

Analyzing the Strengths and Weaknesses of Women Elected Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions in Rajasthan



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Berlin



Shiv Charan Mathur Social Policy Research Institute
Jaipur, India

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANM	Auxiliary Nurse Mid-wife
BDO	Block Development Officer
BRGF	Backward Region Grant Fund
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CHC	Community Health Centre
DDP	Desert Development Programme
DPAP	Drought Prone Area Programme
EWPRs	Elected Women Panchayats Representatives
FAQs	Frequently Ask Questions
IGPR& GVS	Indira Gandhi Panchayati Raj & Gramin Vikas Sansthan
KPA	Knowledge, Practices and Attitude
LAMPS	Land & Agriculture Multipurpose Society
MGNREGS	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
NGO	Non Government Organization
OBC	Other Backward Class
PHC	Primary Health Centre
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institution
PS	Panchayat Samities
RD&PR	Rural Development and Panchayati Raj
RGSY	Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Yojana
RLS	Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung
SC	Scheduled Caste
SCM SPRI	Shiv Charan Mathur Social Policy Research Institute

SFC	State Finance Commission
SHG	Self Help Group
ST	Scheduled Tribe
TFC	Thirteenth Finance Commission
TIA	Training Impact Assessment
TMD	Training Module & Material Development
TNA	Training Needs Assessment
ToTs	Training of Trainers
TPRIs	Training of PRIs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WAD	Women And Development
WID	Women In Development
ZP	Zila Parishad

FOREWORD

Panchayati Raj was the dream of Mahatma Gandhi in a free and modern India. He strongly felt that unless the villages in India developed along with cities the country will not be a prosperous State. However, his ideas were never followed in free India and the country preferred a top down model for development. Nehru was the main architect of modern India. Within a decade of independence he realized that Mahatma Gandhi was right and asked the States to introduce the Panchayati Raj System in India. On October 2, 1959, the three tier system of representative bodies at the village, block and district levels, was inaugurated at Nagaur in Rajasthan. However, the model which was approved was neither here nor there. It depended totally on the State Governments which decided when to hold elections and when not. There was no Constitutional pressure for holding elections at regular intervals. There was hardly any financial support. Women were only on the fringe as co-opted members and hardly ever attended any meetings.

Rajiv Gandhi was the first top leader of the country who realized the importance of women in politics and development. Being young and having heard of UN led national and international movements for women empowerment and slogans like Women in Development (WID) and Women and Development (WAD), he gave the largest number of tickets to women in the 1985 election to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies. These elections were the ones in which the largest number of women became representatives in the Parliamentary and State Assemblies. Before him, the Indira National Congress had never bothered about bringing women into politics in a major way. Nehru had always opposed any reservations for women even before independence. Indira Gandhi was also not inclined towards a serious political role for women through reservations. It was Rajiv who was a truly gender sensitive politician and conceived the idea of a 33.3% of reservation for women. He felt that he could implement his idea at least at the panchayat level where powerful male politics did have much interest. Unfortunately, he died and it was only after his death that the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments could see the light of the day.

The 73rd Constitution Amendment has accorded new status and signification to the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Initially the State Government like other states accorded a 33 per cent reservation for women but increased it to 50 per cent in 2010 Panchayat elections at all the three levels of Sarpanch, Pradhan and Zila Pramukh. The present percentage reservation varies from state to state in India but Rajasthan Government took this historical decision to enhance the role and involvement of women in local self governance also.

A lot has been studied on the status of women in general and panchayats in particular. The Institute has decided to have a pilot study in a few districts of the state spread in different regions to find out to what extent fifty per cent reservation has helped rural women to come forward and participate in Panchayat activities for the development of rural masses of the village.

Since the first elections with reserved seats for women, three more elections have taken place. There has been a noticeable change in the development of women as grassroots level. They are now more vociferous in their arguments. A lesser number is accompanied by their husbands now and they have begun to network with their colleagues. Hard core politics has also entered at the district and block levels with its shortfalls. Unfortunately, the bureaucracy and the political masters are still reluctant to allow full potential for development to the PRIs. The struggle is on and it will be interesting to keep a watch for the future shape of the role of women in PRIs.

(Dr. Sudhir Varma)
Director
SCM SPRI, Jaipur

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Institute for the last few years has been working on important issues concerning gender prevalent in the social environment and their impact on women.

The Institute has been working on projects related to Rural Development and Panchayati Raj for the last many years. Recently it organized a two-day work-shop on awareness of elected women representatives to Panchayati Raj elections of 2010, about five transferred subjects of health, education, women & child development, social justice and agriculture to Panchayats. The institute is indebted to the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung (RLS), Berlin, Germany, who entrusted the institute for taking up such an important study. We gratefully acknowledge the invaluable support of Ms Sonja Blasig, Project Manager South Asia, RLS, Berlin and the Indian Office at New Delhi headed by Dr. Carsten Krinn, Regional Director South Asia along with Mr. Rajiv, Coordinator, Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung (RLS).

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(Manish Tiwari)
Joint Director
SCM SPRI, Jaipur

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Shiv Charan Mathur Social Policy Research Institute undertook a study entitled ‘Analyzing the Strengths and Weaknesses of Women Elected Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions in Rajasthan’, in collaboration with the Rosa-Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS), Berlin, Germany, in 2011. The purpose of the project was to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions who have been elected because of the reservations provided in the 73rd amendment of the Indian Constitution and to explore the actions which can improve their participation. The major findings and issues which have come out of the study are summarized as under.

1. It has come out that the reservation policy of the state to provide 50 per cent seats to women in Panchayati Raj has been effective at all levels - Sarpanchs, Pradhans and Zila Pramukhs. More than 50 per cent women have been elected in the 2010 Panchayat Elections. Keeping the ‘intention of policy in view for weaker sections of the society, most of the elected women representatives belonged to OBC category, followed by SC category. Only Udaipur, out of the five selected districts, was tribal district.
2. Most Sarpanchs and Pradhans were found to be older than 40 years of age and Zila Pramukhs above 50 years, showing that younger generation has not yet taken over at the panchayat level.
3. It has also come out very clearly that nuclear family system is spreading in rural Rajasthan also. Majority of women representatives live in a single family which has both negative and positive aspects. From the income point of view the monthly income varied between ₹ 10,000 and ₹ 60,000.
4. A disturbing feature was poor educational level of elected women representatives. This may be owing to the older age of these women. During conversations with the Sarpanchs, Pradhans and Zila Pramukhs, a large number of them did not reply to questions by themselves and the answers were given by their husbands or male relatives. The interviews suggested that in order to participate fully in the Panchayat institutions, their economic independence and family support were necessary.
5. A number of issues emerged from the answers of PRIs about the trainings given to them after their elections. They stated that trainings were not effective and had no practical contents. They desired more information on the law, rules and regulations, finance and accounts and administration. On development, they required more information on water resources, information technology and social justice projects to be able to help their people in a better way. In order of priority, majority of them suggested development of

infrastructure, social justice and water resources development as their targets during their tenure in the PRIs.

6. Women representatives were aware about major programmes like MGNREGS and watershed projects like DPAP and DDP. They mentioned about their benefits in the area but were critical about corruption and the types of work being done in these schemes.
7. Women representatives suggested that vacant posts in the department of health and education should be filled on priority to provide basic health amenities and education, particularly to girls, in their villages.
8. Many Sarpanchs, Pradhans and Zila Pramukhs blamed lack of administrative support and no powers given to them to deal with government departments, particularly the recently transferred five departments to Panchayats. Lack of budget from SFC, TFC and MLA funds was another reason for their not working effectively in Panchayati Raj System.
9. On the basis of findings and observations of this study, it is concluded that reservation for women in Panchayats should continue with encouragement to youngsters. Further, greater attention should be given on education for girls so they take part in local governance with confidence. In Panchayat meetings only elected women representatives should be allowed to take part and put up their own views.
10. Much more attention is needed on training programmes and contents of training modules. These should be in local language, simple with more audio-visual content and emphasizing practical aspects. Greater attention is needed on legal and financial aspects related to Panchayat matters so that Sarpanchs can take proper and independent decisions.
11. Coordination and cooperation of Government Departments and district authorities need to be ensured for elected women representatives to perform their role and responsibilities effectively. For this, a system approach is required.
12. It also came out that it was necessary that women's groups and NGOs working on women on development issues should work very closely with the elected women and institutional frameworks need to be developed for it like the women and development programme which ran very successfully in Rajasthan. Only then can the intent of the reservation be realized.





