence of "Sarpanch Pati" in rural governance?
- Are there regional variations in the prevalence and influence of "Sarpanch Pati" in different states or districts? How do local contexts and demographics contribute to variations in the role of "Sarpanch Pati" across different regions? Does the practice depend on the extent of women's access to basic facilities for safety and mobility?
- What policy interventions can be recommended to mitigate the influence of "Sarpanch Pati" and promote the genuine empowerment of elected women representatives? How can existing policies be modified or new policies introduced to address the challenges identified in the study?

Methodology

The study will consolidate the available literature on the issue for setting the context for further exploration. Participant observation will provide an insight into the ongoing struggles of EWRs to balance the private and public spheres, within a patriarchal social structure. The aim is not only to collect or compile data but also to investigate how these women experience their new roles in the grassroots democratic institutions after the policy of reservation began in 1993, and how they relate to the debates surrounding their increasing participation. For this, participant observation has to be complemented with interviews, which are part of the participant observation process. Individual as well as collective views of EWRs, "Sarpanch Pati," male members, and government officials to gather qualitative and quantitative data need to be through focus groups and in-depth personal interviews. Documenting specific case studies where the phenomenon of "Sarpanch Pati" is prominent to gain insights into local dynamics and factors contributing to its persistence will be required. (3) As the study is of various states a comparative analysis of the situation across different states and regions to identify regional variations and understand the influence of local contexts will provide more insights into the extent of the issue.

Sample size

Determining the sample size for the study needs to consider the geographical locations, size of the states, PESA states, Schedule VI areas, states and regions with local government institutions under State Acts, backwardness, and status of PRIs. Larger states will be divided into four zones. The study will cover 16 states. A purposive sampling method will be used to select the grama panchayats from among those headed by women. The universe of the sample will include, EWRs, other members of the PRIs both male and female, government officials, and family members.

Larger states with PRIs such as Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, and Karnataka will have multiple regional samples; women-headed local governments will be covered in States and regions where PESA, Schedule VI, and State-Act local governments are present. States with multiple types of local governments such as Jharkhand, Assam, and Manipur for instance, will have samples from all categories.

Since the PRIs have been entrusted with the specific responsibility of preparing plans and implementing various schemes for economic development and social justice, including the 29 subjects mentioned in the 11th Schedule, elected representatives will have to play a major role in development administration. Therefore, understanding the dynamics of "Sarpanch Pati" is essential for promoting genuine gender equality in Indian rural governance. This concept note sets the foundation for a comprehensive study that will not only highlight the challenges but also provide actionable insights for building a more inclusive and representative democratic framework.

As the study is of various states a comparative analysis of the situation across different states and regions to identify regional variations and understand the influence of local contexts will provide more insights into the extent of the issue.

Determining the sample size for the study needs to consider the geographical locations, size of the states, PESA states, Schedule VI areas, states and regions with local government institutions under State Acts, backwardness, and status of PRIs. Larger states will be divided into four zones. The study covered the following states:

1.	Andhra Pradesh	9. Madhya Pradesh
2.	Assam	10. Maharashtra
3.	Bihar	11. Manipur
4.	Chhattisgarh	12. Meghalaya
5.	Himachal Pradesh	13. Rajasthan
6.	Jharkhand	14. Telangana
7.	Karnataka	15. Tripura
8.	Kerala	16. Uttar Pradesh

A purposive sampling method was used to select the grama panchayats from among those headed by women. The universe of the sample will include, EWRs, other members of the PRIs both male and female, government officials, and family members. Larger states with PRIs such as Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, and Karnataka will have multiple regional samples; womenheaded local governments will be covered in States and regions where PESA, Schedule VI, and State-Act local governments are present. States with multiple types of local governments such as Jharkhand, Assam, and Manipur for instance, will have samples from all categories.

Profile of Respondents:

3. Key Observations

Over the last two decades, women's 'political participation' has emerged as a major marker of democracy worldwide. This is frequently operationalized through the policy of women's reservation that seeks to enhance women's *presence* within national and subnational institutions of governance. While affirming the need for women's reservation to increase the presence of women in politics, it is also to be noted that the presence of EWRs in local governance does not easily assure their effective political participation or political representation. This is because of the 'social embeddedness of policy' in local contexts. Effective participation and representation depend upon the 'relative agency' of EWRs who continually negotiate and construct their political subjectivities within everyday life situations, specifically three processes—patriarchal family relations, caste relations at the workplace, and discursively produced marked identities.

There are different roles that women have to play in their participation in governance as elected representatives. In this study, participation in meetings, attending training, and participating in Gram Sabha are being focussed. Some of the observations from the experiences shared by the elected women representatives are mentioned below:

3.1 Prevalence of the Sarpanchpati System

The study found that the Sarpanchpati system, where male relatives of the elected women representatives exert control and authority, is widely prevalent across the states covered, except Kerala. This system was observed prominently in states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan, where husbands, sons, or other male family members often assume the roles and responsibilities associated with the elected position, undermining the autonomy and representation of the women leaders.

In numerous panchayats, male relatives such as husbands, fathers-in-law, sons, or sons-in-law of EWRs openly introduce themselves as the mukhiya/sarpanch or sarpanch pati (husband of the sarpanch). They assume and carry out the roles and responsibilities associated with these positions on behalf of the EWRs, further perpetuating male domination in panchayat affairs and limiting the agency of women leaders.

The study also found instances in Meghalaya and Tripura where Village Male headmen or Male Secretaries exercise considerable influence in steering the decisions of the women representatives, constraining their ability to participate effectively in local governance.

The study identified a typology of the Sarpanchpati system, which refers to the varying degrees of dependence and decision-making power of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) on male members, often their husbands or other male relatives. This typology ranges from EWRs who are aware and bold decision-makers, exercising their power and authority, to those who are completely novice, unaware, and entirely dependent on male proxies for moral support, physical support, transportation, and even legitimate representation.

In between these two extremes, there are various gradations. Some EWRs are aware and partially dependent on male proxies for physical security or social security. Others are aware and strategic but silent decision-makers, where they make decisions behind the scenes while allowing the male proxies to represent them publicly. Some EWRs have partial roles in decision-making, while others are aware but timid and largely dependent on male proxies for various aspects of their role as Sarpanch.

3.2 Background of EWRs: Political aspirations and motivations

During the interviews, various motivations emerged for women to contest elections as Elected Women Representatives (EWRs):

- I. Party Nomination: In some cases, women contested on the tickets of political parties, either by party decision (e.g. in Tripura, where the party leader decided the Panchayat President would contest as there was ST reservation) or by being approached by parties to contest (as seen in Kerala).
- II. Family Legacy/Dynastic Politics: In certain instances, women were encouraged or convinced by family members, especially husbands/male relatives, to contest in order to continue the family's political legacy and hold on to power after male relatives' tenures ended. This led to instances of dynastic politics with family members being repeatedly elected, limiting opportunities for new leadership. Such instances were seen in Rajasthan, Meghalaya, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand etc.
- III. Family's Path to Power: In some cases, like in Maharashtra and Bihar, families encouraged women members to contest not due to a prior legacy but as a means for the family itself to access political power and positions.
- IV. Self-Motivation and Aspiration: Some women contested out of their own inspiration and political aspirations, using it as a platform for personal growth and empowerment beyond household roles. In Himachal Pradesh, an EWR contested due to her own personal aspirations and motivations. As illustrated in a case study from Kerala and Jharkhand, some EWRs gained more confidence and motivation over successive tenures to reassert themselves politically.
- V. Opportunity through SHGs: In certain areas, women's self-help groups (SHGs) provided a pathway for members to contest local elections, as was seen in Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand.

3.3 Role and Responsibilities as EWRs

- I) Experience Gained Over Tenures: With successive tenures, EWR could carry out their duties and responsibilities more effectively and confidently, benefiting from the experience gained in their first term, as was seen in the case of Jharkhand.
- II) Knowledge Gaps: Some EWRs, like in Tripura, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh, struggled to understand panchayat functioning fully and depended on relatives, secretaries, or fellow representatives for assistance. Key areas of limited knowledge included technical aspects such as standing committees, panchayat records, proceedings of gram sabhas, quorum requirements, etc. In Meghalaya, women representatives in Village Employment Councils (VECs) had a poor understanding of their conduct, functions, fund regulations, and use of technical applications. This highlights the need for capacity-building initiatives to enhance EWRs' comprehension of their roles and responsibilities.
- III) Sincere Attitude Despite Constraints: While many EWRs, such as in Tripura, Bihar, and Chhatisgarh, lacked articulation to express a comprehensive understanding due to limited exposure, they often approached their work sincerely and diligently.

IV) Perceived Gender Limitations: Some responses pointed to an internalized perception that women cannot be well-versed with political knowledge and structures, hindering their grasp of panchayat functioning. As mentioned in Meghalaya, there were doubts about women's experience engaging in local governance and skepticism around their problem-solving abilities.

V) Communication Competencies: Though some EWRs had knowledge about schemes/programs, they lacked articulation skills to explain the details comprehensively, as was seen in the case of Chhatisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. However, certain EWRs developed excellent public engagement and communication skills, compensating for knowledge gaps through their sincere commitment to community service. In the case of Meghalaya, while women naturally developed public communication abilities through social movements, the presence of male representatives in local bodies restricted them from effectively utilizing these skills. They could not address gaps left by male heads.

VI) Technical and Financial Literacy Gaps: Managing funds, signing cheques/online forms, and using panchayat portals made s EWRs dependent on others due to a lack of financial and technical literacy; despite being literate, as mentioned in Chhatisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. In Meghalaya, there was a dependency on male representatives for record-keeping tasks.

VII) Balancing Domestic Responsibilities: The timing of gram sabhas, meetings, and training affected EWR participation as they had to balance household duties like sending children to school, meal preparation, etc., as mentioned in the case of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Chhattisgarh and Telangana. They missed events coinciding with festivals due to domestic preparation responsibilities. The EWRs missed out on training, social development initiatives, record maintenance and important meetings owing to domestic and religious responsibilities at home.

3.4 Administrative issues and facilities for EWRs

Infrastructure Constraints: There was a lack of gender-friendly infrastructure like dedicated gram panchayat buildings and functional toilets with water connections for women representatives. In most of the gram panchayats visited, there was no dedicated office space or room for the Sarpanch/President, regardless of their gender. This discouraged them from being available at the office premises.

Financial Limitations: The honorarium provided to elected representatives, including women, was too low and inadequate. There were delays in receiving travel and daily allowances, posing financial difficulties across states. In Meghalaya, Village Employment Councils (VECs) are voluntary institutions without any provisions for remunerations to their office bearers. This limited the interest and ability of women representatives to stay engaged, especially when they had to travel long distances for training without the option of reimbursement.

The lack of proper infrastructure facilities like dedicated office spaces and the absence of financial support mechanisms like adequate honorariums and timely allowances hindered the effective functioning of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs). This was further compounded in regions like Meghalaya, where the voluntary nature of local governance bodies meant no remunerative provisions for women representatives, discouraging their active participation.

3.5 Gaps in Capacity building

It was highlighted that training programs for EWRs are not held regularly enough. In many cases, they received only one training during their entire 5-year tenure. Missing this single training left them completely detached from the capacity building process.

Lack of regular reinforcement also made it difficult for EWRs to retain and apply learnings from the infrequent trainings. In Meghalaya and Bihar, only one induction training was provided, with other programs being mere reading of policy guidelines without interactive sessions.

- I. Content Relevance and Delivery: The training programs were often inadequate and ineffective, lacking targeted and relevant content delivery customized for women representatives. Comprehension challenges further hindered the capacity building of EWRs, necessitating more practical, accessible and easy-to-understand training sessions. It was felt that if women presidents received more relevant training, it could enhance their engagement, enthusiasm and effectiveness in political leadership roles. In Meghalaya, there was no specific capacity building tailored for women representatives in Village Employment Councils.
- II. Family Influences: Women representatives were apprehensive about attending events or platforms if their accompanying husbands were not treated with due respect, fearing it could discourage spousal support for their future participation in such activities.

The theoretically-oriented and generalized training programs with comprehension barriers, compounded by influences of family dynamics, severely limited EWRs' access to relevant capacity building opportunities required to effectively fulfil their governance duties and responsibilities.

3.6 Challenges related to mobility and travel

- I. Restricted Mobility and Public-Private Divide: The responses highlighted the severely restricted range of mobility for EWRs. Their participation in panchayat offices or related activities was constrained by rigid mobility rules imposed by their families across states. There existed a clear public-private divide, with men dominating the public spheres of politics and work, while women were closely associated with and confined to the domestic realm of family and home.
- II. Societal Norms and Traditional Gender Roles: Traditional gender roles assigning women primarily domestic responsibilities and societal norms restricting their mobility posed a significant barrier to their participation in public forums and political activities. Attending meetings, rallies, community gatherings etc. became extremely difficult for EWRs due to these regressive norms curtailing their freedom of movement.
- III. Caste-based Mobility Restrictions: In some instances, such as Bihar, caste differences further restricted the mobility and travel of EWRs. As a result, despite being elected as the panchayat President, some EWRs could not effectively address key issues across their full jurisdiction due to limited understanding stemming from their circumscribed mobility across different populations.

IV. In case of Meghalaya and Assam women were not allowed to leave their village premises for residential trainings. Security concerns and transportation constraints made women uncomfortable traveling alone. Also, customary regulations fixed by the traditional village headman prevented women from independently organizing and mobilizing meetings.

The deep-rooted patriarchal norms, systemic gender roles and caste dynamics severely curbed the mobility and public participation of EWRs. This not only hindered their ability to carry out official duties effectively across their constituencies, but also restricted their access to capacity-building opportunities like trainings and exposure visits outside their villages. The mobility challenges, exacerbated by lack of security, transport and regressive cultural diktats, significantly undermined the participation, growth and leadership potential of women representatives in local governance.

3.7 Structural Barriers

- I. Gender Roles and Domestic Responsibilities: Traditional gender roles, such as household chores and caregiving responsibilities, severely restricted women's opportunities to engage in public and political activities, further marginalizing their voices in governance processes. Household labor remained divided along gender lines, with women burdened with domestic work expected of their gender. This left them with little to no time for themselves or involvement in social and political spheres. Many respondents revealed that the burden of housework was a major factor hindering their participation in various political processes within the gram panchayats. The concern of leaving children unattended while attending long meetings and residential trainings posed a significant barrier, limiting the participation and capacity-building opportunities for women representatives (e.g., in Tripura, Meghalaya, Maharashtra, Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhrapradesh, Rajasthan and Telangana).
- II. Caste Dynamics: In certain villages, as highlighted in cases from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Tripura, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan, the caste dynamics were such that dominant caste members often disregarded or challenged the authority of leaders from oppressed castes. In such situations, women leaders from marginalized castes required support from their male relatives or community members to effectively assert their positions and confront the dominant caste individuals.
- III. Patriarchal Norms and Stereotypes: Patriarchal social norms, attitudes, and gender stereotypes discouraged women from participating in public life, seeking leadership positions, and contributing to decision-making processes (e.g., in Tripura, Meghalaya). It was brought up in interviews that the presence of elderly men from the village in gram sabhas or panchayat premises affected the presence and participation of women in these spaces. Additionally, the lack of recognition and respect for their roles and capabilities in gram sabhas was a common challenge faced by women leaders. As per tradition in most village families, women were not allowed to speak in front of elderly male relatives and were required to wear a 'ghunghat' (veil) in their presence. There also existed a tendency among the general public to approach male relatives of EWRs instead of the elected women representatives themselves when seeking to resolve issues across states.
- IV. Limited Education and Awareness: Limited access to education, illiteracy, and a lack of awareness about their rights, roles, and responsibilities in governance structures led

- to underrepresentation and limited engagement of women in decision-making processes (e.g., in Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh).
- V. Age and Mobility Factors: Age played a significant role, with younger women more commonly represented by male relatives. This trend was intertwined with the strict ghunghat system and restricted mobility for young women. As women grew older, the ghunghat system tended to loosen, and their mobility expanded, leading to increased independence and agency.
- VI. Balancing Family Responsibilities: Women leaders often struggled to balance family responsibilities with their political roles, highlighting the need for family support, particularly regarding childcare and understanding (e.g., in Tripura, Meghalaya, Madhya Pradesh).
- VII. Political Party Dynamics: Political party agendas and dynamics often constrained women elected representatives, limiting their autonomy and ability to make independent decisions that addressed the diverse needs of their constituents (e.g., in Tripura).
- VIII. Male Predominance in Governance: The predominance of men in local governance structures often undermined the confidence of women elected representatives in taking up leadership roles. Many women hesitated to assume positions of authority due to apprehensions about facing scrutiny and confrontation from senior officials and male members within the village or at the gram panchayat offices. However, it was observed that EWRs were less hesitant in seeking suggestions and clarifying doubts when they had female panchayat secretaries.
- IX. Decision Making Ability: Women leaders faced heightened scrutiny, criticism, and a fear of being blamed or judged by society, which could inhibit their willingness to take risks or make bold decisions, especially in the initial stages of their tenure (e.g., in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Meghalaya). The dominance of men in local government and the lack of female representation in leadership positions contributed to underconfidence among women elected representatives in assuming leadership roles and expressing their concerns in public forums. Women who were respected and involved in decision-making processes within their households exhibited greater confidence and decision-making abilities when taking up elected positions as representatives. The support and empowerment they received from their families played a crucial role in enhancing their leadership capabilities.
- X. Inexperience and Limited Understanding: Despite reservations for women in elected positions, many lacked prior experience in local governance, confidence, and an understanding of governance schemes and processes, limiting their effectiveness in decision-making and conflict resolution (e.g., in Karnataka, Kerala).

3.8 Engagement with CBOs

I. Capacity Building Through CBOs: Women who were part of community-based organizations (CBOs) gained some exposure to essential skills like book and record keeping. Many of them even learned how to write their names after engaging with these CBOs (as seen in case studies from Bihar and Meghalaya).

II. Supporting Role of CBOs: Engagement with CBOs played a crucial role in supporting elected women representatives in various ways. The presence of CBO members in gram sabhas and partnerships with self-help groups (SHGs) for social development activities enabled better outreach and a more community-driven approach to governance, as observed in a case study from Himachal Pradesh.

3.9 Experience with Officials

- I. Positive Impact of Female Secretaries: The presence of female panchayat secretaries was regarded positively, as it enhanced convenience and comfort for elected women representatives in their interactions with these officials, compared to their male counterparts as seen in Chhatisgarh and Karnataka.
- II. Workload Constraints: In some instances, panchayat secretaries handling multiple panchayats were unable to dedicate the required time and attention to supporting the elected representatives effectively (as observed in Maharashtra).
- III. Lack of Motivation: There was a noticeable lack of interest and motivation among some panchayat secretaries, particularly those posted outside their native districts as observed in Rajasthan.
- IV. Overburdening of Responsibilities: In certain cases, panchayat secretaries took on an overwhelming level of responsibilities, including collecting and managing demands from the local community, in addition to their regular duties.

Women representatives found it easier to connect and collaborate with other women in their villages, as well as local service providers like teachers, community health workers, and block-level officials. These personal connections facilitated dialogue on family and social issues, contributing to a more inclusive, community-driven approach to local governance. While many challenges persist, there are also inspiring examples of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) who have broken free from conventional constraints and evolved into confident leaders in their own right. Several pathways have enabled this transformation.

In states like Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka, the robust self-help group (SHG) movement has nurtured and empowered many women, some of whom became EWRs, leveraging their SHG experience. In Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, EWRs have emerged from grassroots mass movements and civil society organizations, deriving strength from these spheres of activism. Additionally, in states like Jharkhand, EWRs who secured a second tenure in local governance bodies were able to build on their previous experience, shedding initial inhibitions and growing markedly more self-assured in effectively discharging their responsibilities.

These diverse pathways underscore how, given the right opportunities and support systems, women can decisively break free from regressive shackles and come into their own as confident, capable leaders in the political arena.

4. Key Recommendations - from officials, ERs and COB's:

These points outline a comprehensive strategy for enhancing the capacity of elected representatives, particularly focusing on women in local governance. By implementing these strategies, efforts can be made to reduce the dependence of WERs on family members or male members and empower them to become independent, confident, and effective leaders in local governance. Here's a summary of the key recommendations:

1.Strengthening Capacity Building Initiatives for Elected Women Representatives (EWRs)

- I. Incorporate a Training Strategy Focused on Elected Women Representatives:
 - Integrate a dedicated training strategy for Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) within the national capacity-building framework.
 - Ensure that multiple training sessions are conducted during the tenure of EWRs, based on their specific needs and requirements.
- II. Conduct Comprehensive Training Needs Analysis (TNA):
 - Undertake a detailed Training Needs Analysis (TNA) for all Elected Representatives, with a specific focus on EWRs.
 - Within the TNA for EWRs, conduct a separate assessment for women with and without formal education to identify their unique training needs.
- III. Design Tailored Training Curricula:

Based on the TNA findings, develop training sessions covering a range of topics, including:

- Functional Literacy
- Public Speaking Skills
- Financial Management
- Personnel Management
- Administrative Skills
- Conflict Resolution
- Negotiation Skills
- Gender Sensitization
- Leadership Skills
- Technical Literacy (e.g., bill management, financial record-keeping)
- E-Literacy
- Awareness of Programs, Schemes, Rights, and Entitlements
- Legal Frameworks
- IV. Enhance Training Content and Methodologies:

- Incorporate fundamental concepts in the training curriculum, such as poverty, planning, GPDP, grassroots democracy, law, Gram Sabha, code of conduct, public service, social responsibility, gender budgeting, decision-making, social inclusion/exclusion, and anticorruption measures.
- Utilize interactive and participatory training methodologies, including role-playing, case studies, group discussions, Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRA), simulations, and field visits.

V. Ensure Accessibility and Flexibility of Training Programs:

- Strategically choose training venues that are accessible to EWRs, preferably at the cluster/block or district level along with the option of deploying mobile training teams at the Panchayat level.
- Accommodate the schedules of EWRs, considering their family obligations, cultural commitments, and livelihood activities.

VI. Develop a Cadre of Master Trainers:

- Identify and train a cohort of master trainers from the peer group, comprising accomplished former women Panchayat presidents.
- Empower Community Resource Persons (CRPs) as master trainers/mentors and assign them to Gram Panchayats with women presidents.
- Ensure that master trainers receive certification from recognized institutions, such as NIRD PR, SIRD PR, or other training institutes.

VII. Strengthen Institutional Capacity and Coordination:

- Designate a nodal person at the SIRD/State training institute level to focus specifically on the training of EWRs.
- Conduct a gender analysis of the training modules developed by NIRD PR, SIRD PR, and other training institutes.

VIII. Facilitate Exposure Visits and Knowledge Sharing:

- Organize annual exposure visits for EWRs to showcase best practices and successful experiences from other states.
- Conduct gender sensitization sessions for officials at the district, block, and Gram Panchayat levels, as well as for PR&RD department personnel.

IX. Leverage Technology and Digital Platforms:

- Develop user-friendly training manuals and IEC materials in local languages.
- Utilize audio-visual technologies, such as video conferencing and TV, to enable distance learning at the Gram Panchayat level.
- Establish a Learning Management System (LMS) to host e-modules, manuals, case studies, FAQs, and best practices, leveraging NIRD PR's E-Prashikshan platform.

- Create a platform like the India Panchayat Knowledge Portal (IPKP) to share videos and experiences of successful EWRs.
- X. Strengthen Monitoring, Evaluation, and Feedback Mechanisms:
 - Conduct pre- and post-assessments and follow-ups for training programs.
 - Gather feedback through surveys to continuously refine and restructure the training initiatives based on the evolving needs of EWRs.

2. Strengthening the Support from the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) for Elected Women Representatives (EWRs)

- I. Establishment of Gender Corners:
 - Position dedicated Resource Persons (RPs) in Gender Corners at the Block and Gram Panchayat levels to provide support to Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Elected Women Representatives (EWRs).
 - Facilitate coordination with relevant departments to ensure the provision of counseling, rehabilitation, and advisory support services through the Gender Corners.
 - Organize joint orientations and capacity-building sessions for SHGs and EWRs to foster synergies and mutual understanding.
- II. Facilitate Community Forums for Joint Initiatives: Encourage the creation of community forums that bring together SHGs and EWRs to collaborate on various initiatives, such as:
 - Mobilizing and ensuring participation in Gram Sabhas
 - Organizing convergence camps to facilitate access to government schemes and services
 - Launching campaigns and awareness drives on social issues
- III. Develop Manuals on Collaborative Roles of SHGs and EWRs:
 - Prepare comprehensive manuals that highlight the complementary roles and responsibilities of SHGs and EWRs, and provide guidance on how these two institutions can effectively support each other in the local governance and development processes.
 - Emphasize the importance of cooperation, knowledge-sharing, and resource mobilization between SHGs and EWRs to achieve better outcomes for the community.
 - Disseminate these manuals widely among SHG members, EWRs, and other relevant stakeholders to promote the adoption of collaborative approaches.
- IV. Strengthen Capacity Building and Training:
 - Integrate dedicated training modules on the roles and responsibilities of EWRs within the existing NRLM capacity-building programs for SHGs and community cadres.
 - Ensure that the training curricula cover topics such as local governance, decisionmaking processes, financial management, social accountability, and convergence strategies.

• Leverage the expertise and experiences of successful EWRs to design and deliver the training programs, enabling peer-to-peer learning and mentoring.

V. Facilitate Convergence and Networking:

- Actively promote convergence between NRLM, Panchayati Raj Institutions, and line departments to develop integrated support mechanisms for EWRs.
- Encourage the formation of networks and platforms that bring together EWRs, SHG members, and other community stakeholders to share best practices, advocate for their rights, and collectively address local challenges.
- Provide necessary support, such as information sharing, resource mobilization, and linkages, to strengthen these convergence and networking initiatives.

VI. Enhance Monitoring and Documentation:

- Develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework to track the effectiveness of NRLM's support for EWRs, capturing quantitative and qualitative indicators.
- Ensure regular documentation of successful case studies, innovative practices, and lessons learned to facilitate cross-learning and replication within and across states.
- Disseminate the learnings and insights through various knowledge-sharing platforms, including NRLM's knowledge management systems.

3. Strengthening Support for Elected Women Representatives (EWRs)

- I. Addressing the Technology Interface Challenge:
- Recognize the potential challenges faced by semi-literate EWRs in accessing and using technology-based applications and e-portals.
- Make provisions to provide smartphones to Panchayats with women presidents to enable them to leverage digital tools and resources.
- Authorize the placement of a dedicated resource person at the Panchayat level to serve as a technical expert and provide hands-on support to EWRs in using technology.

II. Enhancing Infrastructure and HR Support:

- Standardize the infrastructure and amenities within Panchayat offices to ensure they are elderly, PwD, and gender-friendly.
- Standardize the infrastructure and facilities in the block and district-level training centers to create an enabling environment for the capacity building of EWRs.
- Establish on-site childcare facilities, including childcare services and breastfeeding areas, at training venues, along with provisions for caretakers.
- Ensure the placement of a female Panchayat Secretary in Panchayats with women presidents to provide administrative support and enable effective functioning.

III. Providing Financial Support and Incentives:

• Introduce state-level programs to support the livelihoods of EWRs, enabling them to balance their civic responsibilities with their financial needs.

- Provide an advisory to states on increasing the remuneration of elected representatives, with a 50% additional remuneration for EWRs, similar to the practices in southern states.
- Ensure timely reimbursement of remuneration, travel allowances, and daily allowances to EWRs to alleviate financial hardships.

IV. Strengthening Legal Support and Partnerships:

- Partner with the District Legal Service Authority to provide legal support and advisory services for EWRs, addressing issues related to their rights and responsibilities.
- Establish strategic partnerships with the Ministry of Electronics and IT, and the Ministry of Education, to create an ecosystem of digital skilling and educational opportunities for Panchayat representatives and community members.

V . Implementing Accountability and Transparency Measures:

- Introduce an award system to recognize and incentivize Panchayats with women representatives in non-reserved seats, as well as the best-performing Panchayats with women presidents.
- Implement state-level regulations to prevent the misuse of authority and address conflicts of interest among elected representatives, including the issue of "Sarpanch Pati."
- Develop a code of conduct tailored specifically for EWRs, emphasizing the regulations and standards they must adhere to.

VI. Strengthening Support Systems for Capacity Building:

- Establish a help desk and gender helpline for EWRs at the state level to provide dedicated support and advisory services.
- Create a network of "resource blocks" or clusters of Panchayats with successful EWRs to facilitate knowledge-sharing and peer-to-peer learning.
- Encourage the formation of EWR and ex-EWR associations to enable collective advocacy and support.

VII.Improving Monitoring and Awareness:

- Conduct a government-funded gender audit of Panchayats, covering facilities, rules, regulations, files, and records, to identify and address gaps.
- Implement an auxiliary system to assist Panchayats in maintaining records and updating information on local issues.
- Launch a nationwide campaign to boost the involvement and recognition of EWRs in the effective functioning of Panchayats, targeting media, citizens, and political parties.
- Clearly define the division of responsibilities between the Panchayat Secretary and the President to ensure accountability and minimize vulnerabilities among elected representatives.

The recommendations outlined above present a comprehensive framework to strengthen the support for Elected Women Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions. By addressing the key challenges and barriers faced by EWRs, these recommendations aim to enhance their participation, leadership, and overall effectiveness in local governance and community development.

5. Case Studies - State-wise Experiences of Women Elected Representative

5.1 Andhra Pradesh

The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Andhra Pradesh are structured to promote decentralized governance and development across the state. However, Andhra Pradesh has introduced an innovative model in its local governance system through the establishment of Village Secretariats (Gram Sachivalayam), aiming to provide an efficient and accessible governance structure to the rural population. The PRIs in Andhra Pradesh also operate at three levels: Gram Panchayat, Mandal Parishad, and Zilla Parishad. At the grassroots level, the Gram Panchayat serves as the basic unit of local governance in Andhra Pradesh. It is responsible for the implementation of various schemes and programs related to health, sanitation, education, agriculture, social welfare, and infrastructure development within the village. The Gram Panchayat ensures participatory decision-making by involving the community through the Gram Sabha meetings, where villagers can present their issues, suggestions, and participate in the planning process of developmental activities. Above the Gram Panchayat, the Mandal Parishad (or Block Panchayat) functions at the block level. It plays a crucial role in coordinating the development activities and programs of several Gram Panchayats within its jurisdiction. The Mandal Parishad ensures that the plans and projects executed at the village level align with the broader development objectives of the block. At the apex of the PRI structure, the Zilla Parishad operates at the district level, overseeing and coordinating the functions of the Mandal Parishads. It is responsible for the planning and implementation of district-wide development projects and schemes, ensuring resource allocation, and monitoring progress across the district.

Case Study 1:Geetha Harshitha, East Godavari District

Geetha, a 25-year-old graduate with aspirations of becoming a teacher, finds herself in an unanticipated political role within the Gram Panchayat. Her entry into politics was not driven by personal ambition but by familial obligation, as her father, unable to contest due to reservation policies favoring women from the Scheduled Caste community, compelled her to step into the political arena. The reservation system, designed to enhance representation and ensure equity, ironically serves as the backdrop for Geetha's reluctant foray into politics. Contesting and winning a seat reserved for Scheduled Caste women, Geetha embodies the complexities and unintended consequences of reservation policies, highlighting the gap between policy objectives and their impact on the ground.

Geetha's tenure as a Gram Panchayat representative is marked by significant gaps in her understanding of the role and its responsibilities. Unfamiliar with the functions of a Gram Panchayat, the intricacies of budgeting and finance, the nuances of government schemes, and the broader implications of her position, she represents a broader issue: the challenge of performing a role for which she is unprepared and uninterested.

Geeta did not have any aspiration to join politics and contest the panchayat elections. She did not have motivation to perform as Sarpanch. As a newcomer with aspirations outside politics, Geetha's role in the development and planning processes of her Gram Panchayat has been limited. Her lack of familiarity with the intricacies of budgeting, finance, and development

schemes has constrained her ability to effectively contribute to the panchayat's economic planning and initiatives aimed at uplifting the community.

Geetha's engagement in governance and platforms such as the Gram Sabha is marked by a steep learning curve. With minimal prior exposure to the operational aspects of the Gram Panchayat and its governance mechanisms, her involvement has been passive, reflecting a broader issue of inexperience and lack of preparation for the responsibilities that come with her elected position. Her father as a proxy plays the role of Gram Panchayat President in all aspects. Geetha encounters numerous challenges, including a significant knowledge gap regarding her duties and the functions of the Gram Panchayat, owing to limited trainings she is exposed to, the pressure personal ambition, and accepting a role she was compelled into. These challenges are combined by the broader societal and systemic constraints that affect women in politics.

The lack of a strong support network and mentorship has been evident in Geetha's journey. Unlike her counterparts with more experience or interest in politics, Harshitha's path has been relatively isolated, highlighting the need for more structured support systems for women who find themselves in similar positions of reluctant leadership.

The sudden thrust into political life has disrupted Geetha's personal aspirations and life balance. Attempting to direct her responsibilities as a Gram Panchayat representative while holding onto her dreams of becoming a teacher presents a significant personal and professional conflict, symbolic of the challenges faced by women coerced into political roles. Although not explicitly detailed, Geetha's narrative suggests an underlying current of gender-based discrimination and biases, particularly the societal expectations that limit women's roles to certain fields and the pressures that deter them from pursuing personal ambitions outside the traditional norms.

Given her limited tenure and the steep learning curve, Geetha's achievements and direct impact on her constituents have been modest. However, her presence in the Gram Panchayat serves as a symbol of the ongoing struggle for meaningful women's representation in politics and governance. There is a clear need for comprehensive capacity development for Geetha, encompassing governance, financial management, leadership skills, and an understanding of local government schemes. Such training would equip her with the knowledge and confidence to fulfil her role more effectively.

Geetha's journey stresses the necessity for changes to support women's genuine empowerment in political spheres. Future aspirations for improving women's representation include the establishment of mentorship programs, capacity-building initiatives tailored to the needs of women representatives, and fostering a culture that encourages women's active and informed participation in politics.

Geetha's story is a poignant illustration of the challenges faced by women thrust into political roles without adequate support or interest. It highlights a critical flaw in the implementation of reservation policies: the assumption that mere representation equates to empowerment and effective governance. Her experience raises questions about the effectiveness of political participation when elected representatives are not fully engaged or knowledgeable about their

duties and the needs of their constituents. This situation calls for a comprehensive approach to political empowerment, emphasizing the need for education, training, and genuine interest in public service, beyond the tokenistic fulfillment of reservation quotas.

Reflecting on her unexpected political journey, Geetha remarked, "I found myself in a role I never wanted, a path I never chose. It's like being given a script in a language I don't understand." This candid admission not only captures her personal difficulty but also serves as a metaphor for the broader challenges of ensuring meaningful political participation for women representatives who find themselves in positions of power without the tools, desire, or knowledge to effect change.

Case 2: Manu, Alluri Sitarama Raju District, Andhra Pradesh

Mrs. Manu's story unfolds her duties as a Gram Panchayat, located in the Alluri Sitarama Raju District of Andhra Pradesh, where she has become a beacon of active female leadership in local governance. As a 38-year-old matriculate with a rich background in public service and a deeprooted commitment to her community, Mrs. Manu's transition from a dedicated volunteer and an active member of a Self-Help Group (SHG) to the Panchayat President epitomizes the transformative power of women's participation in politics. Belonging to the Scheduled Tribe (ST) community and hailing from a family deeply involved in the upliftment of their community, Mrs. Manu's journey into politics was paved by her previous engagements in public life. Her election as the Panchayat President is not just a personal achievement but a proof to the potential of women with grassroots experience to lead and effect change within their communities.

Mrs. Manu's tenure as Panchayat President has been marked by her focus on addressing social development issues, particularly those affecting women and children. Unlike the conventional emphasis on infrastructure development, her leadership reflects an understanding of the community's needs, prioritizing health, education, and women's empowerment. Focus on Social Development: Mrs. Manu has championed initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life for women and children, leveraging her position to address issues beyond mere infrastructure.

Her success is partly due to the solid support from other women within SHGs, demonstrating the strength of collective action and community-based networks in fostering social change. By effectively collaborating with women functionaries, volunteers, and leveraging the services of the village secretariat and Women Empowerment Representatives (WER), Mrs. Manu has showed how synergy between elected representatives and administrative bodies can enhance governance and service delivery at the grassroots level. Mrs. Manu has actively contributed to the economic development and planning process in her community by prioritizing initiatives that strengthen sustainable livelihoods, enhance local infrastructure, and support the agricultural sector, crucial for the local economy. Her leadership has been instrumental in integrating traditional knowledge with modern practices to foster economic resilience.

With a deep understanding of governance, Mrs. Manu has maximized her engagement in platforms like the Gram Sabha to advocate for transparency, inclusivity, and community participation. Her efforts have been focused on empowering constituents to voice their concerns and contribute to the decision-making process, thereby enhancing democratic governance at the grassroots level. Despite her successes, Mrs. Manu faces challenges such as bureaucratic hurdles, overcoming societal resistance to women in leadership, and addressing the limitations imposed by her educational background. Additionally, the patriarchal structure of rural politics sometimes undermines her authority and decision-making capacity.

