

IND/99/543: Capacity Building of Elected Women Representatives and Functionaries of PRIs

The Next Plan of Activities

2. PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

In India, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment which provided statutory status to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) has been particularly important mandating the community role in planning and development projects. The amendment created reserved seats for women and scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, potentially providing an opportunity to bring historically marginalised groups into the political process.

However, the Tenth Plan (2003-2007) recognises that despite the move towards decentralisation through the PRIs, there is marginalisation, exclusion of people on account of social, caste and gender affiliations. The Plan document therefore emphasises the participation of people especially women's groups at all stages of planning, implementation and monitoring and considers this as a prerequisite for good governance.

Panchayat elections across the country brought over 1 million women to Panchayati Raj Institutions at all three levels of the PRIs. The central aim has been to bring women and other marginalised groups into the center stage of local governance and development processes, to place their respective concerns at the centre of village, taluka, district level planning, budgeting etc. Although with reservation for women and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the visibility of socially marginalised sections of society in the elected local bodies has improved, whether these groups are effective in voicing their own interests remains to be seen. Quota may not fully bring about social change. Caste and class issues definitely play a major factor in determining position, access and decision-making ability. There is thus a need to focus particularly on these groups to build their confidence to make their participation in decision making more effective and reflective of concerns of the sections of society they represent.

Thus, it is clear that decentralization process has provided representation, but representation does not necessarily mean participation. A concurrent awakening process is required on the objectives of decentralization and the opportunity it provides to ensure informed participation of all social groups and accountability of governance. PRI is only beginning to transform the processes and priorities of local government as well as the women who have been brought into politics. But sustaining this transformation is a significant challenge, given the inertia and resistance of patriarchal institutions and values.

The representations of women have not automatically led to a more gendered analysis of the issues confronting local government. Nor has it necessarily raised the profile of women who often act as proxies for men's views. Improvement in their participation does not necessarily mean that women will also be effective in articulating their gender interests in public space. Visible and increased participation by women in local governments is now seen as necessary but not sufficient in addressing women's gender priorities. Women from low caste groups and poor communities, after being elected have been given a first time opportunity to take on public roles. After several years, it is a big challenge for women to function in formal spaces, dominated as they are, by men. Women still face considerable handicaps to their involvement in politics; for example, inadequate

education, the burden of reproductive and productive roles, lack of financial independence or control of assets and the opposition of entrenched cultural and religious views. Women's immediate pre-occupations may also reflect practical concerns that flow from existing divisions of labour and power, rather than more strategic challenges to underlining power structures. Women often become tokens or mere figureheads, who are silenced, marginalized and, in extreme situations, subject to harassment and violence.

It is observed that it is mostly men who draw up proposals for development work for submission to the gram sabha. Pradhan patis (elected women's husbands) are also a common phenomenon in the gram panchayat meetings and reflect the strong hold that patriarchy has over the lives of women. There are cases where women are forced to contest by the male members of their families. On the other hand, families and community have no confidence in them, as a result of which the women internalise this image. Women holding ordinary seats receive less protest than women holding executive positions. Caste plays a major role in the attitudes of the people. Traditional mindsets do not permit these women to be seen as political entities. The prevailing traditional system which restrict women from speaking freely in front of elder male relatives; lack of previous experience in attending male dominated meetings, lack of knowledge about the functioning procedure of meetings, all have an impact on the effective participation of women in discussions and decision making processes at the level of village panchayats. The first time participation by women belonging to the poor and low castes has not been sufficiently supported by inputs such as information, training and political visibility. Illiteracy, inadequate information and lack of awareness are common deterrents to participation.

The political perception of women's limited capacity for public office needs to be changed. The difference has to be qualitative, so that these women can bring in their experience in governance of civic society into governance of the state. In this way, they could help the state to be sensitive to issues of poverty, inequality and gender injustice. Bringing women to positions of political power in local government is just the first step in social transformation. Gender sensitization of those in power, be they men or women, is of critical importance.