INTRODUCTION

The social justice system of 'Panchayat' is an age old system which was followed in rural areas of India. 'Panchayat' meaning 'Five' wise-men of the village were meant to decide on local complaints of the people, without any legal binding. Still people accepted the judgment of the 'Panchayat' members as they were considered as verdict of the *Parmeshwar* i.e. 'God'. The decision of 'Panchayat' was considered unbiased and was accepted by all members of the society. Mahatma Gandhi also advocated such a system for a vast country like India in his dream of Gram Swarajya (village/local governance).

In 1993, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments empowered structural reforms of Panchayati Raj Institutions in India. This provided 33 per cent seat reservation for women, not only in the general category but also the earlier reserved categories of scheduled castes and tribes in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The Constitutional amendments were perceived to provide a legal framework for women as earlier the pattern of cooptive of women at the there levels of panchayati raj. The step was meant to overcome the age old looking down up on social attitude towards women and their very low educational level. Their new involvement in local government was a challenge for the men-dominated panchayati raj and urban local bodies.

Panchayati Raj in India

In ancient times the Panchayat system was prevalent in undivided India and Nepal. The word 'Panchayat' was mentioned even in the 'Rig Veda'. As per mythology, in the era of *Ramayan*, Panchayats were protectors of rural people and had a say in the kings court (*Rajya Sabha*). This

system is mentioned in the *Mahabharat* as well when the Panchayat was empowered to collect taxes on behalf of the king.

During the dynasties of Maurya, Gupta and Harshvardhan, there is a mention of an effective Panchayat system. The Chinese traveler then Huensang also wrote about the Panchayat system in India. In the *Aine-a-Akbari*, Panchayats have been mentioned as an important part of the settlement process of local disputes. In the British Raj, a Societies Registration Act was passed in 1860 to control Panchayats. Similarly, British rulers made under Lord Mayo, the Governor General and in 1882 by Lord Rippen to study and control Panchayats.

Mahatma Gandhi, during the freedom struggle was aware of the fact that to unite people, self governance and Panchayati Raj was vital. His slogan was 'Gram Swaraj' (village self-governance). After India's Independence, a Panchayati Raj Act was passed and the Panchayat system started functioning. These were, however, almost defunct as they had no Constitutional status until 1993. On 23rd April, Panchayati Raj Institutes gained a Constitutional status through the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992.

Panchayati Raj in Rajasthan

Rajasthan was the first state where the 3-Tier Panchayati Raj system was introduced on the recommendations of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee. It was inaugurated by the late Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru on 2nd October, 1959 at Nagaur.

The main objective of Panchayati Raj was to develop a system of development and democratic decentralization of powers with the aim to foster rapid social and economic development and prompt justice. Some of the social developmental measures included:

- a) Improving school infrastructure and quality of education.
- b) Increase water and electricity availability.
- c) Reduce the occurrence of communicable diseases.
- d) Increase income generation per household.

Article 40 of the Constitution of India provides that all the states shall undertake steps to organize village Panchayats and these Panchayats would be empowered with necessary authority to enable them to function as units of self-governance. The Panchayati Raj system of Rajasthan consists of a three-tier structure:

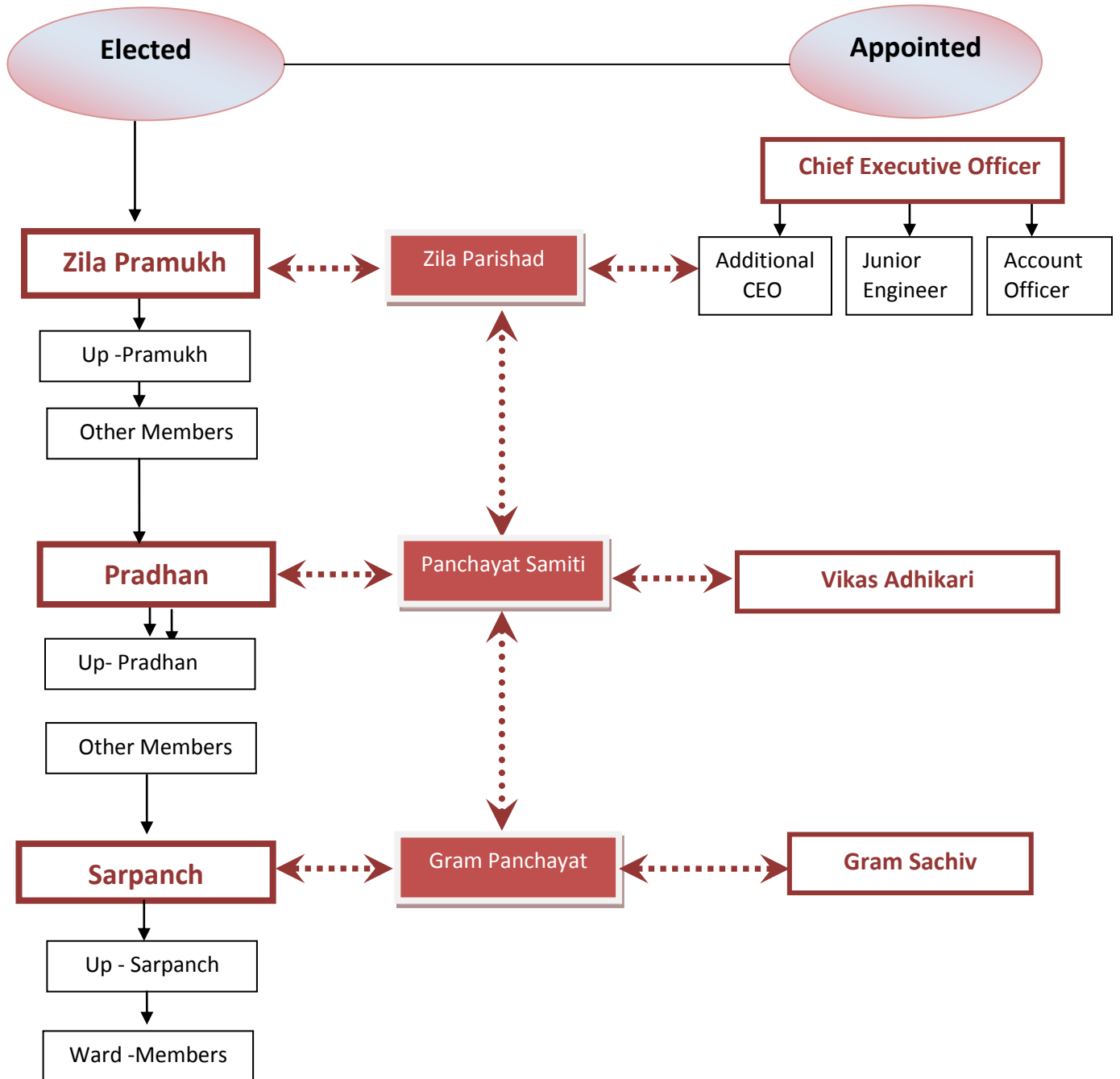
- I. **The Gram Panchayat:** All the voters of a village form a Gram Sabha which is responsible for the working of Gram Panchayat. A minimum population of 500 is constitute a Gram Panchayat and at some place more than one (two) villages constitute a Gram Panchayat. A Gram Panchayat is headed by a Sarpanch.
- II. **The Panchayat Samiti:** A number of Gram Panchayats are included in a Panchayat Samiti which is at a block level. Whereas, the Pradhan is the elected head and the Block Development Officer (BDO) is the nodal officer.
- III. **The Zila Parishad:** The Zila Parishad or Zila Panchayat is the highest body at the district level. This body controls and coordinates all activities of Panchayats in its jurisdiction. The Zila Pramukh is the elected head and the District Development Officer/Executive Officer of the district is the nodal officer.