Mrs. Manu's journey has been supported by strong support networks within SHGs and mentorship from seasoned public servants and community leaders. These relationships have provided her with valuable insights, strategies for effective governance, and the resilience to overcome obstacles. Balancing her role as Panchayat President with personal responsibilities has been a delicate task for Mrs. Manu. She negotiates this balance by involving her family in her vision for community development and leveraging her support network to manage her time and commitments effectively.

Mrs. Manu has encountered gender-based discrimination and biases in her political career. These experiences range from being underestimated due to her gender to facing resistance when implementing policies that challenge traditional gender roles. However, her persistence and accomplishments have gradually begun to shift perceptions within her community. Mrs. Manu's tenure has seen significant achievements, including the implementation of health and education programs tailored to women and children's needs, infrastructure improvements, and the promotion of women's economic empowerment. Her leadership has positively impacted her constituents, enhancing their quality of life and fostering a more equitable community.

Recognizing the need for continuous learning, Mrs. Manu has identified areas for capacity development, including advanced training in governance, financial management, and strategic planning. Such training would further empower her to address complex challenges and lead more effectively. Looking forward, Mrs. Manu aspires to mentor other women aspiring to political leadership, advocating for policies that support women's empowerment and representation. She recommends establishing more robust training programs for women in politics, enhancing support systems for female leaders, and promoting cultural shifts to value women's contributions to governance equally.

Mrs. Manu's effective leadership stresses the critical role of prior public involvement and networking in political efficacy. Her background as a volunteer and SHG member provided her with the skills, network, and understanding necessary to navigate the complexities of governance and advocate for meaningful change. This case study illustrates that women, when actively participating in politics and equipped with proper training and support, can significantly impact social development. Mrs. Manu's story is a clarion call for nurturing and promoting women's political participation as a catalyst for comprehensive community development.

Reflecting on her journey, Mrs. Manu shared, "True change comes from understanding your society. As women, we have the insight and the compassion to address the core issues that affect our lives and those of our children. Together, with the strength of our sisters in SHGs and the support of dedicated functionaries, we can create a wave of transformation that transcends the physical infrastructure and touches lives." Her words not only capture her commitment to her role but also highlight the potential of women in political leadership to drive significant social change.

5.2 Assam

Assam, the easternmost state of the Indian subcontinent Is the biggest state in the Northeast. it is the key to the entire Northeast India. Under the rule of the *Ahoms*, who governed Assam for six centuries, a mix of tribal and non-tribal institutions prevailed, laying the groundwork for the development of Panchayats. The Assam Local Self-Government Act of 1915 marked the formal establishment of Goan Panchayats in the state. Subsequently, due to the shortcomings of the Panchayat scheme under the 1915 Act, the Panchayat Act of 1926 was enacted. After India gained independence in 1948, a new Panchayat Act was introduced in Assam. This Act underwent further modifications with the enactment of the Assam Panchayat Act of 1959, which introduced a three-tier system comprising Goan Panchayats at the village level and Mohkuma Parishads at the sub-divisional level. However, the two-tier structure proved to be limited in its scope, prompting the revision of the system with the Assam Panchayati Raj Act of 1986. This legislation reinstated the three-tier local government structure, comprising Up-Goan Panchayats, Anchalik Panchayats, and Mohkuma Parishads.

The Assam Panchayat Act of 1994 marked another significant evolution in the state's Panchayat system, aligning it with the provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. Under this amendment, a three-tier Panchayat structure was established in Assam, comprising Zilla Panchayats (ZP) at the district level, Anchalik Panchayats (AP) at the intermediate level, and Goan Panchayats (GP) at the village level.

The first Panchayat elections under the Conformity Act, which covered all three tiers following the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, took place in Assam in December 2001 with a gap of a decade from the previous election in 1992. The first State Finance Commission was constituted on 23rd June 1995 and the report was submitted to the Governor on 29 February 1996.

The Assam Panchayat (Amendment) Act 2011 substituted "not less than one-third" with "fifty per cent" reserved seats for women. The rotation of offices at all three tiers is done every 5 years. Also, there is the provision of reservation for women belonging to the SC and ST categories from among the seats reserved for the persons belonging to the SC and ST, which shall not be less than one-third of the total number of seats reserved for the persons belonging to SC and ST.

In 2021 the government of Assam amended the Assam Municipal Act 1956 to provide women reservations for 10 years. It was also decided to bring an amendment to The Guwahati Municipal Corporation Act, 1969 to extend the tenure of women reservation up to 10 years in direct elections to posts of Councillors of the Corporation.

A considerable number of women entered Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) as elected representatives. However, although reservation has enhanced the representation of women, their participation remains an important question due to prevailing patriarchy both within and outside the household. In this context, a study to understand the participation of tribal women (Tiwas of Assam) in Gram Panchayat found that reservation of seats has indeed enabled

women to enter local governance. However, the reservation could not alter the patriarchal nature of GP. Thus, there is a need for institutional reforms in the GP.¹²

Case study 1: Smt. Junu Begum, Kalita Kuchi Gram panchayat, Kamrup

When we visited Kalita Kuchi Gram Panchayat in the Kamrup district to meet the Secretary, we were introduced to the husband of the Panchayat President. He had come to the Panchayat office to handle some official paperwork. We were fortunate to witness him signing and putting seals on the papers. On the second day of our visit, he accompanied President Smt. Junu Begum to the office. She was an Anganwadi worker who had resigned five years ago to contest the election.

She interacted with us very freely, although her husband did most of the talking. However, her level of confidence and self-esteem regarding her responsibilities as President was low. She depends on her husband to fulfil her duties as President. They both mentioned attending training programs together at the block level. Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) are not keen on attending district or state-level trainings as family responsibilities take priority. Her husband remarked, "The training was not very effective. People attend it not to acquire knowledge but merely to meet clothes over a cup of tea. They don't even remember what they learned." Smt. Junu added, "Since my husband accompanies me to the training, I do not pay much attention." The Sarpanchpati said, "Women cannot go for residential training alone. They have to be accompanied by male members from the family."

Her husband, who is both a farmer and a contractor, emphasized the importance of funds in securing tenders. He justified by saying "I take contracts to ensure that money remains within the Panchayat".

Junu Begum maintains healthy relationships with both male and female members. Male representatives also noted that if any problem arises in the village late in the evening, EWRs are often unwilling to go there. In such situations, male representatives take the lead. Even if the EWR is willing to go alone, it is not socially acceptable.

Junu mentioned that she only comes to the Panchayat when required for meetings. Her husband emphasized that to be an effective leader, one needs a strong political background, a good socioeconomic status, education, and experience working with the community. He said, "Decisions are to be made in consultation with the family, following social and cultural norms".

She mentioned that she presides over the Gram Sabha, but SHG members we met expressed that she doesn't speak during the Gram Sabha sessions. Instead, it is her husband and the Secretary who address the meetings. They remarked that it would be beneficial if the President

¹² Kakati, B. K. (2023). Can Reservation Ensure Women's Participation in Local Governance: A Study Among Tiwas. *Journal of the Anthropological Survey of India*, 0(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/2277436X231192278

attended the office regularly so that they could meet her as needed. Their involvement in SHGs has boosted their confidence to make decisions, and they have gained the freedom to travel. Consequently, they feel capable of fulfilling the roles and responsibilities of the President without the involvement of male family members.

They have undertaken initiatives such as campaigns against child marriage and for female education. They noted that previously, society prioritized boys in families, but today, girls are also given importance, partly due to policies like reservations for women.

Case Study 2: Ambari Gram Pachyat, Binnakandi block, Hojai

Smt. Runa Layla Borbhuya, 26 years old and a graduate, holds the position of Gram Panchayat President. We couldn't meet the President but her husband came to the panchayat office. However, her husband who is a farmer seems to play a significant role in decision-making and implementation within the Panchayat, particularly regarding construction works. His involvement in overseeing construction works and decision-making processes raises questions about the extent of his influence and the degree of autonomy granted to the elected representative. His assertion that he has the right to head the Panchayat due to his investment and planning for the election raises concerns. This suggests a potential undermining of the democratic process.

Moreover, the husband's assertion that experience is more important than education overlooks the value of knowledge and skills acquired through formal education, which can enhance effective governance and decision-making. He suggests that women, due to their household responsibilities, may only be able to attend training at the Gram Panchayat or block level, limiting their exposure to capacity-building opportunities. Limiting women's access to training opportunities based on household responsibilities perpetuates gender disparities and inhibits their full participation in Panchayat activities.

Despite being the Gram Panchayat President, it seems that Smt. Runa Layla Borbhuya's role in Gram Sabha meetings is limited, with the secretary handling those responsibilities.

The issue of Smt. Runa Layla Borbhuya's limited role in Grama Sabha meetings and her husband's assertion of control over decision-making processes further underscores the need for addressing gender disparities and promoting women's empowerment in local governance. The husband's acknowledgement that his wife attends Grama Sabha and engages in MGREGs work is positive, indicating her active involvement in community affairs. However, the revelation that she does not have a significant role in the Gram Sabha proceedings, with the secretary assuming responsibility, raises questions about her level of authority and participation within the Panchayat.

Addressing these gender dynamics and power imbalances is crucial for ensuring inclusive and effective governance and fostering the meaningful participation of women leaders like Smt. Runa Layla Borbhuya.

5.3 Bihar

Bihar, with its rich history and diverse cultural heritage, is characterized by a complex caste-based social structure and predominantly rural landscape. Administratively, Bihar is divided into 9 divisions comprising 38 districts, 101 subdivisions, and 534 blocks. As of the 2011 Census, Bihar ranked as the third most populous state in India, with a total population of approximately 10.41 Crores. The population distribution between males and females was roughly balanced, with 5.42 Crores males and 4.98 Crores females. Despite urbanization trends observed in cities like Patna, the majority of Bihar's population resides in rural areas, constituting nearly 89 per cent of the total population.

Bihar stands as India's most densely populated state, with 1,106 persons per square kilometre, indicating the high population density experienced across its regions. The state's population accounted for about 8.60 per cent of India's total population in 2011. The sex ratio in Bihar, reflecting the number of females per 1000 males, was recorded at 918, which was below the national average of 940 at the time of the census. This ratio provides insights into gender demographics within the state.

While Bihar has witnessed an upward trend in literacy rates over the years, the overall literacy rate stood at 61.80 per cent as per the latest population census. There remains a significant gap between male and female literacy rates, with male literacy at 71.20 per cent and female literacy at 51.50 per cent, highlighting disparities in access to education and literacy attainment between genders.

During the colonial period, Bihar was a part of the Bengal Presidency until 1921 and was brought within the purview of the Bengal Local Self-Government Act. Under colonial rule, certain parts of the state were subject to the Bengal Local Self-Government Act, which provided for local governance structures within those areas. The Bihar and Orissa Village Administrative Act of 1922 played a significant role in this regard by enabling the creation of elected Union Boards and some elected Panchayats. These local bodies were primarily responsible for dealing with minor civil and criminal matters at the grassroots level.

Following India's independence, Bihar underwent administrative reforms to establish local self-government institutions. The Bihar Local Self-Government Act was enacted to further streamline administrative divisions. One significant provision of this act was the restructuring of district board areas to make them smaller than the revenue boards. This restructuring aimed to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of local governance by ensuring that administrative units were appropriately sized and managed.

The Bihar Panchayati Raj Act, which was passed in 1947 immediately after India gained independence, marked a significant step towards decentralization and local self-governance in the state. The act officially commenced its functioning in 1949. An important amendment to

the act was made in 1950, which introduced provisions for the election of representatives in Local Boards. This move aimed to democratize the governance process at the grassroots level by allowing citizens to elect their representatives. The launch of the community development program in 1952 further fueled the establishment of panchayats across Bihar. This program emphasized local participation and decision-making in development initiatives, leading to the accelerated formation of panchayats throughout the state.

In 1959, the Bihar Panchayati Raj Act underwent another significant amendment in line with the recommendations of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee. These recommendations likely focused on strengthening the democratic functioning and effectiveness of the Panchayati Raj system in Bihar. Subsequently, in 1961, the Bihar Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad Act was enacted to establish block and district-level panchayats. This act came into force on 2nd October 1963, further formalizing the three-tier Panchayati Raj System in Bihar. Under this system, governance was organized into Gram Panchayats at the village level, Panchayat Samitis at the block level, and Zila Parishads at the district level.

The Bihar Panchayati Raj Act of 1993 was enacted in alignment with the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India, which aimed to strengthen decentralized governance at the grassroots level. This act established a three-tier system of local governance in Bihar, comprising Gram Panchayats at the village level, Panchayat Samitis at the Block level, and Zila Parishads at the District level.

In 2006, this system underwent a comprehensive revision and repeal, leading to the enactment of a new Bihar Panchayati Raj Act. This revised act continued to uphold the three-tier structure of local governance established in 1993.

As of now, Bihar has a total of 8,053 Gram Panchayats, 533 Panchayat Samitis, and 38 Zila Parishads operating across the state. Gram Panchayats, which serve as the primary units of local administration, are further divided into wards, totalling approximately 1.15 lakhs in number. One notable feature of the Bihar Panchayati Raj Act of 2006 is the establishment of Nyaya Panchayats, also known as Gram Kuchaharies, for the delivery of justice at affordable costs directly to the rural populace. This initiative aimed to ensure access to justice for rural communities by establishing localized judicial mechanisms.

The Act of 2006 mandates that 50 per cent of seats at all three tiers of the Panchayat are reserved for women. This reservation aims to address gender disparities in political participation and decision-making processes. Additionally, seats for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) are reserved in proportion to their population in the state. These reservations are rotated at the time of Panchayat elections every five years under the supervision of the State Election Commission in the manner prescribed by it.

For this study on women's participation in Panchayati Raj institutions in Bihar, two districts - Nalanda and Madhubani were selected. One Gram Panchayat in each district was covered for an in-depth study. Both the Gram Panchayat office and Gram Kachahari were studied to

understand the status of elected women representatives in these two institutions at the village level.

Case Study 1: Indu Devi, Lodipur Gram Panchayat, Nalanda District

Indu Devi, a 63-year-old woman from Lodipur Panchayat in Bihar, found herself in an unexpected position after being elected as the Panchayat Mukhiya in the 2021 local elections. Despite belonging to a well-to-do family, this was her first time contesting in elections. She was persuaded by her son-in-law to enter the electoral race, especially since the seat was reserved for women.

Having spent her entire life confined within household responsibilities and with no exposure to matters beyond family affairs, Indu Devi found herself thrust into a public role she neither aspired for nor felt equipped to handle. Lacking any political background or experience, she was unaware of the duties and responsibilities associated with being a Panchayat Mukhiya. Her son-in-law took charge of the entire election campaign and process on her behalf, as he would have contested himself if the seat was not reserved.

Coming from a traditional family setup, Indu Devi held the belief that women were primarily responsible for household work and had limited participation in political or developmental affairs. In her view, women relied entirely on male members for financial support and could not independently plan and organize the resources required for contesting elections.

Despite her lack of awareness about the specifics of reservations for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), Indu Devi felt that this provision was the only reason she could contest elections, given her lack of education and skills in other areas.

Having no prior experience or knowledge, Indu Devi lacked awareness regarding the preparation of the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) or the schemes implemented in her Panchayat. She was not familiar with the details of the funds received and utilized. Instead, her son-in-law managed the entire planning process and coordinated with departmental schemes on her behalf.

Although Indu Devi regularly attended Panchayat meetings and Gram Sabhas alongside her son-in-law, she never took the lead in presenting the annual plan or conducting stakeholder consultations for planning. Her lack of education and awareness limited her participation to mere attendance without any substantial role in decision-making.

She also highlighted her dependency on her husband for permission to travel outside her home for official work, indicating a lack of autonomy and lacked the confidence to travel alone. Household duties also served as a constraint, further limiting her mobility and participation in governance activities.

Indu Devi had her own space within the Panchayat office and visited it when necessary, always accompanied by her son-in-law. People approached her son-in-law directly for issue resolution, as she was unaware of her powers as the elected head of the Panchayat. All administrative roles and responsibilities were handled entirely by her son-in-law, who represented her and made decisions on her behalf. Additionally, due to her inability to read, her son-in-law read all documents requiring her signature.

She admitted to a lack of knowledge about major schemes, programs, and initiatives undertaken by the Panchayat to provide services like water supply and sanitation in her area. She mentioned that the selection of beneficiaries for government schemes was handled by the Panchayat Secretary and her son-in-law, with approval from the Gram Sabha.

Despite presiding over and addressing people in Gram Sabhas, Indu Devi was unaware of the meeting agendas and did not independently organize or communicate with attendees. Instead, she relied on her son-in-law to manage the approval processes and interactions with the crowd due to her hesitation and discomfort in such situations. Furthermore, Indu Devi mentioned that she had no direct interactions with the Panchayat Secretary, other elected members, or government officials, highlighting her limited involvement in governance and administrative processes.

Although Indu Devi had been a member of a Self Help Group (SHG) for 6-7 years under the Bihar rural livelihoods promotion program, she had never taken up any leadership role within the group. While she regularly attended SHG meetings, her involvement had not translated into enhanced participation within the Panchayat. The only notable benefit she mentioned was learning how to sign her name after joining the group.

Interestingly, Indu Devi's candidacy in the elections encouraged other women in the village to consider contesting for the position of ward member. Her respected status in the community played a significant role in motivating other women who might have previously viewed participation in elections and Panchayat activities as less respectable endeavours.

Indu Devi expressed that she had not received any training or capacity-building sessions to understand her role better within the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) before or after becoming an elected representative. She had never attended any training programs or meetings alone and always relied on her son-in-law's accompaniment. She mentioned that while there were meetings held to explain tasks, she often struggled to comprehend the discussions due to her lack of formal education and inability to read. She shared that she understands the colloquial language spoken at home but finds it challenging to grasp the formal language used in these meetings.

Despite her lack of interest in politics and governance work, Indu Devi acknowledged that she was open to learning if someone could teach her in a language she understands. She cited her experience of learning how to use a phone from her granddaughter as an example of her

willingness to learn new things, even in old age. She emphasized the importance of having a patient teacher who can communicate in a way that she can comprehend.

In her own words, she expressed her desire for training sessions that are conducted in a language she understands, stating, "Hum du ber aain kar debai ta trainere khisiya jaitei,lekin je koi humra bhasha mein batayega to hum sikh jayenge" which translates to "If I ask many doubts probably the trainer will get irritated but if someone will teach me in a language I understand, I will try to learn." This highlights her eagerness to learn and improve her understanding of her role within the Panchayati Raj system, provided that suitable learning opportunities are made available to her.

Indu Devi's son-in-law, serving as her proxy representative, demonstrated a significant level of assertiveness and political astuteness within local governance. He assumed the role of the Mukhiya, effectively taking charge of the administration and decision-making processes on behalf of his mother-in-law. His comprehensive understanding of the Panchayati Raj Act and meticulous knowledge of the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) were evident through his detailed explanations of ongoing activities. He capitalized on the opportunity to hold the position on behalf of Indu Devi.

Throughout the conversation, his strong affinity for politics and desire for political influence were apparent. However, his attitude toward potential capacity-building efforts for Indu Devi was dismissive, reflecting a certain level of arrogance and scepticism regarding her ability to learn new skills or take on greater responsibilities. Instead, he seemed content with maintaining complete control over the Panchayat's operations while perpetuating the existing power structure.

Indu Devi expressed gratitude for the support she received from her son-in-law, who handled all aspects of Panchayat work, including planning, implementation, and monitoring. She acknowledged her inability to read, write, or express herself, as well as her lack of decision-making ability, as major constraints in fulfilling her role effectively.

Testimonial: "Mehman sab kuch dekh lete hain kaam, asli mukhiya to yahi hain. Hum bas sunte rehte hain, dekhte rehte hain isi bahane se bahut kuch jankari mila hai jo pehle ni tha, yahi faayda hua hai humko aur kya." (My Son-in-law looks after the work, and he is the real Mukhiya. I just listen to him and observe what is going around, and that's how I've gained a bit of knowledge that I didn't have before. That's the benefit I've received, what else.")

Case Study 2: Manju Devi, Mahatha, Gram Panchayat, Ladania Block, Madhubani District

Manju Devi, a young woman belonging to the Yadav caste, contested the Sarpanch elections with the encouragement of her husband. As a graduate, she relies on her husband's support in her day-to-day activities, especially because she adheres to the tradition of Ghunghat, which makes it difficult for her to be in public places such as the Panchayat Bhavan and Gram Sabha. Manju Devi finds the work challenging, particularly in maintaining law and order in the village and handling cases involving the upper-caste community, as men from other castes may not readily listen to her.

Due to societal expectations, Manju Devi feels the pressure to conform to the role of a dutiful daughter-in-law and wear the Ghunghat. Consequently, she often relies on her husband for assistance in her official duties. Additionally, the low payment for their work as Sarpanch is insufficient, and if Manju Devi has to attend meetings or training sessions alone, she incurs extra expenses for transportation, as rickshaw rides are required. Furthermore, issues arise with the reimbursement of travel allowances (TA), as there are delays of up to six months in receiving them. This delay complicates financial management.

Manju Devi expressed concern about the challenge of leaving her child alone when attending meetings. She recounted an incident when she had to attend a district-level meeting with her husband and child, only to find that arrangements for tea and snacks were made only for the meeting participants. This lack of consideration left her disappointed, especially since her husband and child had to wait for hours without being offered anything. She emphasized the crucial role of her supportive husband, stating, "If my husband were not supportive, I would not have been able to go for such meetings." She highlighted that all women elected representatives in other panchayats are accompanied by their family members for such meetings, indicating the need for better provisions to include family members in such gatherings. She said, "I feel very sad when I see all the family members waiting outside while we sit on chairs comfortably in the meeting under the fan." She stressed the importance of having arrangements for family members accompanying elected representatives to meetings, as their support enables effective participation.

Regarding her role and responsibilities, she acknowledged her husband's assistance in dealing with cases and incidents, particularly those reported by men. As a young daughter-in-law, she felt it would be perceived negatively if she directly engaged with men, especially in resolving conflicts. Therefore, her husband typically communicates with them, consulting with village elders and handling cases that require police intervention, while she refrains from direct involvement in such matters.

Despite these challenges, Manju Devi has not received adequate training for her role. She mentioned receiving training only once during her five-year tenure, finding Gram Kachhahari-related matters to be very technical. She relied heavily on her husband's explanations, acknowledging that without his help, she would struggle to understand. She said "In a tenure of five years I have only received training once, and the Gram Kachhahri-related matters are very technical. If I don't take my husband's help, I will not understand a thing. I don't even remember what was being said in the training, but my husband was there with me, so on the

way back from the training, he told me in brief what was discussed" She further mentioned that being the wife of the only son in the family, she struggled to balance her involvement in panchayat activities with household duties, questioning who would manage the household work if she fully engaged in her responsibilities.

She credited the help she received from the Gram Kutchery Sevak during her tenure in carrying out her responsibilities, particularly regarding maintaining records and managing stationary, for which there is a shortage of funds. She appreciates the direct approach enabled by having a woman in that position who understands and supports the needs of women leaders in grassroots institutions. However, her lamentation about the lack of real powers in the Gram Kutchery institution reveals systemic challenges that hinder the effectiveness of local governance structures. The perception that decisions made hold little value unless they involve individuals who show respect for her husband and father-in-law reflects entrenched patriarchal attitudes that undermine the authority of women leaders.

Manju expressed her willingness to contest again if given the opportunity, believing she would be better prepared next time. Her husband, who harboured political ambitions, encouraged her to contest for the position. Still, he also recognized the challenges it brought, particularly in terms of her absence from home and the perceived neglect of household work and childcare. His concerns about the difficulties of the sarpanch position, particularly in resolving disputes and the tendency to exclude women from such roles in the village society. Despite these challenges, his acknowledgement of the positive impact of their work in their village, attributed to the close-knit community, suggests potential opportunities for effective governance within supportive environments rather than work in a different village navigating caste dynamics.

He said, "Mukhiya ka pad thik hai, aap yojana banaiye gram sabha kariye lekin sarpanch banne me dikkat hai, khali jhagra jhanjhat suljhane ka kaam hai aur gaon samaj me aaj bh mahila log ko is sab se dur hi rakha jata hai. Is gaon me sab caste ka log phir bhi thoda mil jul ke rehta hai to humlog ka kaam thik se ho jata hai ni to aap dusra gaon sab me jaiyega to bahut samasya hai" which translates to "The post of Mukhiya is fine, you make plans and hold village meetings, but there is difficulty in becoming a Sarpanch. The work involves only resolving disputes and conflicts, and women are kept away from all this in village society today. Even though people of all castes in this village still interact and are still living in a small circle, our work goes smoothly. If you go to another village, there will be a lot of problems."

5.4 Chhattisgarh

Chhattisgarh, established as the 26th state of the Indian Union on November 1, 2000, occupies the ninth position in terms of area and the seventeenth position in terms of population. With a

total population of 2.56 crores as per the Census of 2011, 32 percent of the population comprises tribal communities and 11.60 percent comprises scheduled castes. The sex ratio in Chhattisgarh is 991 females for every 1000 males, which is higher than the national average of 940. The literacy rate in Chhattisgarh has shown improvement, reaching 70.28 percent according to the latest population census. Male literacy stands at 80.27 percent, while female literacy is at 60.24 percent. The state is organized into 27 district panchayats, 146 janapad panchayats, and 11,664 gram panchayats, which form the three-tier Panchayatraj institutions in the state.

Panchayati Raj in Chhattisgarh has inherited the practices and structures of local self-governance initiatives from the former undivided Madhya Pradesh state. Consequently, the Panchayati Raj legislation that was enforced in Madhya Pradesh at the time of its reorganization continues to apply to Chhattisgarh. This law has been re-designated as the Chhattisgarh Panchayat Raj Adhiniyam, 1993, which forms the basis for the current Panchayat Raj system in Chhattisgarh. The panchayat elections in the reorganized state of Chhattisgarh were held in 2005 for all three tiers of the Panchayati Raj system.

Under the Chhattisgarh Panchayat Raj Adhiniyam, 1993, one-third of the seats are reserved for women. This reservation policy also applies to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. Initially, the allocation of reserved seats is determined by lottery in the first election. Subsequently, it is done by rotation, ensuring that women leaders occupy all reserved seats over a cycle of three elections. Additionally, the two-child norm was established as a disqualification criterion for occupying Panchayat seats. A literacy qualification was also introduced in the law, as per the Act amended in 2004, for candidates below 30 years of age for election to Panchayats (Section 36(1)).

However, in a cabinet meeting held on February 26, 2008, three significant decisions were made regarding reservation in the state Panchayat elections. They are ¹³:

- Increase of women reservation to 50 per cent from 33 per cent;
- Rotation of reserved seats every two terms in place of one term; and
- Removal of two child of women candidates.

Case study 5.4.1: Rupa Kosaria, Nayakbandha Panchayat, Abhanpur Block, Raipur District

Rupa Kosaria, a 35-year-old mother of three children, initially did not see herself entering the realm of politics. However, her deep sense of responsibility towards her community and her firm belief in her ability to bring about positive change led her to contest the Panchayat elections, despite facing opposition from her brother. Rupa's conviction stemmed from her confidence in effectively fulfilling the duties of a Sarpanch and serving her community.

¹³ Institute of Rural Management, The State of Panchayas 2007-08 - An independent assessment Vol 2, state /Ut Reporrts, Sponsored by Ministry of Panchayati Raj, New Delhi

As the Sarpanch of Nayakbandha Panchayat in the Abhanpur Block of Raipur District, Rupa's life reflects the multifaceted roles that women often assume. Alongside her responsibilities as an elected representative, she operates a general store, while her husband runs a small-scale business. Despite her limited formal education, having only completed the eighth standard, Rupa's determination to learn and adapt has remained steadfast. Upon assuming office, she encountered various challenges typical of rural governance, including managing accounts and finances. Nevertheless, Rupa sought guidance from the Panchayat secretary, recognizing the importance of continuous learning and skill development.

Rupa's leadership style is grounded in inclusivity and community engagement. She actively organizes Gram Sabhas, ensuring the participation of ward members and the broader community, with women often outnumbering men in attendance. Rupa is acutely aware of her roles and responsibilities as an elected representative, ensuring the support of all her fellow ward members and the UP Sarpanch. They convene regular meetings to discuss various initiatives, although she admitted that she is aware of the standing committees outlined in the state Panchayati Raj Act but are not operational within the Panchayat.

Despite facing opposition from her family, Rupa remained undeterred and actively involved herself in various community activities, particularly ensuring the participation of women, including members of Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Village Organizations (VOs). Her determination is evident in her statement that "Her husband and children's support is all she wants; her parents and siblings can oppose her for as long as they want. She will not stop doing things that she likes, and she is not doing anything wrong."

Rupa's husband's support is crucial to her ability to fulfill her duties as an elected representative. Despite his lack of interest in politics and his busy schedule as a businessman, he provides her with the freedom to allocate funds for events such as those on August 15th or January 26th. This support allows Rupa to balance her responsibilities as a wife, a business owner, and a Sarpanch effectively.

Managing her household, the general store, and her role as an elected representative can be overwhelming at times, especially considering her husband's busy schedule. However, Rupa remains determined and resilient. She recognizes the importance of her general store as a source of income and understands that her position as Sarpanch is temporary. Despite the hectic nature of her responsibilities, she is committed to fulfilling her duties both at home and in her community.

Rupa's ability to navigate her various roles demonstrates her strength and determination. Her husband's support, albeit indirect, allows her to focus on her responsibilities as a Sarpanch without neglecting her duties as a wife and business owner. This partnership underscores the importance of familial support in enabling women to participate in leadership roles and contribute to their communities.

Her leadership is inclusive and participatory, as she encourages SHG and VO members to voice their concerns and submit demands for necessary resources. Under her guidance, numerous demands related to animal husbandry and agricultural equipment have been successfully incorporated into development plans, benefiting SHG members and their households. Rupa has prioritized infrastructural development, including constructing CC roads, drainage systems, community halls, and rangmanch. Additionally, she has spearheaded the establishment of poultry and goat sheds, as well as a Mahila Bhavan for SHG members. Furthermore, Rupa ensures the effective implementation of various government schemes and programs, such as Awas Yojana, MGNREGS, and Swachh Bharat Mission. She She is well-versed in the details of these schemes and personally visits MGNREGS work sites to monitor and evaluate progress.

Despite her dedication, Rupa faces logistical challenges due to her lack of driving skills and limited public transportation. However, she mitigates these challenges with support from the UP-Sarpanch, who attends meetings on her behalf and briefs her on the discussions. She takes the assistance from her husband in navigating online applications and digital resources and he ensures she has access to the necessary information.

She emphasizes the need for continuous learning and skill development, advocating for state-level residential training programs. She believes such initiatives would provide better resources and focused learning opportunities without the distractions of household responsibilities unlike block-level trainings, which can be demanding and hectic, as she must cook, complete household chores, and then attend the training. Additionally, she underlines the importance of computer training for elected representatives, given the increasing reliance on online processes.

Rupa Kosaria's journey exemplifies the transformative potential of grassroots leadership. Through her proactive approach, community engagement, and commitment to continuous learning, she has initiated tangible development projects and empowered fellow community members, particularly women, to actively participate in governance. Her resilience and determination serve as a powerful reminder that with unwavering resolve and a steadfast commitment to one's values, even the most daunting obstacles can be overcome, leading to a more equitable and inclusive society.

Case Study 2: Jhunko Karma, Bade Kilepal Gram Panchayat, Bastanar block, Bastar district

Jhunko Karma, a 31-year-old woman from a rural village, stepped into the realm of local governance by contesting the panchayat elections in 2019. Despite having completed her education only up to the 12th standard, Jhunko was motivated to enter politics because the seat was reserved for women candidates. Her decision was rooted in her confidence in her abilities and her aspiration to contribute positively to her community.

Jhunko faced various challenges as she embarked on her political journey. Despite her husband's previous unsuccessful attempt at contesting the panchayat elections in 2014, she decided to pursue her own candidacy in 2019. To finance her campaign, Jhunko utilized her personal savings and also received financial support from her husband. This backing from her spouse has been instrumental in sustaining her throughout her term as an elected representative.

Despite the responsibilities that come with her role, Jhunko remains committed to fulfilling her duties. She strives to maintain a regular presence at the panchayat office and ensures her availability to the constituents she serves. Developing a positive rapport with the panchayat secretary, who oversees multiple panchayats, has been a priority for Jhunko. She endeavors to handle her responsibilities independently and only seeks assistance from the secretary when necessary or when joint decisions are required. This approach reflects Jhunko's dedication to effectively serving her community while fostering collaborative relationships within the local governance framework.

Jhunko's ability to drive a scooty has proven to be advantageous in her role as an elected representative. This mobility allows her to navigate the village efficiently and attend to various development sites, such as those related to infrastructure projects like roads, drainage, and land development. Being present at these sites enables Jhunko to oversee progress firsthand and address any issues or concerns promptly, contributing to the effective implementation of development initiatives in her community.

Moreover, Jhunko's mobility facilitates her close engagement with various government departments. Recognizing the significance of livelihood initiatives, she has established regular communication with these departments to explore opportunities for local employment generation. Understanding the challenges faced by villagers who migrate to Andhra Pradesh for work, Jhunko is committed to implementing livelihood programs that can provide alternative employment opportunities within the community. By prioritizing such initiatives, she aims to improve the economic well-being of her constituents and address the issue of migration, thereby contributing to the overall development and welfare of her village.

Jhunko's commitment to addressing the safety concerns of her community is evident through her focus on installing street lights in the village. She recognizes the importance of adequate lighting, particularly in areas frequented by girls, to ensure their safety and well-being. By prioritizing the installation of street lights near the girls' hostel and community hall, Jhunko demonstrates her proactive approach to enhancing security measures and improving the overall living conditions in her village.

Despite initially lacking familiarity with government schemes and processes, Jhunko's deep understanding of the issues faced by her constituents drives her determination to learn and adapt. She acknowledges her reliance on the support of her husband and the panchayat secretary to navigate the complexities of governance effectively. This collaborative approach enables Jhunko to access necessary information and resources, empowering her to make informed decisions and advocate for the needs of her community.

Jhunko's experience highlights the challenges associated with limited training opportunities for elected representatives, particularly in rural areas. Despite receiving training after her election, the passage of time has led to a lapse in her recollection of the content. However, Jhunko compensates for this by adopting a participatory approach to decision-making, engaging with ward members and seeking final approval during gram sabha meetings. This inclusive approach ensures that the perspectives and concerns of community members are considered in the decision-making process.

Jhunko's comfort in attending meetings at the district, block, or panchayat level shows her commitment to fulfilling her responsibilities as an elected representative. However, she remains cognizant of the challenges that other women ward members may face, such as transportation constraints or the inability to travel alone. In acknowledging these barriers, Jhunko demonstrates empathy and understanding, recognizing the importance of supportive networks in facilitating women's participation in politics.

Jhunko's acknowledgment of her husband's understanding and support underscores the importance of familial encouragement in women's political participation. His unwavering backing has provided her with the confidence and resilience needed to navigate the challenges inherent in elected office. Despite facing occasional feelings of uncertainty or dissatisfaction, Jhunko's ability to rely on her husband's support has been pivotal in overcoming these obstacles and staying committed to her role as an elected representative.

Jhunko's acknowledgment of the sacrifices she has made for her political role underscores the complex balance that many women in leadership positions must navigate between their public responsibilities and their roles as caregivers. There are instances when she is away from home when her children return from school, leaving her with a sense of guilt and the consideration that this might be her first and last term before returning to her usual life, where she is available for her children all the time.

As she looks towards the future, Jhunko's determination to continue her political journey reflects her enduring dedication to serving her community and effecting positive change. With her husband by her side and a growing sense of empowerment, Jhunko is poised to further contribute to the advancement of her village and advocate for the needs of its residents. Her aspirations to contest in future panchayat elections and potentially pursue positions at at the Panchayat Samiti (block-level) or Zila Parishad (district-level) demonstrate her commitment to continued growth and service to her community.

Her journey from being primarily engaged in household duties to actively participating in politics highlights the transformative power of civic engagement for women in rural areas. Through her involvement in politics, Jhunko has not only expanded her horizons but also gained valuable knowledge and experiences that have enriched her personal and professional life. Her story serves as a testament to the resilience and determination of women who choose to take on leadership roles in their communities, despite the personal sacrifices involved.

Jhunko's ability to recognize the importance of family support, coupled with her continuous learning and genuine desire to make a difference, exemplifies the qualities necessary for effective and compassionate leadership.

Her journey from being primarily engaged in household duties to actively participating in politics indeed highlights the transformative power of civic engagement for women in rural areas. By stepping into the political arena, Jhunko has expanded her horizons and gained valuable knowledge and experiences that have enriched both her personal and professional life. Through her dedication and perseverance, she has demonstrated the resilience and determination of women who choose to break barriers and take on leadership roles in their communities. Jhunko's story serves as a testament to the transformative potential of women's participation in politics through reservation.

Case Study 3: Fagni Kartam, Bade Kilepal-1 Gram Panchayat, Bastanara Block, Bastar District

Fagni Kartam, a 28-year-old widow, with a graduation in biology and mother of three young girls, embarked on a new journey in 2019 when she decided to contest the panchayat elections. Encouraged by her husband, who had previously won the elections twice and held the position for 10 years, Fagni stepped into the realm of politics when the seat was reserved for women. Fagni's decision to enter politics was influenced by her husband's experience and guidance, as he was well-versed in the intricacies of panchayat work.