There is a need for long-term planning and strategizing for their effective participation. The various training programmes that are being run are being used to discuss their problems, but on an ad hoc basis. In the training programmes that have been conducted for the elected representatives, emphasis has been mainly on awareness generation about the provisions in the Act, rather than on the practical aspects of functioning of Panchayat Raj Institutions. There was no special emphasis on the training and other capacity building efforts of women, dalits, tribal and other weaker sections. In many states, training could not be imparted to all. Hence, many of the elected members (especially the ward panchs) have not received any form of structured training during the first term. Inadequate training infrastructure as well as the availability of trainers in terms of quality is far below the desired level considering the increase in the number of elected representatives in each state.

It is also observed that there are gender biases in the bureaucratic set up towards women elected representatives. This outlook further disables the elected women from participating in the decision-making process. This calls for development of a gender-sensitive system.

Further, there is a need for grassroots women to come together to discuss their problems individually and collectively and come up with common strategies to address them. There is no infrastructural facilities of networking available that could bring them together and strengthen them while allowing autonomy in their functioning. Women must be provided with specific kinds of support, which go beyond technical training to build solidarity through strengthening links between women's organisations, groups and elected bodies. There is a need to facilitate the creation of a forum of elected women representatives to be able to raise issues of development and governance irrespective of party affiliations, share their experiences, represent their views, constraints and have a peer network to support them. Through these networks women can achieve unity and consensus on common causes, and exercise influence on decision-making processes as pressure groups.

In view of this, strategic capacity building of women in PRIs for effective governance must be documented and disseminated for learning lessons and replication of strategies. The National Training Policy for Panchayati Raj functionaries has been drafted. The emerging lessons can be fed back into the policy.

3. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Systems created for improved ability of women members in PRI and women's groups to negotiate their entitlements in decision-making and resources of PRI
- Gender sensitive environment for women to function in public spaces
- Women's forum created in the project states for implementation of gender sensitive policies esp. related to Panchayat functioning
- Gender orientation of government capacity building plans for PRIs strengthened
- Elected women and women's group asserting their rights and demanding for implementation of various legislation meant for protecting their interests.
- Improvement in the number of women getting elected in the general category against unreserved seats.
- Improved access to services by women and men in the community.
- "Status of women" reports (with gender disaggregated data) in selected panchayats as advocacy tools.

4. TARGET GROUP

- The focus of the 'next plan of activities' would be to build the capacity of elected women members and existing women's groups and sensitise elected male representatives towards women's priorities in selected districts. The districts could be selected from six to seven States including the three new states, i.e., Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttaranchal.

5. STRATEGY

The overall strategy would bring women into political structures and support the backward and forward linkage of women's presence in politics, linking household and family priorities with macro-planning processes, campaigns and training programmes to prepare the women as electors, elected and as prospective candidates. Strengthening the identity of women representatives by

leadership training, gender sensitisation of men and women and building coalitions will promote the objective of 73rd Constitutional Amendment.

The strategy of the 'next plan of activities' will be at multiple levels.

Focus on building capacities of women in local governance

Interventions in strengthening PRIs will focus on building, promoting and empowering new leadership of women especially from Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes. Women can use this space to voice their concerns and to set the agenda in relation to Gram Panchayats (GPs). Elected women's capacity and solidarity will be built through information, education and sensitization. In this process of social mobilisation, capacities of the men will also be strengthened through gender sensitisation to support women in their newly acquired political space. Women's capacity will be enhanced to ensure involvement in managing and taking decisions over resources in their village or addressing issues of basic services such as health, education and water supply. Their leadership and confidence levels will be built to emerge as assertive leaders to participate in governance and political process. The capacities of women and their confidence in taking active part in the public sphere of village politics will be developed.

Intensive training will be conducted for the elected women to help them focus on existing inequities and problems that women face at large in their villages. Efforts will be made to design women's agenda for development, in a largely male-dominated public space. Training will span issues relating to confidence building, leadership, Panchayat Raj Act, self-autonomy, lobbying and building knowledge bases. Information can be disseminated in a creative manner through traditional and modern media including radio programmes covering Panchayat procedures, opinions on the 73rd Amendment, and people's experiences with women sarpanches. Women also see functional literacy as an important part of their empowerment.