In Rajasthan, Panchayats, Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads were assigned 33, 58 and 19 subjects respectively by the Rajasthan Panchayat Raj Act (1994). However, they were subject to conditions laid down by the government.

The 33 districts of the state are divided into 241 Tehsils, 249 Panchayat Samitis and 9,177 Village Panchayats. Currently, elections to the Rajasthan Panchayats are held once in five years and are supervised by the State Election Commission. The last Panchayat elections were held in 2010.

Figure 1.1 below provides the structure of the three-tier system of the Panchayati Raj and also indicates the administrative support structure that accompanies it.

Figure 1.1
Structure of Panchayati Raj



The population of the state, as per 2011 census is 6.86 crore (68.60 million) and population density of 201. Male and female literacy rates are 80.51 per cent and 52.66 per cent, respectively. According to the census of India, 2011-Rajasthan series 9, of the total 33 districts in the state, 15 were identified as gender sensitive due to the adverse statistics (below national average) reported in these districts as regards sex ratio and literacy levels in census 2001. Occurrence of droughts is a common feature which greatly affects livelihood of the masses and creates serious problems of drinking water for human being and large animal populations. Thereby increasing drudgery for women and keeping them away from literacy, access to health and decision making in the villages.

The last Panchayat elections were held in Jan-Feb., 2010. The scenario of elected representatives is presented as under for the state.

Table: 2.1
Number of PRIs in 2010 elections in Rajasthan

PRIs	General	SC	ST	OBC	Women	Male	Total	% Women
Zila Parishad	9	6	5	13	19	14	33	57.57
Pradhan	77	42	46	83	134	114	248	54.03
Sarpanch	4462	1592	1759	1364	4824	4353	9177	52.56

Source: The State Election Commission, Government of Rajasthan, 2010

The Table above shows that women are also getting elected in non-reserved constituencies.

Table 2.2 shows the total number of Sarpanchs in five districts selected for the study. The highest number of 459 was in Alwar district and in Udaipur there were 323 tribal Sarpanchs. Ganganagar had no tribal Sarpanch. The breakup of PRI is shown in table 2.3 for the Rajasthan state as per 2010 elections. Out of total 9166 Sarpanchs, the highest number of 3690 candidates from OBC category won the election. This was followed by ST, General and SC category of candidates. This also shows that women candidates also won on non-reserved seats.

Table: 2.2**Number of Sarpanchs elected in Five selected Districts of Rajasthan in the 2010 Panchayat Elections**

District	General	SC	ST	OBC	Total
Ajmer	62	44	8	135	249
Alwar	76	92	61	230	459
Ganganagar	40	126	0	137	303
Jodhpur	79	56	9	176	320
Udaipur	58	18	323	56	455

Source: The State Election Commission, Government of Rajasthan, 2010

Table: 2.3**Reservation of Seats and Category wise Elected Representatives**

Post	Reservation					Elected						
	Gen	SC	ST	OBC	Total	Gen	SC	ST	OBC	UN-Filled	Term Not Due	Total
Zila Pramukh	16	6	4	7	33	9	6	5	13	0	0	33
Pradhan	121	41	42	44	248	77	42	46	83	0	0	248
Zila Parishad Member	513	179	163	158	1013	254	190	185	384	0	0	1013
Panchayat Samiti Member	2729	929	825	790	5273	1240	1034	956	2041	2	0	5273
Sarpanch	4459	1590	1757	1360	9166	1813	1681	1970	3690	2	10	9177

Source: The State Election Commission, Government of Rajasthan, 2010

A general picture of Panchayat elections held in 2005 (33.3 % reservations for women) and 2010 (50% reservation for women) is shown in table 2.4. This clearly shows that in 2010 elections, 3.31 per cent more women cast their votes as compared to the 2005 election. As far as category wise

women who contested these elections, more number of women contested 2010 elections, OBC being the biggest category followed by SC and ST candidates. Similar are the results for elected women representatives in 2010 election. This shows emerging awareness and interest of women in Panchayat elections in Rajasthan.

Table: 2.4

Summary of Data – Panchayat Elections

		Year of Election		% Variation From the Last Election	
		2005	2010	2005	2010
Electorates	Total	28180	29226	14.35	3.71
	Male('000)	14729	15330	13.92	4.08
	Female('000)	13451	13896	14.83	3.31
	%Male	52.27	52.45	0.38	0.34
	%Female	47.73	47.55	0.42	-0.38
Contesting Candidate	No.	15308	15677	13.35	2.41
Category wise Contesting candidate (Female)	No.	5511	7897	21.44	43.30
	Gen	1294	1964	-16.25	51.78
	SC	1170	1635	38.13	39.74
	ST	959	1325	30.12	38.16
	OBC	2088	2973	48.19	42.39
Category wise Elected Candidate (Female)	No.	2013	2796	5.89	38.90
	Gen	456	678	-42.64	48.68
	SC	409	544	17.87	33.01
	ST	368	488	26.90	32.61
	OBC	780	1086	66.31	39.23
Elected Pradhan	No.	917	882	0.00	4.64

Source: The State Election Commission, Government of Rajasthan, 2005 & 2010

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Varma (1992) in his book “Women’s Development : Policy and Administration” stated that “the scale of status quality are totally out of balance for a Rajasthani woman. If invisibility is graded, she is probably the country’s most invisible woman. If access is the criterion, she is virtually isolated from health care, literacy and employment. Going by the definition of status, in social ranking, she is the worst in the country in terms of power, prestige and esteem”.

In April 1993, the Seventy-third and Seventy-fourth Constitutional Amendments, were made in the Constitution, reforming the structure of local Governance. In the context of the new legislation, 33 per cent of the seats in local government Panchayati Raj Institution (PRIs) - have been reserved for women as well as for SC and ST. These amendments have raised hopes for genuine decentralization of decision-making process and the increased participation of women in local government. A National Seminar on Women in Panchayati Raj was held on 27-29 in April 1995 at Bangalore. At this, Dr. Vina Majumdar delivered the Keynote Address and stated that “the task of defending the Indian democracy has descended on the women’s movement. It has acquired the task of strengthening Indian democracy and its foundation. It has taken on the task of defending the Indian Constitution as it is meant to be”.

At this National Seminar, a group of activists from Rajasthan - presented a study on ‘Women in Panchayati Raj; the case of Rajasthan’. This work was coordinated by Kavita Srivastava and others. Some of the observations made in this report are summarized as under:

- i) The analysis shows that for the first time large number of rural women have got elected on party tickets. This will obviously change the character of the parties. It is now dependent on the women to change the structure of the parties from within. But what is very interesting is that the BJP which till now did not have a rural base in Rajasthan, got an opportunity to strike roots through women and tribals.
- ii) It is very clear that the parties picked up those women who could bring those votes. It was not because of her work with women that they wanted her, but because her image would get them votes, and they could have a *de facto* control on her.

According to Batliwala (1995) empowerment process is generally, though not always, externally induced for the simple reason that there is a trigger required to set the process in motion and since one of its key aspects is challenging the dominant ideology which has been internalized, you require, very often a trigger from outside. Further, very importantly, empowerment must as a process aimed to generate new notions and new understanding of power, and of the use of power, so that one does not end up replicating old models and old abuses of power and it is important that it must lead to a kind of globalizing consciousness and awareness where local issues and their linkages with global issues become clearer to people.