The sudden and tragic loss of Fagni's husband, compounded by her belief that he was killed due to political animosity, marked a devastating turn of events in her life. This loss not only left Fagni grieving but also unsure about how to navigate her role as a panchayat leader without her husband's guidance and support.

In the face of this immense personal tragedy, Fagni found strength and support from an unexpected source: her brother. Encouraged by him to fulfill the responsibility she had taken on, Fagni was reassured by his promise of unwavering support.

She said that you took this responsibility, and now you must fulfill it. He has been very supportive. With determince Fagini said "I am trying to be there for all the meetings. I am trying to understand schemes and programmes with the help of the panchayat secretary."

Despite the challenges she faces, including the tragic loss of her husband and societal judgment, Fagni remains steadfast in attending meetings and engaging with the panchayat secretary who is also a woman, to understand various government schemes and programs. This has allowed Fagni to interact freely and seek guidance without hesitation. She has been upfront about her lack of knowledge and has relied heavily on the secretary's assistance.

Fagni's journey has been marred by social stigma and criticism from relatives who have chastised her for not grieving her husband's loss properly and for bringing her one-year-old child to the panchayat office. While these comments have been hurtful, Fagni has demonstrated

remarkable resilience and perseverance, ensuring her attendance at all Gram Sabha meetings and panchayat proceedings.

Fagni's journey in the panchayat has been marked by significant personal growth and adaptation. In the absence of her husband, she has taken on the responsibility of liaising with officials herself, a task previously handled by him. Despite her initial lack of confidence and limited memory of her training, Fagni has shown remarkable progress in her ability to communicate effectively and engage with both officials and villagers.

Over the past year, her newfound confidence in public speaking and be prepared with answers during meetings and interactions with villagers. reflects a transformative change in her demeanor and capabilities. Previously more reserved and focused on her role within the household, Fagni admits that her husband used to handle most of the administrative tasks. She would put her signature on the documents whenever required.

Today Fagni has taken on a more active role in governance, signing documents and participating in meetings with increased confidence. This shift signifies her willingness to step out of her comfort zone and take charge of her responsibilities.

While Fagni is committed to implementing the promises made during her campaign, she has no intentions of contesting elections again. Her decision to prioritize her children's well-being and seek employment instead of pursuing re-election reflects her deep commitment to her family's welfare and her desire to provide them with stability and security, especially in the aftermath of her husband's tragic death. Her concerns for the safety and future of her daughters weigh heavily on her, prompting her to focus on securing their future rather than continuing her political journey. She said, "I have three daughters, and the circumstances in which my husband died make me worry for the lives of all my loved ones. I would choose to stay out of politics and focus on making life better for my children".

While Fagni acknowledges her husband's contributions to the village's development and feels a sense of duty to carry on his vision, she also grapples with fear and uncertainty about navigating the complexities of political life on her own. Despite this internal conflict, her primary concern remains the welfare of her family, driving her decision to prioritize their needs over her own aspirations.

5.5 Himachal Pradesh

Himachal Pradesh, located in the northern part of India, stands as a testament to India's northern beauty, characterized by its picturesque landscapes, diverse cultural tapestry, and rich historical legacy. Nestled amidst the majestic Himalayas, this mountainous state boasts a predominantly rural populace engaged in agricultural, horticultural, and tourism activities.

According to the Census of 2011, Himachal Pradesh was home to a total population of 6,864,602 individuals. Among them, 3,481,873 were male, while 3,382,729 were female. Over the years, the state has made significant strides in literacy, with rates witnessing a remarkable increase from a mere 7.98 per cent in 1951 (with male literacy at 11.94 per cent and female literacy at 4.02 per cent) to an impressive 82.80% in 2011 (with male literacy at 89.53 per cent and female literacy at 75.93 per cent). This upward trajectory reflects the state's unwavering dedication to enhancing education and fostering socio-economic empowerment among its populace.

Before 1947, Himachal Pradesh was comprised of 30 small princely states under British rule, lacking a unified Panchayat law. However, in areas where rulers were enlightened, they adopted the Punjab Village Panchayat Act of 1939. The formal establishment of the state of Himachal Pradesh occurred on April 15, 1948, through the amalgamation of these 30 princely states. Over time, the region underwent various administrative changes until it achieved statehood as the eighteenth state of the Indian Union on January 25, 1971. This journey from fragmented princely states to a cohesive state within the Indian Republic marked a significant milestone in the region's history and governance structure.

The roots of Panchayats in the territories now forming Himachal Pradesh trace back to 1908 when Raja Bijai Chand of Kehloor (Bilaspur) initiated the establishment of quomi (caste) Panchayats in his state. Additionally, most of the other princely states in the region also had their traditional Panchayats.

Following independence, the state legislature took steps to modernize and formalize the Panchayat system to align with local conditions and the increasing demands for democratization. In 1952, the Himachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act was enacted, aiming to regulate and improve the functioning of Panchayats in the state. This legislative measure was a crucial step towards democratizing governance and empowering local communities in Himachal Pradesh. The 1952 Act was repealed in 1968 when the state legislature passed a new Panchayati Raj Act to incorporate the major recommendations of the Balwantirai Mehata Committee and to provide a uniform system for the entire state, including Bilaspur and other areas transferred to it. Later Himachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 came into effect in conformity with the 73rd Amendment of the Indian Constitution. Again the 1994 Act was amended in 1997 to extend the Panchayat Raj system to the Fifth Schedule areas in the state in conformity with the central law of 1996 on the subject.

The state is organized into Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) operating at the village, intermediate (block), and district levels. These institutions, comprising elected representatives, play a pivotal role in local governance and development initiatives, encompassing areas such as rural infrastructure, education, healthcare, and social welfare programs.

With the latest amendment in 2008, 50 per cent reservation was mandated for women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions, both in rural and urban local bodies. These reservations are rotated every five years to ensure equitable representation. This legislative measure aimed to enhance the political participation of women and promote gender equality in local governance. Despite these efforts, women's political engagement in Himachal Pradesh has primarily remained limited to voting behaviour. However, there has been a noticeable increase in women's participation in electoral processes, particularly evident in the higher voter turnout among women compared to men in assembly elections held in 1998, 2003, 2007, and 2012. This trend reflects a positive shift towards greater inclusivity and representation of women in the state's democratic processes.

Various studies have delved into the involvement of women in local governance in Himachal Pradesh, providing valuable insights into this area. Researchers have highlighted the importance of gender quota policies in democratic systems, elucidating their role in advancing gender equality despite encountered challenges. These studies have demonstrated how the reservation of seats for women in rural local governments, as observed in states like West Bengal, has empowered women leaders, showcasing their effectiveness in governance and contributions to developmental objectives.

Moreover, studies have pointed to an increasing acknowledgement of the state's responsibility to actively encourage women's participation in governance. Constitutional amendments that provide reservations in Panchayati Raj Institutions have led to a greater number of women engaging in grassroots politics, consequently driving tangible societal transformations.

Additionally, research has analyzed the factors influencing women's participation in initiatives such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in Himachal Pradesh. These studies have identified constraints like limited agricultural opportunities, migration trends, skill deficiencies for alternative employment, as well as the importance of support from family and community networks. However, challenges such as delayed employment, payment discrepancies, health issues, household obligations, and gender biases have been recognized as hindrances to their active involvement.

Furthermore, case studies have illustrated the transformative potential of elected women leaders in Panchayati Raj Institutions across Himachal Pradesh. These cases elucidate how women, through awareness campaigns, training initiatives, and active engagement with stakeholders, can drive positive changes in governance, ultimately leading to grassroots development. In conclusion, the literature underscores the criticality of promoting women's participation in local governance in Himachal Pradesh. By addressing barriers and harnessing

women's leadership capabilities, local institutions can significantly contribute to community development and overall societal advancement.

Case study 1: Rachna, Deori Ghat Panchayat President, Theog Block Shimla District

Rachna's story exemplifies the journey of a strong and independent woman who dedicates herself to community service and empowerment initiatives, benefiting from her unmarried status, which grants her the freedom to fully engage in societal activities. With a Bachelor's degree under her belt, Rachna possesses the necessary skills and knowledge to actively participate in community development efforts, positioning her as a capable and committed agent of change within her community.

Joining the local Women's Group facilitated by CORD in 2009 marked a significant milestone in Rachna's journey towards empowerment. Through this group, she gained invaluable support and resources that enabled her and her peers to address important women's issues and collaborate on effective solutions. Leadership training and capacity-building sessions provided by CORD equipped Rachna with the skills and confidence necessary to undertake community development tasks efficiently. Additionally, financial literacy training and involvement in Self-Help Groups (SHGs) empowered her and other women economically, enabling them to take control of their financial futures.

Rachna's active involvement in the Mahila Mandal facilitated by CORD prepared her for leadership roles and empowered her to address pressing community issues such as sanitation, hygiene, alcohol abuse, and drug addiction. Her proactive approach to advocacy and outreach, coupled with increased mobility and engagement with various stakeholders, solidified her reputation as a passionate and effective community leader.

Rachna's increased mobility and active engagement with various stakeholders underscore her proactive approach to advocacy and outreach within her community. Her willingness to visit banks, insurance companies, farms, and other communities to promote campaigns and messages for community development reflects her dedication to serving society and driving positive change. Through her efforts, Rachna became widely recognized as a passionate, articulate, helpful, and caring individual capable of making a meaningful difference in their community.

Encouraged by the support and recognition she received from her community and family, Rachna decided to contest the Panchayat elections in 2021 and emerged victorious. Despite the seat being open for all candidates, Rachna's strong reputation and track record of community service contributed to her success, and she emerged victorious in the election. She stated "I strongly believe that reservation for women has provided me with an opportunity for initial entry into the system of PRIs. Being an elected representative increased my circle of influence and action to become more visible and recognised as a leader and change-maker in development issues and action than as a member of a women's group".

Rachna's capability and confidence have earned her support from various stakeholders, including Block Development Officers (BDOs), Block Mission Management Unit (BMMU) staff, and Community-Based Organization (CBO) networks. Her active participation in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) as an Elected Women Representative (EWR) has not only empowered her to engage in economic decision-making but has also enhanced her control over economic resources within her household. Her influence is evident in her decisions regarding education, where she opted to send her nephew to a government school and her niece to a private school, contrary to the choices made by other community members. This decision showcases her ability to exercise agency and make informed choices based on what she perceives as best for her family. Moreover, Rachna has demonstrated adeptness in accessing and utilizing available subsidies, loans, seeds, and irrigation schemes for her benefit as well as for the benefit of others in her Panchayat.

Rachna's active participation in local self-governance has provided her with a substantial platform for engaging with various stakeholders, including local communities, administrators, politicians, and institutes such as the Himachal Pradesh Institute of Public Administration (HIPA) and the PR Training Institute in Mashobra. Through her involvement in these initiatives, Rachna has been able to enhance her mobility and establish networks at different levels, enabling her to interact effectively with diverse groups.

She acknowledges the importance of these opportunities for learning, recognizing their significant role in strengthening her knowledge, skills, and problem-solving approaches. The exposure to different perspectives and practices has contributed to Rachna's growth as a leader, enabling her to adapt to various situations and challenges effectively. Furthermore, Rachna's engagement with officials of different stature has helped her establish effective relationships, both within her community and with external authorities.

Rachna's leadership and initiatives are not confined to the public sphere; they also garner support and recognition at the household level. Her brother, sister-in-law, and neighbours actively acknowledge and endorse her leadership, providing continuous support and boosting her self-confidence. This endorsement from her immediate family and neighbours reflects the respect and admiration Rachna commands within her community, further empowering her to pursue her endeavours effectively. Such support underscores the importance of community backing in facilitating women's leadership and empowerment, both within and beyond the realm of local governance.

Her active participation as an Elected Women's Representative (EWR) in the Panchayat has not only expanded her involvement in social, community, and political activities but has also earned her respect and recognition from key male figures within the Panchayat, such as the Up-Pradhan (Vice President) and Secretary, despite their initial scepticism. Initially, these male counterparts may have been hesitant about Rachna's decisions and lacked enthusiasm in supporting her initiatives. However, Rachna's demonstration of leadership, competence, and successful execution of various decisions and projects gradually shifted their attitude towards her.

Her proactive approach and compassionate demeanour have established her as a trusted figure among women in the Panchayat. They feel comfortable confiding in her and seek her assistance for problem-solving, preferring her counsel over that of other male officials like the Vice President or Secretary.

An instance that exemplifies Rachna's commitment to addressing women's issues occurred when she encountered a concerning health issue (white discharge) affecting several women in the Panchayat. Sensing the urgency of the matter, Rachna took swift action by advocating for a health and awareness camp to address the problem. Her initiative in drafting a letter to the Block Development Officer and coordinating with the health department resulted in the successful organization of the camp.

Through collaboration with the Mahila Mandal and SHG members, Rachna ensured the smooth execution of the camp, where women received valuable health awareness sessions and checkups. The positive outcomes of the camp, including reduced concerns among women and expressions of gratitude towards Rachna, underscore her effectiveness in addressing community needs.

Rachna's deep understanding of the Panchayat's responsibilities and processes, coupled with her commitment to community development, has enabled her to make significant contributions to her Panchayat's progress. She prioritizes initiatives such as drug awareness camps, health camps, and Gram Sabhas, emphasizing the importance of participatory approaches in decision-making and governance.

Rachna's active encouragement of SHG members to participate in Gram Sabhas reflects her dedication to promoting community engagement and empowerment. By fostering a culture of participation and inclusivity, she ensures that the voices of all community members are heard and valued in the decision-making process.

Recognized for her capability and leadership, Rachna enjoys the support and endorsement of both the Panchayat team and the villagers. Their trust in her judgment and commitment underscores her effectiveness as a leader and partner in community development efforts. With her achievements and aspirations, Rachna is now motivated to take her leadership journey to the next level by contesting in the Zila Parishad/MLA election. Through this endeavour, she aims to extend the benefits of her leadership to a broader spectrum of people, furthering the cause of inclusive and sustainable development in her region.

Rachna's experience during previous Gram Sabha meetings highlights a common challenge faced by women leaders in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) – the lack of recognition and respect for their roles and capabilities. The fact that villagers would approach the Vice President and Secretary instead of Rachna with their queries and concerns reflects deep-seated gender biases and stereotypes prevailing in society. These assumptions may stem from traditional gender roles and expectations that assign women primarily domestic responsibilities rather than leadership roles in public affairs. As a result, women leaders like Rachna often face

initial scepticism and resistance when attempting to assert their authority and make independent decisions within the Panchayat. However, by actively participating in Gram Sabha meetings, demonstrating her knowledge of Panchayat affairs, and making informed decisions, Rachna was able to gradually earn the respect and recognition of her community members. Rachna's journey epitomizes the essence of women's empowerment and leadership in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and community development. Her significant contributions to the development of her Panchayat underscore the pivotal role that women play in driving positive change at the grassroots level.

Both intrinsic and extrinsic factors have contributed to Rachna's success. Her drive for self-improvement, education, and training, coupled with her willingness to explore various livelihood options, reflect her commitment to self-empowerment and community upliftment. Rachna's collaboration with organizations like CORD and government agencies further enabled her to leverage resources and support networks for the betterment of her community.

As the Pradhan, Rachna capitalized on her knowledge, skills, and networks established through her involvement in women's groups to foster positive relationships with stakeholders at all levels. Importantly, she adopted an inclusive approach, ensuring that her activities and policies were responsive to the diverse needs and perspectives within her community. Rachna's ability to navigate challenges and conflicts with maturity and a solution-oriented mindset further enhanced her effectiveness as a leader.

Through her leadership, Rachna has succeeded in uniting community members, fostering collaboration, and driving tangible improvements in local governance and community well-being. Her story serves as an inspiration and a testament to the transformative potential of women's leadership in PRI and grassroots development initiatives.

Case Study 2: Santosh Sharma, Bhanat Gram Panchayat, Rajgarh Block, Sirmour District

The 45-year-old Santosh, a resident of Bhanat Gram Panchayat, is married and falls under the Above Poverty Line (APL) category. She has three children and plays a crucial role in managing her family's finances and ensuring their livelihood, primarily derived from agriculture. She completed her education up to the 10th standard and later got involved in the Self-Help Group (SHG) network in 2015. This has a significant impact on her financial stability and overall well-being.

Santosh's experience reflects the complex dynamics often present within families regarding women's participation in politics and decision-making. Despite her lack of interest in politics and initial hesitation, Santosh's husband and parents-in-law exerted pressure on her to contest the Panchayat election in 2021, citing the special reservation for women. Santosh's reluctance to enter politics highlights the challenges women may face in navigating traditional gender roles and expectations within their families. Despite her desires and preferences, Santosh felt compelled to prioritize her husband's aspirations and fulfil the societal expectation of women's

participation in local governance. She agreed to participate in the election, reassured by her husband that he would manage all the responsibilities, relieving her of any concerns.

After winning the election, her husband assumed all the responsibilities associated with the position, as he had assured earlier. Although her husband handles the substantive tasks, Santosh is still required to attend the Panchayat office regularly, even after completing her household chores.

Santosh's perspective reflects the challenges faced by individuals who are not inclined towards politics but are thrust into leadership roles due to reservation systems. Feeling unprepared and overwhelmed, Santosh's experience underscores the importance of ensuring that women who assume leadership positions through reservations receive adequate support, training, and resources to effectively carry out their duties.

Santosh expressed her experience of receiving training shortly after her selection as Panchayat president in Shimla. While the training provided her with an understanding of the functions and roles of a Pradhan, it did not ignite her interest in politics. She feels that if women presidents were offered more relevant training, focusing on capacity building or confidence building, it might enhance their engagement and enthusiasm for politics. Despite several months passing since her training, Santosh still finds politics uninteresting and struggles to demonstrate her skills in Panchayat politics.

After speaking with other members of the Panchayat, it is understood that Santosh's husband assumes most of the Panchayat's responsibilities. Locals feel that Santosh should take the initiative to learn and take on more responsibilities on her own.

When asked about her interests and hobbies, Santosh mentioned that she is interested in business and would like to expand her Kirana shop. Before becoming the Pradhan of the Panchayat, she enjoyed spending time in the shop, but since then, she has stopped. Her elder son now manages the shop. Santosh believes that she could make a more effective contribution if she were given tasks aligned with her interests, rather than being burdened with responsibilities due to external factors.

When speaking with her husband, he expressed that Santosh has shown considerable improvement in her skills, and he notices her continuous growth. He is supportive of her learning process regarding Panchayat's work and believes that she will eventually be able to take on all responsibilities independently and serve as a capable and self-reliant Panchayat President.

In this scenario, it's clear that Santosh's aspirations and desires are being overlooked by her family and society. She is being pressured, directly or indirectly, to take on responsibilities that do not align with her interests or abilities. The lack of relevant training and support for women in leadership roles exacerbates this situation, leading to difficulties in governance and community development.

Furthermore, the reluctance of economically advantaged households to engage in community responsibilities underscores broader societal issues related to social cohesion and community involvement. Addressing these challenges necessitates a comprehensive approach, including targeted capacity-building programs, initiatives to promote women's agency and empowerment, and fostering a culture of inclusivity and active participation in local governance processes.

When asked about the challenges of Panchayat work, her husband mentioned that there is a lack of funds provided to the Panchayats, and demands are high. Another challenge they face is the distance between the Panchayat and the block, making it difficult to commute and invite line departments to public meetings or organise any camps. They suggested that capacity-building training should be organised regularly for Panchayat members to equip them with updated knowledge and take exposure visits to witness good Panchayats and explore possible opportunities. Also, specialised training in digital skills should be provided for all Panchayat members. He believes that having better digital skills is important for using modern technology effectively in Panchayat activities.

5.6 Jharkhand

Jharkhand, known as "The land of forest," is a state in eastern India, established as the 28th state of India on 15 November 2000, carved out from the southern half of Bihar. It shares borders with Bihar to the north, Uttar Pradesh to the northwest, Chhattisgarh to the west, Odisha to the south, and West Bengal to the east. With an area of 79,714 square kilometres (30,778 square miles), it ranks as the 15th largest state by area and the 14th largest by population.

As per details from Census 2011, Jharkhand has a population of 3.3 Crores, with males comprising 1.69 crores and females 1.61 crores. The population witnessed a growth rate of 22.42 per cent in the preceding decade. Jharkhand's population constitutes 2.72 per cent of India's total population. The state's sex ratio stands at 948 females for every 1000 males, slightly below the national average of 940. The literacy rate in Jharkhand has shown improvement, reaching 66.41 per cent as per the latest census data. Male literacy stands at 76.84 per cent, while female literacy is at 55.42 per cent, indicating a gender disparity in educational attainment.

In Jharkhand, thirteen out of twenty-four districts are located wholly within the Fifth Schedule Areas, which historically have had more than 50 per cent of tribal populations and are afforded special protection under the Indian Constitution. Approximately 45 per cent of the state's geographical area, spread across sixteen districts, falls under the Fifth Schedule. Adivasi Traditional Self-Governance (TSG) Systems in these areas incorporate a strong concept of democratic participation. There are four major types of panchayat systems prevalent in tribal regions of Jharkhand:

- 1. Munda-Manki system of the Ho tribe
- 2. Parha system in Oraon villages
- 3. Munda-Manki system (Mundari)
- 4. Santhal Manjhi-Paragnaiti system

Following independence, the first generation of Panchayati Raj Institutions was established across the country to promote democratic decentralisation. These institutions had provisions for the direct election of mukhiyas (village heads) and panches (village council members), unlike the Traditional Self-Governance (TSG) systems. By 1970, the three tiers of Local Self-Government were operational throughout Bihar, including the Jharkhand area.

After each major tribal revolt in the Jharkhand area, special legislation was enacted to address tribal grievances and prevent the alienation of tribal lands. Examples of such legislation include the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act (CNTA) and the Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act (SPTA). These Acts recognized the traditional local self-government systems of the tribes. For instance, under the SPTA of 1908, the term "village headman" referred to "the person appointed or recognized, whether before or after the commencement of this Act, by the Deputy Commissioner or other duly authorized officer to hold the village headman, whether known as Pradhan, Mastajuir, or otherwise." However, according to the rules

enacted under the Act, the appointment of the headman was to be in accordance with village customs. While these colonial Acts recognized the Traditional Self-Governance (TSG) systems, they also had the potential to create conflicts between traditional leaders and elected panchayat heads.

Following the formation of the state of Jharkhand, the Jharkhand Panchayat Raj Act (JPRA) was passed in March 2001. This act aimed to provide for the constitution of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in accordance with the provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment and the Central Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA Act). The JPRA included provisions for reservations, ensuring that not less than one-third of all seats in the panchayats were reserved for women at each level. Additionally, in the Scheduled Areas, all posts of gram panchayat chairpersons and vice-chairpersons were reserved for Scheduled Tribes (STs).

Furthermore, the State Election Commission (SEC) was constituted in 2004 under Section 66 of the Jharkhand Panchayat Raj Act 2001 and the provisions contained in Article 243 K(1) of the Constitution. The SEC successfully conducted the first Panchayat elections in the state in November and December 2010. Moreover, the first State Finance Commission (SFC) was constituted on 28th January 2004, even when no elected PRIs were on the ground.

Case study 1: Priyanka Devi, Taimara Panchayat, Bundu block, Ranchi District

Taimara Panchayat predominantly inhabited by the Munda tribe, has long struggled with issues related to infrastructure development, employment, and women's empowerment. Women's participation in politics was minimal, reflecting broader societal norms and constraints.

Priyanka Devi's journey as the Mukhiya (village head) of Taimara Panchayat epitomizes the transformative power of women's participation in grassroots politics, particularly in communities like hers, predominantly inhabited by the Munda tribe. Despite facing societal norms and personal challenges, Priyanka has emerged as a beacon of change and empowerment in her community.

Priyanka's journey into politics was not easy. While she initially contested the election at the encouragement of her husband and father-in-law due to the reserved seat for women, her subsequent decision to run for a second term was driven by her own will and commitment to serving her community. Coming from a family where many of the family members were elected representatives as ward members, block pramukh, and Gram Pradhan. Priyanka drew inspiration from her relatives' experiences and sought to contribute meaningfully to the welfare of her village.

Initially encouraged by her husband and father-in-law to contest the election due to the reserved seat for women, Priyanka's decision to run for a second term was driven by her

determination and commitment to serving her community. Despite the loss of her husband, who had previously supported her in her political endeavours, Priyanka took on the challenge independently and with resilience.

In her second term, Priyanka's victory was not only a testament to her perseverance but also to the trust and confidence placed in her by the community. Despite facing competition from several candidates, Priyanka secured the highest number of votes, highlighting her popularity and the effectiveness of her leadership.

Her approach to governance is grounded in addressing the real issues faced by her constituents. Her door-to-door campaign and focus on addressing genuine problems rather than making unrealistic promises have earned her respect and admiration from the villagers. Drawing inspiration from her family members who have also served as elected representatives, Priyanka is committed to making a meaningful impact on the welfare of her village.

In her initial days, she faced uncertainty and unfamiliarity with administrative processes. However, her commitment to learning and dedication to her role propelled her forward. Priyanka actively sought guidance from her family members, participated in training programs, and engaged with village officials to understand government schemes and initiatives. Despite initial hesitations, she embraced her responsibilities wholeheartedly, gradually gaining confidence and competence in her role.

Her leadership style is characterized by hands-on engagement and proactive problemsolving. She ensures regular interaction with villagers, conducts site visits to monitor infrastructure projects, and collaborates closely with government officials to address community needs. Through her efforts, she has facilitated the implementation of schemes like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), which has provided employment opportunities to women in the village, empowering them economically and reducing the need for migration to urban areas like Ranchi in search of livelihoods.

Priyanka Devi's leadership is centred around promoting the empowerment of women in local governance. She actively encourages women's participation in political processes, recognizing the significant impact it can have on fostering inclusivity and diversity in decision-making within the Panchayat. Through her presence in this position in the two tenures and performance, Priyanka has inspired more women to contest elections and take up leadership roles in the Panchayat.

Her journey as Mukhiya has been characterized by continuous learning and adaptation. Exposure visits, such as the one to Kerala under the Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS) programme, have provided her with valuable insights into best practices in local governance. Particularly noteworthy for her was the prominent presence of women at MGNREGS worksites during the visit. Additionally, she was impressed by the infrastructure

and functioning of the Panchayat office in Kerala, which had a dedicated staff working efficiently.

Inspired by the exposure visit, Priyanka has implemented innovative approaches and improved governance mechanisms in her village. In her first tenure, she was initially hesitant to regularly sit in the Panchayat office, finding it odd. However, after witnessing the dedication of women Panchayat presidents and members in Kerala, who regularly attended their offices, she was inspired to do the same. Now, Priyanka ensures her availability in the office during working hours and even beyond, as she lives close by. This accessibility allows her to better serve the villagers and address their needs, even outside of official working hours.

Priyanka Devi demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of various schemes and programs implemented through Panchayats, particularly the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). She is well-versed in the permissible works under the scheme, the documentation required for obtaining job cards, and the process for making work demands. Priyanka actively collaborates with the Rojgar Sevak to ensure timely employment for villagers who have made work demands.

In addition to her expertise in MGNREGS, Priyanka actively participates in the development planning process. She contributes ideas and works closely with Gram Sevak and other ward members to prepare and finalize the annual action plan. Priyanka also has a thorough understanding of the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) and engages in door-to-door mobilization to ensure villagers' participation in Gram Sabhas.

Her approach to beneficiary selection prioritizes those who have not previously received government benefits due to documentation issues. She assists these individuals in obtaining necessary documents from the block or district authorities to enable them to access government support. Additionally, Priyanka believes in prioritizing families where the primary breadwinner has passed away.

Priyanka is also well-versed in the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) and works closely with the Self-Help Group (SHG) and Village Organization (VO) members. With her own experience as an SHG member for ten years, she has a deep understanding of their needs and challenges. In her tenure as Mukhiya, she facilitated the establishment of VO offices and Sahayata Kendras under the Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS). Furthermore, Priyanka actively engages in social development activities alongside SHG members, including campaigns against alcohol abuse, awareness programs on safe menstruation practices, and promoting handwashing practices among school children.

Priyanka Devi's tenure as Mukhiya has undeniably brought about significant improvements in Taimara Panchayat, ranging from infrastructure development to community engagement and women's empowerment. Despite facing persistent challenges related to resource allocation and administrative capacity, Priyanka's steadfast commitment to advocating for

her community's needs and fostering collaboration has been instrumental in driving sustainable development initiatives.

Her consecutive tenure has allowed her to build upon her experiences and demonstrate tangible results to the villagers. In her second term, Priyanka's confidence and the trust of the villagers in her leadership enabled her to implement various initiatives with greater effectiveness. This continuity has been crucial in ensuring the successful implementation of projects and programs aimed at addressing the village's needs.

Priyanka's journey serves as a powerful example of the transformative impact of women's leadership in local governance. Her dedication, resilience, and unwavering commitment to serving her community have made her a catalyst for positive change in Taimara Panchayat. By overcoming challenges and advocating for inclusive and equitable development, Priyanka has not only inspired her community but has also become a beacon of hope and empowerment for women leaders everywhere.

The major challenges faced by her were particularly concerning her mobility, financial stability, and understanding of financial responsibilities. In her first tenure, she relied on her husband for transportation to block or district offices, but after his passing, she had to manage everything on her own. The lack of adequate public transport facilities further compounded her difficulties in accessing these offices.

Financial instability is another significant challenge she faces, exacerbated by delays in receiving her honorarium and reimbursements for TA/DA. She said that TA/DA for attending meetings and trainings also never comes on time. Many times she has not even received it. She has land and is engaged in agriculture is how she manages her family's expenses. Despite receiving only a nominal honorarium of Rs. 1000 for her role as Mukhiya, Priyanka is responsible for implementing various government programs and schemes in her village. She compares this situation unfavourably with that of an MLA who receives more substantial funds without direct responsibility for program implementation. She said, "MLA who does not even visit his constituency receives so much money from the government he does not even implement any programme directly but as mukhiya we are responsible for the implementation of programmes and we get nothing".

While Priyanka has gained a better understanding of her roles and responsibilities, particularly regarding government schemes and programs, she still struggles with financial management, especially concerning the disbursement of public funds. She emphasizes the need for additional training tailored to the specific challenges Mukhiyas face in handling public finances.

5.7 Karnataka

Karnataka state in the southern part of India was created on November 1, 1956, with the passing of the State Reorganisation Act. As a result, the state had four different sets of

legislation. Originally known as the State of Mysore, it was renamed as Karnataka in 1973. The state covers an area of 191,791 km2.

As per details from Census 2011, Karnataka has a population of 6.11 Crores of which males and females are 30,966,657 and 30,128,640 respectively. The total population growth in this decade was 15.60 per cent. The population of Karnataka formed 5.05 per cent of India in 2011. The sex ratio in Karnataka is 973 i.e. for every 1000 males, which is below the national average of 940. The literacy rate has seen an upward trend and is 75.36 per cent. Of that, male literacy stands at 82.47 per cent while female literacy is at 68.08 per cent.

The princely state of Mysore also had a long and somewhat chequered history of decentralisation. Commencing as far back as 1881 it went through several phases up to independence. Shortly after independence three committees (Venkatappa Committee (1949), Chandrashekaraiah Committee (1954) and Kondajji Basappa Committee (1962) examined and reported on measures to strengthen local government.

Following the report of the Balwantrai Mehta committee (1957) the Mysore (Karnataka) Villages Panchayat and District Board Act 1959 was enacted and continued to be in force till 1983. Later the Ashok Mehta committee (1978) recommended the two-tier structure with Zila Panchayat (ZP) at the district and Mandal Panchayat at the lower level on the lines of the Mysore (Karnataka) Act 1959. This was the basis for the 1983 Act. The law reserved 25 per cent of membership in Panchayat to women.

In Karnataka, the Panchayat Raj system, established in 1959, has undergone multiple reforms to enhance local self-governance. Consequent to the 73rd Constitutional amendment, the State Government enacted the Karnataka Panchayat Raj (KPR) Act, 1993, to establish three-tier Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) at the village (Gama Panchayat -GP), taluk (Taluk Panchayat -TP) and district (Zilla Panchayat -ZP) levels and framed rules to enable PRIs to function as institutions of Local Self-Government (LSG). The Karnataka Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj Act, 1993 was amended and now it is known as the Karnataka Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Act, 2020.

The Panchayat Raj system in Karnataka stands as a successful model, empowering local communities and promoting participatory democracy. It has enabled greater participation of women and marginalised communities in decision-making processes, leading to notable improvements in the delivery of basic services such as healthcare, education, and sanitation in rural areas. Women's participation in local governance has been a topic of growing interest, particularly in India where policies like the 73rd Constitutional Amendment (1992) mandate 33% reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The matrix of reservation of seats and leadership positions is changed once in 5 years in compliance with the principle of rotation. This exercise is undertaken based on a roster for reservation prepared by the Deputy Commissioner. In 1997, on the suggestions of an official committee set up to reform Panchayat Raj, the state government adopted an accelerated rotation of reservation by cutting down the leadership terms of Presidents and Vice Presidents 20, 20 and 30 months for ZPs, TPs, and GPs respectively. Reservations concerning leadership posts

are also rotated 20, 20 and 30 months for ZPs, TPs, and GPs respectively. Thus, there are three reservation rotations in every five-year term for the ZP and the TP and two rotations for G. The sequences in which the reservations are made are as per the Act. The significant development was the decision of the Government of Karnataka to enhance the reservation of seats for women to 50 per cent at the GP/P/ZP levels, by amending a section of the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act with affection on 23rd July 2010.

The study by B.PAC (2019)[1] acknowledges the historical increase in women's representation in Karnataka, exceeding the national average in PRIs. It highlights achievements like 43.7 per cent of women in Gram Panchayats (2005) and 51 per cent in Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) council (2015) due to reservation hikes. The Karnataka State Panchayati Raj Amendment Act (2015)[2] aims to further increase women's participation through measures like capacity building and infrastructure development like separate toilets in panchayats.

The report by Development Alternatives (2021)[3] identifies various barriers to women's active participation, including social norms, lack of training, and pressure from male members. It emphasizes the need for measures like skill development and addressing power dynamics within families. Another study by Shah (2006)[4] titled "Engineering Elections: The Experiences of Women in "Panchayati Raj" in Karnataka, India" argues that solely focusing on numbers doesn't capture the full picture. It emphasizes the need to consider factors like caste, class, and ethnicity that intersect with gender, impacting women's experiences and effectiveness in PRIs.

While Karnataka has witnessed significant strides in women's participation in local governance due to reservation policies, studies highlight the need to address social barriers, empower women through training, and ensure their voices are truly heard within the system. Further research can delve deeper into the impact of women's leadership on local development and explore strategies for overcoming the remaining challenges.

Case study 1: President Smt. Adv. Arpitha Harishkumar, Sugganahalli Grama panchayat, Ramnagar District

Smt. Arpitha, a 34-year-old professional lawyer with a B. Com and LLB degree, assumed the role of president in her Gram Panchayat five months ago. She attained the presidency through the OBC women reservation quota in the 2021 elections. Her journey into local governance was not only driven by personal aspirations but also influenced by her family's political background, notably her co-sister's involvement in the Taluk Panchayat.

Her family, including her husband and her two in-laws, play an instrumental role in caring for their two children, enabling her to dedicate time to her responsibilities at the Panchayat office and the legal profession. She states that she relies on her husband's counsel for important Gram Panchayat decisions. With her husband also engaged in the legal profession,

they share responsibilities in both their professional and personal lives. The support and understanding provided by her family serve as a pillar of strength, empowering her to navigate the challenges of balancing her roles as a lawyer, mother, and president with grace and efficiency. Arpitha acknowledges the indispensable role her family plays by stating that I had to spend time at the Panchayat office or Taluk for work purposes. My in-laws look after my children. Without their support, it would not be possible for me to work.

Arpitha, leveraging her experience as an advocate and her two and a half years as a ward member, quickly familiarized herself with the functions and responsibilities associated with the role of a Gram Panchayat president. Following her election, she participated in a three-day training session provided to newly elected members, supplemented by online training sessions offered by the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD). While acknowledging the benefits of classroom sessions, Arpitha advocates for additional computer training and exposure visits, particularly for women representatives who may lack such exposure and could benefit from increased confidence-building opportunities.

In Gram Panchayat meetings, Arpitha observed that women ward members often assume passive roles in discussions concerning Panchayat issues. She recognizes that it will take time for women representatives to become more active in these areas and emphasizes the importance of capacity development and gender equality in fostering meaningful participation.

Arpitha's vision for the Gram Panchayat prioritizes providing quality healthcare, sanitation, and potable water for all, and promoting legal literacy among citizens. She prioritizes these issues in the Panchayat's annual planning, utilizing resources such as magazines and newsletters received by the Gram Panchayat office to enhance her knowledge and address community needs effectively.

She now gets good support from the secretary and others in the panchayat office. However, she is confident to state that "Even if I do not get support from officials, I will be able to govern my panchayat with the PRI Act".