Teams of women will carry out campaigns in villages to explain the salient features of the 73rd Amendment and the place given in it to women. In the discussions that will take place during these yatras (processions), women can voice clear priorities. Effective media campaign will be directed towards changing social attitudes, sensitisation and training of key players and catalysts. Training, village camps, information fairs and exposure visits would be undertaken for both women's collectives and elected women to increase their participation in the GP meeting and Development Committees (under GPs) that has been set up in some states. This will enable gram panchayat women to attend the gram sabhas and raise issues of concern to women. In the project sites, the existing women groups can work with elected women and assist in placing relevant issues to be placed before the Gram Sabha whether it is access to drinking water, drainage, road, electricity, improvement of schools or public distribution system.

The elected and the non-elected women as a result of the collectivization process will demand accountability of government and non-government development expenditure. Through building women's capacity to participate in panchayat elections, the effort would help to create clear political environment and establish non-violent, transparent and non-party based ways of contesting elections with gender concerns firmly on the Gram Panchayat's agenda, and making the Gram Sabha accountable to poor women. Women representatives would be supported to work for clean politics as characterised by increased transparency and accountability of public officials. The

project would support women's groups as facilitators to enhance their participation in local governance, develop community-based monitoring systems to improve delivery of basic services and strengthen linkages between women's groups and gram panchayats. Their public role as monitors of basic services in key sectors e.g., health, PDS, education, water and sanitation and basic service infrastructure would be supported.

Building capacity is an important tool to strengthen the performance and accountability of this fairly new governing institution. Capacity building would recognise and respect each individual's knowledge with group reflection and analysis of the system of local self governance in relation to other tiers of governance and evolve a group understanding on factors impinging on functioning of PRIs. This will help in a shared understanding and determination for collective action. Although the capacity building would be designed to build a holistic perspective on women, local governance and development, it should respond to the pressing needs of the sarpanches. Practical matters must take precedence over planned modules. Capacity building of elected women, women's collectives and strengthening of networks is critical for this.

Strengthening women's networks and advocacy through interface with planners and policy makers

Support by women's groups helps increase elected women's participation in Gram Sabhas. The solidarity between women's groups and elected women will help in addressing gender priorities. This is crucial for elected women members to survive in politics. Women's collectives will be supported in advocacy to influence legislation with regard to PRIs. For instance, in few States, Panchayats are continuing beyond the stipulated period thereby transgressing the Constitution and depriving a minimum of 1/3rd women and the other categories of their rightful representation in panchayats. Interface meetings will be organised between the elected women and the policy makers, ministers to demonstrate their views. Such open forums can provide an opportunity to elected women to interact directly, articulate their concerns and influence policies that affect their functioning such as no-confidence motion, two-child norm or to ensure quorum for women in gram sabha meetings.

Elected women's forum will be set up and supported comprising active representatives from each district and across States to participate and present views with regard to local self-governance on a regular basis. The federation with representation of women's self-help groups, elected women pradhans and women Zilla Panchayat members can act as pressure groups with district authorities and in turn enthuse women's participation in the political sphere. The network of elected members and women's groups will seek to advocate for increased accountability of local governments to communities. Together they will seek to widen democratic participation at the grassroots, to create pressure groups and to assert their right to information through village assemblies or Gram Sabhas. Strong institutional support is a pre-requisite for long-term success of any follow-up activity to develop larger networks.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment has made it possible for women to cast a much wider net of influence and empower themselves by creating conduits to access and control local decision-making forays and other political spaces. There is a need to develop a critical mass of elected women representatives in the panchayat and create positive role models for their peers. Statewide

campaign initiated by Women's Group Initiative on Governance (WGWI) operative in few States will be supported to mobilise women sarpanches across the state.