Buch (2000) presented a paper to the Centre for Women's Development Studies on "Women's Experience in Panchayats : the Emerging Leadership of Rural Women". She opined that rural women have shown that they can use the new political space created for them. Further, there are markers of change, empowerment and leadership, despite the multiple handicaps and burdens, they have initiated and which they continue. She suggested that it is the state and the civil society which have to support them in organization, training, net working with information package and questioning the myths. They must also bring up data and experience without bias but with empathy and perseverance, she concluded.

Sharma and Anita (2007) stated that even after 12 years of the enforcement of the 73rd Amendment, involving the revolutionary change of feminizing grassroot policy by bringing in lakhs

of elected women in local self governance, these elected women representatives still experience vulnerability of atomization, isolation and male-dominant subversion of political cultural milieu.

To counter-act against this, Rajasthan has launched the 'Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhiyan' in partnership with the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and the National Commission for Women. In fact, on the capacity building front of PRIs, Rajasthan has emerged as the model state to have actively followed in letter and spirit the 27 resolutions adopted on the theme of capacity building and training of panchayats at the VII Round Table Conference.

Mehta (2009) in his study on "Empowerment of Women Through Participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions" made the following conclusions :

- i) A fairly large proportion of women representatives of PRIs are still lacking the opportunities to participate in outdoor activities, including different development programmes and activities of village Panchayats.
- ii) The rights and duties of women Pradhans which are constitutionally assigned to them for strengthening their empowerment are being used by their male wards. Even certain policy decisions of the village Panchayats are being undertaken by male family members on behalf of women Pradhans.
- iii) Illiteracy, lack of motivation and freedom for participating in activities of village panchayats and lack of awareness about their constitutional rights and duties were seen as the most important reasons behind the lack of improvement in the socio-economic status and empowerment of women in different village panchayats.
- iv) The perception of a little over half of the women representatives of PRIs was that providing an opportunity to women for representing village panchayats will certainly prove a successful intervention of the government for bringing social and economic empowerment among women in rural areas in the near future provided that some concrete efforts are undertaken for changing the attitude and ill feeling which prevail

among men against women and existing social evils disfavoring and limiting the freedom of women for participating in different activities.

- v) Initiatives towards making suitable changes in the criteria fixed for the identification of village Panchayats and wards to be reserved for women candidates, maximizing the participation of women to oversee the implementation general and women specific development programmes at various stages of their implementation as well as taking up more training programmes to promote awareness among women about their constitutional rights and duties were among the most significant options suggested by Pradhans and the members for achieving the desired level of importance in the socio-economic status and empowerment of women.

A “Study on the Participation of Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions” was conducted by Kaul and Sahni (2009). The findings of the study revealed that neither the reservation for women nor their actual presence in the panchayat have increased the sensitivity of these bodies to the problems related to rural women. Women who are elected are not always treated with due respect. Many elected women complained that their suggestions were not considered nor were they consulted while decisions were being made. Some felt that their views were ignored only because they were women. At times they were pressurized by their husbands to approve the decisions made by the male dominated Panchayats. Kalash *et al.* (2009) concluded that age, education, family type, mass media exposure, social participation and urban contact have significant association with the performance of women panchayat members. However, caste and income have no significant association with performance levels of women panchayat members. The study was done in the Sikar district of Rajasthan.

“Rajasthan Patrika” dated September 21, 2011, suggested that in Rajasthan villages sarpanch husbands were losing their hold on decisions making as more and more educated women were coming forward in Panchayati Raj. In fact, in rural areas, women are taking it the beginning of their political career. Further, the present fourth generation women representatives, both well educated as well as less educated, are coming forward for the development of their Constituencies.

Summing up

Since the Constitutional amendments, a lot has been done to empower rural women through the vehicle of Panchayati Raj. From a 33 per cent reservation to 50 per cent reservation along with better educational levels have changed the political scenario in the villages. There are, however, a number of gaps because of which the desired benefits and goals are yet to be achieved. Women Sarpanchs even today are dominated by male members of the family to take decisions as per their desire. Therefore, more efforts are required by the state and the civil society to enable the elected women representatives to perform their constitutional role in an effective manner.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study was initiated to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of the EWPRs. It was necessary to design the study in such a manner that the data were collected on all the aspects. The research methodology was designed to achieve the expected outcome of the project. The major objectives of the study were:

1. **Project Objectives:** Following were the objectives of the project –
 - (I) To assess the situation and gaps in empowerment process at the Panchayati Raj level
 - (a) Women Representatives background
 - (b) KPA of the women elected representatives
 - (II) To study and identify gaps in the present training modules for the Panchayati Raj representatives –
 - (a) Study and Analyse the content of present training modules vis-à-vis the actual training needs
 - (b) Study the state training delivery system
 - (III) To assess the requirements for gender sensitization of the elected male and also of elected women members of the Panchayats as well as the bureaucracy at the PRI level
 - (a) Examining attitudes of officials towards women representatives
 - (b) Backward, forward and lateral linkages

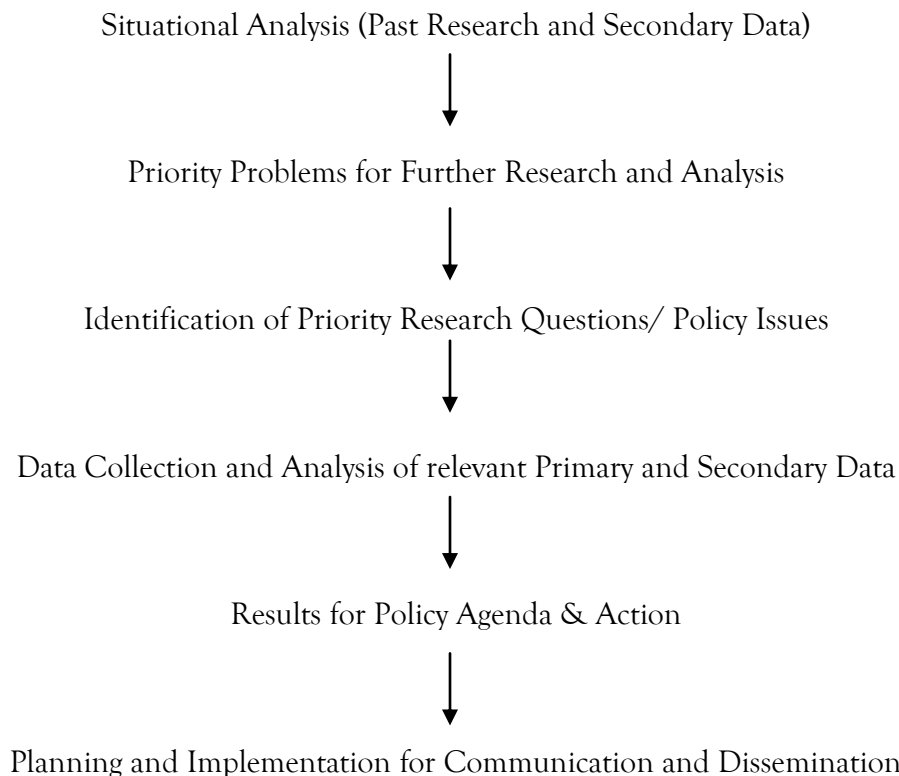
- (IV) To understand the need and context of training women representatives
- (V) To give recommendations (i) whether the prevailing system needs to be sensitized to help empowering the women elected representatives; (ii) gender sensitization of officials; (iii) awareness generation among women elected representatives; and (iv) what concrete measures need to be taken for empowering the women panchayati raj representatives.