It was evident that Arpitha received significant support from the secretary and other officials in the Panchayat office. However, she remains confident in her ability to govern effectively even in the absence of support from officials, citing "I will govern with my understanding and adherence to the provisions of the Panchayati Raj Act".

Arpitha draws inspiration from the legacy of Indira Gandhi, highlighting the ongoing need to promote gender equality in political representation and leadership roles. She said "Indira Gandhi was the first Prime Minister of our country. At that time, we did not have equality. Even though we have achieved equality to some extent in these times, there has not been another woman Prime Minister. Therefore, women's equality is necessary for women's empowerment and leadership promotion".

She emphasizes that while reservation provisions are crucial for a woman, they must be complemented by capacity development initiatives and a commitment to practicing equality in daily routines. Her dedication to public service is evident in her decision to stand for the upcoming Gram Panchayat elections, underscoring her ongoing commitment to serving her community and advancing the principles of good governance.

Case study 2: President Smt. B. M. Sunita Rudramuni, Balakundi Grama panchayat, Bellary District

Smt. Sunita, a 37-year-old Gram Panchayat President and mother of two children (a daughter and a son), was elected as a ward member three years ago and has been serving as President for the past five months. She resides with her family of six members: her husband, two children, and in-laws. Despite completing her matriculation before marriage, Sunita continued her tailoring and embroidery work after marriage, while also actively participating in farming alongside her husband. This not only provided her with a means of livelihood but also enhanced her self-reliance and contributed to her family's income.

She married into a family with a political background, where both her mother-in-law and brother-in-law have been actively involved in local governance as ward members and Taluk Panchayat members, respectively. Their encouragement and support played a crucial role in motivating her to enter politics and stand for election. Before she was elected a ward member, her engagements were primarily focused on household chores and agricultural activities. She became a member of a Self-Help Group (SHG) two years ago and currently serves as an active member and secretary of her SHG.

Encouraged by her mother-in-law and husband, Sunita decided to stand for election, benefiting from a reserved seat designated for women from her ward. Following her successful election as a ward member, she has undertaken a total of eight training sessions facilitated by the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD) at various levels, including both residential and non-residential programs. Some of these sessions were tailored specifically for Women Elected Representatives (WERs). The training modules primarily focused on topics related to local governance, such as the roles and responsibilities of elected representatives, financial management, budgeting processes, government schemes, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), and leadership development.

WERs (Women Elected Representatives) are often less inclined to attend residential training sessions, especially if they are scheduled back-to-back days. Smt. Sunita highlights that the content presented in these trainings can sometimes be overwhelming for attendees. She notes that women ward members who are part of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) tend to be more active and engaged, as they have opportunities to learn various skills and information through their SHG activities. Sunita personally attributes her increased socialization skills and confidence to her involvement in an SHG, which has enabled her to interact with a diverse group of women.

Initially, Sunita faced challenges after being elected for the first time. She found it daunting when constituents from her ward sought her assistance, often relying on her male colleagues for support in the early days. Not everyone around her was helpful, but in time she learned ways to do things by herself.

While Sunita possesses moderate knowledge regarding governance, government schemes, and budgeting processes, she remains committed to addressing pressing issues within her panchayat, such as school dropout rates and child labor, aiming to mitigate these challenges.

According to the Second Division Accounts Assistant (SDAA) of the gram panchayat, it may take time for WERs to fully grasp the functioning of the panchayat due to various factors. Many WERs, apart from a few exceptions, may allocate less time to panchayat-related duties due to family obligations and a perceived lack of socialization skills.

The president of the Gram Panchayat Leadership Federation (GPLF), who served as a ward member 15 years ago, acknowledges the capabilities of today's WERs, noting their relative competence compared to those from her time. She emphasizes the importance of reservation policies in ensuring increased representation of women in elected positions, suggesting that without such policies, it would be challenging to achieve similar levels of female representation. The GPLF President says "In most cases, people will prefer a male member over a female one when it comes to elections. But things are slowly changing, and it will take time for people to accept women as their leaders".

^[1] B.PAC. (2019). Participation of Women in Politics: A Case study of Karnataka State https://bpac.in/bengaluru-commuter-study/.>

^[2] Karnataka State Panchayati Raj Amendment Act, 2015

^[3] Development Alternatives. (2021). Removing Barriers to Women's Participation in Local Governance https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-12/UNDP-RoK-UNU-Participatory-Planning-and-Paying-for-Local-Action-Plans-to-Address-Gender-Based-Violence.pdf.

^[4] Shah, A. (2006). Engineering Elections: The Experiences of Women in "Panchayati Raj" in Karnataka, India. Journal of Asian Studies, 65(1), 127-154.

5.8 Kerala

Kerala, the southern coastal state of India over the years, has seen several interventions that have ensured the enhancement of participation of women in social, political, and public affairs. The State Government has also taken considerable efforts through several policy measures to ensure equal opportunities for women in all spheres of public employment, and to facilitate their equal access to public spaces in the State. This is reflected in the much lower gender gap in basic capabilities, such as education and health, its favourable sex ratio of 1,084 women per 1,000 men (Census 2011), and several other indices. However, women have not come to the forefront of public life or political struggle for their education and mobility. Nevertheless, the participation of women in Panchayati Raj institutions is higher than the Indian average and half the positions in decision-making bodies of Local Governments are reserved for women.

Reservation for women in Local Governments in Kerala was introduced with the formation of district councils in 1991. Thirty-four per cent of the district councillors were women and their entry into the district-level leadership constituted the first major break in the long tradition of the invisibility of women in Government leadership (Isaac et.al, 1991)¹⁴. Despite all the efforts to include women in the development process, it was only the Ninth Plan that decided those women's issues should be included in the development agenda and special emphasis should be given to women's empowerment. A conscious attempt was made to incorporate gender issues aimed at a more transformational outcome for women through the Women Component Plan (WCP) at the local level.

The <u>73rd and 74th Amendments</u> also mandate the reservation of seats for women, Scheduled Castes (SC), and Scheduled Tribes (ST). The Kerala Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 and the Kerala Municipality Act 1994 have ensured one-third reservation for women in seats and positions of LSGs Later, as per Section 7 (6) in the KPRA and Section 6 (7) in KMA, reservation for women has increased to 50 per cent of the total number of seats and positions in LGs by rotation to different constituencies in LGs from 2009 onwards. Compulsory provision of reservation for women and proportional reservation for SC / ST at all levels of the three-tier Panchayat system and municipal system helped to ensure the representation of women in the Local Government system in Kerala. In this way, the participation of women increased, and women became more likely to be in leadership positions.

Women's working group, representation of women in every working group, one-third participation of women in every committee, defined participation of women in Grama Sabha, 50 per cent of women's participation in the subcommittee of Grama Sabha and 50 per cent of participation of women in development seminar were also ensured by the government of Kerala. It is remarkable that of the total number of persons elected to local governments in the elections of 2020, 54 per cent were women (Economic Review, 2023).

¹⁴ Thomas Isaac, T M and Mohana Kumar. (1991). 'Kerala elections, 1991: Lessons and Non-Lessons'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol 26, no.47, pp.2691

The advent of Kudumbashree has led to the mass mobilisation of women, independent of political affiliation. A lot of women in the present-day panchayat institutions have their origins in Kudumbashree and they are graded to be better experienced and performing very well in comparison with their male counterparts. Not to mention they have a grass-root level networking and have far greater social outreach among women than anyone else. [Biju and Kumar, 2013]¹⁵. Most of the newly elected women are shown to study as well as comprehend the government machinery within the first 7 months and the people perceive women representatives to be more approachable, enthusiastic, and less corrupt. The women representatives of Kerala are measured to be best best-performing representatives in all of India which shows that their trajectory is in the right direction [Navaneeth M S, 2020].

According to a survey conducted by Chowdhary and Radha (2002)¹⁶ for the Centre for Development Studies, most of the women representatives came from a poor or middle-class background. Half of the women were housewives or held other informal jobs which did not supplement much of the family income. Again, implementing reservation policies does not change the ground realities overnight. Almost three-fifths of the women surveyed said they would not seek re-election due to the heavy repressive stance they faced from the political circles and due to familial obligations.

Navaneeth (2020)¹⁷ in his working paper states that in the case of several women, the family or party runs the show with women standing as mere proxies. To substantiate his argument with a very striking example of this trend seen in the 2015 elections to the local self-governing institutions, where the women candidates in Manjeri municipality and Kuravambalam panchayat did not have their pictures in the campaigning posters and were addressed in the name of their husbands and the main leader of the respective political party.

Case study1: President Sheela Punchavayal Nenmeni Grama panchayat, Wayanad

Nenmeni Grama Panchayat of Wayanad district, with a population of 46,950 (Census of 2011), reflects a diverse demographic composition, comprising 4 per cent Scheduled Castes (SC), 17 per cent Scheduled Tribes (ST), and 79 per cent belonging to the general category. The district is in the north-east of Kerala state with administrative headquarters at the municipality of Kalpetta. It has four development blocks with 54 Block panchayat wards, three municipalities with 99 municipality wards and 23 grama panchayats with 413 Grama Panchayat wards. The Scheduled Tribes constitute 18.76 per cent of the total population of

¹⁵ Biju, B. L. and Kumar, K. G. A. (2013). Class feminism: The Kudumbashree agitation in Kerala. Economic and Political Weekly, 48(9):22–26.

¹⁶ Chowdhary, B. R. and Radha, S. (2002). Women in Local Bodies. Technical Report 22, Centre for Development Studies.

¹⁷ Navaneeth, M S, (2020) Reservations for Women in Kerala's Local Self-government Institutions: A Mere Tokenism?, Working paper, May 16 Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3758947 or https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3758947

the district belonging to various tribal communities, which mainly include the Paniyas, Adiyas, Mullu Kurumas, Urali Kurumas, Kurichiyas and Kattunaikas. The district has 36,135 Scheduled Tribe families, which is 33.47 per cent of the total families of Scheduled Tribes in Kerala. As such they are a decisive fraction in the policy framing of the district as well as the State. As per the Population Census 2011 data, the following are some quick facts about Wayanad district. Another significant feature of the district is its sizeable number of tribal populations. 18.5 per cent of the population

At its helm stands fifty-six-year-old Sheela, an unmarried woman, who assumed office as the President of Nenmeni Grama Panchayat in Wayanad district, Kerala, on 30 December 2020. The Panchayat encompasses a total of 11,330 households distributed across 23 wards. Hailing from the Kuruma community, one of the marginalised tribal communities in Kerala, her upbringing in an agriculturalist family was characterised by financial hardships and limited opportunities. Despite these challenges, her steadfast determination propelled her to pursue education up to the pre-degree level (+12), harbouring aspirations of becoming a nurse or a teacher. Eventually, she underwent training for kindergarten teaching and secured a position in a tribal school, earning a meagre monthly salary of one thousand rupees. This income was insufficient to cover her expenses, and she relied on support from her family following the loss of her father at the age of 30 and, later, her mother a decade thereafter. Despite enduring a demanding commute involving two buses and a 45-minute walk through the forest each day, Sheela found fulfilment in her teaching role, dedicating herself to it for 10 years and 5 months.

In 2005, at the age of 35, Sheela's life took a new turn when she was approached by the Indian National Congress (INC) to contest the block panchayat election, despite lacking prior political experience. It was through the reservation policies for women and ST communities that she found herself thrust into the realm of politics. Despite initial hesitations and the urging of opposition party members for her resignation from teaching, Sheela made the difficult decision to transition into politics, supported by her family, albeit naive to the political landscape.

Sheela's resilience and strength in the face of adversity are truly commendable. Despite experiencing a profound personal loss with her brother's passing, she has not only taken on the responsibility of caring for her brother's family but has also assumed the financial burden of her brother's home loan. Her ability to shoulder such significant responsibilities while maintaining her composure and continuing to excel in her career is a testament to her strength of character and determination.

Her political journey continued in 2010 when she contested and won as a Nenmeni gram panchayat member leveraging the reservation provisions aimed at ensuring representation for marginalized communities. However, she lost by a narrow margin in 2015 when she stood for the third time. Following her narrow defeat in the election, Sheela took on the role of Hostel Warden at the Rays Entrance Coaching Centre in Kozhikode however she lost the job due to the covid pandemic. However, her dedication to public service led her back to the

political arena in 2020, where she once again assumed leadership role as President of Nenmeni Grama Panchayat.

As a block member, she underwent a learning process that involved acquiring skills in preparing plan proposals and speaking in public forums. Initially, she relied on written speeches to convey her message effectively. However, as she gained more experience and confidence, she transitioned to communicating in her style, which resonated better with the local people. This adaptation allowed her to connect more authentically with her audience and ensured that her message was easily understood and appreciated by the community. In 2010, when she was given the role of standing committee chairperson, she was not confident.

However, a decade of experience and knowledge gained gave her the confidence to take the role of President in 2020. Her gram panchayat gets around eight crores annually for development expenditure, two crores for traditional functions and six crores for maintenance of roads and institutions from the state government. Their annual income is around two crores through taxes and non-tax sources. Before any meeting, she calls a meeting with other members of her party. Collective decisions and the space given to panchayats for deciding the use of funds helped her to face the challenges.

Sheela's journey into governance and politics involved active engagement in election campaigns and community outreach initiatives, where she learned the principles of governance and gained insights into the Panchayati Raj Act and other relevant concepts through training programs offered by institutions like the Kerala Institute of Local Administration. Despite initial concerns about the suitability of a political career for a woman of her integrity, she began to earn recognition from the public over time.

However, being a woman representative also brought certain challenges and economic burdens. Election campaigns often required candidates to cover expenses for propaganda, which were not fully covered by the party. Coming from an economically poor background, Sheela had to borrow money to finance her campaign. After she lost her parents, she lost her brother too, who always stood with her. Now she looks after her brother's family and his debts.

Furthermore, Sheela emphasizes the importance of creating secure workplaces for women, as empowerment remains inadequate if women face harassment or unsafe environments. She also underwent the unpleasant experience of being stalked by an individual struggling with mental health issues, highlighting the ongoing challenges women face in achieving true empowerment and security in the workplace. The initial empathy towards the perpetrator, however, led to the escalation of the situation to physical violence, with the perpetrator violently assaulting Sheela at her office, underscoring the gravity of the issue. She said,

"He would follow me every day, persistently asking for marriage, despite already being married and having children. I initially attributed his behaviour to poverty and mental health issues. However, one day he confronted me at my office, violently striking me across the face and pulling my hair, causing my nose to bleed. It later came to my attention that certain local individuals associated with the opposition party had influenced him to act in such a manner.

Despite being an elected representative for 15 years, she is unsure about what will happen after her tenure in 2025. She possesses a strong desire to contribute more to society but must return to her previous job as a hostel warden if she fails to get re-elected. Women like her, who have emerged victorious from various struggles, are valuable resources for those still trapped in the web of disempowerment due to gender, caste, and class. Sheela's journey epitomizes the often-overlooked reality of individuals whose political ascendancy is facilitated by reservation quotas, shedding light on the complexities and opportunities inherent in such affirmative action measures.

Case study 2: President Geetha R, Sasthamcotta Grama panchayat, Kollam

Sasthamcotta Grama panchayat is a part of Kollam District, Kunnathoor Taluk, Sasthamcotta Block Panchayat. The area of the panchayat is 24.42 sq. Km. The 19 wards are inhabited by 8,426 households with a population of 33,285 (Census of 2011). This case study explores the remarkable journey of Geetha R., the President of Sasthamcotta Grama Panchayat, from her humble beginnings as an Asha worker to her current position at the age of 50. She is one of the eleven elected female representatives out of a total of 19 ward members of Sasthamcotta Panchayat.

Geetha said, "I was an Asha worker for twelve years and received the award for the best work from the Community Health Centre (CHC). From 2003 onwards, I was also an active member of the Kudumbashree Ambadi Neighbourhood Group, serving as president and secretary. Therefore, I would establish rapport with each household in my ward greatly aided me in the electoral campaigns."

Recognizing her work with community-based organizations, as an Asha worker and her family's loyalty to the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M), the local party members urged her to participate in the 2020 election in the Scheduled caste (SC) women's reservation seat from her Ward 13, Manakkara West comprising five hundred families. The grassroots support, coupled with the backing of her family and political party, enabled her successful transition into electoral politics and became the first-generation elected member of her family.

As her role expanded to a Panchayat President, she observed notable changes unfolding across family dynamics, societal interactions, and official space. Geetha has had to navigate through various forms of discrimination and expectations. However, her determination and strong support system, particularly from her family, have helped her overcome these challenges. She said, "Other SC members do not face that much discrimination, maybe it's because I am the Panchayat President". As a member of the Scheduled Caste and being a woman, she has encountered instances of neglect and denial from her fellow committee members. There is an unsaid norm of hierarchy that exists within the realm of democratic governance, regardless of

official positions. She said, "They are senior members, so they expect me to go and meet them even though I am the President".

The first few months of her tenure were very challenging, taking a toll on her health. She encountered a land-related issue concerning the construction of an Anganwadi versus Public Health Centre (PHC), where the Vice President and other party members had undertaken actions without informing her. In response, she took a stand for PHC, facing opposition from all members of the Panchayat committee, including those from her party. Though this incident cornered her by the entire Panchayat committee she said 'This taught me to a lot of things. I even felt it was a wrong decision to entire politics. I do not react to anyone and see everyone as one irrespective of what they are". During these challenging circumstances, her family stood with her, especially her husband, providing support and guidance, and becoming a mentor for her endeavours. In the early days, she found solace in sharing day-to-day concerns and progress with him. There were occasions when her family came and sat in the Panchayat office, concerned about her health.

Before her tenure as an elected representative, she managed all household chores independently. However, the gender dynamics shifted within the family after becoming Panchayat President, her husband deliberately undertook tasks, and this facilitated a peaceful work environment for her. Geetha said, "My husband does every household activity, some days, I don't even get time to make tea for my family, but he takes care of everything".

She shared her memories of her first flight travel to New Delhi to attend a seminar after taking up the position of president. Recently her gram panchayat was selected for a three-day national workshop on "Healthy Village towards Healthier Tomorrow" in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh. She said the interaction with participants from 24 states and UTs, was very meaningful as it served as a collaborative platform for knowledge-sharing and strategising towards building a healthier future, focusing on the holistic development of local communities.

Geetha emphasises the importance of having at least completed 10th standard education and possessing knowledge of society for individuals interested in political roles. She also acknowledges the need for more training and guidance, particularly because she lacked prior political interaction at these levels before assuming her current position. Post-election she missed the initial district-level training since she became the primary contact of a COVID-19 patient. Later she received the training from Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA).

Utilising the annual budget provision of around Rs eight crores, she was able to lead the panchayat in winning awards like the Swaraj Trophy in 2020-21 and 2022-23, the Mahatma Award for Haritha Karma Sena and achieving 100 per cent utilization of SC funds. Despite initial challenges and opposition, she has stood firm in her decisions, demonstrating her leadership and commitment to serving her community.

Geetha's commitment to society has garnered widespread acceptance and admiration. She recounted how she challenged practices by her predecessors, such as requiring people to leave

their slippers outside the room of the Panchayat President, symbolizing a significant shift in accessibility and openness. Her actions earned her the comment "Geetha Berlin mathil thakarthu" (she has broken the wall). Despite her influential position, Geetha emphasised that while she oversees the work of officials, she does not seek to control them. When asked about her plans, Geetha expressed confidence in taking on any position if given the opportunity again. However, if not, she mentioned that she would continue her work as an Asha worker.

Case study 3: President Adv. P Saruthi Olavanna Grama panchayat, Kozhikode President P. Saruthi is among the youngest Panchayat Presidents in Kerala, holding office in the populous Olavanna Grama Panchayat in Kozhikode District. Born into a family deeply entrenched in political activism, particularly within the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M), Saruthi inherited a fervent dedication to public service from an early age. In her college days, she actively participated in party activities and contributed significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic through various community initiatives. These efforts not only bolstered her social standing but also showcased her leadership potential.

Assuming office at the age of 22 while pursuing her LLB degree, Saruthi's appointment as Panchayat President symbolized a growing trend of youth involvement in local governance. Despite initial scepticism from senior members due to her age, Saruthi's determination, coupled with unwavering family support, enabled her to overcome these hurdles, demonstrating maturity beyond her years.

Olavanna Grama Panchayat, currently with a population exceeding 100,000, comprises 23 wards, with 13 represented by female members, reflecting a commitment to gender inclusivity in local governance. According to the 2011 Census, the Panchayat counted 15,074 households, amounting to a population size of 68,432. The budget allocation for the fiscal year 2023-24 earmarked Rs 14.37 Crores for development expenditure, traditional functions, and maintenance.

Saruthi's nomination for the presidency, underscored a broader trend towards youth involvement in governance, aligning with a growing emphasis on promoting youthful perspectives in local administration. Despite her capabilities and active engagement within the party, Saruthi encountered challenges in garnering initial acceptance from some senior ward members and officials, attributed to her perceived lack of experience and understanding of the Panchayati Raj system. Moreover, her age occasionally overshadowed her authority as president, necessitating assertive displays of maturity. Challenging prevalent norms, Saruthi confronted derogatory labels such as 'Kutti' (young child) due to her age, particularly from members considerably older than her. In response, she firmly asserted her identity, proclaiming, "I am not just a kutti nor merely a woman, but the President." While initially met with resistance, her steadfast assertion gradually commanded respect, marking a significant shift in perceptions within the Panchayat.

Saruthi's upbringing in a politically active family served as the bedrock for her burgeoning interest in public service. At the age of 10, her mother's involvement in the Mahila Samakhya

program marked a pivotal moment, introducing her to the realm of women's empowerment initiatives. Moreover, witnessing her father shoulder household responsibilities in tandem with her mother's activism instilled in her a profound understanding of shared duties and egalitarian principles.

She said, "Family support is very important to take such a responsible role". Acknowledging the paramount importance of family support in assuming her leadership role, Saruthi emphasizes its pivotal role in her journey. Despite her multifaceted responsibilities as Panchayat President, a student, a spouse, and now a mother, the unwavering support from her family, including her in-laws, has been instrumental. Notably, her in-laws' alignment with her political beliefs ensures a seamless continuation of this support network.

Throughout her tenure, Saruthi navigated personal milestones such as graduation, marriage, and motherhood, with the aid of her supportive family network. Her mother-in-law's active involvement, from accompanying her to training sessions to providing childcare, exemplifies the collaborative effort underpinning Saruthi's successful journey as a president.

However, while Saruthi finds solace in her family's support during times of stress or tension, she refrains from discussing official matters with them. Instead, her husband's offer of assistance during moments of overwhelm highlights the importance of emotional support in managing her multifaceted roles. This balance between familial support and personal agency underscores Saruthi's resilience and determination in navigating the complexities of her leadership role.

Ms. Saruthi's three-month maternity leave was a transformative period, marked by personal growth and reflection. During this hiatus, the vice president assumed the responsibilities of the presidency, ensuring continuity in governance. Upon her return to work, Saruthi encountered the inevitable challenges of balancing her professional duties with newfound maternal responsibilities, yet she found solace in the supportive environment surrounding her.

Identifying a pervasive challenge among young people, Saruthi underscores the need for greater clarity regarding opportunities for youth engagement within the governance system. She advocates for the implementation of awareness-building initiatives aimed at elucidating governance structures and avenues for youth involvement, recognising the absence of such programs currently. Notably, Saruthi's understanding of governance processes was bolstered by her participation in training programs facilitated by KILA.

Looking ahead, Saruthi harbours aspirations of embarking on a legal career, leveraging her experiences in governance to contribute meaningfully to the legal realm. However, she remains cognizant of the fickleness of political support, acknowledging that before the election people will say that they will support you but after that supporters can turn into opposers. Addressing the inherent barriers hindering women's entry into leadership positions, Saruthi advocates for the establishment of robust support systems tailored to their needs. While women with strong familial support may navigate these obstacles more seamlessly, many face significant

challenges stemming from traditional gender roles. To bridge this gap, Saruthi calls for dedicated support agencies equipped to provide resources and childcare options, specifically tailored to the needs of women leaders thereby fostering an enabling environment for women leaders to thrive.

5.9 Madhya Pradesh

The state of Madhya Pradesh, with an area of 4.43 lakh sq. km, is the second-largest state in the country. It occupies 13.4 per cent of the country's total geographical area. Its population of 7.27 crore (2011 Census) makes it the state with the fifth largest population (5.99 per cent of the national total). The state shelters communities belonging to various socio-cultural and ethnic backgrounds. As per the 2011 census, the Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste constitute a significant portion of the population of the state constituting 36. 60% of the total population. In mapping out the social demography, the districts of Jhabua, Dhar, Barwani, Khargone, Dindori, Chhindwara, Mandla, Betul, Seoni, Shahdol have the maximum population of ST, SC and OBC. In other words, out of 53 districts, a total of 11 districts are the residents of communities that require special assistance to come forefront in the social, economic and political spheres. The female and male literacy rates in 2011 were 60.0 per cent and 80.5 per cent. This indicates, the need for an increase in education among females.

The state when it came into existence on the first of November 1956, inherited the legislation and experience of the pre-existing Panchayat system in its five regions. In Central provinces, the panchayats were set up when the Central Provinces Village Panchayat Act 1920 was enacted and brought into force in May 1922 'to establish village panchayats to assist in the development of local self-government in rural areas and the administration of Civil and criminal justice'. A village panchayat could be established for a circle comprising of a village or group of adjacent villages by the Deputy Commissioner (DC) on his own or by an application made to him by the District Council or by not less than 20 adult male residents of a village or group of villages. The panch could be elected from the male owners of the houses and proprietors or tenants permanently resident in a village of the circle. The limitation of 'male' was removed only by an amendment in 1934.

Panchayat legislation in Madhya Pradesh began with the enactment of the Madhya Pradesh Panchayat Act 1962, which was based on the study of the Rural Local Self-Government Committee headed by Shri Kashi Prasad Pandey in 1957. Another committee was set up in 1969, chaired by Shri M.P Dubey to review the experiences of panchayats in the state, which led towards the enactment of the Panchayat Act, of 1981. This was replaced by the new Panchayat Raj Act in 1990 and further amendments were made from 1993 onwards.

Madhya Pradesh was the first state to conduct elections to panchayats after the 73rd amendment in 1994. The panchayat elections have always been held formally on a non-party basis. This has been continued even in the post-73rd amendment period. Only the 1990 Act had provided for holding Panchayat elections on party lines. It also provided for direct elections of not only the punch or sarpanch of Gram Panchayats but also the Adhyaksh of Janpad Panchayat and pradhans of zilla parishads.

After the Constitutional Amendment the Madhya Pradesh Panchayat Raj Adhiniyam, 1993 was passed by the state legislature on 30 December 1993 and came into effect on 25th January 1994 replacing the earlier Panchayat Act of 1990. The act added a new chapter specifically for the panchayats that fall under the scheduled areas. The state constituted the Finance Commission in June 1994 to look into the finances of Panchayat as well as municipalities. It gave the first report for the gram panchayat in April 1995.

On emphasizing women in politics, Madhya Pradesh has special provisions for women contesting elections at all three levels of governance. The reserved seats for women have been increased from 33 per cent to 50 per cent. The provisions in the act through reservation policy give special opportunities to women in general and women contesting from the ST, SC and OBC categories. The seats are reserved in all three tiers i.e; Zilla panchayat, Janpad panchayat, and Gram Panchayat for the women. The assignment of reservation for women across all seats was decided by lottery in the first election and then by rotation in such a manner that women leaders occupy all the seats in a cycle of three elections. The reservation matrix is rotated once every 5-year term. However, in March 1999 just two months before the second Panchayat elections were due, the Act was amended to do away with rotation only for SCs/STs in membership of Panchayat. Even within SCs/STs, the rotation of reservation of seats for women continues. The Amendment to Article 243 D of the Constitution envisages enhanced reservation for women in PRIs leading to greater participation of women in the public sphere and also making Panchayats more inclusive institutions. Moreover, gender equity and inclusiveness will lead to better delivery of public services, such as health, sanitation, early childhood care, drinking water, etc. that affect women's lives and make the PRIs more accountable to the rural populace.

The article written by Nadini Dasgupta (2020), mentions the process of decentralisation in Madhya Pradesh involves the transfer of resources, tasks and decision-making to lower-level authorities who are (1) democratically elected and expected (2) to be largely independent of the state and depends on the local politics that is traditional dominance of upper caste, class, tribe and other background communities. She suggests that while opportunities for women in local governance have expanded, power dynamics within PRIs remain skewed, with elected representatives from reserved categories often overshadowed by male counterparts, particularly husbands. However, the power dynamics among the caste, tribes, general and other background communities give a different picture, where the elected members belonging to reserved categories are in the forefront as elected representatives but the male counterpart, the husband of the elected women holds the power.

This observation aligns with findings from the India Policy Forum study (2010), which indicates that villages with female leaders experience increased female participation and responsiveness to female policy concerns. However, a significant portion of the panchayat's work is done from the back end, either by their husband/in-laws or relatives of elected women representatives.

Case study 1: President Kavita Rakesh Verma, Bijori Grama panchayat,

Twelve years ago, I witnessed my family members actively participating in the panchayat elections. It was the first time my father stood for election, but unfortunately, he did not win. Undeterred, he decided to support my aunt in her candidacy, and with his efforts, she emerged victorious, becoming the first female Sarpanch of our panchayat in Raisen district. Subsequently, my brother also contested an election but faced defeat. However, my aunt secured another term, this time from a reserved seat.

This significant event in my life served as a source of inspiration for me to also step forward and stand for election. Encouraged by the support of my family and husband, I decided to pursue this path despite my numerous family responsibilities, which include caring for my school-going children, managing household chores, engaging in farm work, and providing hospitality to visiting family members and relatives. Despite the demands of my family life, I am committed to managing both personal and public affairs to the best of my abilities.

Experiencing the participation of women in elections, I have come to view politics as a source of power. The position of the Sarpanch holds immense authority, essentially making them the ruler of the village. The entire village falls under the jurisdiction of the Sarpanch, which holds significant influence over its affairs. In many ways, the Sarpanch is akin to a king within the village. Poore gaon sarpanch ke aandar hai aur sarpanch gaon ka raja hai.

Reflecting on this, I believe that every woman should consider contesting in politics at least once in her life. Reservation opportunities provided by the government specifically for women, present a unique chance for them to actively engage in governance and contribute to the betterment of their communities.

After winning the election, I attended training sessions on the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) and sponsored schemes in Bhopal. These training programs have been instrumental in empowering women in general, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Through frequent and continuous training, women have acquired the skills necessary to take charge and work independently.

However, there exists a prevalent perception among villagers that while seats are reserved for women, many are unsure of their roles and responsibilities. Consequently, elected representatives hesitate to attend meetings and conferences called by the panchayat authority. This reluctance often leads to delays in decision-making processes, and in some cases, tasks may be forwarded without the explicit consent or signature of the lady president.

Despite these challenges, I am determined to drive development projects in my panchayat through initiatives facilitated by the Janpad. Additionally, I aim to raise awareness within the community about the importance of women's representation in politics. Many women in the village are unaware of the government schemes and provisions available to them, and it is my

goal to educate and empower them to access these resources for the betterment of our community.

Case study 2: President Dhappu Bai Malviye, Ex-Sarpanch, Bijori Grama panchayat

Dhappu Didi's journey in community development has been driven by a fundamental motive to stay engaged in constructive work. Her ambition to contribute to the betterment of her community and village has led her to undertake various initiatives, including providing door-to-door services such as pension work, achieving Open Defection Free (ODF) status, renovating hand pumps, facilitating water connections, and issuing disability cards.

Despite having studied only until the 5th standard and being a mother of five children, Dhappu Didi found a new identity through her engagement in community development work within the panchayat. Her dedication and ambition for the village's development gained recognition among the people, ultimately leading her to contest the panchayat election in 2010, where she emerged victorious with 342 votes in a reserved seat. During this period she also got an opportunity to travel Jaipur for panchayat president samellan. That was her first time travelling outside her village.

During her tenure, Dhappu Didi actively participated in panchayat meetings, and public gatherings, and ensured the dissemination of office orders received from higher authorities. Her presence and active involvement garnered recognition and support from the community, motivating her to continue serving with the ideology of Gandhiji, considering herself as both the daughter and daughter-in-law of her family and village. 'I am beti and bahu of my family and the village'.

Despite facing challenges, including losing her seat by a narrow margin (56 votes) in the second term election, Dhappu Didi remained resilient. She continued her work with NGOs and became involved in Self-Help Group (SHG) collectives, contributing to the preparation of village development plans and implementing various projects such as street lights, online education facilities, and check dams for water conservation. She worked as a Panch member of Panchayat and Janpad and has been a member of SAMARTHAN an NGO, a representative of the Mahila Vikas committee and convenor of the Jal Naal Yojna. Despite facing challenges, including losing her seat by a narrow margin of 56 votes in the second term election, Dhappu Didi displayed remarkable resilience. She continued her engagement with NGOs and became actively involved in Self-Help Group (SHG) collectives, contributing significantly to the preparation of village development plans and the implementation of various projects such as installing street lights, establishing online education facilities, and constructing check dams for water conservation. Her dedication led her to serve as a Panch member of both the Panchayat and Janpad, and she held positions as a member of SAMARTHAN, an NGO, a representative of the Mahila Vikas committee, and the convenor of the Jal Naal Yojna.

Dhappu Didi's exemplary work earned her widespread recognition and appreciation from the people and associates she closely worked with. Her regular interactions with department officers from various sectors enabled her to establish connections and access resources for the benefit of her community.

Moreover, due to her regular contact with bade officers (department officers) from Adivasi harijan kalyan vibhag, Krishi Bivhag and mazdoor sang, she can approach bade sahaeb (big people)

Dhappu Didi has also actively participated in various training and capacity-building programs held at Janpad focused on health, gender, and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI), gaining valuable insights and experience. Through her journey from being an elected women's representative to becoming the vice president of the Community Livelihood Forum (CLF), Dhappu Didi acknowledges the hard work and responsibilities shouldered by women both within and outside their homes. Further, she says, I have seen women getting job opportunities after becoming cadres of SLRM, They have become vocal and have stood on their own feet and taken responsibility.

Moreover, she highlights the positive impact of women's involvement in organizations like Self-Help Groups, where women have gained job opportunities, become more vocal, and assumed greater responsibilities, ultimately empowering themselves and their communities. Dhappu Didi's story exemplifies the transformative potential of grassroots engagement and women's leadership in driving sustainable development.

Gaon ki log tej tarar mahila ko piche rakhte hai, gaon ki soch aaisi hai aur ye soch hum mahilaon ko badalna hai

Case study 3: President Munni Bai, Khajuri Grama panchayat, Bhopal

Munni Bai, a forty-year-old mother of three, resides with her husband and parents-in-law in Khajuri. Her teenage children attend secondary and high school in a private school near Bhopal city. Having observed a trend of family members entering politics after marriage, Munni Bai recalls an incident from twenty-five years ago when a particular family in her village established a tradition of contesting and winning panchayat elections. For five consecutive years, the head of the family secured party tickets for his relatives, including nephews, uncles, cousins, and father-in-law, who successfully contested and won general seats. This tradition became ingrained in both the family and the village itself. However, along with other villagers vying for candidacy, her father-in-law also contested but did not win.

Motivated by her father-in-law's aspiration for a family member to stand for election, Munni Bai embarked on her political journey with the full support of her family. Becoming the Panchayat President fulfilled not only her aspirations but also the dreams of her husband and father-in-law. Elected in July 2022, Munni Bai has actively participated in meetings convened

by the Gram Panchayat, conducted field visits, engaged with constituents, and listened to the concerns of women in her community.

When asked about her orientation and capacity-building experiences, Munni Bai mentioned attending her first training session on the GPDP at the Janpad. Additionally, she acknowledges the invaluable support provided by the panchayat secretary and her husband in organizing public meetings, managing documents, and staying updated with circulars from the Zilla or Janpad. Through these collaborative efforts, Munni Bai strives to fulfil her duties as Panchayat President and effectively serve her community.

Reference:

http://www.srcindore.com/lit_database.php

 $\underline{https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ced915d622c0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ced915d622c0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ced915d622c0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ced915d622c0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ced915d622c0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ced915d622c0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ced915d622c0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ced915d622c0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ced915d622c0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ced915d622c0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ced915d622c0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ced915d622c0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ced915d62ce0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ced915d62ce0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ce0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ce0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ce0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ce0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ce0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ce0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ce0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ce0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ce0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ce0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ce0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ce0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ce0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ce0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ce0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.gov.uk/media/57a08d4ce0018e9/dasgupta-properties.publishing.go$

2688.pdf

http://iasir.net/AIJRHASSpapers/AIJRHASS16-251.pdf

5.10 Maharashtra

Maharashtra, situated in the western and central part of India, boasts a lengthy coastline spanning approximately 720 kilometres along the Arabian Sea. The state comprises 35 districts, which are further divided into six revenue divisions for administrative purposes. Maharashtra has a rich tradition of robust planning bodies operating at both district and local levels. In rural local self-governance institutions include 33 Zilla Parishads, 355 Panchayat Samitis, and 27,993 Gram Panchayats. Urban governance, on the other hand, is overseen by 23 Municipal Corporations, 222 Municipal Councils, 4 Nagar Panchayats, and 7 Cantonment Boards.