Documentation of the processes

Lack of systematic documentation constrains the process of learning and should be an integral part of training. Documentation of capacity building strategies would specially include the holistic approaches, training materials and methodologies, other aspects of training and also larger processes of planning at the local level. It should be able to elicit lessons on women constraints, needs and priorities for capacity building and leadership Development and impact on improved access to services by women and men. A mechanism would be drawn up to ensure that lessons are fed back into larger capacity building plans.

6. DEVELOPMENT GOAL

To create an enabling environment for women's participation in local governance and to emerge as change agents to promote the objectives of the Tenth Plan and influence the larger capacity building plans.

7. IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVES/OUTPUT

Immediate objective-1

To build the capacity of women elected representatives and women's groups to influence the local governance process.

Activities

1. Organise joint workshops of NGOs and training institutions to evolve a common capacity building strategy.
2. Undertake training needs assessment, understand women's local context by gender analysis and prepare a plan that acknowledges both opportunities and limitations of trainees' position.
3. Organise perspective building workshops to cultivate the philosophy of self-governance and inclusive governance in PRI members and women's groups to adopt suitable strategies to promote the same.
4. Develop personal skills and leadership (human relations – assertiveness, psychological tools to know personality traits; communication skills – public speaking personal presence, how to project; content/substance, organize ideas).
5. Organise women's meetings where they can debate their own deprivation and discrimination and gender priorities in all spheres from family to state.
6. Organise gender sensitive training for male members to sensitise them towards elected women.
7. Organise skill building programme to improve planning skills, problem-solving skills, organising and convening a meeting, writing an application and negotiation skills.
8. Support enhancement of skills on how to balance legislative duties, constituency building and family life, learn legislative system (para legal training).
9. Support functional literacy programmes among the elected women.

10. Support mentoring by senior elected leaders to support younger women.
11. Organise exposure visits of elected women and women's groups to higher level offices (block / district) and line departments for building rapport and learn from other best practices.
12. Organise information fairs on government programmes, procedures and rules at cluster, block and district level. .
13. Organise community radio programmes for capacity building of elected representatives.
14. Organise intensive training programme on developmental communications, radio communications technology, script writing, multi-media use development and management of the programme. Select women for training as performers and as reporters for the radio serial, and organise training programmes by resource agencies.
15. Publicise the radio programme through local newspapers and pamphlet announcements in key public places at regular intervals. Air the radio programme. Organise feedback sessions at cluster levels at regular intervals.
16. Production of video docu-drama for mass awareness building on PRI.
17. Support community education campaign using posters, films, brochure, informal leaders (religious leaders) and traditional art puppet show, traditional local song, traditional drama for mobilising elected women, women's groups and gram sabha for gender sensitive local planning.
18. Organising gram sabhas/ palli sabhas/ward meetings by gram panchayats with women taking a leadership role in the conduct of the meeting.

Immediate Objective- 2

To strengthen existing networks of women in local governance and establish new ones.

Activities

1. Identify women's organisations and NGOs to organise and establish a network among them on women in local governance at different levels.
2. Support closer collaboration between NGOs, media, activists, other political institutions and the government.
3. Set up elected women's forum in each state with few active representations from each district including elected women at three tiers, women's groups and make a state level forum.
4. Organise regular meetings of this forum with policy makers.
5. Networking of women across the States and workshops with policy makers.
6. Organise perspective-building workshops for media on local governance and gender sensitive governance.

Immediate objective – 3

To strengthen research documentation and publications on women in local governance and ensure wide dissemination to improve replication.

Activities

1. Support NGOs and research institutes to conduct studies on women's participation and leadership in local governance and decision-making and gender impact studies.

2. Building a resource base on good practices on women in politics in print and through production of video and audiocassettes.
3. Dissemination of the information, case studies, good practices through websites, workshops.
4. Support journalists (Regional and National) to write articles, success stories of the women, those who are in the local politics so that other women will be encouraged to come forward in the politics.
5. Assessment of the national and state capacity building plans and policies for Panchayati Raj functionaries to tailor them according to the lessons learned in the project.
6. Organise wide consultation (regional/national) on national training strategy of government of India and the fund allocation.

8. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

One district has been selected in the State for the capacity building programme and this process will be catalysed by the selected NGO implementing partner. The training institution will collaborate with this NGO in the selected district.

Within a selected district, block level resource teams could be created with functions of community mobilization and leadership development of women. A district level resource team could be created to support information sharing, networking and exchange of experiences. This process will be facilitated by the NGO implementing partner. These resource centres could also support the existing District Planning Committees or the Block Panchayats in planning, capacity building and monitoring of plans focused for women's development. Interface with other existing groups or networks should also be strengthened in this process.

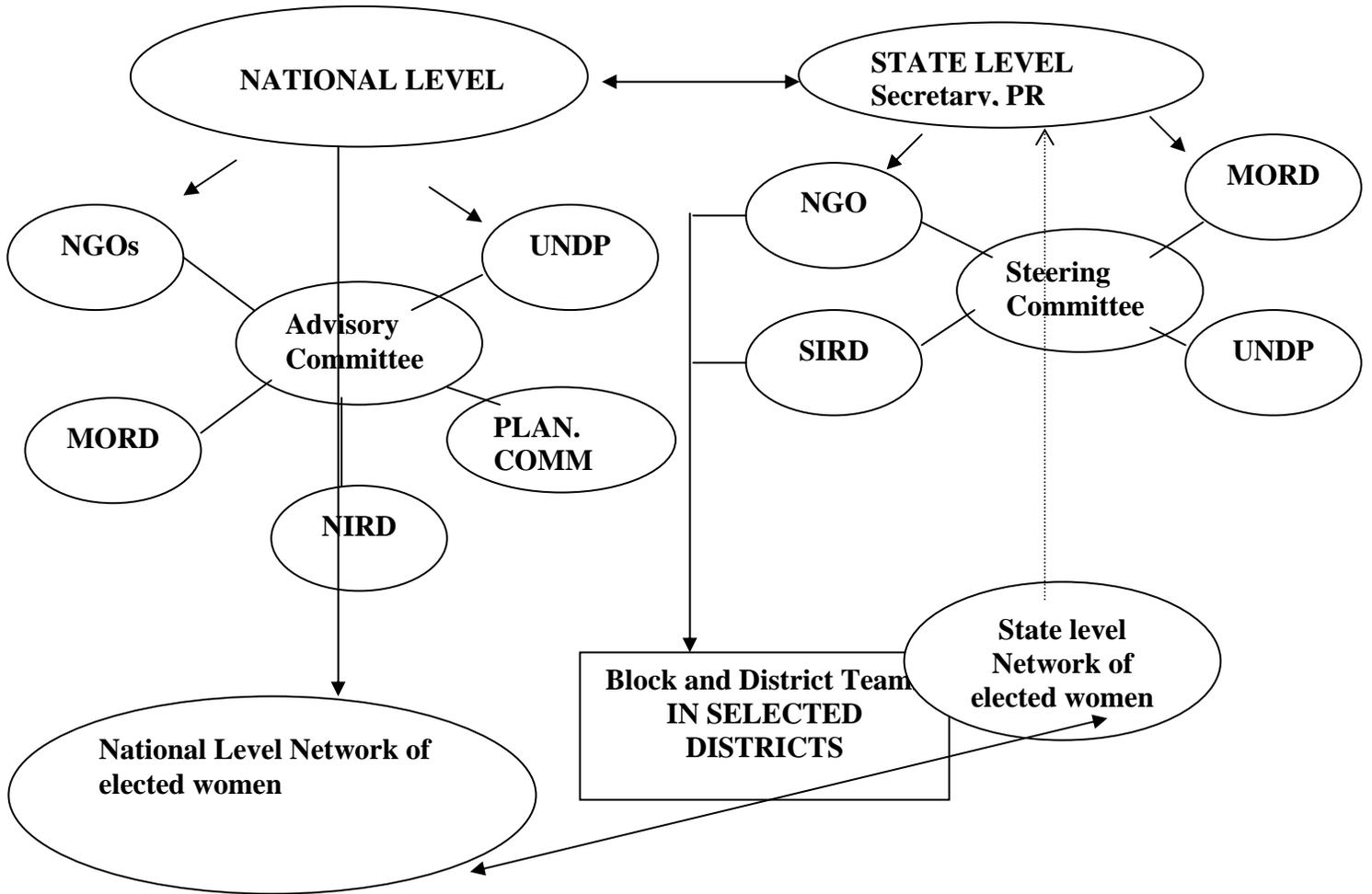
District and the block level teams (multi-stakeholder) could comprise of panchayat members esp. Zilla Panchayat members, block officials, teachers, representative of women's groups, representatives of SC and ST women, and serviced by selected NGOs. These will work with elected women's forum in that particular district. This team will also throw up issues that require training and other policy resolutions at a higher level.