The project activities included Orientation of the Project Staff, Collection of Secondary and Primary Data, Preparing the Schedules and Interview Guide, Framing of criteria for the selection of sample representatives, training of field investigators, supervised field investigation, data collection, entry, coding, cleaning, analysis and preparation of the report.

Methodology & Strategy

i Research approach

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCH AND ACTION



As indicated in the research diagram, the initial stages of the research project dealt with collection of relevant data, which included information from secondary sources and key informants to possess an insight into the present situation in the form of a draft concept paper. The Research and Policy Issues thus identified were then prioritized. The prioritized issues/questions were taken up for an in-depth study during the collection of primary data. Primary data were collected in accordance with the proposed methodology. The data thus collected were analyzed using qualitative and quantitative techniques. The findings were documented.

ii Need and Source of Data

Secondary Data

For macro level investigations, secondary level information/data were collected from all the available sources. Broadly these included; official records, newspaper reports and journals, other research reports, various governmental and non-governmental agencies of the State, This included data on Census Reports, Election Commission Reports, stratification of representatives on the basis of caste, sex and level of literacy. This information helped in assessing the scenario. Further, the data collected was also essential to sampling for collection of primary data.

Primary Data

The data collected from secondary sources was used to select sub-divisions in the given districts on the basis of blocks with women Sarpanchs, Pradhans and Zila Pramukhs, OBC, SC/ST population and the status of women. From the selected blocks, the respondents were chosen on the basis the education, caste and economic status.

Primary data was collected using the interview and observation method. A total of 50 cases were selected in the five districts (10 in each district)¹. The findings were corroborated with the findings of interviews with the male representatives, block and district level interviews. Purposive Stratified sampling was used for this purpose.

Indicators listed for the study are as follows:

General:

- Family Background
- Health
- Education
- Financial Status

Study Related:

- Priorities/Working culture of women
- Needs/requirements of women
- Training modules
- Training needs
- Voters' perception
- Gender favoritism
- Reservation policy
- Need for power among women
- Empowerment of women
- Awareness of overall political scenario
- Difference in priority from that of men
- Problems faced by women at workplace

Field Testing of Questionnaire

Investigators were sent for field testing of the questionnaire. Some pilot questionnaires were filled in order to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. This was done in Jobner block of Jaipur district. The information collected in all formats was analyzed for bringing out inferences.

iii Selection of District and Blocks

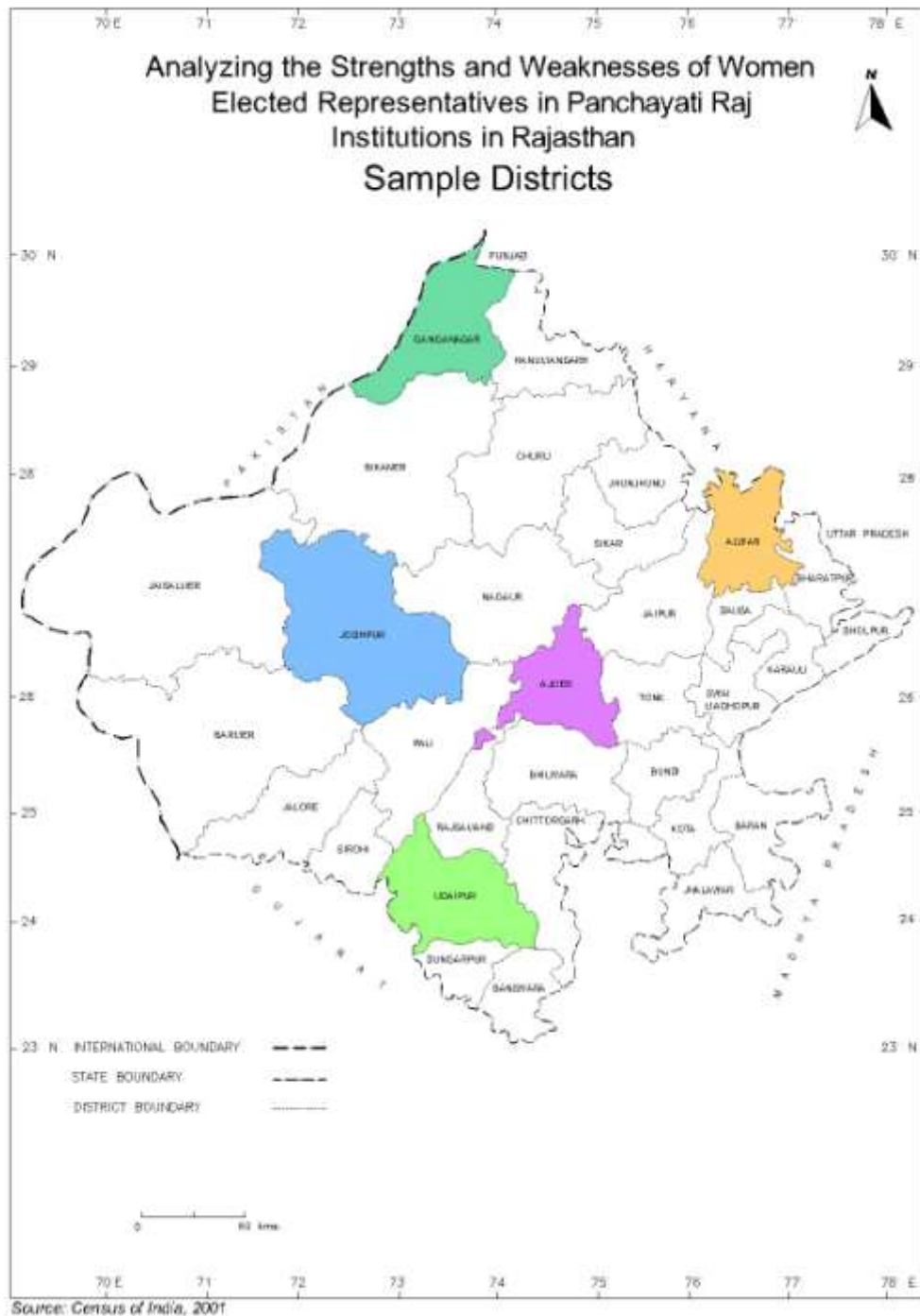
For the study five districts viz, Ganganagar, Ajmer, Jodhpur, Alwar and Udaipur have been selected representing different regions of the state (Fig. 3.1). In order to collect information for the study questionnaires were prepared, focusing on the objectives of the project. Based on these the personal interviews were taken covering 10 women elected representatives (WER) and 5 men elected representatives (MER), and two Pradhans and a Zila Pramukh in five districts of Rajasthan. Besides these, voters' perception about the working of women representatives was also collected.

Table: 3.1

Selections of block

District	Block	Justification
Sri Ganganagar	Sri Ganganagar, Sadulshahar	High SC/OBC population
Ajmer	Masuda, Pisangan	Large rural agrarian population
Jodhpur	Bilada, Balesar	Desert area
Alwar	Thanagaji, Bansur	Industrial
Udaipur	Gogunda, Sarada	High ST population

Figure : 3.1



Identification of research questions: Question were derived from a critical assessment of the project's results and effects.

Tools for Data Collection

(I) The Formats and Questionnaire

Following formats and Questionnaires were developed for field research:

- (i) Format for Women Sarpanchs
- (ii) Format for Male Sarpanchs
- (iii) Format for Voters
- (iv) Format for Women Pradhans
- (v) Format for Zila Pramukhs

Sampling

Table: 3.2

Numbers of Elected Representatives in Sample Districts block wise

District	Block	Zilla Pramukh	Pradhan	Female Sarpanch	Male Sarpanch	Voters
Shri Ganganagar	Sadulshahar	1	1	5	3	16
	Shri Ganganagar		1	5	2	14
Alwar	Thanagaji	1	1	5	3	16
	Bansur		1	5	2	14
Ajmer	Pisangan	1	1	5	3	16
	Masuda		1	5	2	14
Jodhpur	Bilada	1	1	5	3	16
	Balesar		1	5	2	14
Udaipur	Gogunda	1	1	5	3	16
	Sarada		1	5	2	14
		5	10	50	25	150

At each level, the enquiry started with the collection of information about the district. This included the number of women representatives, details about women representatives' socio-economic-geographical status of the constituency etc. Initially a meeting was arranged at the district level with the Zila Pramukh and CEO of Zila Parishad for briefing them about the study. At the next step the blocks with women representatives were identified in accordance with the identified indicators.