Covering a vast geographical area of 3.08 lakh square kilometres, Maharashtra is the second-largest state in India. It also ranks second in terms of population, with approximately 11.24 crore inhabitants, accounting for 9.29 per cent of the country's total population. Despite the national urban population average standing at 31 per cent, a significant 45 per cent of Maharashtra's population resides in urban areas. However, the state's sex ratio, at 925 females per 1000 males, is lower than the national average of 940, as per the Census of 2011.

Maharashtra ranks as the third most urbanized state among major states in India. Notably, two districts, Mumbai and Mumbai (suburban), have 100% of their population residing in urban areas. Conversely, two other districts, Gadchiroli and Sindhudurg, have less than 15% of their population living in urban areas.

The population of Greater Mumbai Urban Agglomeration (UA) stands at 18.41 million, making it the largest Urban Agglomeration in the country in terms of population. Additionally, Maharashtra boasts six urban agglomerations (UAs) or cities with a population of one million and above within the state.

Evolution of local self-government and structure:

Maharashtra has a longstanding tradition of robust panchayats, predating the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in 1992. The state's journey towards strengthening local self-governance dates back to the late 19th century. In 1869, the first attempt to enhance the

administrative structure of villages was made with the establishment of village sanitary committees. However, it wasn't until 1920 that further attention was given to the village as a unit of administration.

The inception of local self-government in the Bombay province traces back to 1869 when district local fund committees were established under the Bombay Local Fund Act. However, these early institutions were not truly democratic as they were predominantly controlled by officials and nominated members.

The momentum towards genuine local self-government gained traction with the advocacy of Lord Ripon, whose government resolution of 1882 emphasized the principle of local self-government. In response, the Bombay Local Boards Act of 1884 was enacted, introducing district and Taluka local boards. These boards were headed by district collectors, prant (Sub-divisional) officers, or mamlatdars (tehsildars).

Subsequently, under the Bombay Local Boards Act of 1923, significant progress was made towards democratization. This legislation facilitated direct elections for members of district local boards, as well as for the positions of Presidents and Vice Presidents.

The Bombay Village Panchayat Act of 1920 marked a significant milestone by establishing statutory village Panchayats as fully elected bodies for the first time. However, it's important to note that voting rights under this act were limited to adult male members. Additionally, this legislation formalized the control of district local boards over Panchayats.

Following recommendations from the Hatch Committee in 1925, a new law called the Bombay Panchayat Act 1933 was enacted. This legislation aimed to streamline and enhance the functioning of village Panchayats.

After the reorganization of states in 1956, Maharashtra saw the passage of the comprehensive Bombay Village Panchayat Act 1958. This legislation provided a framework defining the duties, responsibilities, and powers of village Panchayats, further strengthening the local self-governance system in the state.

Maharashtra played a pioneering role in implementing the recommendations of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee, which advocated for the establishment of a three-tier Panchayat Raj structure. Following the formation of the state of Maharashtra on May 1, 1960, the newly established government took proactive steps towards strengthening Panchayats.

On June 27, 1960, a committee on Democratic Decentralization was formed under the leadership of Shri Vasantrao Naik. This committee was tasked with formulating strategies to enhance the functioning of Panchayats in the state. Based on the recommendations of this committee, Maharashtra enacted the Maharashtra Zilla Parishads and Panchayat Samitis Act in 1961. Subsequently, the three-tier Panchayat Raj system was officially established and became operational in Maharashtra on May 1, 1962.

Twelve districts in Maharashtra are governed by the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, also known as PESA. To facilitate the implementation of this legislation, the Maharashtra Zilla Parishads and Panchayat Samitis (Extension to the Scheduled Areas and Amendments) Ordinance was promulgated on January 3, 1997. However, on April 12, 1997, this ordinance was replaced by the Maharashtra Zilla Parishads and Panchayat Samitis (Extension to the Scheduled Areas and Amendments) Act, 1997. These measures were taken

to extend the provisions of zilla parishads and panchayat samitis to the scheduled areas of Maharashtra and to introduce necessary amendments for effective governance in these regions.

In Maharashtra, one-third of the seats in village panchayats, block panchayats, and district panchayats are reserved for women, including reserved seats for Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) women. Additionally, reservation of seats and offices of the presidents of Zila Parishads and chairpersons of Panchayat Samitis are provided for SCs and STs in proportion to their population and by rotation. Moreover, 27 per cent of the posts of Zila Parishad presidents and Panchayat Samiti chairpersons are reserved for backward castes, and one-third of these positions are reserved for women. The chairperson of the Women and Child Welfare Committee must be a woman counsellor of the Zila Parishad. Furthermore, the post of chairperson of the Panchayat Samiti is reserved for SC/STs and women on a yearly rotation basis. Notably, the reservation for women has been increased to 50 per cent, indicating a significant step towards gender equality and representation in local governance structures.

Case Study 1: Surekha Dharma Kamble, Babhalgaon / Kerur Gram Panchayat, Tuljapur Block, Dharashiv District

Surekha Dharma Kamble, a 58-year-old homemaker, possesses a passion for listening to and reciting Marathi poems. She assists her husband with farming, and her two daughters and son are all married. Her brother-in-law had previously contested the Gram Panchayat election, which motivated her son, a graduate, to express his interest in contesting the upcoming Panchayat Samiti (block Panchayat) elections in 2021. However, since the seat was reserved for women, Surekha was asked to stand for the election instead.

Throughout the election process, from filling nomination forms to campaigning, Surekha's son accompanied her. Despite her lack of formal education, Surekha stepped into the role of Sarpanch with determination, even though she had never spoken in public forums before. When she had to deliver a speech on Republic Day, her son and the gram sevak helped prepare and record a speech for her, which she listened to repeatedly to memorize. Despite initial doubts due to her illiteracy, Surekha successfully delivered the speech in front of the village, predominantly consisting of men.

Travelling by train for the first time along with other grama panchayat sarpanches, Surekha attended regional-level training sessions on the roles and responsibilities of a Sarpanch organized by YASHADA in Baramati and Aurangabad. During the training, being illiterate, Surekha had to seek assistance from another Sarpanch sitting beside her to write the exam answers, except for her name and the name of her Gram Panchayat.

Surekha said "In the training they conducted I had to write an exam of 40 marks. I have not got any formal education. I have only learned to write my name and gram panchayat name. So I sought the help of another sarpanch sitting next to me to write all my answers except my name and my gram panchayat name".

Surekha acknowledges her son's support in handling Gram Panchayat-related work, especially in navigating mobile notifications and government schemes. She said "Nowadays everything is in mobile, all the notifications come in mobile, yojana also comes in mobile. etc.. and my son is a graduate and he understands it". In the Panchayat, despite women comprising the

majority of elected ward members, men primarily handle Gram Panchayat-related tasks such as panchayat committee meetings, Aamsabha, Gram Sabha, etc.

According to the Gram Sevak, the Sarpanch is more approachable for women in the village, and the Gram Panchayat provided the VO office for women last year. CBO members also find women Sarpanch more approachable compared to male counterparts, although the impact of the Gram Panchayat's work on CBO members has been minimal.

Case Study 2: Gitanjali S. Welnekar, Aronda Gram Panchayat, Sawantwadi Block, Sindhudurg District

The 34-year-old high school teacher, the wife of a Merchant Navy officer, is the Sarpanch of Aronda Gram Panchayat. The uniqueness of Aronda village lies in its higher literacy rate compared to any other gram panchayat in the whole of Maharashtra. She holds double graduation degrees, a BA and a B.Ed.

In the Aronda Gram Panchayat, the position of Sarpanch is reserved for women from the OBC community. The gram panchayat operates with an alliance system, ensuring that two Sarpanches serve within a single term. Currently, Smt. Gitanjali S. Welnekar holds the position of the second Sarpanch and has been serving for the last 2.5 years of the term.

She attributes a significant portion of her decision to pursue the Sarpanch position to the encouragement and support she received from her family, notably her husband. Interestingly, when she initially contemplated nominating herself for the election, she confided her ambition solely with her husband, opting to keep her decision confidential from the rest of her family until then. Gitanjali firmly believes that the unwavering support from her family, combined with her educational background, played a pivotal role in bolstering her confidence and facilitating her journey towards becoming a Sarpanch.

Mrs. Gitanjali is deeply committed to the development of the gram panchayat. She displays a profound understanding of fund allocation, tax collection, and the nine themes of localizing sustainable development goals. Having participated in multiple training sessions on the GPDP process and the nine themes, she is well-prepared to fulfil her responsibilities effectively. She attributes her confidence and governance style in the gram panchayat to her education.

According to the Gram Sevak, Mrs. Gitanjali possesses extensive knowledge of gram panchayat governance. While she generally demonstrates competence in her role, she occasionally seeks assistance from the Gram Sevak to better understand fund flow and accounting matters when necessary.

5.11 Manipur

Nestled in the northeastern part of India, Manipur shares its borders with Mizoram, Nagaland, and Assam within the country, as well as Myanmar internationally. Renowned as the 'Jewelled Land', Manipur derives its name from its distinctive geography, featuring an oval-shaped valley surrounded by nine hills. This area holds significant ecological and cultural value, boasting a diverse array of plant and animal species, along with a vibrant mix of cultural traditions.

Bamboo farming serves as a prominent industry in Manipur, with over 3,000 square kilometers of land dedicated to its cultivation, making it one of India's largest bamboo-producing regions.

Politically, Manipur became a part of the Indian Union in 1949 and attained full statehood in 1972. Over the years, the state has undergone administrative changes, including the addition of seven new districts to the existing nine districts, to better address the needs of its diverse population. The state's geographical layout can be categorized into two main regions: the hill area and the valley area. The division between hill and valley areas reflects not only geographical disparities but also distinct cultural and ethnic compositions. The hill area encompasses five districts, namely Senapati, Tamenglong, Churachandpur, Chandel, and Ukhrul, while the valley area comprises four districts, including Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal, and Bishnupur. The hill districts cover approximately 90 per cent (20,089 sq. km) of the state's total area, leaving the valleys to make up the remaining 10 per cent (2,238 sq. km).

Manipur is home to a diverse range of ethnic groups, broadly classified into three main categories: the Meiteis, Kukis, and Nagas. While the Meiteis and Meitei Pangals (Muslims) constitute the majority population in the valley area, the hill areas are predominantly inhabited by Kukis and Nagas. This cultural diversity adds depth and richness to Manipur's heritage, reflected in its traditions, festivals, and art forms. With its breathtaking landscapes, abundant biodiversity, and a tapestry of distinct ethnic communities, Manipur stands as an enchanting state offering a harmonious blend of natural wonders and cultural marvels.

In Manipur, village-level administration has a long history dating back to early periods. In the villages of Manipur valley, there were clubs named singlups or wood clubs, resembling the panchayats of Bengal, under the sirdar or head of the village. Besides generally controlling village affairs, these singlups used to adjudicate petty disputes in the villages. In December 1896, the singlups were replaced by five-member panchayats.

The tribal villages in the hills as well as in the valley were administered by the village councils consisting of khunbu, luplakpa, and other village elders headed by Khullakpa. Each Loi which means "village" had its own administrative structure, led by a village Chief known as the Khullakpa, who was supported by other village officials. These councils settled all the disputes of a civil, criminal, religious and social nature. These structures were under the authority of the King of Manipur, reflecting a decentralized system of governance. Notably, the composition and responsibilities of village officials varied from one village to another, depending on factors such as the village's origin and occupation.

Under the Manipur State Courts Act 1947 and under the Manipur Hill Peoples Regulation of 1947, the village panchayats and the village authorities in the hill areas where confirmed with the powers of the laws Court for the administration of justice in criminal and civil cases.

The present Panchayat system in Manipur was introduced in 1960 under the provisions of the United Provinces(Utta Pradesh) Panchayati Raj Act of 1947, which was extended to this state. This initiative established a two-tier system of Panchayats in the Manipur valley and Jiribam

areas. Necessary rules were framed in 1962 for making applicable the various provisions of the Act. In January 1964, the first elections for constituting grama panchayats where held. In September 1964 a total of 227 gram panchayat and 43 nyaya panchayats came into existence and started functioning. After the attainment of statehood in 1972, the state government enacted the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act of 1975 which provided for a three-tier structure consisting of Gram Panchayats at the village level, Panchayat Samitis at the block level, and Zilla Parishads at the district level, beides nyaya panchayats for judicial purpses.

Aligning with constitutional amendments, particularly the 73rd Amendment Act to the Constitution of India, Manipur passed the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act in 1994. This legislation reinstated a two-tier system of Panchayati Raj, with Gram Panchayats at the village level and Zilla Parishads at the district level. These legislative developments underscored the ongoing evolution of local governance structures, emphasizing the importance of grassroots democracy in shaping India's political landscape and empowering communities at the grassroots level. The state election commission constituted under the new Act framed the Manipur Panchayati Raj (Election) Rules, 1995. As provided in the Act, the State Finance Commission was constituted for both the panchayats and nagar panchayats. The Act of 1994 was amended substantially in 1996.

The elevated economic role of women in Manipur finds its roots in the historical "Lallup system". Under this system, men were obligated to serve the king during times of need, leaving women to manage households and economic endeavors in their absence. Women assumed significant responsibilities, such as farming, cattle tending, weaving, blacksmithing, fishing, and kitchen gardening, to sustain their families. Despite the implicit burdens imposed by the lallup system, women in Manipur not only equaled but often surpassed men in fulfilling their economic and social duties. The settlement of various subgroups constituting the Meiteis in Manipur brought with them a complex religious system. Patriarchal values were introduced alongside the establishment of clan settlements, particularly as masculine labor became crucial in production, including taming wild animals and engaging in warfare.

The empowerment of women crucially hinges on their participation in decision-making processes, whether within households, communities, or governmental bodies. However, statistics from the 16th Lok Sabha Election in India reveal a stark gender disparity, with only 11 per cent of Members of Parliament (MPs) being women out of a total of 543 seats. Manipur, in particular, has seen minimal representation, with only one woman MP, belonging to the Scheduled Tribe (ST) community, elected to date.

Despite the relatively high representation of women in Panchayats in Manipur, often exceeding the one-third mark, questions arise regarding the quality of female leadership within these bodies. However, despite their numerical representation, doubts persist regarding the effectiveness of women leaders in Panchayats. Many women occupying positions in Gram Panchayats are often perceived as mere puppets of their households, reluctant to make independent decisions. They tend to defer to the authority of their husbands or other male family members, as well as to the directives of their political parties. In numerous instances,

women's presence in meetings is considered unnecessary, and their participation is limited to providing thumb impressions after meetings have concluded. Furthermore, many women lack awareness of local issues or the decisions made during meetings, showing a lack of sensitivity to the concerns of the general populace.

Case Study 1: Mayanglambam Surbala Devi, Top Dusara Gram Panchayat, Imphal East District

Mayanglambam Surbala Devi, a 52-year-old married woman with a Master of Arts in Social Work and a mother of four daughters and one son, currently serves as the Pradhan in Top Dusara Gram Panchayat, located in Imphal East District. Hailing from a Above Poverty Line (APL) background, Surbala's entry into local governance commenced with her successful election to a reserved seat in the 2017 elections.

Driven by her commitment to uplift marginalized sections of society, particularly widows and homeless families, Surbala drew inspiration from her prior role as a secretary in Self-Help Groups (SHGs) established under the Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) in 2006. Through her engagement with these groups, Surbala acquired a profound understanding of the community's needs and identified the prevailing disparities between the community and the panchayat. Notably, she actively advocated for the equitable distribution of rations to beneficiaries through the Public Distribution System (PDS) shops within her Gram Panchayat.

Surbala's experience highlights the valuable role that family support, especially from her husband, plays in enabling her to navigate her responsibilities as the Pradhan of Top Dusara Gram Panchayat. Leveraging her husband's experience as a former Pradhan in the preceding two terms, she benefits from his guidance and support, which helps her overcome the challenges of her relatively limited prior involvement in politics and development activities.

Her reliance on consultation with family members, particularly her husband, reflects her initial hesitancy and perhaps lack of confidence in making independent decisions for the community. However, Surbala also acknowledges the importance of reservation policies in providing women like her with the opportunity to participate in elections and contribute to local governance. This acknowledgement suggests her recognition of the broader societal changes brought about by gender quotas and the empowerment of women in traditionally maledominated spheres of governance.

Surbala views reservation as a positive mechanism for enhancing women's representation in local government, providing them with a platform to work for the welfare of the community. Previously, women were often relegated to household chores or participation in community-based organizations (CBOs) like Meira Paibi and self-help groups (SHGs), with limited consideration given to contesting elections for leadership positions such as Pradhan or Ward Members, which were perceived as male-dominated. However, the introduction of reservation policies has led to a shift in attitudes, with Surbala's family members offering support and

assistance in her new role as Pradhan. This has enabled her to work in a position she had never envisioned for herself. Additionally, her involvement with women collectives has encouraged more women to approach her, indicating their growing interest in participating in the planning and decision-making processes. Nevertheless, the continued lack of female representation in leadership positions poses challenges, leading women to hesitate to express their concerns in public forums like gram sabhas or meetings.

In her approach to the preparation of the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP), she expressed her limited knowledge gained from the training conducted by the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD). While she acknowledges her reliance on her husband for assistance in this matter, she also leverages her daughter-in-law's involvement in the Self-help Group (SHG) network to gain a basic understanding of central and state-sponsored schemes which enabled her to assist beneficiaries in accessing benefits. With ongoing support from the SHG network, she engaged with the agricultural department of her district to organize training and awareness programs for her Gram Panchayat (GP), including the distribution of paddy seeds to beneficiaries. Throughout her tenure, Surbala prioritized community engagement by organizing two-gram sabhas annually. As a result, she witnessed a consistent increase in women's participation in these meetings, indicating the positive impact of having a female Pradhan.

Surbala shared her experience with the three-day residential capacity-building training organized by the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD) after she was elected Pradhan. She found the sessions overly technical and challenging for participants, especially for participants attending for the first time. As a result, many participants, including herself, relied on the assistance of one or two family members to comprehend the terminologies and processes discussed during the training. Surbala emphasized the need for training sessions to incorporate proper Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials and video documentation illustrating best practices to facilitate better understanding and visualization of processes. Furthermore, she suggested that the training curriculum should cover essential topics such as leadership, components of the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP), utilization and channelization of funds, and knowledge on Central and State-sponsored schemes, including the utilization of funds from the 15th Finance Commission. Surbala proposed dividing these training sessions into three to four parts per year, with each session lasting no more than a day. This approach, she believed, would provide better support and guidance to participants attending such training for the first time, ensuring effective capacity-building within the local governance framework.

Reference:

1. Local Self-Government in Manipur: A Case Study of Phayeng Gram Panchayat Dr. Mangoljao Maibam1, B. Sharatchandra Sharma2 1Assistant Professor, (POL. SC.), N.G. College, Imphal

- 2Associate Professor, (POL. SC.), IDEAL College, AKAMPAT, Imphal East Corresponding Author: Dr. Mangoljao Maibam https://www.ijrrjournal.com/IJRR Vol.10 Issue.3 March2023/IJRR54.pdf
- Women's Empowerment in Manipur Journal of Social and Political Sciences, Vol.4 No.1 (2021) 16
 Pages Posted: 4 Mar 2021 <u>Arambam Sophia</u> Manipur UniversityDate Written:January13,2021 https://deliverypdf.ssrn.com/delivery.php?ID=6630881010940671091201110
 <a href="https://deliverypdf.ssrn.co

5.12 Meghalaya

Meghalaya, designated as one of the 'Special Category States,' benefits from certain exemptions due to its unique characteristics, including a significant tribal population, low population density, rugged terrain, and strategic border location. As a result, it is exempt from certain provisions of the Indian Constitution, including the 73rd Amendment regarding Panchayati Raj institutions. Instead, traditional local governance structures governed by Articles 244(2) and 275(1) of the 6th Schedule are prevalent in Meghalaya.

One of the unique features of the system of administration in Meghalaya is the existence of the traditional system of administration in the form of **Syiemship**, **Sirdarship**, **Wahadarship**, **Doloiship**, and **Nokmaship**.

Established in 1950, Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) were introduced in the North-East to grant greater autonomy to tribal societies and preserve their traditional practices. Meghalaya has three ADCs: Khasi, Jaintia, and Garo, covering 12 districts. These ADCs oversee Local Governing Institutions (Dorbar Shnong/Nokma), which are vital grassroots bodies. The Sxth schedule is a self-cntained code of governance and the ADCs are virtually states in miniature with all the three wings of governance namely, the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. In 1972 an amendment in the constitution of India was made. With inclusion of Paragraph 12A, it was mandated that in case of any conflict the state's decision would prevail. This meant that there was reduced legislative autonomy of the councils and the ADCs required close liaising and coordination with the state government. Thus, the bills passed by the ADC have to be sent to the District Council Affairs Department of Government of Meghalaya for clearance prior to the governor's approval.

In Meghalaya, there has been a longstanding tradition of excluding women from involvement in political matters, as there has been a prevailing belief that politics and grassroots governance are domains primarily for men. In response to this, women in the community have historically formed associations known as "Seng Kynthei" in Khasi areas which are outside local governing systems but organically functioning as a community support mechanism. Through these associations, women come together to create a platform for discussing, taking action, and supporting village dorbars in community development efforts, as well as in addressing issues such as crime and injustices faced by any segment of the population. To address this, Village Employment Councils (VECs) were established for the implementation of MGNREGS in the State, with reserved seats for women. VECs mirror Gram Panchayat Institutions and facilitate women's involvement in local governance, providing them with opportunities to participate in decision-making processes and contribute to community development initiatives.

"The VECs are apolitical organizations but play a significant role to address different grassroot problems related to gender equality and developmental issues and its main intention is to involve active participation of women. Consequently, to comprehensively study women's participation in local government institutions in Meghalaya, engaging with VECs, where women hold leadership roles, is crucial. Traditional councils like Dorbar Shnong or Nokma operate under customary laws

and may not reflect women's involvement as effectively"- Conrad K. Sangma (Chief Minister, Meghalaya).

Case Study 1: Saibila Mynsong, Village Employment Council (VEC) Secretary, Pashang Village

The Pashang village falls under the Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) scheme, which was identified the previous year. Notable community infrastructures such as well-built schools, Anganwadi centers, and community halls were observed. However, the village lacked a Village Dorbar office or an office for the Village Employment Councils (VECs), which could have facilitated easier access for villagers to approach their leaders regarding queries and work related to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

Saibila, a 28-year-old homemaker, resides in the village. She completed her education up to class 9 before getting married and has three children—a 10-year-old daughter and two sons aged 4 and 8. She supports her husband in potato cultivation and manages domestic chores. Despite being interested in community-led initiatives before marriage, such as rallies against alcoholism and supporting vulnerable families, she faced restrictions on her involvement in such activities after marriage. Despite her lack of interest and determination to stand for the post, she was nominated as the Secretary of the VEC in July 2022 by the General Body committee, a position reserved for women. She was not aware of this position itself and about reservation. It was her uncle, previously the VEC President (Headman), who convinced her to accept the offer by convincing her about the benefits of the position.

She encounters several challenges in her role as the Secretary of the Village Employment Council (VEC). Firstly, she lacks familial support, particularly from her husband, who prioritizes her duties towards childcare and household chores over her involvement in the VEC. Secondly, she struggles with understanding the intricate workings of various village-level institutions and committees, resulting in coordination issues. Thirdly, the induction training provided by the block merely consisted of readings of roles and responsibilities guidelines, without any specialized capacity-building sessions, thus impeding her ability to effectively fulfill her role. These challenges have contributed to Saibila's waning interest and motivation in continuing her service as the VEC Secretary.

Her perspectives on women's participation in local governing institutions reflect the challenges and barriers faced by many women in rural communities. She believes that traditional gender roles, lack of experience, and skills limit women's opportunities to participate effectively. Saibila feels powerless to challenge the status quo and address village issues due to personal constraints and fears of repercussions.

Despite witnessing social issues and deteriorating amenities in the village, Saibila hesitates to voice her concerns to the headman, fearing backlash and expulsion from the village, as it may be perceived as a challenge to his authority.

Saibila expresses a keen interest in learning about participatory methods in preparing a community-level Village Development plan but lacks knowledge and opportunities to participate actively. Despite her general understanding annual revision of the MGNREGS action plan revision process, she rarely gets involved in conducting and mobilizing community demands, highlighting the dominance of male household representatives and village headmen in controlling decisions and procedures within village committees.

Saibila acknowledges the importance of capacity-building training to enhance her understanding of her role as the VEC Secretary. However, she expresses discomfort with attending residential training programs due to security concerns associated with staying in unfamiliar areas and the necessity to travel long distances away from her village. Additionally, her family restricts her from staying away from the village for more than 2-3 hours, further complicating her ability to attend such training. The lack of adequate transportation options, geographical constraints, and the expenses associated with travel, which are not reimbursed, pose additional challenges for Saibila to participate in training programs effectively.

Her proficiency as a bookkeeper within her Self-Help Group (SHG), enabling her to manage certain records within the Village Employment Council (VEC). However, her lack of technical expertise in operating a smartphone poses a significant challenge when it comes to utilizing the MGNREGS labor attendance app (NMMS) within the Village Employment Council (VEC). This limitation hampers her effectiveness in managing labor attendance and other related tasks, potentially impacting the efficiency and transparency of MGNREGS operations in her village. Throughout her interaction with the team, Saibila exhibited hesitancy and shyness in expressing her thoughts regarding the limited participation and responsibilities of women in local governing institutions. She conveyed her preference to withhold certain experiences, fearing potential repercussions for herself and her family if she were to openly discuss such issues without the guidance of the Village Headman. This reluctance reflects the complex dynamics and power structures present within the village community, where speaking out against established norms and authority figures may lead to adverse consequences. She siad "We do not want to upset our Sordar committee by questioning our own leaders (Male); we just want to support them in ways agreeable to the Headman of the Village. Afterall women can play a role in village development by contributing in nurturing our sons in a better way, who will one day grow up to become good leaders"

Case Study 2: Asulitha R. Marak, VEC President, Bangsi Apal Village

Asulitha R. Marak, a 58-year-old woman, currently holds the position of President of the Bangsi Apal Village Employment Council (VEC) since February 2022, while also serving as the President of her Self-Help Group (SHG). Her nomination for the VEC President's post by the village general body committee of MGNREGS placed her in a challenging position. Despite her initial lack of interest due to health concerns and the anticipated expenses associated with

the role, she reluctantly accepted the position. The nominal annual allowance of Rs. 5000 provided to VEC office bearers is insufficient considering the time and effort required, leading her to forgo potential income from agricultural activities.

A married woman with four children, she sees her presidency as a way to set an example for her children, showing them that women can hold significant positions within local governance structures. However, she expresses uncertainty about her autonomy in decision-making within the VEC. Often, she relies heavily on the VEC secretary, who has more leadership and planning experience, having previously served as the Village Head (Sordar). This reliance is acknowledged and accepted by the villagers, with Koberius Mynsong (VEC Secretary) noting that job card holders prefer consulting him over the President due to her perceived lack of expertise in addressing queries and devising comprehensive plans under MGNREGS. Hence, Asulitha's predicament highlights the complexities faced by women in leadership roles within local governance, where gender-based reservations may not always align with practical expertise and decision-making authority. Despite her position as President, she struggles with challenges in exerting influence and meeting expectations within the VEC structure.

She encounters substantial challenges in actively engaging in the decision-making processes within the VEC due to her extensive household responsibilities. Her time is largely consumed by family duties and daily customs, leaving her with limited availability for VEC meetings and block-level training sessions. Consequently, she frequently arrives late to VEC meetings, missing critical discussions, and is unable to attend block-level training events. The responsibility of attending these trainings and managing important documents such as circulars and guiding booklets primarily falls upon the VEC Secretary, who tends to be more present and actively involved.

It was also disclosed by her that it is the secretary who chairs all MGNREGS and VEC internal committee meetings. Despite her efforts to inquire about training opportunities and obtain relevant materials, she has been denied access, further hindering her involvement in VEC affairs. Consequently, Asulitha feels that she holds her position in name only, largely because of her family's proximity to the Nokma of the Area.

Furthermore, Asulitha's restricted exposure to various stakeholders and officials results from her absence from training sessions and block meetings. Consequently, she increasingly relies on the Village Headman, VEC Secretary, and other managing committee members for guidance in carrying out her responsibilities and organizing meetings. Despite being responsible for proposing the scheduling of VEC meetings with job card holders, she finds herself sidelined in decision-making processes. The Village Headman, in collaboration with others, determines the meeting agenda and resolutions to be passed without consulting or considering her opinions and consent on various matters. Indeed, this sentiment is echoed by the VEC secretary, who openly expresses that he views women's participation in governing bodies and planning mechanisms as unnecessary, citing their perceived lack of experience and skills. He further argues that reservations present a challenge for more qualified male participants to engage in VEC activities and contribute to problem-solving efforts. This lack

of inclusion and autonomy further marginalizes Asulitha within the VEC structure, impeding her ability to effectively represent the interests of her constituents. Additionally, due to her infrequent attendance at training sessions and other VEC meetings, Asulitha faces difficulties in comprehending the intricacies of fund management. This situation has inadvertently contributed to certain irregularities within the VEC managing committee. Specifically, there have been instances where a portion of the payment for a day's work is collected from active job card holders by the VEC, purportedly to establish savings for training and other unforeseen expenses. Observing such practices, she is unable to address the issue due to her limited understanding of the guidelines and operational framework of the Committee.

During the session, it became evident that Asulitha often turned to the VEC secretary for answers and guidance, depending on him to validate her own perspectives and responses. Despite her desire to voice her feelings and opinions, the secretary's presence often made her hesitant to do so. Ultimately, Asulitha shared how enduring such discriminatory practices and customary restrictions over time has cultivated a significant level of tolerance within her.

5.13 Rajasthan

The present form of the state of Rajasthan came into existence in 1956. The first major Act for Panchayat Raj in the state was the Rajasthan Panchayat Act 1953, which governed the functioning of village panchayats and nyaya panchayats. This Act was based on the existing Panchayat Acts of the princely states. Subsequently, the Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zilla Parishad Act were passed in 1959, and the Rajasthan Panchayat Act 1953 was amended to conform with it. Panchayat Raj was introduced in the state in October 1959 in accordance with the recommendations of the Balwantri Mehta committee. Additionally, the Rajasthan PESA Act was passed in September 1999.

As per details from Census 2011, Rajasthan has a population of 6.86 crores, with 3.55 crores being male and 3.29 crores female. The population of Rajasthan forms 5.66 percent of India's total population in 2011. The Sex Ratio in Rajasthan is 928 females per 1000 males, which is below the national average of 940. The literacy rate in Rajasthan has seen an upward trend and is recorded at 66.11 percent as per the latest population census. Male literacy stands at 79.19 percent, while female literacy is at 52.12 percent. Approximately 75.13 percent of the total population of Rajasthan resides in rural areas.

The Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act of 1994, following the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, established a three-tier structure of Panchayats in the state. This structure comprises Zila Parishads (ZP) at the district level, Panchayat Samitis (PS) at the intermediate level, and Gram Panchayats (GP) at the village level. Panchayat elections in the state are conducted regularly, with elections at the Gram Panchayat level being non-partisan, while elections at the Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad levels are held on party lines.

Initially, after the 73rd Amendment, one-third of the total seats in panchayats were reserved for women. Additionally, not less than one-third of the seats reserved for Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes/Other Backward Classes were also reserved for women from the respective categories. Furthermore, not less than one-third of the offices of the chairperson of panchayats were reserved for women. Subsequently, the state government raised the women's quota in panchayats to 50 percent, further enhancing women's representation in local governance. Additionally, the policy of rotating reserved seats every five years aimed to ensure broader participation and prevent the entrenchment of power in specific groups.

In 2018, the government abolished the minimum education criteria for civic polls candidates, which had previously mandated certain educational qualifications for contesting various levels of panchayat elections. The criteria stipulated that for contesting the Zila parishad or panchayat samiti polls a contestant must have a minimum qualification of secondary education (class X) and to contest the sarpanch elections, an aspirant for the general category must have passed class VIII and a SC/S aspirant must have paEmphasize the importance of reservation policies to ensure equitable representation and participation of marginalized groups in local governance. This move aimed to promote inclusivity and allow individuals from diverse educational backgrounds to participate in local governance. Moreover, the two-child norm for local candidates, which was previously enforced, was also abolished.

The assessment conducted by the Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA) highlights a significant challenge in the effective utilization of the one-third reservation for women in local governance, particularly in the context of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). Despite the reservation, many elected women representatives (EWRs) face obstacles in fully exercising their roles and responsibilities, as their husbands, sons, or fathers often perform these duties in proxy. This phenomenon of proxy representation undermines the intended goal of women's empowerment and representation in PRIs. While efforts such as introducing identity cards to ensure attendance and participation of EWRs in meetings are made, the pervasive influence of family members in decision-making processes remains a major hurdle. The admission by some EWRs that the support from their family members has been crucial to their success underscores the complex dynamics at play. While family support can be instrumental in facilitating women's participation in local governance, it also raises questions about the extent of women's agency and autonomy within PRIs¹⁸.

Case Study 1: Nauroti Devi, Harmada Gram Panchayat of Ajmer district

This is the story of an extraordinary woman called Nauroti Devi in Rajasthan. Born into a poor Dalit family and deprived of formal education, she exhibited incredible resilience and courage in confronting injustices faced by her community. Nauroti, like many other labourers, experienced the injustice of not receiving promised full wages. In response, she bravely spoke out against this disparity, rallying her fellow labourers to join her cause and effectively becoming the voice of the agitation. Her advocacy for fair wages not only shed light on the

¹⁸ Irma

exploitation of laborers but also mobilized collective action, demonstrating her leadership and ability to inspire others to join her cause. Nauroti's activism began with a simple yet powerful demand for economic justice, laying the foundation for her lifelong commitment to social and economic equality. As she continued her advocacy work, Nauroti expanded her focus to address broader issues such as including the Right to Information, social audit, and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). In the early 1980s, her participation in initiatives like the Barefoot College and the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan provided her with valuable knowledge and skills, further empowering her to advocate for change on a larger scale.

Winning the election in 2010 as Sarpanch in Harmada Gram Panchayat of Ajmer district marked a significant milestone in her journey, allowing her to channel her advocacy efforts into formal leadership roles. Drawing on her previous experience as a ward member and her training on Panchayati Raj in Kerala, Nauroti approached her role with a strong sense of purpose and determination. Her tenure as Sarpanch was characterized by transparency, accountability, and a steadfast commitment to the welfare of her community.

Nauroti had gained insight into the responsibilities of a ward panch from the training that she had received. She initiated the practice of conducting three Gram Sabhas annually with women from her ward. She diligently documented each proposal and submitted them to the Gram Panchayat, despite facing repeated dismissals. During her final year as a ward member, she demanded explanations for unfulfilled work orders in her ward which ended in the construction of roads in her ward.

Nauroti Devi's approach to her campaign for Sarpanch in 2010 exemplifies her commitment to ethical leadership and grassroots engagement. In contrast to the prevalent practice of spending large sums of money ranging from 5 to 10 lakh rupees to influence voters, Nauroti chose to conduct a modest and principled campaign, refraining from monetary inducements and instead relying on personal interactions and her reputation for integrity.

By personally visiting households to seek votes, Nauroti demonstrated her dedication to connecting with her constituents on a meaningful level. Despite feeling anxious about the impact of her modest campaign strategy during the vote counting process, her fearlessness and willingness to challenge injustice resonated with the predominantly Scheduled Caste population of the village, earning her widespread respect and support.

Nauroti's refusal to engage in unethical campaign practices and her steadfast commitment to principles of integrity and honesty set her apart from other candidates. Her election victory was a testament to the trust and confidence placed in her by the community, who recognized her sincerity and dedication to their welfare. Even after assuming office as Sarpanch, Nauroti continued to actively engage in campaigns around issues such as the Right to Information (RTI) and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS),

social audits demonstrating her ongoing commitment to transparency, accountability, and social justice.

Nauroti Devi's tenure as Sarpanch was not without its challenges, as she faced opposition and attempts to deceive her from various quarters, including neighbouring male Sarpanches. Despite these obstacles, her decision to pursue the role of Sarpanch was motivated by her deeprooted dedication to addressing the issues plaguing her community and her desire to bring about positive change. Recognizing the prevalent corruption within the Panchayat system, Nauroti resolved to challenge it head-on and work tirelessly to promote transparency, accountability, and good governance.

Nauroti Devi's commitment to serving her community and upholding transparency and accountability in governance is exemplified by her proactive response to an incident involving the misappropriation of MGNREGS funds. She vividly recalls an incident where a woman approached her within two months of her tenure, raising concerns about an overdue payment from the MGNREGS program, Nauroti took immediate action.

Despite the secretary's claims that the funds had already been disbursed, Nauroti refused to accept this explanation and decided to investigate the matter herself. Upon scrutinizing the muster roll, she uncovered evidence of misappropriation, revealing that another individual had unlawfully pocketed the funds intended for the woman. With determination and perseverance, Nauroti confronted the culprit and demanded restitution. Despite initial resistance, the individual ultimately relented and repaid the woman within a week, bringing closure to the matter and ensuring that justice was served.