At the State level, a Steering Committee will be set up comprising State Government, SIRD, NGOs, Ministry of Rural Development and UNDP to guide the strategic processes of the programme. From the state, the **State Panchayati Raj/Rural Development Secretary** would be the **focal point** from the State Government to pull together lessons from the implementation of the programme and ensure the engagement of State Government in the capacity building policy dialogue.

At the national level, an advisory body comprising NGOs, Ministry of Rural Development, UNDP, Planning Commission and NIRD will be set up to give policy directions on the National capacity building plans/policies for PRIs and guide the programmatic roadmap.

A national level network of elected women leaders will be created to create a network of the women across the States.

IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS



Budget for Capacity Building of Elected Women Representatives and Functionaries of PRIs (per district)

Capacity Building of PRI Representatives

List of NGOs¹ (for State level project implementation, and for participation in the State Steering Committee)

S. No	Name of State	NGO for project implementation	Steering Committee at the state level (proposed)
1	Maharashtra	Aalochana, Pune	State Dept. of PR/RD Department, MORD, UNDP, SIRD and NGOs such as Vacha Charitable Trust; Research and Support Centre for Development
2	Rajasthan	Unnati, Jodhpur	State Dept. of PR/RD Department, MORD, UNDP, SIRD and NGOs such as Shanti Maitri Mission; Society for Sustainable Development
3	Madhya Pradesh	Eklavya-Samavesh, Bhopal	State Dept. of PR/RD Department, MORD, UNDP, SIRD and NGOs such as Samarthan; Mahila Chetna Manch
4	Uttaranchal	Bhubaneswari Mahila SEWA Ashram, Anjali Sen	State Dept. of PR/RD Department, MORD, UNDP, SIRD and NGOs such as Uttaranchal Jan Jagriti Sansthan; Mussoorie Gramin Vikas Sansthan (M.G.V.S.)
5	Chhattisgarh	Path, Mahasamund	State Dept. of PR/RD Department, MORD, UNDP, SIRD and NGOs such as Debate, Mahila Shikshan Prakashan Kendra
6	Jharkhand	Integrated Development Foundation (IDF), Ranchi	State Dept. of PR/RD Department, MORD, UNDP, SIRD and NGOs such as Jan Utthan Samiti; Lok Prerna
7	Orissa	Institute of Socio Economic Development (ISED), Bhubaneswar	State Dept. of PR/RD Department, MORD, UNDP, SIRD and NGOs such as Gram Vikas, Vikalp
8	Uttar Pradesh	Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra, Lucknow	State Dept. of PR/RD Department, MORD, UNDP, SIRD and NGOs such as Shayog, Uttar Pradesh Voluntary Action Network
9	Bihar	Centre for Communication Resources Development (CENCORED), Patna	State Dept. of PR/RD Department, MORD, UNDP, SIRD and NGOs such as PRAXIS, Lok Jagriti Kendra
10	Haryana	Social Centre for Rural Initiative and Advancement	State Dept. of PR/RD Department, MORD, UNDP, SIRD and NGOs such as Centre for Advancement of Village Economy, Society for Rural Economy and Technology

¹ Most of these NGOs have been assessed for their work on PRIs in a study undertaken by Planning Commission.