The team then approached the Pradhan of the block to make a list of women Sarpanchs on the basis of the identified indicators. It was followed by a research team consisting of a male and a female investigator which interviewed the women Sarpanch. Another member simultaneously had discussions with the voters of the constituency and the members of the gram panchayat.

Dissemination Workshop

A one-day dissemination workshop was organized on 5th December, 2011 at SCM Social Policy Research Institute, Jaipur to discuss the preliminary findings of the research work with various stakeholders and to obtain their views. The meeting was chaired by Ms Mamta Sharma, Chairperson, National Commission for Women and presided by Ms Lad Kumari Jain, Chairperson, State Women Commission alongwith government officials, representatives of RLS, UNICEF, UNDP, representatives of NGOs, social workers and the research team of SCM SPRI.

Participants gave their views about the involvement of women in Panchayati Raj. It was mentioned that women representatives were more honest and think more about social justice programmes. They gave greater attention to drinking water, child care, sanitation and girls education. It was suggested that interference of male family members should be curtained in decision making. Greater attention should be given to training modules which should be flexible to meet the requirement of literate as well as illiterate representatives. There should be effective monitoring of trainings conducted at Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad levels. Women Sarpanchs desired greater emphasis in trainings on legal matters, rules and regulations, finance and accounts and administrative procedures. For a detailed report on the workshop please see Annexure.

PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

The analyses have been made based on interviews with ten female Sarpanchs per district. Thus, data from 50 samples has been tabulated for inference.

Age of Sarpanch

In order to strengthen democracy at grass roots level, it is considered important that young people come forward to serve people. Keeping this in view, an analysis of the age of elected Sarpanchs has been made and presented in Table-4.1. This shows that 60 per cent Sarpanch were above 40 years of age and 40 per cent upto 40 years. Only 22 per cent were upto 30 years of age. In Udaipur district, which is predominantly a tribal area, 60 per cent were upto 40 years and only 20 per cent were above 50 years of age. Political parties and women activists should coax youngsters to participate in panchayati raj.

Table: 4.1

Age - group of Sarpanch of Selected Districts of Rajasthan

	District	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total	%
Age (Years)	<30	4	1	2	2	2	11	22
	31-40	2	1	1	2	3	9	18
	41-50	2	7	5	4	1	19	38
	(>51)	2	1	2	2	4	11	22

Family Structure

Another finding of the study is that even in rural areas joint family system is slowly vanishing. The data reveal that nuclear or single family system (64%) is now more prevalent (Table-4.2). This could be the outcome of development and modernization.

Table: 4.2
Family Structure of Sarpanch

Type of Family	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total	%
Joint	2	2	3	5	6	18	36
Nuclear	8	8	7	5	4	32	64

Income level of the Sarpanch

The performance of an elected sarpanch, particularly female, depends to a great extent on her economic status. The study revealed (Table-4.3) that more than 50 per cent female Sarpanchs had an income between Rs. 10,000 and Rs. 60,000 whereas 12 per cent Sarpanchs had an income of Rs. 100,000 or more. There was no Sarpanch in upper bracket category in Udaipur district and two each were in Jodhpur and Ganganagar districts. A monthly income upto Rs. 10,000 was of 32 per cent Sarpanchs.

Table: 4.3
Income Level of Sarpanch

Monthly Income (Rs.)	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total	%
<10,000	5	1	1	3	6	16	32
10,000-30,000	5	8	5	2	1	21	42
30,001-60,000	0	0	2	2	1	5	10
60,001-90,000	0	0	0	1	1	2	4
>90,001	0	1	2	2	1	6	12

Social Categories

Amongst the social categories of SC, ST and OBC, the highest number of 25 out of a sample of 50 were OBCs (50%). The number of SC and ST Sarpanchs was the same, nine each (Table 4.4). The general category Sarpanchs were only 14 per cent. As expected, in Udaipur 7 out of 10 women Sarpanchs were tribals. Ajmer, Jodhpur and Ganganagar do not have significant tribals.

Table: 4.4

Social Categories of Female Sarpanchs

Caste	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total	%
General	1	2	1	1	2	7	14
Other Backward Class	1	7	8	5	4	25	50
Schedule Castes	1	1	1	4	2	9	18
Schedule Tribes	7	0	0	0	2	9	18

Educational Status

A large number, 60 per cent, Sarpanch were illiterate or literate to the extent to be able to sign their names (Table:4.5). The educational level of women in Rajasthan is low and this is also reflected in the educational level of elected Sarpanchs. Only 5 out of a sample of 50 were secondary/higher secondary. This could also be a factor coming in the way of their performance in a male dominated society.

Table: 4.5

Educational Status of Female Sarpanch

Educational qualification	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total	%
Illiterate	0	0	0	1	1	2	4
Literate	4	7	8	2	7	28	56
Primary	2	0	1	3	0	6	12
Middle	2	2	1	4	0	9	18
Secondary	2	1	0	0	2	5	10

Political Background

It is generally believed that family background always helps in choosing a profession, be it a medical doctor, engineer, lawyer or business person. Similarly, in the political sphere, there are many examples where siblings of politicians adopt politics as their career. Keeping this in view a question on political background was asked. It was revealed that 52 per cent female Sarpanchs had no such political background whereas 48 per cent came from families of politicians (Table-4.6). Although not a majority, but 48 percent is a large number and proves the point made in the beginning of the constitutional amendments of 1992 that they would take political, dirty or otherwise, to the ground level and would give rise to political bickerings and hamper real development work which would go totally against the historical role of the unbiased panchayats and the doctrine of Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swarajaya in the real sense of word.

Table: 4.6

Political Background of Female Sarpanchs

		Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total	%
Political background	Yes	6	6	4	4	4	24	48
	No	4	4	6	6	6	26	52

Who answered Questions

It is important that the person who is interviewed provides his/her own answers. It helps assessing the performance of a person and his own understanding of the issue and, therefore, getting relevant information for right inferences. As seen in Table-4.7 that 72 per cent woman Sarpanchs either did not speak at all (60%) or partially participated (12%). Thus, their own concepts were not available and answers were based on male members understanding. This does not point to a greater personal involvement or empowerment of women representatives in the panchayati raj. Only 28 per cent women Sarpanchs, answered themselves. The Table also shows that tribal women in Udaipur are far better than their counterparts in more developed districts like Ganganagar and Alwar as far as understanding their roles is concerned. In Jodhpur, the results can be attributed to extremely low literacy of women in the rural areas. The fact that tribal women have

been in the fore front of development at the panchayat level has been brought out in many other studies also. This is a serious matter and such a situation needs to be corrected. Obviously, the husband / male family member continues to be the *de facto* Sarpanch. It is also possible that women are still not able to converse on these matters because they lack conversation skills for the purpose.

Table: 4.7

Performance of Women Sarpanchs

		Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total	%
Who Answered Questions	Themselves	5	3	0	3	3	14	28
	Husband/Relative	3	6	9	6	6	30	60
	Husband/Relative	2	1	1	1	1	6	12

Whether you were elected as a result of the Reservation Policies

The major aim of the reservation policy for women in Panchayati Raj is to give them an opportunity to lead the village level development comprehensively. It is expected that it would also give a greater pressure to women related development programmes which were being neglected by a male. It is, however, a moot point to examine, whether a 50% reservation and a flood of women elected representatives have really helped them in real, measurable empowerment and raised their status and esteem in the society through the power to lead the development process and if it is still a dream, how long will it take to fulfill it. Out of 50 women Sarpanch 47 were elected because of the reservation policies (Table-4.8).