Nauroti Devi's leadership as Sarpanch was marked by transformative projects and unwavering advocacy for marginalized communities. One such project was the establishment of the Rajiv Gandhi Seva Kendra as a multipurpose Panchayat Bhawan. Instead of relying on contractors and their hefty commissions, Nauroti took a hands-on approach, personally overseeing material selection, quality control, and labor management. Her meticulous management ultimately resulted in significant cost savings of Rs. 1.2 lakh, demonstrating her commitment to efficient and transparent governance.

Reflecting on her tenure as a ward member, Nauroti recalls a significant challenge involving the absence of a burial ground for the Muslim community. Despite initial obstacles, including resistance from occupiers, Nauroti persisted in her advocacy efforts. Her relentless pursuit led to the acceptance of her proposal by the Gram Sabha, resulting in the allocation of 12 bighas of land for the burial ground. Overcoming nearly two decades of struggle, Nauroti ensured the construction of boundary walls, a rest house, and provisions for drinking water, providing a long-awaited solution to the community's needs.

Her advocacy extended beyond infrastructure projects to social issues, including her vocal opposition to the practice of Sati. Despite facing backlash, she remained steadfast in her

commitment to justice and equality, exemplifying her unwavering dedication to upholding human rights and dignity for all members of her community.

Nauroti's formidable background roots from her extensive experience across various roles. Beginning as a 'sathin' dedicated to women's empowerment, she traversed villages, educating communities about their rights, particularly in the wake of the Bhanwari Devi case. Despite lacking formal training, Nauroti's dedication to personal growth since 1980 is evident through her active participation in various opportunities that came her way. Crucially, Nauroti's journey was enabled by the unwavering support of her family, facilitating her mobility and participation in leadership roles. She seized every opportunity to expand her knowledge and hone her leadership skills, exercising her right to education and empowerment. Through her tireless advocacy and championing of numerous causes, Nauroti earned widespread recognition as a respected leader in Rajasthan, leaving a lasting impact on her community and inspiring others to follow in her footsteps.

Case Study 2: Lehariya Devi, Palasani Gram Panchayat, Jodhpur district

Shrimati Lehariya Devi Gehlot's journey into politics showcases her determination and willingness to step into leadership roles despite initial reluctance from her family. In 2020, she decided to contest the election for the seat reserved for OBC women, a decision made at the last minute after three others had already filed their nominations. Her son mentions that she decided to contest elections at the very last minute after three people had already filed their nominations for the same. While her family was initially hesitant about her political aspirations, Lehariya Devi took charge of her campaign, demonstrating her independence and drive.

At 60 years old, Lehariya Devi is deeply rooted in religious activities and holds a prominent position in the 'bhagat mandal' within her panchayat. Her active involvement in community service and wide social circle within the mandal contribute to her strong presence in the community. Additionally, her family's successful construction business further enhances her influence and connections within the panchayat.

Lehariya Devi's reliance on her elder son's expertise from his NGO highlight her resourcefulness and adaptability in managing panchayat affairs. Despite her lack of formal education, Lehariya Devi actively participates in the Panchayat's affairs and demonstrates a willingness to learn, as evidenced by her attendance at the GPDP training and basic understanding of various schemes and programs.

While she seeks guidance from her son and gram sevak, Lehariya Devi asserts her independence and takes charge of decision-making within the Panchayat. Her statement, "My son works for me and not on my behalf. I instruct them what to do," shows her leadership style and confidence in directing the operations of the Panchayat.

Lehariya Devi's confidence and influence within the Gram Sabha meetings, coupled with her significant network of approximately 250 women connected through the mandal, underscore her leadership and community engagement. Her reputation as a respected figure in the

panchayat and her role in resolving disputes further solidify her position as a key decision-maker and problem solver within the community.

Her influence extends beyond the boundaries of the panchayat, reflecting her broader impact and support within her family and the community at large. Her involvement in religious activities and dedication to community service have earned her respect and loyalty, bolstering her leadership credentials.

Lehariya Devi's ability to manage household finances and contribute to familial decisions not only enhances her confidence but also showcases her practical leadership skills. Her awareness of the financial transactions within the panchayat demonstrates her commitment to transparency and accountability in governance.

The visibility of Lehariya Devi's image and recognition within the panchayat, such as through posters and other forms of acknowledgment, serves to symbolize her status as a prominent figure and the face of the community. This recognition further reinforces her leadership and influence, highlights her status as the face of the community.

Case Study 3: Mamta Devi, Songarh Gram Panchayat, Bhim

Mamta Devi's journey as the Sarpanch of Songarh Gram Panchayat in Bhim, Rajasthan, began with her historic appointment during the 2018 elections. The establishment of Songarh Panchayat stemmed from the division of a larger panchayat, with a specific mandate from the government requiring a Dalit woman to serve as the Sarpanch. At just 27 years old and a mother to a seven-year-old, Mamta Devi stepped into the role, making history as the first Sarpanch of Songarh.

Despite her limited formal education, having completed up to the 7th standard, Mamta Devi's determination and sense of duty led her to take on the responsibilities of leadership in her community. However, her decision to reside outside the panchayat along with her husband for her son's education presents challenges, particularly in terms of mobility. The distance of around 12 kilometers to the panchayat office adds logistical hurdles to her ability to fulfill her duties effectively.

Despite her inherent intelligence and outspoken nature, she faces the challenge of balancing her personal identity with the expectations placed upon her as a Sarpanch and as a woman in her community.

The societal expectations and constraints Mamta Devi alludes to underscore the deeply ingrained gender norms and roles that influence women's behavior and decisions, particularly in positions of leadership. The pressure to conform to these expectations can create a barrier

for women leaders like Mamta Devi, limiting their ability to assert themselves fully and exercise their authority without fear of backlash or judgment.

Mamta Devi's awareness of the long-lasting impact of her actions on her relationships within the community reflects her understanding of the importance of maintaining harmony and trust, even beyond her tenure as Sarpanch. This recognition of the interconnectedness of her personal and professional life highlights her commitment to serving her community while navigating the constraints imposed by societal norms. She feels the pressure of the repercussions that she may face post tenure if she appears too assertive or intrusive in panchayat affairs.

Mamta Devi's dependency on her husband for communication and her limited agency in handling the financial transactions of the panchayat highlight the challenges many women face in assuming leadership roles, particularly in male-dominated environments. Her reliance on her husband to navigate the intricacies of governance reflects broader societal norms that prioritize male authority and control, even within elected positions. According to her, he was the face behind the election campaign.

She entered the panchayat office in a 'ghoongat', adoptig a subdued demeanor and her interactions being mediated by her husband further illustrate the constraints imposed upon her by traditional gender roles and expectations. Despite holding the title of Sarpanch, Mamta Devi's ability to assert her authority and fully engage in the affairs of the panchayat is hindered by these dynamics. While Mamta Devi's personal life may not have undergone significant changes as a result of her role as Sarpanch, her commitment to advocating for her family's interests demonstrates her resilience and determination to fulfill her responsibilities despite the challenges she faces.

Mamta Devi's experience underscores the importance of comprehensive and effective training programs for elected representatives, especially those from marginalized backgrounds or with limited formal education. In her 5 year tenure she has been a part of one five-day training session on panchayati raj. The inadequacy of her training highlights a significant gap in the support provided to new leaders, which can hinder their ability to effectively fulfill their roles and responsibilities.

However, the training she underwent failed to significantly improve her knowledge, provide clarity on schemes and GPDP, or explain the roles and responsibilities associated with her position. Limited mobility, traditional gender roles, and insufficient family support further compound Mamta Devi's challenges, making it difficult for her to fully engage in her duties as Sarpanch.

Case Study 4: Shanta Devi, Sailana Gram Panchayat, Jhadol Block of Udaipur district

Shanta Devi's journey as the Sarpanch of Sailana Gram Panchayat showcases the rising participation of women in leadership roles, particularly in tribal communities where they have historically been marginalized. As a young, educated, and determined woman, Shanta Devi represents a new generation of leaders striving to bring about positive change in their communities.

Securing a seat reserved for Scheduled Tribe (ST) women highlights the importance of affirmative action policies in promoting gender equality and ensuring representation for marginalized groups. Shanta Devi's election victory underscores the trust and confidence placed in her by the members of Sailana Gram Panchayat, who saw her as a capable leader capable of addressing their needs and concerns.

Shanta Devi contested for the first time in 2020 and won the election. Sailana panchayat was formed in 2015, and she assumed the presidency in 2020. The fact that five out of the seven wards in Sailana have female ward panchs reflects a significant shift in gender dynamics and power structures within the Panchayat. It indicates a growing recognition of women's leadership abilities and their ability to effectively govern and represent their communities.

Shanta Devi's background as an 8th-grade graduate and a mother of two demonstrates her resilience and determination to overcome obstacles and pursue her aspirations. Despite limited formal education, she has shown the courage and initiative to step into a leadership role and make a difference in the lives of the people she serves.

The prevalence of polygamy in Sailana Gram Panchayat poses unique challenges to the democratic process and gender equality. In many cases, men with multiple wives may seek to exploit legal loopholes to circumvent government rules limiting candidacy to individuals with two or fewer children. One such loophole involves persuading women, often wives or relatives, to run for election on their behalf.

Shanta Devi's husband, who harbored aspirations of becoming the sarpanch but lost in the 2015 election, encouraged Shanta to run for the position, as the seat was reserved for women. He referred to himself as the "sarpanch pati," emphasizing his role in managing the affairs of the panchayat. He noted that women in the panchayat are typically disinterested in politics due to their low levels of education and domestic responsibilities. Consequently, Shanta's involvement in panchayat matters remains minimal, with her husband predominantly representing her.

Her husband, having closed his clothing business to focus on his role as the "sarpanch pati," actively campaigned for her, while she remained largely passive. Unlike another female ward panch, Bhanwari Bai, who exhibited confidence due to her association with a non-governmental organization, Shanta's demeanor during interactions is timid, highlighting her limited agency in the panchayat affairs.

Before Shanta Devi's tenure, the position of sarpanch was held within a single family for two decades. Her husband attributes this shift in power to his election campaign, which focused on clean and corruption-free politics. He clearly states that despite Shanta Devi's candidacy, the community is aware that it is her husband who is essentially running in the election. While Shanta attends training and meetings alongside her husband, he manages all financial matters, ensuring her dependency on him for effective panchayat management.

Despite attending gram sabhas, Shanta is reluctant to speak and displays a lack of confidence, with her husband taking charge of most responsibilities. The decision-making authority within the household also lies with her husband and in-laws, limiting Shanta to domestic duties.

Case Study 5: Vimla Devi, Luni Block of Jodhpur District

In Nandwan Gram Panchayat, situated in the Luni Block of Jodhpur, Vimla Devi serves as the Sarpanch. Residing with her husband, Rajesh, her two children and her in-laws. Vimla Devi contested on an OBC woman seat and won the elections in 2020. Since then, her husband and father-in-law manage most of the Panchayat affairs.

While Vimla Devi expresses genuine interest in village development, her involvement is limited primarily to attending gram sabhas. Decision-making within the household and the Panchayat is dominated by her father-in-law, who had contested for the sarpanch position in 2015 and remains highly influential. Vimla Devi's participation in Panchayat meetings is constrained, and she lacks awareness of critical matters such as the budget and works under MGNREGS.

Despite receiving training on GPDP alongside her husband, Vimla Devi's father-in-law remains the primary decision-maker, effectively acting as a proxy Sarpanch. Her interactions with male members within the Panchayat are hindered by her inability to speak confidently in front of them, limiting her effectiveness as a leader.

While Vimla Devi demonstrates potential in managing finances and facilitating women's support through Self Help Group meetings, her overall impact is constrained by her dependence on her male relatives. Vimla Devi acknowledges the benefits of being a woman Sarpanch, particularly in terms of support from other women and increased mobility. However, her ability to drive meaningful change remains limited.

5.14 Telangana

The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Telangana, as per the Telangana State Panchayati Raj Act, 2018 (Act No. 5 of 2018), are structured across three layers. This structure aims to ensure decentralized administration and governance, enabling more focused and localized development and governance at the village, block, and district levels. Here's a breakdown of the three layers. Grama Panchayat is the lowest level of the PRI structure, directly interacting with the rural population at the village level. Gram Panchayats are responsible for the execution and management of various development programs, maintenance of public utilities, and addressing the day-to-day issues and needs of the villagers.

Mandal Praja Parishad (MPP), Situated above the Gram Panchayat, the Mandal Praja Parishad functions at the block level. It coordinates the activities of the Gram Panchayats within its jurisdiction, facilitating the implementation of development projects and schemes. The Mandal Praja Parishads play a critical role in ensuring that the development efforts are harmonized across multiple villages, optimizing resource use and planning at a slightly larger scale than individual villages. Zilla Praja Parishad (ZPP), is the highest level in the PRI structure, operating at the district level. The Zilla Praja Parishad oversees and coordinates the activities of the Mandal Praja Parishads within its district, ensuring that district-level planning and implementation of programs are carried out effectively. It plays a pivotal role in aligning the development initiatives with state and national priorities, securing funding, and overseeing the overall welfare and development of the rural areas in the district.

Each layer in the PRI structure of Telangana is designed to cater to the specific administrative and development needs of its respective jurisdiction, ensuring a comprehensive approach to rural governance and development. The Act ensures that each level of the PRI has the authority, resources, and responsibility to address the specific needs of their communities, facilitating a bottom-up approach to governance and development planning.

The Gram Panchayat's responsibilities extend across various sectors including sanitation, street lighting, tree plantation, waste management, and community development. It is tasked with the creation and execution of developmental programs, maintenance of public infrastructure, and ensuring the welfare of the village community. The Act mandates the convening of Gram Sabha meetings, which must include discussions on development programs, financial reports, and addressing any grievances or suggestions from the village residents.

At least two of the six Gram Sabha meetings held annually must focus on women, senior citizens, and disadvantaged sections, ensuring their participation and addressing their concerns. The emphasis on conducting at least two Gram Sabhas with a focus on women indicates the state's commitment to addressing the specific needs and issues faced by women in rural areas. This approach ensures that women's voices are heard, and their concerns are addressed in the planning and implementation of local development projects.

Case study 1, Mrs. Lakshmi, Renga Reddy District, Telangana

Lakshmi, a 45-year-old graduate and married woman, represents a significant step toward inclusion and empowerment Gram Panchayat. Her journey into politics, spurred by family encouragement and a relative's influence, an elected member of Mandal Panchayat, highlights importance of reservation, gender dynamics, and political participation at the grassroots level. The seat, reserved for Scheduled Caste (SC) women, became Lakshmi's entry point into politics, aligning with efforts to enhance female political representation. Despite her family's political background providing inspiration, it was her husband's persuasion that ultimately led her to contest the election, indicating the influential role of familial dynamics in her political journey.

Lakshmi's case unfolds an understanding of reservation policies and women's political participation. While she acknowledges the significance of reservations in increasing female representation, her experience underlines the persistent barriers faced by women in politics, including family dominance, political system constraints, and administrative challenges. Although she is aware of various development schemes and the concept of Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP), her knowledge gaps in financial management and revenue sources reveal the limitations faced by women representatives in fully exercising their roles. The delegation of panchayat-related duties to male family members further highlights the gendered division of political labor.

Mrs. Lakshmi, through her role in the Gram Panchayat, has aimed to contribute to economic development and planning, despite facing several challenges. Her involvement in discussions related to the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) and various development schemes signifies an attempt to understand and partake in economic planning. However, her limited knowledge in financial management and the panchayat's revenue sources underline the need for enhanced capacity in economic governance. Lakshmi demonstrates a basic understanding of governance structures, including the significance of the Gram Sabha in democratic decision-making. Her engagement, however, is somewhat constrained by the traditional gender roles within her community and the dominance of male relatives in political and administrative duties, limiting her direct participation and visibility in these critical forums.

The challenges Lakshmi faces are multifaceted, including family dominance in political activities, systemic constraints within the political and administrative setup, and her own gaps in knowledge related to governance and financial management. These challenges are compounded by the gendered division of political labor, which often sees women representatives relegated to symbolic roles.

Lakshmi's interactions with Self Help Groups (SHGs) highlight the potential of support networks and mentorship in empowering women in politics. These groups offer a platform for collective action and shared learning, providing Lakshmi with insights into community needs and strategies for addressing women's issues. However, the case study suggests a need for more

structured mentorship programs to help women representatives navigate the complexities of governance. The balancing act between political responsibilities and personal life is a significant challenge for Lakshmi. The expectation to manage household duties alongside political work, compounded by the lack of substantive support in her administrative responsibilities, underscores the broader issue of work-life balance faced by women in politics.

While not explicitly detailed, the systemic challenges and family dominance encountered by Lakshmi hint at underlying gender-based discrimination and biases. These experiences reflect the broader societal and institutional barriers that limit women's effective participation in political life. Despite the hurdles, Lakshmi's role has had a positive impact on her constituents, particularly in raising awareness about the importance of women's participation in governance. Her ability to bring attention to issues affecting women and children, albeit within the constraints she faces, marks a step forward in representing marginalized voices in the development discourse.

The case clearly identifies the need for intensive training and capacity development for women representatives. Enhancing Lakshmi's understanding of financial management, governance processes, and effective leadership skills could significantly improve her ability to contribute to economic planning and development initiatives. Lakshmi's journey underscores the critical need for systemic change to empower women in politics genuinely. Her future aspirations likely include breaking free from the symbolic nature of her role to become a more active and effective leader. Recommendations for improving women's representation include institutional reforms to support women's leadership, targeted capacity-building programs, and initiatives to challenge and change the gender norms that hinder women's full participation in political life.

Lakshmi's story is a poignant reminder of the challenges that women face in the political arena, but also of the potential for change that lies within their collective action and empowerment. Lakshmi's narrative brings to light the critical issues at the intersection of gender, politics, and rural governance. Despite her awareness of local issues and the challenges women face both in public and private spheres, her capacity for action remains limited due to inadequate training and reliance on male family members for administrative tasks. Her experiences reflect a broader pattern of women's marginalization in politics, despite formal structures of inclusion. However, her belief in the collective power of women, as demonstrated through her interactions with Self Help Groups (SHG), points towards potential pathways for empowerment and more effective political participation. The need for intensive training and support for women representatives like Lakshmi is evident, highlighting the importance of capacity building in achieving true empowerment and representation.

Lakshmi's journey is marked by a blend of resilience and restricted autonomy. She once remarked, "While the seat of power may be reserved for us, the key to its effectiveness lies beyond reach, often in the hands of those we are expected to represent." This statement captures the paradox of her position – elected to serve and represent, yet constrained by the very structures meant to empower her. Her experience emphasises the necessity of systemic change,

starting from the grassroots, to ensure that women in politics are not just figureheads but effective agents of change.

Case 2, Nagamani, Ranga Reddy District, Telangana

Ms.Nagamani's ascent to the position of Gram Panchayat president embodies the intersection of gender, education, and political representation within the unique context of Telangana's Thandas. With no formal education and her roots deeply entrenched in agricultural labor, Lakshmi's ascent into political leadership challenges the conventions surrounding women's roles in rural governance. Nagamani's election as the president of a Gram Panchayat in Thanda, a tribal settlement, brings to the fore the intricate dynamics of tribal identity, gender, and political representation. Despite the significant hurdle of lacking formal education, Nagamani's leadership illuminates the essential role of reservation policies in opening avenues for women's participation in politics. Yet, her experience reveals the complexities and challenges that accompany these policies.

Nagamani's tenure as president has been emblematic of the myriad challenges that confront women in rural political arenas. Her leadership journey is fraught with the challenges of engaging in governance without formal education. Her path has been obstructed by entrenched gender norms that limit women's authority and influence in political roles. The dominance of patriarchal decision-making within her family and the wider community starkly illustrates the barriers to autonomous leadership for women. While intended to facilitate women's participation in politics, reservation policies, according to Nagamani, have inadvertently reinforced gender stereotypes and confined women's political engagement to reserved seats, undermining their broader political agency.

Nagamani, despite her lack of formal education, has played a crucial role in the economic development and planning process of Thanda. Her leadership has been pivotal in advocating for projects that benefit the community, especially in agriculture and water conservation, demonstrating an intuitive understanding of her constituency's needs. However, her capacity to contribute effectively is hindered by gaps in her understanding of financial and development planning processes.

Nagamani's engagement in governance and platforms like the Gram Sabha is marked by her earnest effort to represent her community's voice. Yet, her participation is often challenged by the deeply ingrained gender norms and the overarching patriarchal decision-making structures within her community, limiting her ability to exert influence fully.

The primary challenges Nagamani faces include political space without formal education, confronting and overcoming gender norms that restrict women's roles in leadership, and dealing with patriarchal decision-making processes. Moreover, reservation policies, while

beneficial in enabling her political entry, have also pigeonholed her engagement within the political sphere, often undermining her broader agency functions.

Nagamani's journey has been supported by informal networks of women within the community, including members of women's groups and SHGs. These networks have provided her with a platform for sharing experiences, gaining insights, and drawing strength. However, the lack of formal mentorship programs for women in politics has been a gap in her journey towards effective leadership. Balancing her political responsibilities with personal life has been a significant challenge for Nagamani, reflecting the struggle of women in leadership. The demands of her political role often clash with familial expectations and responsibilities, illustrating the need for a support system that acknowledges and addresses the unique challenges faced by women in politics.

Nagamani's tenure is rife with instances of gender-based discrimination and biases, both subtle and overt. These experiences highlight the systemic barriers that limit women's effectiveness in political roles, highlighting the pervasive influence of patriarchal norms on women's autonomy and authority in governance. Despite these hurdles, Nagamani's achievements include raising awareness about the importance of women's roles in governance and advocating for the needs of her community, particularly in areas affecting women and children. Her leadership has brought attention to critical social issues, albeit within the constraints she faces.

Nagamani aspires to see a future where women's representation in politics is not just symbolic but is characterized by active and effective participation. She advocates for systemic changes to support women in politics, including the introduction of formal mentorship programs, capacity-building initiatives, and a shift in societal attitudes towards women in leadership roles. These steps are crucial for empowering women like Nagamani to steer the difficulties of governance and make a lasting impact on their communities.

Reflecting on her experiences, Nagamani said, "In this journey, every hurdle, every barrier, taught me something profound—not just about politics, but about life itself. It's not the absence of obstacles but how we choose to overcome them that defines our path." This insight captures the essence of her resilience and determination to redefine the role of women in rural politics, serving as an inspiration for many to follow.

5.15 Tripura

Tripura, located in the northeastern region of India, has undergone significant changes in its administrative status since India's independence. Initially recognized as a 'C' category state on November 26, 1950, it attained Union Territory status on November 1, 1956. However, Tripura gained full statehood on January 21, 1971, following the enactment of the North East Reorganisation Act 1971. The state capital is Agartala, and it is geographically landlocked.

Despite being one of the smallest states in India after Goa and Sikkim, Tripura covers an area of 10,492 square kilometres. According to the 2011 census, its population stands at 3.67

million, with a population density of 350 persons per square kilometre. The hilly terrain poses challenges to road connectivity both within the state and with the rest of India, contributing to developmental backwardness.

Tripura is characterized by its diverse ethnic composition, including Bengali, Muslim, and various tribal communities. There are 19 distinct tribal ethnic groups and subgroups in the state, each with its own languages and cultural practices, contributing to the rich cultural tapestry of Tripura.

Tripura, once a princely state, had a significant tribal population and a traditional governance system consisting of village sardars (local chieftains) and traditional panchayats. These institutions were rooted in the social customs and cultures of the diverse tribal communities, providing solutions to community-level disputes.

Following Tripura's accession to the Indian Union in 1949, the traditional system seamlessly transitioned into the modern Panchayat system. The Tripura administration opted to adopt, with modifications, the United Provinces Panchayat Raj Act 1947. This act was later replaced by the Tripura Panchayat Act 1983.

The evolution of the Panchayat system in Tripura has seen several key developments. Initially, the Tripura Panchayat Raj Rules were framed in 1961, introducing a single-tier Panchayat Raj system known as the Goan Sabha. The executive body of the Goan Sabha, known as the Goan Panchayat, was empowered with the local self-government's powers starting from October 2, 1967. Additionally, Nyaya Panchayats were established under this Act to handle judicial functions.

In 1983, the Tripura Panchayat Act brought significant changes, abolishing the Nyaya Panchayats and replacing the Goan Sabha with the Goan Panchayat. This Act also introduced reservations for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Goan Panchayats in proportion to their population.

Elections for the members of the Goan Panchayat were initially conducted through open voting by raising hands. However, reforms were introduced in 1978 to ensure free and fair elections under adult franchise, conducted through secret ballots and allowing the participation of political parties. In the same year, Pradhans (heads) of the Gram Panchayats were elected directly.

According to the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution of India in 1992, the Tripura Panchayat Act, 1993 was enacted to decentralize power at the village level. In 1994, seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were reserved proportionately as per the provision of the Tripura Panchayat Acts, 1993. The first General Elections of the Panchayats took place in 1994, and subsequent elections were held in 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019.

The state has implemented one-third reservation for women in general/SC/ST categories for both membership and offices of Chairperson in all three tiers of Panchayats. In 2004, the Act was amended to introduce a provision for the removal of any male member of a Panchayat if they use abusive or derogatory language towards female members or behave disrespectfully towards women in any meeting or public place.

Since 2014, 50 per cent of women's representative seats have been elected in all three tiers of the Panchayati Raj system, as well as Tripura Tribal Areas District Council (TTAADC) Village Committees. Tripura serves as an example of people's participation in PRI systems, leading to significant socio-economic changes in the state due to the effective functioning of the three-tier Panchayati Raj comprising Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti, and Zilla Parishad.

Two-thirds of the area of Tripura falls under the Sixth Schedule Areas of the Constitution, where village committees have been constituted, and elections are held. The term of the Village Committee is three years.

To understand the current status of the Women Elected Representatives of Tripura we visited two Gram Panchayats Debabari and Laxmipur under Amarpur and BC Nagar block which comes under Gomati and South Tripura district.

Case Study 1: Suradhani Munda, Lakshmipur Gram Panchayat, South Tripura district.

Suradhani Munda, a member of the Munda tribe, serves as the Panchayat President of Lakshmipur Gram Panchayat. Her journey reflects resilience and a commitment to fostering positive change within her community. Suradhani's involvement in Self-Help Groups facilitated connections with her community, while her active role in the panchayat garnered support from key stakeholders, including the secretary, vice president, Block Development Officer (BDO), and Panchayat Samiti.

Despite facing numerous challenges, including limited participation in the development and planning processes, Suradhani's entry into politics was enabled by opportunities provided through ST reservation. Her longstanding membership in a political party underscores her dedication to community service and advocacy. While Suradhani's tenure as Panchayat President may be marked by distance from official duties, her leadership and advocacy continue to inspire positive change within her community.

For forty-eight years, Suradhani's journey has been a testament to resilience and determination, starting with her marriage at the tender age of 13 amidst her family's financial struggles that deprived her of formal education. Despite these formidable challenges, she has emerged as a prominent leader within her community, demonstrating resilience and determination.

A striking aspect of Suradhani's community is the gendered division of labour, where male family members remain idle at home while women bear the burden of household responsibilities and income generation. This entrenched tradition has persisted for generations. However, as a community leader, Suradhani is spearheading efforts to challenge these norms and bring about meaningful change. She is actively encouraging her son to seek employment and contribute to the family's financial well-being, disrupting the pattern of male idleness. Additionally, she has advocated for the empowerment of her daughter by ensuring that she was married only after reaching the age of 18, thereby prioritizing her education and personal development.

Suradhani's perception of women's participation in politics is rooted in breaking barriers and empowering her community, particularly women, against entrenched practices like child marriage. Drawing from her own experiences, she advocates for gender equality in education and employment, striving to create a more inclusive and equitable society.

Despite her remarkable leadership and advocacy, Suradhani appears to be unaware of the specific activities and contributions of the Lakshmipur Gram Panchayat towards its designation as the first Water Sufficiency Village in Tripura. This underscores the disconnect between her role as Panchayat President and her engagement with administrative functions, highlighting the need for greater awareness and involvement in local governance initiatives.

Nevertheless, Suradhani's journey exemplifies resilience and determination in the face of adversity. Despite her struggles, she remains committed to transforming her community and envisioning a future where education, employment, and gender equality thrive. Her aspirations reflect a deep-seated desire for positive change and progress, inspiring others to join her in the pursuit of a better tomorrow.

5.16 Uttar Pradesh

With the attainment of independence, the state government of Uttar Pradesh enacted the Uttar Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act of 1947. This act provided for the election of the Panchayat president and expanded the powers and functions of these institutions. Under the 1947 act, three bodies were created: the Gram Sabha, the Gram Panchayat, and the Panchayat Adalat (to settle disputes).

In addition to the village panchayats, the Kshetra Samitis and Zilla Parishads were constituted under the Kshetra Samiti and Zilla Parishad Adhiniyam of 1961. Uttar Pradesh did not enact a new Panchayati Raj legislation in conformity with the 73rd Constitution Amendment. Instead, it amended the two existing acts, namely the United Provinces Panchayati Raj Act, 1947, and the Uttar Pradesh Kshetra Panchayat and Zilla Panchayat Adhiniyam 1961, incorporating provisions to conform to the 73rd constitutional amendment. These amended acts came into force on 22nd April 1994.

Until 1983, Uttar Pradesh had Nyaya Panchayats. The state finance commission was constituted on 23rd April 1994. In accordance with Article 243D in the state Panchayati Raj Acts, reservation has been given for women of not less than one-third of the total seats and offices, as mandated by the Constitution. This reservation is applicable for each term of 5 years. Furthermore, the one-third reservation for women was increased to 50 per cent.

Among the states of India, Uttar Pradesh (UP) has the largest Scheduled Caste population, although its literacy rate remains relatively low. According to Census 2011, Uttar Pradesh has a population of 19.98 Crores, with 10.44 Crores males and 9.53 Crores females. This population constitutes 16.50 percent of India's total population in 2011. The sex ratio in Uttar Pradesh is 912 females for every 1000 males, falling below the national average of 940. Despite this, the literacy rate in Uttar Pradesh has shown an upward trend, currently standing at 67.68 per cent. The male literacy rate is higher at 77.28 per cent compared to the female literacy rate of 57.18 per cent.

Case Study 1: Rajeshweri Gupta, Puranderpur Gram Panchayat, Sevapuri Block,, Varanasi District

Rajeshweri Gupta, a 42-year-old married woman with a Master of Arts in History and a mother of one daughter, currently serves as the Pradhan in Puranderpur Gram Panchayat, located in the Sevapuri Block of Varanasi District. Coming from an Above Poverty Line (APL) background, Rajeshweri's journey into local governance began with her successful election to a reserved seat in the 2021 elections.

Motivated by her dedication to uplift marginalized segments of society, particularly widows and homeless families, Rajeshweri drew inspiration from her previous role as a member of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) established under the Uttar Pradesh State Rural Livelihoods Mission

(UPSRLM) in 2018. Through her involvement with these groups, Rajeshweri gained a deep understanding of the community's needs and identified the existing disparities between the community and the panchayat. Importantly, she actively advocated for the healthcare development of the Gram Panchayat (GP) and organized Ayushman Bharat Camps (Health Card) at the ward level within her GP.

Rajeshweri's experience highlights the crucial role that family support, particularly from her husband, plays in facilitating her navigation of responsibilities as the Pradhan of Puranderpur Gram Panchayat. Drawing on her husband's expertise as a former Pradhan in the preceding two terms and his current position as a Ward Member, she benefits from his guidance and assistance, which aids her in overcoming the challenges stemming from her relatively limited prior involvement in politics and development initiatives.

Her inclination towards seeking counsel from family members, notably her husband, reflects her initial hesitance and, perhaps, a lack of confidence in making independent decisions for the community. Nonetheless, Rajeshweri also acknowledges the significance of reservation policies in affording women like her the opportunity to contest elections and contribute to local governance. This recognition indicates her awareness of the broader societal transformations catalyzed by gender quotas, fostering the empowerment of women in traditionally maledominated spheres of governance.

For her reservation is a positive mechanism for augmenting women's representation in local government, providing them with a platform to contribute to the community's welfare. Previously, women were often confined to household chores or participation in community-based organizations (CBOs) like self-help groups (SHGs), with limited consideration given to contesting elections for leadership positions such as Pradhan or Ward Members, which were perceived as male-dominated. However, the introduction of reservation policies has precipitated a shift in attitudes, with Rajeshweri's family members offering support and assistance in her new role as Pradhan. This has empowered her to assume a position she had never envisioned for herself.

Rajeshweri elaborated on the social norms in her area, where women traditionally had limited freedom to venture beyond their households except for specific occasions like marriage or festival shopping. However, with the establishment of SHGs under UPSRLM, women gained opportunities to participate in meetings, albeit with limited interaction with the community. Consequently, during decision-making processes related to finance, social issues, or politics, women in her Gram Panchayat often sought support from male family members, including her father-in-law, husband, or even her son. Additionally, given the familial ties among residents in her Gram Panchayat and her position as the youngest member in meetings, Rajeshweri felt hesitant to speak out of respect for others. As a result of these significant factors, Rajeshweri often turned to her husband for assistance when making decisions as Pradhan. Despite this, her engagement with women collectives has fostered a sense of empowerment among women, leading more of them to seek her guidance and indicating a growing interest in participating in

planning and decision-making processes. However, the ongoing dearth of female representation in leadership roles remains a challenge, as it causes women to hesitate in voicing their concerns in public forums such as Gram Sabhas or meetings.

In her approach to preparing the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP), Rajeshweri admitted to having limited knowledge, primarily acquired through training conducted by the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD). While she acknowledges her dependence on her husband for assistance in this matter, she also relies on her panchayat secretary to gain a basic understanding of central and state-sponsored schemes. This knowledge enables her to assist beneficiaries in accessing benefits effectively. Throughout her tenure, Rajeshweri prioritized community engagement by organizing two Gram Sabhas annually. As a result, she observed a consistent increase in women's participation in these meetings, indicating the positive impact of having a female Pradhan.

Rajeshweri shared her experience with the three-day residential capacity-building training organized by the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD) after being elected Pradhan. She found the sessions overly technical and challenging for participants, especially for those attending for the first time. Consequently, many participants, including herself, relied on the assistance of one or two family members to comprehend the terminologies and processes discussed during the training. To address these challenges, Rajeshweri emphasized the need for training sessions to incorporate proper Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials and video documentation illustrating best practices. These materials would facilitate better understanding and visualization of processes for all participants.

Furthermore, she suggested that the training curriculum should cover essential topics such as leadership, components of the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP), utilization and channelization of funds, and knowledge on Central and State-sponsored schemes, including the utilization of funds from the 15th Finance Commission.

Rajeshweri proposed dividing these training sessions into three to four parts per year, with each session lasting no more than a day. Additionally, she recommended organizing separate training sessions for Women Elected Representatives (WER). This approach, she believed, would provide better support and guidance to participants attending such training for the first time, ensuring effective capacity-building within the local governance framework.

Case Study 2: Mansha Devi, Dilman Devariya Gram Panchayat, Nagarcity Block, Mirzapur District

Mansha Devi, a 43-year-old married woman, currently serves as the Pradhan in Dilman Devariya Gram Panchayat, Nagarcity Block, situated in Mirzapur District. Her journey into local governance began with her successful election to a reserved seat in the 2021 elections. Her foray into this role was influenced by her prior involvement with Self-Help Groups (SHGs) under the Uttar Pradesh State Rural Livelihoods Mission (UPSRLM) since 2018,

which provided her with a deep understanding of the community's needs and the existing disparities between the community and the panchayat.

Her family, particularly her husband, plays a crucial role in supporting her to navigate her responsibilities as Pradhan. Leveraging her husband's experience as a former Pradhan and current Ward Member, she benefits from his guidance, despite her limited prior involvement in politics and development activities. While her reliance on consultation with family members may reflect initial hesitancy and a lack of confidence in making independent decisions, she also acknowledges the importance of reservation policies in providing women like her with the opportunity to contribute to local governance.

Viewing reservation as a positive mechanism for enhancing women's representation, Mansha Devi notes a shift in attitudes toward women's participation in leadership positions. Despite societal norms that previously limited women's involvement to household chores, the introduction of reservation policies has encouraged women to contest elections and participate in decision-making processes. Mansha Devi's involvement with women collectives has further encouraged women's participation in planning and decision-making processes.

In her approach to the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP), Mansha Devi relies on her husband and the panchayat secretary for assistance due to her limited knowledge gained from training. She prioritizes community engagement by organizing regular gram sabhas, witnessing a rise in women's participation, and highlighting the positive impact of having a female Pradhan. Mansha Devi emphasizes the need for more accessible and practical training sessions for elected representatives, suggesting topics and formats that would enhance their capacity within the local governance framework.

Questionnaire Shared with States for Inputs and Feedback

List of Potential Questions for Interaction with Women Sarpanches during States' Visits by the Advisory Committee Members for the purpose of seeking insights and actions to be taken to prohibit proxy women's participation in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).

- 1. What is the greatest problem you face from Government Officials, male family members and relatives while discharging your Panchayat-related functions?
- 2. What suggestions would you like to offer to the Government for the smooth functioning of your duties and independent functioning of your post?
- 3. Do you seek support from the Legal Department of your State in discharging your duties? Further, will such legal advice/support bring improvement in your way of functioning?
- 4. Do you feel that the five best Gram Panchayats led by Women Sarpanches be awarded by the Central Government as it may enhance their confidence and performance?
- 5. Do you feel that there has to be a provision of penalty for any male member of your family/relative if he performs the duty of Sarpanch on your behalf?
- 6. Do you feel that the Panchayat members should get TA/DA for attending the meetings of Panchayats?
- 7. Do you feel that there should be an Association of Sarpanches at District Level, State Level and National Level.?

And such Associations:-

- · should hold their meeting quarterly.
- furnish their suggestions to the Government.
- · take a view on cases of Sarpanch Pati so that they may be debarred.
- should not affiliated to any political party.
- should not have any political characters.
- have to be truly registered and self-governance Association of Sarpanches

Detailed Report of Madhya Pradesh Workshop

पंचायत राज संचालनालय, मध्यप्रदेश

भू-तल, विकास भवन, पुरानी जेल के सामने, अरेरा हिल्स, भोपाल
Telephon No.0755-2557727,Fax No.0755-2552899, E-mail adress: dirpanchayat@mp.gov.m
क्रमांक/पं.रा./एफ-1- /2024-25/ ↓ 462______ भोपाल, दिनांक ७५.↓▶.2024
प्रति.

संयुक्त सचिव, भारत सरकार, पंचायती राज मंत्रालय 11वीं मंजिल जीवन प्रकाशबिल्डिंग 25 के.जी. मार्ग, नई दिल्ली।

विषय :- Proposed State's visit by the advisory committee members
Constituted to examine the Proxy Women's participation in
PRis.

संदर्भ :- संयुक्त सचिव, पंचायती राज मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार का पत्र क्रमांक डी0ओ0 एन-11014/4/2023-PESA दिनांक 30 जुलाई 2024

विषयान्तर्गत संदर्भित अर्द्ध0शा0 पत्र का अवलोकन करें, ं 03 अक्टूबर 2024 को आयोजित सेमिनार का कार्यवाही विवरण आवश्यक कार्यवाही हेतु संलग्न प्रेषित है।

संलग्न :- उपरोक्तानुसार

(मनोज पुष्प) संचालक सह-आयुक्त पंचायत राज संचालनाजय, म0प्र0

Minutes of Seminar on Proxy Women Participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions

Venue: RCVP Noronha Academy of Administration

Date: 3rd October 2024

Background: The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has constituted an Advisory Committee on 19.09.2023 in pursuance of the order dated 06.07.2023 of the Honorable Supreme Court of India to examine the issue of women sarpanches being represented by male members of their family and to examine other related issues to ensure that women's reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) is meaningful and not tokenistic. The committee consists of 10 members and is chaired by Shri. Sushil Kumar, Secretary to the Government of India (Retired).

As per the decision of the advisory committee to engage with elected representatives from across the country for wider consultations on challenges faced by the women elected representatives (EWRs), and their insights on possible solutions. Madhya Pradesh was shortlisted for the consultation and a two-day workshop was planned in the state on 3rd and 4th of October, 2024. The committee members held consultations with the EWRs, department officials, Mahatma Gandhi State Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (MGSIRD), other training institutes, UNFPA, academia, and representatives from non-government organizations on 3rd of October and visited Phandakala GP, in Phanda Block in Bhopal on 4th of October 2024.

The minutes of the deliberations held with the stakeholders on the topic mentioned above are as following:

I. Inaugural Session:

- a. The consultations started with Dr. Sudhir Jain, Deputy Director, Directorate of Panchayat Raj (DoPR), Bhopal welcoming the participants and dignitaries to the event and emphasized on the importance of the day's deliberations on shaping the policies around eliminating proxy leadership across the country.
- b. Keynote Address: Ms. Mamta Verma, Joint Secretary cum Member Convenor of the Advisory Committee explained that the committee was constituted with the aim of providing recommendations to ensure meaningful opportunities to women so that they can claim their rightful positions and perform their duties as provisioned in the constitution and related state legislations. While the advisory committee has 7 tasks listed in the terms of reference, one of the major tasks is examine the training and capacity building framework for EWRs with regard to periodicity, methodology and implementation plan of the trainings. While the EWRs in Panchayats have fought one of the toughest election to join the public office, and had set an example for the women to follow, it is essential that the state and national governments take measures to create a better environment for all women elected representatives to perform their roles meaningfully.

- c. Mr. Manoj Pushp, Director, Panchayat Raj, M.P.: Director emphasized on the need to focus on quality of capacity building interventions in the state and the action each of the departments and administrations and different levels shall take to eliminate proxy leadership. The silver lining for Madhya Pradesh is the momentum created by the Madhya Pradesh State Rural Livelihood Mission (MPSRLM) in creating organic leadership amongst women in rural areas. While MP has seen an increase in women from Self-help groups (SHGs) being elected to panchayats, there is a need for social and behavioral change amongst the larger community to be prepared for more women in public offices. He exhorted the participants to contribute to the discussions by speaking openly about the challenges they face and give their suggestions as well.
- d. Mr. Ramit Maurya, Director, Ministry of Panchayati Raj: Mr. Ramit Maurya, Director, MoPR addressed the gathering and informed the participants that the open platform was created so that the participants shall speak up about the challenges and provide inputs to the Advisory Committee in shaping their recommendations. He informed the gathering that the committee is simultaneously engaging with different stakeholders like Rajya Mahila Aayog, SIRDs etc also to get their insights on the possible solutions for the issue. He requested the participants to ensure that each one of them gave their feedback on the questionnaires shared at the time of registration.
- e. V K Bhasin, Member, Advisory Committee: Mr. V K Bhasin asked the participants to speak freely without fear and ensured that they won't be quoted in the reports with names. He asked them to share the lived experiences of themselves and their counterparts to inform the policy recommendations of the committee.
- f. Anita Brandon, Member, Advisory Committee: Ms. Brandon elaborated on how patriarchy has impeded all the efforts taken since the 73rd amendment to promote women's participation in decision making spaces including as EWRs. She spoke briefly about how the language used also propagates gender disparity for e.g. we have gendered designations like Rashtrapati and Sabhapati; while many women are holding public positions, designations are still not tailored to include them. She informed the participants that India has the highest number of EWRs in the world, but steps need to be taken to translate the numbers into actual meaningful participation in decision making. It is essential that India get rid of 'sarpanchpati' from our vocabulary and practice. She requested all participants to participate in the discussions.
- g. Ms. Jayashree Mohanta, Member, Advisory Committee: Ms. Mohanta spoke briefly about the revolutionary step of ensuring women in public office through electoral reservation in PRIs. While the Rural Livelihood Mission has proven that

women's economic, social and political empowerment is possible, it is essential that more focused interventions are planned to develop the women's political leadership.

II. Open Discussions:

Post the inaugural session, the committee members facilitated an open and interactive discussion with all participants to elicit their responses on the three major areas specified in the programme agenda. The major points emerging from the discussion are as following:

Sl. No.	Challenges	Solutions/Interventions Suggested by participants
1.	Male members perform the duties instead of the EWRs in most places. Women panches don't participate in the meetings as meetings are chaired by 'Sarpanchpati'	Administrations at all levels should engage with EWRs and not with their proxies. While it is acceptable for women to seek support of their trusted family members, the family members shouldn't step into offices. Women need to be provided adequate trainings to take up the role of people's representatives more effectively through their confidence building, skill upgration etc.
		Active EWRs at state, district, block, and other panchayats should act as models or influencers promoting others to step up by instilling confidence in them.
2.	Ghunghat pratha also restricts women from openly participating in the public programmes like gram sabha and other meetings within or outside panchayats. Misogyny, alcoholism of ground staff also restricts women's participation.	Social and behavioral change interventions at community level are required to address these cultural practices. Many state PR acts have provisions for Panchayats to ban sale of alcohol within it geographic jurisdiction through a gram sabha resolution with 1/3 rd majority.
	Safety of women in public places.	Gender sensitivity trainings of all government staff and other ERs to make the workplaces more inclusive and safer. Activate SHGs and PRI-VO convergence in the panchayats to promote meaningful

· .		participation of women in gram/mahila sabhas and thereby build a support system for EWRs.
		Network/Association of EWRs to develop an enabling ecosystem and for real-time support from peers.
		Government to put in place mechanisms and systems for safety of women in public places. (preventive and responsive).
3.	Social norms, patriarchy, caste-based discrimination etc also impedes active women's participation in public offices. Lack of sharing of responsibilities at household level puts undue pressure on EWRs to multitask.	Social and behavioral change interventions at community level are required to address these issues. Education to shift perceptions on gendered roles is required; sensitize the young right from school and the adults through community level programmes. Continuous persuasion and interaction with EWRs to motivate and support them to participate. (support groups – network of EWRs, NGOs/CSOs, and SHGs). Collectivization of women/SHGs to prevent proxy interference.
		Sarpanch, ASHA, ANM, Anganwadi Worker etc jointly visit EWRs at their homes and sensitize family members, motivate EWRs to participate.
4.	Lack of education/illiteracy also limits EWRs' active and informed participation in governance and administrative processes. Lack of trust on other government staff like Gram Sevak or gram Rozgar sahayak resulting in reliance on husbands or male family members for support and	While some of the participants insisted on having a basic education criteria like 8th or 12th pass for contesting panchayat elections, some didn't agree with the proposed suggestion. They suggested that EWRs be provided with functional literacy, digital literacy programmes to equip them with necessary skills to perform their roles. Adult education shall be sufficient to equip the EWRs with necessary skills.
	advice. Lack of confidence in performing duties due to lack of trainings,	EWRs should be trained to read and respond to government documents/letters.

		Orientation on all schemes and programmes through regular training programmes.
		Training programmes to focus on soft skills, communication, mobilization, conflict resolution in addition to the regular induction, orientation trainings.
		ERs/EWRs took up interventions to promote EWRs participation in decision making processes by facilitating meetings for collection and implementation of demands from their electoral constituency. This led to increased trust and consequently participation in governance processes.
		Educate EWRs on the legal and institutional support systems (training centers, legal aid centers, government programmes etc) in place to support them.
5.	Issues related to mobility, lack of safety in public places, lack of access to mobile phones and digital literacy increase reliance on male family members.	Mobility support for EWRs should be explored; training EWRs to drive vehicles, getting driving licenses, provision of reimbursements/payment of fuel bills may be explored.
		Provision of phones under CUG facilities may be explored.
		Phones personally used by EWRs to be registered on e-gramswaraj and panchayat darpan portals.
		Training/orientation of EWRs to use government portals.
		Increased honorarium and travel support/TA for EWRs.
6.	Lack of motivation or encouragement to participate	Incentivize better performing EWRs in annual functions at district/block level.
		Felicitate them in public platforms; publish their work and impact in local media (print, electronic, and social media)

and Pro		aign for removing Gender Discrimination PRIs And Capacity-building Training of
1.	Lack of access to updated information on government programmes.	Regular meetings with line departments to collect information regarding programmes and schemes.
	Reliance on gram sevak/gram Rozgar sahayak for information/government	On the job training of EWRs through revised training methodologies.
	notifications.	Formation of network of EWRs to promote information sharing and collective learning from peers on practical issues, conflict resolution.
		Adult literacy campaigns across state to help EWRs.
		Official Documents/portals should be available in local language also.
2.	Government officers in some places are also more comfortable speaking to male family members or male	Gender sensitivity trainings of all government staff from gram panchayat to state level.
	ERs than to EWRs.	Stringent action against government officers engaging with proxies.
3.	The processes in government are often quite complex making it difficult for EWRs to take informed decisions.	Simplify processes and communicate them in simple, easy to understand formats (print and AV) for the EWRs.
		Reduce delay in processes.
		Information materials regarding every process, programmes to be made accessible to EWRs. Every department responsible for training the EWRs on their programmes and schemes; involve them in the programme planning at GP level.
4.	Lack of participation of EWRs in training programmes.	As many women are holding positions for the first time, they require time to learn the skills and collect information on the roles expected of them and hence trainings should be more regular; organized closer to their places.

		(martistic and a second of the second
		Training content and methodology to be revised to match the local requirements
		(dialect, practical information requirements).
		Trainers should be sensitive, content to be
		more practical with focus on communication,
		mobilization, soft skills, departmental programmes in addition to core content
		related to PRIs.
:		Trainings to be activity based and not in lecture mode.
	·	Do not let proxies attend training on behalf of EWRs.
		Facilities in training centers (clean bathrooms, and residential quarters).
		Creche services at gram panchayat level or
:		care facilities at training centre level to enable
		women to participate in the trainings without distraction/stress about childcare.
5.	Lack of access to information	Regular meetings with department officials in
	regarding programmes, schemes,	which information on programmes and
	rules and laws related to PRIs,	schemes are shared. Use the platform to share
	programmes.	their concerns of doubts regarding the
	Lack of confidence to interact with	programme.
	government officials	Soft skills training.
	government officials	Gender sensitization of government officials
		to be more enabling.
6.	Social norms, patriarchal mindset	Community sensitization programmes
	impeding women's participation.	through women's collectives, MPSRLM.
	Tokenistic participation in reserved	State wide campaigns through traditional and
	seats due to social	new media to make society more sensitive
	norms/patriarchy.	and aware.
		TT . G
		Use influencer messaging, documentaries,
		television programmes to motivate women leaders.
		Improve civics education content in schools to ensure everyone is trained on the basics of
		local governance and its importance.
		1

		Exposure visit for EWRs to provide them with opportunities to interact with inspiring leaders and learn from successful governance model across India.
		Create citizen advocacy programmes to promote women's participation.
		Non – Government organizations working closely with EWRs to build their capacities have a major role to play. Collaboration with non-government organizations to sensitize community and women to motivate them to contest elections.
		Pre-election voter education/awareness of women to make them effective EWRs. Pledge on eliminating proxy leadership at the time of nomination and while taking oath.
SSIO Us	N 3: Legal Measures for removing	interference of Male relatives of EWRs in
1	Gender based discrimination and violence in workplaces.	Awareness regarding POSH and institutional mechanisms for grievance redressal and ways
		to approach them.
2	Misuse of powers by Proxies	Stringent action against perpetrators. Stringent action against proxies. Show Cause Notice in the first instance of violation followed by strict punitive action against the proxy.
2	Misuse of powers by Proxies	Stringent action against perpetrators. Stringent action against proxies. Show Cause Notice in the first instance of violation followed by strict punitive action against the
2	Misuse of powers by Proxies	Stringent action against perpetrators. Stringent action against proxies. Show Cause Notice in the first instance of violation followed by strict punitive action against the proxy. EWRs not to be punished for the actions of

Tamil Nadu Bill to provide for reservation of
seats for women for two consecutive terms)

III. Recommendations/Suggestions from Committee members to the participants:

- Every WER's mobile phone numbers should be registered in portals.
- Public hearing on every Thursday in villages to address women and children's issues to build trust amongst communities on GPs.
- Display Notice board with information of related officers (contact numbers of health, education, bank linkage nodals).
- Monthly meeting with women in villages. (Mahila Sabha)
- Revolving funds for women's development/land rights for women
- State Panchayati Raj Department to educate all WER.
- · Bureaucracy to interact with ERs more regularly.
- Additional allowances for women to manage care giving roles.
- Penalty for officers engaging with proxy.
- Consecutive reservation of seats reserved for women.
- IV. Vote of thanks: Mr. K.B Malviya, Director SIRD and Dr. Sudhir Jain, Deputy Director delivered vote of thanks.

Detailed Report of Tripura Workshop



Proceedings of

Consultative Seminar

On Proxy Representation of Women Elected Representatives in PRIs

Date: 11-12 Nov, 2024



Women Friendly Village

Ministry of Panchayati Raj , Government of India & RD (Panchayat) Department, Government of Tripura



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In collaboration with

- Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India
- RD (Panchayat) Department, Government of Tripura

In support of

Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, Government of India

Participating states & stakeholders

- Tripura
- Manipur
- Mizoram
- Meghalaya
- Sikkim
- Nagaland
- YASHADA, Pune
- NLU, Tripura
- Women Commission
- SIPARD
- TRLM & SHG members from TRLM



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Proceedings

Proceedings of the seminar on Proxy Representation of Women Elected Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions

02 Inaugural Session

Welcome address from officials Elected F

Welcome address from officials, Elected Representatives

7 Technical Session I

Open Discussion with EWRs/Pradhans to speak out their views on : Possible Measures to eliminate Proxy Practices of Sarpanch/Pradhan Pati from Panchayats

Open Discussion with EWRs on Idea

Open Discussion with EWRs on Idea Generation for IEC Campaign for removing Gender: Discrimination and Proxy Practices of Sarpanch Patis from PRIs & capacity building Training of EWRS in Addressing Proxy Participation

75 Technical Session III

Eliciting views from Stakeholders of the State for adopting Legal Measures for removing interference of Male relatives of EWRs in PRIs

Concluding Session

Eliciting views from Stakeholders regarding Way Forward , Learnings & Suggestions

Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Proceedings of the seminar on Proxy Representation of Women Elected Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions

Welcome Greetings

A warm welcome was extended to all distinguished guests and delegates by Smt. Mousumi Dasgupta, Faculty (Legal Affairs). On this auspicious occasion, the ceremonial lighting of the lamp commenced, symbolizing the dispelling of darkness and the sharing of knowledge and wisdom. This sacred tradition marked a harmonious and enlightening start to the event.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Welcome Address By Sri Prasun De, Direcotr, RD (Panchayat) Department

Shri Prasun De delivered a welcome address at a seminar on the proxy representation of women in Panchayat bodies. He greeted esteemed officials, elected representatives, and delegates from the North Eastern states. He highlighted the importance of the 73rd Amendment, which empowered women in Panchayats through reservations and emphasized the need to uphold the true spirit of this amendment. He also mentioned the Supreme Court's instructions regarding the role of 'Pradhan Pati,' stressing that women should genuinely exercise their positions without any proxies. The seminar aimed to foster collective harmony by sharing and learning from the experiences of different states. Shri Prasun De concluded with a warm welcome, encouraging collaboration to achieve shared goals.

Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Overview & Objectives of this Seminar by Sri Ramit Maurya, Director, MoPR, GOI

Sri Ramit Maurya began by expressing his gratitude to all attendees, acknowledging their valuable presence. He highlighted the significance of the 73rd Amendment, which has been instrumental in empowering women in Panchayat bodies. He emphasized the Supreme Court's judgment on the role of 'Pradhan Pati,' ensuring that women exercise their positions genuinely without proxies.

The session focused on key objectives such as capacity building and grassroots participation. Shri Maurya stressed the importance of the opinions of Elected Representatives (ERs) in shaping national policy and ending gender discrimination. He underscored the need for collective efforts to achieve these goals, fostering an inclusive and equitable governance system.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Challenges & Solution to WER's Pradhan Patis by Dr. Mallinath Kalshetti , Deputy Director General & Director, YASHADA

Dr. Mallinath Kalshetti began by expressing gratitude to the Government of Tripura, the Government of India, and the North Eastern states for their support. He shared his extensive experience as a Block Development Officer (BDO), District Panchayat Officer (DPO), Deputy Secretary, and CEO of Zilla Parishad (ZP), providing valuable insights into the challenges faced by women elected representatives and the issue of 'Pradhan Patis.'

He highlighted the significant representation of Smt. Supriya Das Datta, Hon'ble Sabhadipati, at the UN platform, showcasing India's commitment to gender equality. Dr. Kalshetti emphasized the importance of future collaborations with Maharashtra for knowledge sharing.

The session focused on capacity building, training, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), and the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) schemes, which have been instrumental in identifying gaps. He discussed how the Panchayat Development Index (PDI) score aids in development and how various indicators will help foster a future of active women participation.

Dr. Kalshetti underscored the need for collective efforts to address these challenges and ensure genuine empowerment of women in Panchayat bodies.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs /



Achievements of RD (Panchayat) Depaartment by Dr. Sandeep R Rathod, IAS

Dr. Sandeed R Rathod, IAS, greeted everyone and expressed his pride and pleasure in thanking the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. He extended his gratitude to all participants from the ministry and highlighted significant achievements in women's empowerment in Tripura.

He emphasized the department's commitment to development under the government's leadership, including:

- 33% reservation for women in jobs
- Historical active participation of women in decision-making since the princely Manikya regime
- Maharani Tulsibati's establishment of a girls' school in the 19th century
- Hon'ble Sabhadipati Supriya Das Datta's representation of India at the UN and her commitment to uplifting women with the slogan "Tomader Kotha Bolte Hobe"

Dr. Rathod also highlighted:

- 50% reservation of seats in Tripura PRI bodies for women
- Five local bodies being fully women-led
- Development of the first SOP for Mahila Sabha and the conduct of 3000 subsequent Mahila Sabhas



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Message from Mamta Verma, Joint Secretary, MOPR through VC

Smt. Mamta Verma, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, joined the seminar through video conference and extended her gratitude to the Ministry, the Government of Tripura, and all the participating North Eastern states. She emphasized the need to bridge existing gaps and highlighted the essence of the 73rd Amendment and various Panchayat Acts. Smt. Verma pointed out that 'Pradhan Patis' are a hindrance to collective development and praised Tripura for identifying these gaps, which will help in developing an action plan.

She discussed the potential legal provisions that could be introduced and the importance of Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) buildup. Engaging with women from various spheres of the North Eastern states was highlighted as a crucial step in identifying gaps. Smt. Verma also mentioned how the 15th Finance Commission and RLB funds can be utilized to train women and develop an action plan.

She concluded by thanking Tripura and the North Eastern states and encouraged all the states to share their inputs and opinions for collective progress.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Message from VK Bhasin , Satish Kr. Singh, Ajay Kumar (MOPR) through VC

A warm welcome is extended by Sri VK Bhasin to all participants, with encouragement for the states to share their views and action plans. Recognition and appreciation were expressed for their engagement and willingness to contribute.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Video Presentation on Women Friendly Panchayats

The video showcased a women-friendly Panchayat that has been instrumental in encouraging women's participation and active engagement in local governance. It highlighted several key initiatives, including the development of Mahila Sabhas, which serve as platforms for women to voice their concerns and contribute to decision-making processes. The video also celebrated the achievements of women-led Panchayats, demonstrating how their leadership has brought about significant positive changes in their communities. These Panchayats have successfully implemented various development projects, promoted gender equality, and created opportunities for women to take on leadership roles. Overall, the video emphasized the importance of women's involvement in Panchayats and the transformative impact of their leadership.

Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Launching of Booklets

Two booklets were launched by the RD (Panchayat) Department. The first highlighted a 45-day induction training program of PExO's in collaboration with NLU Tripura, aimed at equipping new recruits with essential skills. The second booklet was the Annual Report of the revamped RGSA schemes, detailing achievements and progress in rural governance and development. These booklets underscore the department's commitment to effective training and continuous improvement in Panchayati Raj Institutions.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Vote of Thanks by Sri Asit kumar Das, Joint Director, RD (Panchayat) Department

Sri Asit Kumar Das, Joint Director of Panchayats, extended his greetings and expressed his heartfelt appreciation to all the elected representatives, officials in attendance. He conveyed how honored and privileged he felt to represent the department. He thanked participants from the North Eastern states, elected representatives from Tripura's PRI bodies, as well as TRLM representatives and SHGs. He emphasized his hope for active engagement and collective participation to share views and insights in this seminar.

Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Group Photo



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



TECHNICAL SESSION I

Open Discussion with EWRs/Pradhans to speak out their views on : Possible Measures to eliminate Proxy Practices of Sarpanch/Pradhan Pati from Panchayats





Team of Facilitators: Dr. Mallinath Kalshetti , Deputy Director General & Director, YASHADA & Sri Ramit Maurya, Director, MoPR, GOI , Smt Mousumi Dasgupta, Faculty (Legal Affairs) ,PRTI,GoT

A questionnaire was provided by the Ministry, and feedback was collected from the elected representatives and participating states based on their responses.

Views of Elected Representatives:

Tripura:

A) Smt. Supriya Das Datta, Honourable Sabhadhipati, Sepahijala, Tripura

Honourable Sabhadhipati Smt. Supriya Das Datta's speech began with her commitments towards rural development over the past five years, which have actively resulted in overall women empowerment. The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme, emphasized by Honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, was highlighted, aligning with the vision that women's education leads to women's development and ultimately to the nation's progress. Active engagement in various government schemes through which numerous Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have been empowered was noted. An increase in SHG numbers from 600 to 6000 in her district was presented as evidence. The contribution of 50% reservation in PRI bodies to active women participation at all levels was emphasized, illustrating how women are now motivated to work with a sense of duty towards development, enhancing their financial stability & freedom.

Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



The concept of "Leaving no one behind" was invoked to ensure that development reaches even the most remote and inaccessible areas. Guarantees were made for the implementation of schemes like the Jal Jeevan Mission, Nal Jal Mitra initiatives, and measures ensuring proper care for mothers, daughters, children, pregnant women, and vulnerable sections of society.

Dr. Kalshetti's question about suggestions for other elected women representatives to follow her path and her views on the matter was addressed. It was highlighted by Madam that appropriate work should be conducted by women representatives according to their positions. The need for legal action against Pradhan Patis was stressed to ensure safe working environments.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



B) Smt. Aparna Nath, Honourable Sabhadhipati, North Tripura, Tripura

Honourable Sabhadhipati Smt. Aparna Nath emphasized that the concept of Pradhan Patis is not prevalent in Tripura, and the Elected Women Representatives do not face such challenges in performing their duties. However, it was mentioned that if such issues were to arise, engagement with the Legal wing of the department for various legal remedies would be pursued. The importance of education was highlighted, along with the historic decision by the Tripura government to reserve 33% of government jobs for women, encouraging wider participation & economic liberty. The need for training male members of society was emphasized to instill a sense of encouragement toward women's development. By raising awareness about women's rights among men, controlling child marriages & changes in public consciousness can be a remedy to tackle problems associated with Pradhan Patis in proxy representation.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



C) Smt. Aparna Singha Roy (Datta), Honourable Sabhadhipati, Khowai, Tripura

Honourable Sabhadhipati Smt. Aparna Singha Roy (Datta) emphasized that Tripura's 50% reservation in three-tier PRI bodies has helped women step forward and actively participate in decision-making and governance. It was stressed that before becoming an elected representative, one should understand how an organization functions, as staying and working within an organization fosters discipline and good habits. She highlighted the importance of initially working for a social cause on a small scale, which would contribute to future growth as a leader. When women are given opportunities to work in such noble causes, their husbands also come to recognize the woman's significant role in managing public affairs for society. The importance of 33% reservation in jobs, 50% reservation in PRI elections, and women's participation in SHGs, which can lead to financial stability, was emphasized. She advocated for child rights, women's rights, and the need for an independent rural economy driven by women's participation and women-run businesses.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



D) Sikkim:

- Representatives from Sikkim highlighted the need for developing Mahila Sabha SOPs to formalize women's participation and leadership.
- Emphasis was placed on the growth and empowerment of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) as a means to provide women with financial stability and independence.
- The importance of zero waste campaigns was highlighted, focusing on sustainability and community-driven environmental solutions.
- Awareness development campaigns were emphasized to promote knowledge on key issues affecting women in all sectors.
- Mental health awareness campaigns were advocated to address the mental well-being of women and reduce stigma.
- The necessity of education for women was underscored as a fundamental factor in their empowerment and social progress.
- Capacity building programs were highlighted as essential to equip women with the necessary skills for personal and professional growth.
- Leadership quality training was emphasized to develop future women leaders who can contribute to governance and community development.
- The need for IEC (Information, Education, and Communication) campaigns was stressed to eliminate proxy representation in PRI bodies and ensure genuine women's participation in decision-making at all levels.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



E) Manipur:

- Representatives from Manipur highlighted the necessity of a Gender Equality Bill to address gender disparities and promote equal rights for women.
- They emphasized the need for more reservations at all levels to ensure greater women's participation in governance and leadership roles.
- The importance of rigorous training was underscored to generate awareness on gender equality, women's rights, and related issues.
- A call for more IEC activities was made to spread information and educate communities on key gender issues, empowering women.
- They expressed a desire to borrow the SOPs of successful Mahila Sabhas in Tripura as a model to strengthen women's participation and governance structures in Manipur.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



F) Nagaland:

- Representatives from Nagaland highlighted that Pradhan Patis do not exist in the region due to the unique history and culture of Nagaland.
- They emphasized that the governance system in the region is based on local self-government through the Nagaland Village Councils (VCs).
- The Nagaland VCs were described as the primary units of social self-government in the region, reflecting the traditional and community-driven approach to leadership and decision-making.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



G) Mizoram:

- Representatives from Mizoram highlighted that the Pradhan Pati concept does not exist in the region; however, they assured that the issue would be addressed if it arises in the future.
- They emphasized the need for higher honorarium for women's participation to encourage greater involvement in governance and leadership.
- The importance of exposure visits was noted to provide women with the opportunity to learn from successful models and broaden their perspectives.
- A call was made for the breakdown of the main budget to specifically focus on women's representation and development, ensuring that financial resources are allocated to empower women in the region.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



H) Meghalaya:

- Representatives from Meghalaya highlighted that the Pradhan Pati concept does not exist in the region due to its matrilineal society, where lineage and inheritance pass through the mother.
- It was emphasized that Meghalaya has a strong network of associations, with village committees holding significant bargaining powers in local governance.
- The need to encourage women's participation by enhancing TA/DA (Travel Allowance/Dearness Allowance) and honorarium was stressed to provide more incentives for women's involvement in decision-making.
- The importance of education in remote areas was emphasized to ensure women in these areas have access to opportunities and empowerment.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Open Discussion with EWRs on Idea Generation for IEC Campaign for removing Gender: Discrimination and Proxy Practices of Sarpanch Patis from PRIs & capacity building Training of EWRS in Addressing Proxy Participation

For the technical session, groups were made among different states for a comprehensive discussion & they were:

- 1) Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur (Team A)
- 2) Sikkim, Mizoram (Team B)
- 3) Tripura Team 01 Sabhadhipatis & Chairperson's
- 4) Tripura Team 02 All Pradhans
- 5) SHG representations from TRLM

Views of the teams are collectively represented as:

Team A:

- Educational awareness is required to empower women and raise consciousness about their rights and opportunities.
- Training of elected women representatives is essential to enhance their skills and effectiveness in leadership and governance.

Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Team A:

- Exposure visits are needed to allow women representatives to learn from successful models and gain practical insights.
- More gender-friendly offices are necessary to create supportive and inclusive work environments for women.
- Street dramas should be organized to encourage women's participation in governance and raise awareness on gender equality.
- Proper utilization of social media and related channels should be promoted to spread awareness and engage communities in discussions about women's rights and participation.
- Distribution of leaflets promoting equal participation should be done to reach a wider audience and inform the public.
- The celebration of the birth of a girl child should be encouraged to foster a positive societal attitude toward gender equality from a young age.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Team B:

- Educational awareness for both men and women are necessary to eradicate proxy representation and promote gender equality.
- Capacity building of women elected representatives should be enhanced to improve their leadership skills and governance effectiveness.
- Exposure visits to other states should be organized to provide women representatives with broader insights and practical experiences.
- Women workshops should be held to focus on skill development and empowerment.
- Mahila Sabhas should be organized to strengthen women's participation in decision-making processes.
- IEC awareness programs are essential to spread information about women's rights and encourage active participation.
- SMS campaigns should be used to reach remote areas, ensuring that women in all regions are informed and engaged.
- Honorarium and TA/DA should be increased to encourage greater women's participation and make their involvement more financially viable.
- The development of women associations should be prioritized to foster solidarity and support networks among women in governance.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Tripura Team 01:

- Awareness for proper representation should be raised by all political leaders to ensure genuine participation of women in governance.
- Establishing Mahila Mandals at the GP level for effective database management was emphasized to enhance organizational efficiency.
- Initiative ideas like "Your Voice Must Be Heard" should be raised and converged through SHG groups to amplify women's participation and representation.
- Capacity building training programs should be conducted to strengthen the skills and knowledge of women leaders.
- A national-level women convention for all elected women representatives was advocated, with a request for the inaugural event to be held in Tripura.
- Removing intoxications from society to create a drug-free environment was highlighted as a key goal for social reform.
- Proper Mahila Sabhas at the GP level should be conducted to empower older and underprivileged women within communities.
- Initiatives should be designed to reach every corner of the country to ensure inclusivity and widespread participation.
- With 50% reservation in PRI bodies, it was proposed that the quorum for Mahila Sabhas be raised to 50% participation.
- Gram Sabha female organization committees should be developed, grouping three to four panchayats together for collective leadership and governance.
- Proper leadership examples should be demonstrated by women leaders to inspire and guide effective governance practices.
- Promote Nesha Mukt Tripura Campaign



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Tripura Team 02:

- Education for women Pradhans is essential to empower them with the skills and knowledge needed for effective leadership.
- Knowledge of government schemes should be provided to ensure that women Pradhans can utilize available resources for community development.
- Computer literacy is necessary for women Pradhans to efficiently manage administrative tasks and communications.
- Capacity building for panchayat staff is important to enhance their effectiveness in supporting governance activities.
- Increasing the number of staff in panchayats is needed to ensure smooth functioning and better service delivery.
- Encouraging more Mahila Sabhas with a focus on legal and social awareness should be prioritized to strengthen women's roles in decision-making.
- Social awareness campaigns through TV, mobile, leaflets, and social media should be promoted to spread information and engage the community.
- Encouragement of MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) should be undertaken to boost women's economic participation and entrepreneurship.
- Proper knowledge of mobile phone use should be imparted to enable women to run business campaigns and manage digital platforms effectively.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



SHG Representations of TRLM

- Didi Awareness Programs should be encouraged to engage with SHGs for promoting livelihood and skill development among women.
- Social development awareness was emphasized to promote overall development in villages, leading to enhanced public knowledge.
- Self-development initiatives were noted as essential, as they would contribute to skill development among community members.
- Economic capacity building should be strengthened through SHGs, Village Organizations (VOs), and Cluster Level Federations (CLFs) for better financial stability and growth.
- A social action committee should be established for awareness generation and to ensure the entitlement of rights within communities.
- Gender resource centers should be established to support and empower women by providing resources and guidance.
- Proper networking for convergence and follow-up should be maintained to ensure effective collaboration and sustained progress.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Eliciting views from Stakeholders of the State for adopting Legal Measures for removing interference of Male relatives of EWRs in PRIs

For the technical session, groups were made among different states & other stakeholders presented their views for a comprehensive discussion & they were:

- 1) Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur (Team A)
- 2) Sikkim, Mizoram (Team B)
- 3) Tripura Team 01 Sabhadhipatis & Chairperson's
- 4) Tripura Team 02 All Pradhans
- 5) SHG Representation from TRLM
- 6) Representative from NLUT
- 7) Representative from Women Commission

Views of the teams are collectively represented as:

Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Team A

- Amendments to state acts were suggested to include stronger legal provisions for the protection and empowerment of women.
- Creation of standing infrastructure within various government departments was proposed to support the implementation and enforcement of these legal measures.
- Dedicated 24/7 women helpline numbers should be established to provide immediate assistance and support to women in need.
- Enforcement of legal provisions was emphasized to ensure that laws and measures aimed at protecting women's rights are effectively implemented and upheld.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Team B

- It was emphasized that legal actions should be classified to differentiate between offenses committed forcefully or willingly.
- Penalties should be tailored to reflect the nature and severity of the offense, ensuring proportionate consequences.
- Amendments to state acts were suggested to incorporate these distinctions for clearer legal provisions.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Tripura Team 01:

- Emphasis on proper legal provisions must be mandatory in state acts to ensure clear guidelines and enforcement.
- It was suggested that offenses and their associated penalties should be explicitly defined within the state acts for clarity and accountability.
- Legal awareness was highlighted as necessary and should be included in the Mahila Sabha SOPs to educate women on their rights and the legal framework protecting them.
- The inclusion of these provisions would help ensure that women are informed, protected, and empowered through proper legislative support.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Tripura Team 02:

- Proper knowledge about women's rights should be communicated effectively in Gram Sabhas to ensure widespread awareness.
- Awareness on domestic violence should be a key focus, educating women on what constitutes domestic violence and its implications.
- Guidance on seeking legal help should be provided so that women know how to access resources and protection when facing domestic violence.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



SHG Representations from TRLM

- Overall monitoring and follow-up on women's cases should be made legally binding to ensure continuous oversight and support.
- Mandatory follow-up procedures should be established to track the progress and resolution of cases involving women's rights.
- Legal frameworks should include provisions for regular updates and reporting on cases to prevent negligence.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Representatives from NLU

- Representatives from NLU emphasized the importance and functions of various committees such as the Legal Aid Committee, which plays a crucial role in providing legal assistance and support.
- The work of the Center for Woman and Child Rights was highlighted, focusing on advocating for and protecting vulnerable groups.
- The need to identify gaps in society to address issues related to women and children was stressed.
- A robust child help ecosystem was called for, along with the significance of the UNICEF-NLU partnership for collaborative efforts in child welfare.
- Key legislations such as the POCSO Act and the Juvenile Justice Act were discussed as essential legal frameworks protecting children's rights.
- The establishment and operation of one-stop centers for women were emphasized to provide comprehensive support for victims.
- The importance of proper execution and follow-up mechanisms was underscored to ensure that laws and support systems are effective.
- It was reiterated that doing the right things consistently and diligently is necessary for impactful results in safeguarding women and children.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Representatives from Women Commission

- The Women Commission highlighted the critical need for educating society to promote gender equality and awareness.
- Pradhans were requested to actively monitor Anganwadi Centers (AWCs) to ensure they function effectively and support women and children.
- The elimination of intoxication in communities was stressed as necessary for the well-being and empowerment of women.
- The abolishment of child marriage was called for to protect young girls and promote their rights and opportunities.
- Active campaigns led by women at the grassroots level were encouraged to foster engagement and leadership in local communities.
- Women were described as essential pillars for overall social development and empowerment, driving positive change within society.
- Proper rights and awareness initiatives were advocated for, enabling women to actively participate in development programs and contribute to community progress.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



CONCLUDING SESSION

Way Forward by Sri VK Bhasin through VC

On behalf of MoPR, Sri VK Bhasin extend his sincere gratitude to all the elected representatives, government officials, participants, and stakeholders for their unwavering commitment and invaluable contributions for capacity building initiative through this seminar.