Table: 4.8

Impact of Reservation Policy

	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total
Yes	9	10	8	10	10	47
No	1	0	2	0	0	3

VIEWS OF THE STAKEHOLDERS

THE ZILA PRAMUKH

Zila Pramukh is the head of the Zila Parishad. The study selected only women headed Zila Pramukhs.

General : General aspects of Zila Pramukh are summarized in Table-5.1.

Age: : At this level generally people with experience and age are elected and this was reflected in this survey also. Out of five Zila Pramukhs, 4 were above 40 years of age.

Type of family : As mentioned earlier, 80 per cent Zila Pramukhs had a nuclear family and only one out of five lived in a joint family system. Thus, the pattern at the Sarpanch and Pradhan levels is seen at the district level also. This shows the compulsions of rapid socio-economic changes.

Income : All the five Zila Pramukhs had monthly incomes between Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 90,000. No one was having an income of less than Rs. 10,000 or above Rs. 90,000. Three of the five Zila Pramukhs had incomes between Rs. 30,000 and Rs. 60,000 per month. This shows that financially all the Zila Pramukhs were well to do.

- Caste** : Out of five Zila Pramukhs two were from the general category and no one was from ST, although Udaipur is a tribal area. SC was also one and two belonged to OBC category.
- Education** : Out of five Zila Pramukh, two were post-graduate, two secondary pass and one was only literate. Thus, from education point of view most of the Zila Pramukhs were well educated and were expected to perform their responsibilities with greater confidence.
- Responses Received** : All five Zila Pramukhs spoke themselves. However, three took help from their husbands/relations. This shows their involvement in providing responses as per their own views, was not total. This shows that even at the highest level of panchayati raj, women hesitate to talk freely and look to male members whether they are giving the right answers.
- Political background** : It is worthwhile to note that all five Zila Pramukhs have political backgrounds before getting elected as Zila Pramukhs. This is as only people with political experience reach to such high levels. This, in a way is good as they can get work done from the administration and politicians for the benefit of the people. However, we expected them to be knowledgeable enough and politically mature to give answers to our questions independently. It would have reflected well for a bright future of panchayati raj.

Table : 5.1

Background of Zila Pramukhs of the selected Zila Parishads

Variable	Categories	Number	Percentage
Zila Pramukh's interview			
Age	Young(<30)	0	0
	Middle(31-40)	1	20
	41-50	1	20
	Old(>51)	3	60
Type of Family	Joint family	1	20
	Nuclear Family	4	80
Monthly family income(Rs.)	<10,000		0
	10,000-30,000	1	20
	30,001-60,000	3	60
	61,001-90,000	1	20
	>90,001	0	0
Caste	Gen	2	40
	Other Backward Castes	2	40
	Schedule Castes	1	20
	Schedule Tribes	0	0
Education	Illiterate	0	0
	Literate	1	20
	Middle	0	0
	Secondary	2	40
	Senior Secondary	0	0
	Graduate	0	0
	Post Graduate	2	40
Response given	Self	2	40
	Husband/relative	0	0
	With Husband/relative	3	60
Political Background	Yes	5	100
	No	0	0

THE PRADHAN

Findings of interviews with Pradhans

The Reservation policy helped six out of the ten selected women to get elected as Pradhans. The remaining got the position as general candidates. Although, all of them felt that reservation was necessary to provide suitable opportunities as all can not have a political background.

Role in Panchayat Samiti

Fifty per cent pradhans stated that they take their own decisions after consideration of all the related issues come up before the Panchayat Samiti in consultation with other members. There were two women Pradhans who were empathetic that they took decisions by themselves after hearing others, but decisions were their own. Unfortunately, three Pradhans were not taking decisions by themselves but totally depended on their husbands or other Panchayat Samiti members. They always agreed to the decision of others and signed on the dotted lines. As the panchayat samiti is a fulcrum of development activities in the panchayati raj system, the absence of decision making by the women pradhans is against the spurt of reservation for women.

Qualities in Women Representatives

This question was framed to find out from women pradhans about what qualities they would consider important to represent people in the Panchayati Raj System. The qualities were economic independence, family support, devotion to service, transparency in action, peoples' support and the ability to converse. It came out that nine Pradhans considered a good ability of conversation as the most important requirement. This was followed by family support (6), people's support (5), transparency (5), economic independence (4) and the least was commitment. It is strange that commitment to work was a low priority for Pradhans.

Change in Attitude

Pradhans suggested a number of areas in which their attitude changed after getting elected. There were multiple views and they are summarized as under:

- i) They were able to convey their views in a better way.
- ii) 'Ghunghat' system had decreased.
- iii) Change in meeting with people.
- iv) Planning based on people's requirement.
- v) Ability of public speaking has improved, particularly in large gatherings.
- vi) Freedom of speech which was suppressed earlier as women.
- vii) Now they are successful with independent views.

This shows that women Pradhans have certainly imbibed positive values and improved their attitude with independent thinking and views.

Goals for which they become Pradhans

On this question about their goals/objectives to become a Pradhan, women representatives gave a number of aims (multiple answers). These are summarized below:

- i) To increase pension for old and widow women.
- ii) Development of drinking water resources.
- iii) Increasing employment in rural areas.
- iv) To solve peoples' problems in general.
- v) To provide benefits of government schemes to people.
- vi) To increase involvement of women in politics.
- vii) To make all villages as 'Nirmal Village' (Ideal village).
- viii) To serve people, particularly poor to provide basic amenities.

They do not match with their low priority for commitment to serve people.

Failure in achieving goals

Not all goals could be achieved by women pradhans and they were quite, open on this issue. Their multiple answers are summarized as under:

- i) Could not solve drinking water problem.
- ii) Gravel roads remained incomplete.
- iii) Government rules/regulations are complicated as such there are difficulties in working.
- iv) Teachers are not appointed as per requirements.
- v) Failure in making all women literate
- vi) Could not encourage girl education in villages.
- vii) Slow pace of development and as such could not achieve 'Nirmal Village' for all villages.

Hurdles in achieving goals:

Women Pradhans were vocal in stating difficulties and hurdles owing to which they could not achieve their goals/targets and felt handicapped in their day to day working as Pradhans. These were as under:

- i) Lack of budget - SFC and TFC budget were less, no funds availability from MLA funds.
- ii) Due to shortage of funds, road construction and drinking water problems could not be solved.
- iii) Real powers not given to work.
- iv) Quality of education could not be improved due to shortage of staff.
- v) Lack of cooperation from revenue staff.
- vi) Due to nepotism/corruption, deserving people not getting benefits.

Awareness about the latest five transferred subjects to Panchayats

All the Pradhans were aware about the transfer of five subjects viz. education, health, women and child development, social justice and agriculture to the Panchayats. They, however, stated that a number of issues related to these subjects like (a) vacant posts in schools; (b) health department not sending meeting notices (c) shortage of specialists in CHCs and; (d) even the Health Minister not able to solve the problems; (e) real powers in the subject not provided; and (f) health centres do not provide quality medicines. Villagers are therefore, not getting benefits, the pradhans have sent letters to all the five state departments for more and better cooperation and coordination.

How you convey to women about government schemes:

In order to make villages, particularly women, aware about government schemes, most Pradhans explain them in general meetings of Sarpanchs, separate meetings with women, through Panchayat Samiti members as well as through Gram Sabhas. Some even took advantage of marriages in villages where they explained the schemes to women guests.

Works and Responsibility

Education : Q. What is the situation of girl child enrolment in your government schools and how would you like to improve the same?