Sri VK Bhasin, in his address, took the opportunity to ensure and confirm with the representatives regarding their stance on the issue of proxy representation. He asked whether they are prepared to take legal actions against such practices, ensuring that the integrity of elected representatives is maintained and that the process remains transparent and accountable. This query was put forward to assess the collective commitment to eradicating proxy representation and upholding the principles of fair governance.



Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



FELICITATION

Valedictory Ceremony

The seminar concluded with a heartfelt valedictory and felicitation ceremony, honoring the elected representatives and officials who contributed to the event's success. Sri Ramit Maurya, Sri Mallinath Kalshetti, Smt. Priyanka Dutta, and Sri Prasun De, along with other distinguished guests, felicitated the participants, acknowledging their valuable efforts and dedication. The ceremony celebrated the collaborative spirit and commitment to public service, leaving attendees inspired and motivated for future initiatives.















Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



CONCLUDING SESSION

Vote of Thanks by Sri Anurag Sen, Joint Director, RD (Panchayat) Department

On behalf of all present, Sri Anurag Sen extends heartfelt gratitude to the Director of MOPR, the Deputy Director of YASHADA, and all the NE State representatives and participants of this conference on proxy representation. Their valuable insights, active engagement, and contributions have played a key role in making this conference a success. Sincere thanks are offered for their unwavering support and commitment to strengthening governance and ensuring transparency in our democratic processes.

Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Day 2: Field visit

Key Observations and Discussion Points for Day 2 Field Visits:

Holakhet Gram Panchayat (Matabari RD Block)

Community Participation:

- Observed active participation of local women in decision-making processes, indicating awareness and utilization of the 50% reservation in PRIs
- Interaction with Self-Help Groups (SHGs) highlighted their role in economic empowerment and financial independence.

Infrastructure & Accessibility:

- Well-maintained community infrastructure under Panchayat initiatives, focusing on gender-friendly spaces.
- Provisions for basic amenities such as clean water under the Jal Jeevan Mission.

Challenges Highlighted by Elected Representatives (ERs):

- Need for more training programs to equip ERs with leadership and administrative skills.
- Gaps in digital literacy for accessing e-governance platforms.

Feedback from Field-Level Officials:

- Acknowledged the importance of legal measures to address genderspecific issues such as proxy representation.
- Suggested creating a dedicated platform for continuous skill development of women leaders.

Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Day 2: Field visit

Key Observations and Discussion Points for Day 2 Field Visits:

Paschim Majlishpur Gram Panchayat (Jirania RD Block)

Grassroots Engagement:

- Discussion with ERs revealed robust mechanisms to ensure genuine representation and participation of women.
- Women representatives actively involved in planning and implementation of schemes like NREGS and MGNREGA.

Innovative Practices:

- Demonstration of successful initiatives like Mahila Sabha's, promoting inclusive governance.
- Use of mobile-based campaigns to disseminate information on health, education, and financial literacy.

Concerns Raised by Officials and ERs:

 Lack of adequate logistical support affecting women's full-time engagement in Panchayat activities.

Suggestions from Consultations:

- Implement targeted IEC campaigns to promote awareness about women's rights and roles in governance.
- Organize inter-state exposure visits for women ERs to learn from best practices.

Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Learning Points & Suggestions

Key Learning Points

1.Empowerment through Legal Framework:

- 1. The 73rd Amendment has significantly empowered women in PRIs through reservations.
- 2. Legal provisions like addressing the role of "Pradhan Patis" are critical for ensuring genuine representation of women.

2. Regional Perspectives on Gender Issues:

- 1. Certain regions, like Nagaland and Meghalaya, do not encounter proxy representation issues due to their cultural and governance structures.
- 2. Other regions highlight unique challenges such as the need for gender-sensitive infrastructure, training, and awareness campaigns.

3. Success Stories:

- 1. Achievements include the establishment of Mahila Sabhas, increased women-led governance, and programs like "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao."
- 2. The active role of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) has significantly contributed to financial stability and social empowerment.

4. Capacity Building and Awareness:

- 1. Training for elected women representatives (EWRs) and community members is essential to enhance leadership and decision-making skills.
- 2. Awareness campaigns using IEC tools, social media, and grassroots initiatives play a vital role in promoting gender equality.

5. Challenges in Proxy Representation:

- 1. The cultural acceptance of "Pradhan Patis" undermines women's leadership roles in some areas.
- 2. Limited education, technical knowledge, and exposure for EWRs hinder their full participation.

6.Role of Legal and Supportive Mechanisms:

- 1. Strong legal measures, amendments in state acts, and establishment of 24/7 women helplines are suggested.
- 2. Existing frameworks, like the POCSO Act and Juvenile Justice Act, offer a model for addressing gender challenges effectively.

Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs



Learning Points & Suggestions

Suggestions for Future Action

1.Strengthen Legal Frameworks:

- 1. Introduce and enforce strict legal provisions against proxy practices.
- Development of Mahila Mandals as parallels to Gram Sabha involving all woman folks of the village/panchayats who will have separate executive body & will decide on various issues related to the woman welfare alongwith the existing PRI System.
- 3. This body will suggest the PRI body to make their plan & policy for welfare of women. It will have a duration of 2 years, & all the woman of the village decides the executive body functioning through various means.

2.Promote Capacity Building:

- 1. Implement widespread training programs for EWRs on governance, technology, and leadership.
- 2. Encourage exposure visits to successful women-led governance models for practical learning.

3.Enhance Awareness Campaigns:

- 1. Utilize diverse mediums like SMS, social media, and street dramas to reach remote areas.
- 2. Organize educational programs targeting men to change societal perceptions about women's roles.

4. Encourage Financial Independence:

- 1. Support SHGs, MSMEs, and women-run businesses through incentives and capacity-building initiatives.
- 2. Provide honorariums and financial benefits to motivate women's active participation in governance.

5.Focus on Inclusive Governance:

- 1. Develop gender-friendly work environments and promote women's representation in higher decision-making roles.
- 2. Ensure inclusive participation in Gram Sabha's and Mahila Sabha's by mandating minimum female participation.

6.Address Cultural Barriers:

- 1. Tailor awareness campaigns to specific cultural contexts, emphasizing education, rights, and leadership for women.
- 2. Celebrate success stories of women leaders to inspire and challenge societal norms.

7.Leverage Technology and Innovation:

- 1. Train EWRs in computer literacy and mobile technology to enhance governance efficiency.
- 2. Use data-driven approaches like Mahila Mandals for better resource management and tracking progress.

Proxy Representation of Women ERs in PRIs

Detailed Report of Uttar Pradesh Workshop

महिला प्रतिनिधि की प्रॉक्सी उपस्तिथि पर आयोजित कार्यशाला

दिनांक 19 दिसंबर 2024 को होटल रेग्नेंट, निरालानगर, लखनऊ में प्रॉक्सी उपस्थिति रोकने हेतु राज्य स्तरीय सेमिनार/संगोष्ठी का आयोजन किया गया। यह आयोजन मा. सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के निर्देशानुसार गठित एडवाइजरी कमेटी द्वारा किया गया। सेमिनार का उद्घाटन राज्य महिला आयोग की अध्यक्ष बिबता सिंह चौहान, सचिव पंचायती राज बी. चंद्रकला, निदेशक पंचायती राज मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार रामित मौर्या, डा डा0 एन.वी. माधुरी, एसोसिएट प्रोफेसर, मानवशास्त्र विभाग, हैदराबाद विश्वविद्यालय एवं समिति सदस्य एवं महिला मुद्दों की विशेषज्ञ और अन्य गणमान्य व्यक्तियों ने दीप प्रज्वितत कर किया। इस अवसर पर समिति की संयोजक श्रीमती ममता वर्मा, संयुक्त सचिव, पंचायती राज मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार एवं श्री वी.के भसीन, लॉ सक्रेटरी (भूतपूर्व) एवं श्रीमती अनीता बैंडन, सदस्य, समित, सुश्री प्रियंका, राष्ट्रीय सलाहकार,द्वारा ऑनलाइन माध्यम से जुड़ते हुए प्रतिभागियों को सम्बोधित किया।

कार्यक्रम में विभिन्न राज्यों झारखण्ड, राजस्थान, हिमाचल प्रदेश के निर्वाचित प्रतिनिधिगण एवं उत्तर प्रदेश से उपस्थित जिला पंचायत अध्यक्ष फर्रूखाबाद, सीतापुर, उन्नाव, क्षेत्र पंचायतों की महिला प्रमुखगण एवं निर्वाचित महिला प्रधानगण द्वारा प्रतिगाग किया गया

इस अवसर पर के यूनीसेफ, और सेंटर फॉर कैटेलाइजिंग चेंज (C3) के प्रतिनिधि भी उपस्थित रहे। संगोष्ठी में प्रॉक्सी प्रथा समाप्त करने, लिंग भेदभाव और पंचायतों में महिला सशक्तिकरण पर विस्तृत चर्चा की गई। पंचायत स्तर पर कानूनी उपायों और महिला ग्राम प्रधानों के अधिकारों पर भी विचार-विमर्श ह्आ।

सेमिनार के दूसरे दिन 20 दिसंबर 2024 को समिति के सदस्य लखनऊ जनपद के माल विकास खंड की ग्राम पंचायत अटारी का भ्रमण कर विभिन्न हितधरको से वार्ता की

सेमिनार/संगोष्ठी की कार्यवाही एवं सुझाव (मिनट्स)

प्रथम दिवसः

महिला संशक्तिकरण और पंचायती राजः बी चन्द्रकला, सचिव, पंचायती राज उत्तर प्रदेश शासन के विचार

सचिव, पंचायती राज ने महिला सशक्तिकरण और पंचायती राज व्यवस्था में उनकी भूमिका पर अपने विचार साझा किए। उन्होंने इस दिशा में अब तक की प्रगति, चुनौतियों और भविष्य की योजनाओं को स्पष्ट किया।

महिला सशक्तिकरण का महत्व

सचिव ने कहा कि महिलाओं के लिए 33% आरक्षण केवल प्रतीकात्मक नहीं है, बल्कि उनकी क्षमताओं को सामने लाने और उन्हें निर्णायक भूमिकाओं में स्थापित करने का एक महत्वपूर्ण कदम है। उन्होंने बताया कि ऐतिहासिक और सामाजिक परिस्थितियों के कारण महिलाओं को उनकी पूरी क्षमता का उपयोग करने से वंचित रखा गया। यह आरक्षण, उनकी बुद्धिमता और नेतृत्व क्षमता को मान्यता देने और उनके अधिकारों को उजागर करने का माध्यम है।

महिला जनप्रतिनिधियों की चुनौतियाँ

1. जिम्मेदारी का एहसास:

सचिव ने जोर देकर कहा कि महिला जनप्रतिनिधियों को यह समझने की आवश्यकता है कि उनके हस्ताक्षर केवल औपचारिकता नहीं, बल्कि कानूनी और नैतिक जिम्मेदारी हैं। वे अपने पंचायत क्षेत्र की 'मुख्यमंत्री' के समान हैं और उनके द्वारा लिए गए निर्णयों की जवाबदेही भविष्य में भी उनकी रहेगी।

2. प्रॉक्सी नेतृत्व:

उन्होंने यह भी कहा कि कई स्थानों पर महिला प्रतिनिधियों का स्थान उनके पति या परिवार के अन्य सदस्यों द्वारा ले लिया जाता है। यह एक गंभीर समस्या है, जिसे प्रशिक्षण और जागरूकता के माध्यम से समाप्त करना आवश्यक है।

महिला सशक्तिकरण की दिशा में प्रगति

1. स्वयं सहायता समूहों की सफलताः

सचिव ने राज्य ग्रामीण आजीविका मिशन (SRLM) के तहत महिलाओं की आर्थिक सशक्तिकरण की सफलता पर प्रकाश डाला। उन्होंने कहा कि महिलाओं ने ऋण चुकाने और फंड प्रबंधन में उत्कृष्ट प्रदर्शन किया है।

2. प्रशिक्षण और नेतृत्व विकास:

सचिव ने 2010 के एक अनुभव को साझा करते हुए बताया कि जब महिला प्रधानों के प्रशिक्षण की शुरुआत हुई, तो शुरुआत में महिलाएं अपने पतियों या परिवार के सदस्यों के साथ आती थीं। लेकिन धीरे-धीरे, प्रशिक्षण और जागरूकता के माध्यम से वे स्वतंत्र रूप से कार्य करने लगीं।

3. स्थानीय समस्याओं का समाधान:

सचिव ने पंचायत सचिवालय को ग्रामीण स्तर की समस्याओं के समाधान का केंद्र बताया। उन्होंने कहा कि आंगनबाड़ी कार्यकर्ता, आशा बहनें और स्वयं सहायता समूह की महिलाएं इन प्रयासों में मुख्य भूमिका निभा रही हैं।

भविष्य के प्रयास और योजनाएँ

1. नारी अदालतों का गठन:

सचिव ने नारी अदालतों की योजना का जिक्र किया, जो घरेलू हिंसा और अन्य विवादों का स्थानीय स्तर पर समाधान प्रदान करेंगी। उन्होंने कहा कि यह ग्रामीण महिलाओं के लिए एक सशक्त मंच होगा।

2. प्रॉक्सी नेतृत्व का उन्मूलनः

सचिव ने कहा कि यह सुनिश्चित करना होगा कि महिलाएं अपने अधिकारों और जिम्मेदारियों का निर्वहन स्वयं करें। उन्होंने प्रॉक्सी नेतृत्व को महिला सशक्तिकरण की राह में सबसे बड़ी बाधा बताया।

3. जागरूकता और संवाद का विस्तार:

सचिव ने सभी महिला जनप्रतिनिधियों से आग्रह किया कि वे अपनी भूमिकाओं को लेकर जागरूक रहें और इस संदेश को अन्य मंचों पर भी साझा करें।

अपने उद्बोधन के समापन अवसर पर उन्होंने कहा कि, "महिला सशक्तिकरण का यह सफर अभी जारी है। आर्थिक, सामाजिक और राजनीतिक सशक्तिकरण को समान रूप से बढ़ावा देने की आवश्यकता है। उन्होंने सभी से आग्रह किया कि अपने अधिकारों और जिम्मेदारियों को समझें और इसे न केवल अपने कार्यक्षेत्र में बल्कि हर जगह चर्चा का विषय बनाएं। यह आपकी नैतिक और कानूनी जिम्मेदारी है। जब तक प्रॉक्सी नेतृत्व की धारणा समाप्त नहीं होगी, तब तक महिला सशक्तिकरण का वास्तविक लक्ष्य अध्रा रहेगा।" हर महिला प्रतिनिधि को यह विश्वास होना चाहिए: "मैं जिम्मेदार हूँ, और मेरे निर्णय से बदलाव आएगा।"

डॉ. ममता वर्मा, जॉइंट सेक्रेटरी भारत सरकार

डॉ. ममता वर्मा ने समुदाय को संबोधित करते हुए समिति के गठन का उद्देश बताया जो निम्नवत है:

सुप्रीम कोर्ट के निर्देश पर गठित इस कमेटी का उद्देश्य महिलाओं की निर्वाचित प्रतिनिधियों से जुड़ी समस्याओं का गहन अध्ययन करना और उनके समाधान के लिए ठोस सुझाव देना है। उन्होंने इस मुद्दे पर चर्चा करते हुए कुछ प्रमुख पहलुओं पर ध्यान केंद्रित किया:

1. महिलाओं के आत्मविश्वास की कमी और सामाजिक बाधाएँ

 यह देखा गया कि निर्वाचित महिलाएँ कई बार अपने परिवार के पुरुष सदस्यों द्वारा अपने अधिकारों और कर्तव्यों का पालन करने से वंचित रहती हैं। इसका मुख्य कारण महिलाओं में आत्मविश्वास की कमी और समाज के तौर-तरीकों को लेकर उनकी झिझक है।

2. प्रतिनिधियों की समस्याओं की समझ

- कमेटी का उद्देश्य महिलाओं से संवाद कर यह समझना है कि उन्हें सरकार,
 परिवार और रोज़मर्रा के कार्यों में किस प्रकार की दिक्कतों का सामना करना
 पड़ता है।
- यह भी देखा गया कि कई बार महत्वपूर्ण बैठकों का आयोजन महिलाओं के लिए असुविधाजनक समय पर होता है, जैसे त्योहारों के दौरान या बच्चों की स्कूल मीटिंग के दिन।

3. प्रशासनिक समस्याएँ

- यह एक बड़ी समस्या है कि कई अधिकारी महिलाओं की बजाय उनके पित,
 पिता या ससुर से संवाद करना पसंद करते हैं। इससे महिला प्रतिनिधियों की स्थिति कमजोर होती है।
- कमेटी ने महिलाओं की प्रशिक्षण की कमी पर भी जोर दिया। बहीखाते या
 प्रशासनिक दस्तावेज़ों को देखने में घबराहट महिलाओं की क्षमता को सीमित
 करती है।

4. पद की अवधि और अनुभव

 कमेटी ने सुझाव दिया कि महिलाओं को एक टर्म के बजाय कम से कम दो टर्म तक का अवसर दिया जाए ताकि वे अनुभव और आत्मविश्वास हासिल कर सकें।

5. समस्याओं के समाधान के लिए कदम

- कमेटी ने बाल विवाह और सती प्रथा के उन्मूलन के उदाहरण देते हुए कहा कि समाज में बदलाव धीरे-धीरे होता है, लेकिन इसके लिए सरकार के साथ-साथ महिलाओं को भी अपने भीतर आत्मविश्वास और जागरूकता लानी होगी।
- महिलाओं को "गाड़ी का पीछे का पहिया" मानने की धारणा को बदलते हुए उन्हें बराबरी का और नेतृत्वकारी भूमिका में देखना होगा।

अंत में उन्होंने महिलाओं को यह संदेश दिया कि वे अपने अधिकारों और कर्तव्यों के प्रति सजग रहें और इन विचारों को अपने क्षेत्र में अन्य महिलाओं तक पहुँचाएँ। इस पहल के माध्यम से महिलाओं को सशक्त और आत्मनिर्भर बनाने का लक्ष्य रखा गया है।

डॉ. रमित मौर्या, निदेशक पंचायती राज, भारत सरकार

डॉ. रिमत ने कार्यशाला की शुरुआत में सभी का स्वागत करते हुए पिछले एक वर्ष से चल रही सलाहकार सिमिति की बैठकों और उनकी कार्यवाही पर प्रकाश डाला। उन्होंने बताया कि सिमिति ने पंचायती राज विभाग, ग्रामीण विकास विभाग, मिहला एवं बाल विकास विभाग, और राज्य मिहला आयोग से इस प्रथा को कम करने के उपायों पर सुझाव प्राप्त किए हैं। इसके साथ ही, विभिन्न राज्यों से भी सुझाव प्राप्त किए गए हैं।

डॉ. रमित ने स्पष्ट किया कि इस कार्यशाला का मुख्य उद्देश्य उपस्थित प्रतिभागियों से सुझाव प्राप्त करना है। उन्होंने कहा, "हम यहां कोई निर्देश देने नहीं आए हैं, बल्कि आपके विचार और सुझाव जानने के लिए आए हैं ताकि इस प्रथा को समाप्त करने के ठोस उपाय सुझाए जा सकें।"

इस कार्यशाला को तीन सत्रों में विभाजित किया गया है, जिनका उद्देश्य है:

- 1. कार्य निष्पादन में आने वाली चुनौतियाँ: प्रतिभागियों से उनके कार्य निष्पादन में आने वाली समस्याओं और प्रशिक्षण (ट्रेनिंग) से जुड़े सुझाव लेना।
- 2. **IEC गतिविधियों पर सुझाव**: सूचना, शिक्षा और संचार (IEC) से संबंधित गतिविधियों में सुधार हेतु विचार।
- 3. कानूनी उपाय: इस प्रथा को रोकने के लिए संभावित कानूनी तरीकों पर स्झाव।

डॉ. रमित ने सभी प्रतिभागियों को आश्वस्त किया कि समिति उनके सुझावों को गंभीरता से सुनेगी और आशा व्यक्त की कि सभी खुलकर अपने विचार साझा करेंगे।

एन वी माधुरी, एसोसिएट प्रोफेसर, हैदराबाद यूनिवर्सिटी

एन वी माधुरी जी ने भी कार्यशाला के उद्दयेश पर चर्चा की , उन्होंने भी बताया की समिति उपस्थित जनप्रतिनिधियों के विचार जानने के लिए यहाँ आई हैं और वह कम बोलेंगे व उनकी ज्यादा स्नेंगे

श्री अटल कुमार राय, निदेशक पंचायती राज, उत्तर प्रदेश

उत्तर प्रदेश पंचायती राज विभाग के निदेशक ने महिला जनप्रतिनिधियों का स्वागत करते हुए, विशेष रूप से अन्य राज्यों से आई महिलाओं का आभार प्रकट किया। उन्होंने विश्वास व्यक्त किया कि सभी प्रतिभागियों की उपस्थिति और उनके विचार इस प्रथा पर अंकुश लगाने में सहायक सिद्ध होंगे।

उन्होंने गर्व से उल्लेख किया कि हाल ही में नई दिल्ली में आयोजित राष्ट्रीय पुरस्कार समारोह में उत्तर प्रदेश के जिन दो गांवों का चयन हुआ, उनकी पंचायतों का नेतृत्व महिलाएं कर रही थीं। यह दर्शाता है कि हमारी महिलाएं किसी भी मामले में पुरुषों से कम नहीं हैं। लेकिन इसके साथ ही, उन्होंने इस बात पर भी जोर दिया कि आज की गोष्ठी का उद्देश्य उन समस्याओं पर चर्चा करना है जिनका सामना महिला जनप्रतिनिधियों को करना पड़ता है। इनमें उनके अधिकारों की जानकारी का अभाव, पर्याप्त प्रशिक्षण की कमी, और परिवार के सदस्यों द्वारा महिलाओं को आगे आने से रोकने जैसी चुनौतियाँ शामिल हैं।

उन्होंने सभी प्रतिभागियों से अनुरोध किया कि वे इस गोष्ठी से निकले निष्कर्षों को एक संदेशवाहक बनकर समाज की अन्य महिलाओं तक पहुँचाएं और उन्हें सशक्त बनाने का कार्य करें। उन्होंने यह भी प्रेरणा दी कि जब कोई पहल शुरू होती है, तो शुरुआत में कठिनाई हो सकती है, लेकिन समय के साथ लोग जुड़ते जाते हैं और यह एक आंदोलन का रूप ले लेता है। निदेशक ने उत्तर प्रदेश को महिलाओं के सशक्तिकरण के लिए सबसे उपयुक्त स्थान बताते हुए कहा कि वर्तमान समय में महिलाओं के लिए अनुकूल वातावरण और नेतृत्व का अवसर पहले कभी नहीं था। उन्होंने मुख्यमंत्री जी के दृष्टिकोण का उल्लेख करते हुए कहा कि उत्तर प्रदेश को देश का "ग्रोथ इंजन" बनाने के लिए महिला प्रतिनिधियों का सशक्तिकरण और उनके अधिकारों का समृचित उपयोग अत्यंत आवश्यक है।

सतत विकास लक्ष्यों के स्थानीयकरण के अंतर्गत 9 प्रमुख विषयों पर कार्य किया जा रहा है, जिनमें से दो - महिला हितैषी गांव और बाल हितैषी गांव - ऐसे क्षेत्र हैं जहाँ महिला प्रतिनिधि अद्वितीय कार्य कर सकती हैं। यह कार्य पुरुष प्रतिनिधियों की तुलना में महिलाओं द्वारा अधिक प्रभावी ढंग से किया जा सकता है।

अंत में, निदेशक ने भारत सरकार का आभार व्यक्त किया कि उत्तर प्रदेश में इस प्रकार की संगोष्ठी आयोजित करने का अवसर मिला। उन्होंने सभी प्रतिभागियों की उपस्थिति को कार्यक्रम की सफलता और गरिमा का प्रतीक बताया।

प्रतिभागियों का समृह विभाजन एवं कार्य सौंपना:

प्रतिभागियों को तीन समूहों में बांटा गया, प्रत्येक समूह में चारों राज्यों के प्रतिनिधियों को शामिल किया गया। इन समूहों की अध्यक्षता जिला अध्यक्ष और ब्लॉक प्रमुखों को सौंपी गई। सभी समूहों को निम्नलिखित विषयों पर चर्चा करने और सुझाव प्रस्तुत करने का निर्देश दिया गया:

- 1. महिला प्रतिनिधियों के लिए आवश्यक प्रशिक्षण और क्षमता विकास।
- 2. सूचना, शिक्षा, और संचार के माध्यम से जागरूकता अभियान।
- 3. प्रॉक्सी प्रथा रोकने और महिला सशक्तिकरण के लिए कानूनी उपाय।

समूहवार चर्चा और सुझाव

समूह 1: महिला प्रतिनिधियों के लिए आवश्यक प्रशिक्षण और क्षमता विकास

- 1. ज्ञान, कौशल और लैंगिक समानता को सुदृढ़ करना
- 2. पंचायत प्रतिनिधियों के लिए न्यूनतम शैक्षणिक योग्यता अनिवार्य की जाए।
- 3. नियमित अंतराल पर कार्यशालाओं, इंटरैक्टिव सत्रों और एक्सपोज़र विजिट का आयोजन हो।
- 4. तकनीकी कौशल और व्यवहारगत प्रशिक्षण प्रदान किए जाएं।
- 5. ब्लॉक स्तर पर ग्राम प्रधानों के लिए साझा कक्षों की व्यवस्था की जाए।
- 6. CUG नंबर प्रदान कर नेटवर्किंग को बढावा दिया जाए।
- 7. ब्लॉक अधिकारियों के रवैये में बदलाव लाया जाए ताकि महिला प्रतिनिधियों को प्रोत्साहित किया जा सके।
- 8. अनिवार्य किया जाए कि महिला प्रतिनिधियों का प्रतिनिधित्व परिवार का कोई अन्य पुरुष सदस्य न करे।
- 9. नियमित रूप से वर्च्अल बैठकें आयोजित हों।
- 10. उत्कृष्ट कार्यों के लिए पहचान और प्रस्कार प्रदान किए जाएं।
- 11. सफलता की कहानियों को स्कूलों/कॉलेजों में साझा किया जाए ताकि भविष्य के प्रतिनिधियों को प्रेरणा मिल सके।
- 12. एक हेल्पलाइन नंबर स्थापित किया जाए ताकि महिला प्रतिनिधि आवश्यक मार्गदर्शन प्राप्त कर सकें।

समूह 2: सूचना, शिक्षा व संचार

- 1. जनजागरूकता अभियान सही समय पर सटीक सूचना दीवार लेखन, टोलों में छोटी बैठकें, और होर्डिंग्स के माध्यम से फैलाई जाए।
- 2. मिहला प्रतिनिधियों के उत्कृष्ट कार्यों का रेडियो, टीवी और सोशल मीडिया पर प्रचार हो।
- 3. शिक्षा का स्तर निर्धारित किया जाए और समय-समय पर प्रशिक्षण अनिवार्य हो।

- 4. पुरुषों को भी शिक्षित किया जाए ताकि वे महिलाओं को नेतृत्व के रूप में स्वीकार कर सकें।
- 5. महिला समस्या केंद्र की स्थापना हो जहां से मार्गदर्शन मिल सके।
- 6. प्रेरणादायक स्लोगन के माध्यम से महिला सशक्तिकरण को बढ़ावा दिया जाए, जैसे:
 - 。 "अर्थव्यवस्था में भागीदारी बढाओ, महिलाओं को आगे लाओ।"
 - o "जब नारी में है शक्ति सारी, तो क्यों रहे नारी बेचारी।"
 - "सम्मान, प्रतिष्ठा और प्यार, महिला सशक्तिकरण के आधार।"

समूह 3: कानूनी उपाय

- 1. प्रॉक्सी प्रथा रोकने के लिए महिला आयोग को नोडल प्राधिकरण बनाया जाए।
- 2. हर तीन माह में CDO द्वारा महिला आयोग को महिला प्रतिनिधियों के कार्यों, सामर्थ्य और समस्याओं की रिपोर्ट दी जाए।
- 3. जाति, धर्म, और लिंग के आधार पर उत्पीड़न की स्थिति में ग्राम सचिव, BDO, DPRO, या CDO से संपर्क किया जाए।
- 4. प्रॉक्सी मामलों को नियंत्रित करने के लिए राज्य स्तर पर सख्त नीति बनाई जाए।
- 5. अशिक्षित प्रधानों के लिए 5-6 माह का विशेष प्रशिक्षण आयोजित किया जाए।
- 6. प्रॉक्सी प्रथा और महिलाओं को कार्य न करने देने के लिए जीरो टॉलरेंस पॉलिसी लागू हो।

महत्वपूर्ण चर्चा और निष्कर्ष

1. प्रॉक्सी के लिए सजा का प्रावधान:

प्रतिभागियों ने सहमति व्यक्त की कि सजा का प्रावधान होना चाहिए। आत्मविश्वास की कमी के मामलों में कुछ प्रतिबंधों को लागू किया जाए।

2. पंचायत स्तर पर शिकायत निवारण प्राधिकरण:

सर्वसम्मित से सुझाव दिया गया कि पंचायत स्तर पर एक रिटायर्ड जज या प्राधिकरण को नियुक्त किया जाए।

3. शैक्षणिक योग्यता:

और डॉ. अनीता ब्रैंडन के सहयोग के साथ बुनियादी शिक्षा को अनिवार्य करने पर सहमति बनी। न्यूनतम आठवीं कक्षा पास का प्रावधान किया जाए।

4. नोडल अधिकारी:

सरकार के कार्यकारी आदेश से नोडल अधिकारी नियुक्त किया जाए और उनके माध्यम से कार्यवाही स्निश्चित की जाए।

संगोष्ठी के अंत में, श्री वी.के. भसीन द्वारा प्रतिभागियों के सुझावों को संकलित किया गया और निष्कर्ष प्रस्त्त किए गए।

द्वितीय दिवस

कार्यशाला के द्वितीय दिवस में एडवाइजरी समिति के विशेष सदस्य के रूप से श्री अलोक प्रेम नागर, संयुक्त सचिव, पंचायती राज मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, श्री रमित मौर्या, निदेशक, पंचायती राज मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार एवं सदस्य समिति के सदस्य द्वारा लखनऊ जनपद के विकासखण्ड माल की ग्राम पंचायत अटारी में भ्रमण किया गया।

इस अवसर में ग्राम वासियों के साथ ग्राम पंचायत आटारी की प्रधान सुश्री संयोगिता सिंह चौहान, खण्ड विकास अधिकारी, खण्ड शिक्षा अधिकारी, पंचायत की समिति के सदस्य के स्वयं सहायता समूह की मिलाएं उपस्थित रहीं

सर्वप्रथम समिति द्वारा प्रतिनिधि अथवा पंचायत की समिति में पदेन दायित्वों के निर्वाहन में आ रही समस्याओं को प्रतिभागियों से सुना गया, फिर उन्हीं के द्वारा समस्याओं के निराकरण के उपाय भी जाने गए। समिति ने अटारी ग्राम पंचायत में प्रधान एवं महिला प्रतिनिधियों के प्रतिनिधित्व एवं उनकी नेतृत्व क्षमता को सराहा।

Detailed Report of Karnataka Workshop

Minutes of the Seminar on Proxy Women's Participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions <u>Inaugural Session</u>

• Welcoming of Dignitaries:

Dr. Arundati Chandrashekar IAS, Commissioner, Karnataka Panchayat Raj Commissionerate, welcomed the following esteemed dignitaries

- Smt. Uma Mahadevan IAS, Development Commissioner and Additional Chief Secretary (Panchayat Raj), Dept. of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Govt. of Karnataka.
- Ms. Mamata Verma IAS, Joint Secretary and Member-Convener, Advisory Committee on Women Pradhans.
- Dr. Nagalakshmi Choudary, Chairperson, Karnataka State Women Commission.
- Dr. Mallinath Kalshetti, Deputy Director General, YASHDA, Pune, Govt. of Maharashtra.
- o Mr. Ramith Maurya, Director, Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
- Shri Sajith Sukumaran, Director-State Programmes, Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy.
- Members of the Advisory Committee, Grama Panchayat Presidents, officers, faculty, and staff from Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana.

Madam Commissioner encouraged all the participants to actively engage in the seminar and share their suggestions with the committee, aiming to make this event a pivotal step towards formulating a strong policy to prevent proxy participation. She extended her best wishes, warmly welcomed everyone once again, and concluded her welcome address

Addresses by Dignitaries:

- Smt. Uma Mahadevan IAS, Development Commissioner and Additional Chief Secretary (Panchayat Raj), Dept. of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Govt. of Karnataka, elaborated on the seminar's significance in empowering women representatives and the initiatives taken by the government of Karnataka in preventing proxy participation.
- Ms. Mamata Verma IAS, Joint Secretary and Member-Convener, Advisory
 Committee on Women Pradhans delivered the keynote address, emphasizing
 critical issues in women's representation and proxy participation
- Dr. Nagalakshmi Choudary, Chairperson, Karnataka State Women
 Commission, highlighted the roles, responsibilities, and importance of the
 President and Vice-President posts in Grama Panchayats.
- Dr. Mallinath Kalshetti, Shri Ramit Maurya, and Shri Sajith Sukumaran shared their perspectives on the importance of addressing proxy participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Vote of Thanks:

Sri Manoj Kumar, Deputy Director (Training), ANSSIRD&PR, expressed gratitude to all attendees and contributors.

The session concluded with a group photo and high tea.

Session 1: Group Formation and Discussions

Facilitator: Dr. Mallinath Kalshetti.

• Group Allocation:

- o **Group 1:** Belgaum Division.
- o **Group 2:** Kalburgi Division and Telangana.
- o **Group 3:** Bangalore Division and Andhra Pradesh.
- o **Group 4:** Mysore Division and Kerala.

Assigned Topics:

- O. Measures to Eliminate Proxy Practices of Sarpanch/Pradhan Pati in Panchayats.
- 1. IEC Campaign Ideas for Addressing Gender Discrimination and Proxy Practices; Capacity-Building Training for EWRs.
- 2. Legal Measures to Remove Male Relatives' Interference in Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Session 2: Group Presentations and Recommendations

Topic 1: Measures to Eliminate Proxy Practices

- Comprehensive training on the Karnataka Panchayati Raj Act for EWRs.
- Mandating direct communication between public/officials and EWRs to prevent proxy practices.
- Establishing a state-level legal helpline for EWRs.
- Conducting biannual Women Grama Sabhas with strict quorum enforcement.
- Weekly mandatory visits by EWRs to Grama Panchayats.
- Providing vehicles for EWRs to reduce dependency on relatives.
- Setting up care centres for dependents to enable EWR participation in meetings.
- Penalizing functionaries who fail to report proxy participation.
- Appointing personal assistants for women Presidents for administrative support.

Topic 2: IEC Campaign Ideas and Capacity-Building Training

- Pre-election training for women and their families on EWR roles and responsibilities.
- Regular and mandatory training for EWRs on government initiatives

- Broadcasting awareness campaigns on proxy practices via social media.
- Experience-sharing campaigns featuring successful EWRs.
- Training family members of EWRs to minimize interference in governance.
- Exclusive digital literacy training for EWRs.
- Joint training sessions for EWRs and Panchayat functionaries to clarify roles and responsibilities.
- Regular leadership and capacity-building workshops for EWRs.

Topic 3: Legal Measures Against Male Relatives' Interference

- Introducing minimum education qualification and upper age limit for contesting elections.
- Disqualifying EWRs for 2 consecutive meeting absences.
- Preferring Self-Help Group (SHG) members as candidates during elections due to their profound experience with the public
- Mandating strict grievance redressal mechanisms for EWRs.
- Empowering EWRs to move breach of privilege motions against non-compliant officials.
- Penalizing EWRs promoting proxy practices, including disqualification from future elections.
- Direct communication of government orders to EWRs instead of intermediaries.
- Enforcing mandatory daily attendance for women Presidents.

Closing Session

- Dr. Arundati Chandrashekar IAS, Commissioner, Karnataka Panchayat Raj Commissionerate, commended participants for their insightful suggestions and distributed mementos to dignitaries and participants.
- Sri Manoj Kumar concluded the seminar with a vote of thanks.



Ministry of Panchayati Raj Government of India