A. In general, Pradhans stated that enrolment of the girl child was better than boys in their schools. They would still like to improve it with measures such as filling vacant posts of teachers, construction of girls' hostels, upgrading KGBV schools (Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalaya), coordination with education officers as they do not have any power, etc.

Health : Q. Are you satisfied with women's health in your area, particularly for infant mortality, maternal mortality rates, anemia and other women related diseases?

A. Most of the pradhans were not satisfied with the medical and health facilities. They were critical that authorities do not invite them in block

level meetings. There were a number of vacant posts of child specialists, gynecologists and radiologists. There was a shortage of budget in *Janani Suraksha Yojana*.

What are the difficulties in taking measures for population control?

Pradhans agreed that there were difficulties in taking family planning measures. They were making efforts to monitor and were taking extension measures to make people aware of the advantages of population control. Workshops were being held and camps were organized for taking family planning measures. Help of ASHAs was also taken. They complained that at community health centres, specialists were not available. Ganganagar Pradhan stated that her district had come first in women and child development works and got an award of Rs. one lakh from the government.

Role of Block Health Committees in Panchayat Samitis

Generally Pradhans were satisfied with the role of Block Health Committees as they reviewed all health related programmes. They, however complained that they were not invited for these meetings.

What improvement is needed in the Block Health Committees?

They suggested that all members should be invited with an agenda sent to them in advance. Meetings should be held regularly. There should be transparency in meetings and there should be an improvement in the behavior of block level officials.

Agriculture: What is the position of agriculture loans, seed availability and animal health in the Panchayat Samitis:

Pradhans were generally satisfied with the agricultural situation as commercial banks and cooperative banks provided loan. LAMPS and Land Development banks also helped.

Minikit programme provided improved seeds and seed distribution was satisfactory. Experts provided technical help. On animal health the Pradhans gave suggestions like:

- a) Lack of Animal Sub-Health Centres
- b) Lack of knowledge on immunization
- c) Shortage of staff
- d) Lack of veterinary doctors

Women and Child Development

Do you think villagers get advantages of *Anganwadi*? Do you inspect these centres? What improvements do you suggest in them? Have you tasted the Mid-Day Meal in the *Anganwadis* and rated the quality of food?

Most women Pradhans were satisfied with the working of *Anganwadis* except one Pradhan. They had no complaint about quality of food given in Mid-Day Meal. However, some suggested that the quality could be improved. They were of the opinion that Self-Help Groups (SHG) were not doing a good job in the Mid-Day-Meal programme and needed some changes. Separate buildings for *Anganwadis* was also suggested. The Pradhans would take a feedback from Sarpanchs and will suggest measures for the improvement in the working of the *Anganwadis*.

What do you think about social evils and what measures you have taken to remove them?

On social evils like the *purdha* system, female feticide, the witch system, domestic violence, dowry, death-feast, alcoholism, child labour, and others, they all agreed that their eradication was necessary. Three said that there was no such evils in their areas, which was rather surprising. They were making efforts to remove these social evils by educating women, sending more and more girl child to schools, organizing women to fight against these evils, particularly educating old people for a positive approach.

Rural Development

What are the activities taken under MGNREGS in your Panchayat Samiti and how this has helped in employment generation?

A number of activities were mentioned by women Pradhans like development of water bodies, anicuts, road construction, water channels and some mentioned about construction of IT centres. These activities have helped in employment generation, particularly in the off-season. Women in particular were getting employment in the village itself which was a big advantage.

What is being done for the upliftment of BPL families?

Seven out of ten women Pradhans mentioned about various schemes being implemented to help BPL families like *Indira Awas Yojana*, Chief Minister Awas Yojana, Health Cards, Antyodaya Yojana, Old Age Pension Schemes and providing electric connection under Rajiv Gandhi Gramin Vidut Yojana. Some suggested that BPL survey should be re-done to find out the real beneficiaries and remove corruption.

Do you inspect transferred schemes to Panchayat Raj and whether these have helped SC and ST people?

Almost all of them agreed that they were aware of these transferred schemes and that they inspect them sometimes. They however, complained that they were not in a position to take any action or interfere in the implementation of these schemes. They also agreed that SC and ST were getting benefits of these schemes. Some even stated that only partial benefits were available.

Role of Pradhans in Panchayat Samiti Activities

Pradhans were provided a list of development activities to indicate benefits and shortfalls in each of them. These are summarized as under:

These answers are similar to those already provided by both Sarpanch and Pradhan in various other questions asked earlier. Some problem and suggestion have been given by individuals. These have been listed above, however, some which are common are:

- i) Lack of finance/budget
- ii) Lack of cooperation from administration
- iii) Shortage of staff/specialists

Help and assistance

On the issues related to help and assistance received from departments and authorities, the following information/suggestions were given:

- i) Get information from Zila Parishad, newspapers, correspondence, BDO, and others.
- ii) Have personal rapport with BDO, Collector, CEO and get good response.
- iii) BDO provides very good support, however, one of them complained that her BDO did not provide information.

Meetings

How many meetings of Panchayati Samiti they attend in Panchayat Samiti and outside Panchayat Samiti? Your role in these meetings and issues raised

In general, all the Pradhans attend Panchayat Samiti meetings at the Panchayat Samiti as well as outside Panchayat Samiti. The common issues raised were electricity connection, drinking water, road construction, irrigation water, issues related to agriculture, shortage of teachers, issues related to health and women and child development.

Coordination

On various issues regarding coordination and cooperation from male members, their attitude towards women Pradhan, help from senior officials, coordination with the Pradhans of the district and other districts and their consultation regarding state and central schemes, the following information and suggestions were given:

- i) A large number of Pradhans (8) said that male staff members work as per their instructions. However two of them did not agree.
- ii) Generally male staff members shows constraint and cooperate fully. However, if needed, complaints are made to higher authorities. Authorities do help them in dealing with male staff members.

- iii) All the Pradhans stated that they do consult other Pradhans from the district as well as from other districts and exchange views.
- iv) All said that they consult male Pradhans also.
- v) On the acceptance of their suggestions in meetings the answers were mixed as some said that their views were accepted, whereas others were of the view that their suggestions were not accepted. Many a time the split was on political party line.

Challenges

Do you have all resources for the work and if not, what do you need for working?

With reference to availability of resources, following points were raised:

- i) Shortage of budget
- ii) Income generation sources are limited for gram panchayats
- iii) Shortage of staff
- iv) Transport facilities are not available
- v) Power to appoint teachers should be given to Panchayat Samitis.

As a Pradhan, have you been successful in improving education, health, infrastructure, women & child development and control against atrocities against women and corruption

On these issues again some mixed reactions were received as under:

- i) Successful to a certain extent
- ii) Collectors do not give attention on corruption charges
- iii) They were trying to reduce corruption and their efforts were continuing
- iv) Some did not speak at all on this question

Training

Details with regard to trainings received by Pradhans are summarized below

Table: 5.2
Training Programmes of Pradhans

S.N.	Subject of Training	Duration	Place	Agency	Usefulness
1.	Role & Responsibilities (8 Pradhan)	3 Days	Jaipur, Bikaner, Ganganagar	IGPRS	Useful
2.	Transferred Five Departments (1 Pradhan) Alwar	2 Days	Alwar	ZP	Useful
3.	Orientation (1 Pradhan) Udaipur	1 Day	Jaipur	IGPRS	Useful
4.	Self Help Group (1 Pradhan) Sarada, Udaipur	7 Days	Kerala	Rajasthan Government	Useful
5.	MGNREGS (Sarada, Udaipur) Jodhpur Pradhan (Bilada)	3 Days 2 Days	Udaipur Jaipur	Vidya Bhawan IGPRS	Useful Useful
6.	Panchayati Raj (1 Sarada Udaipur)	4 Days	Jaipur	IGPRS	Useful

It seems that Pradhans did not take much interest in getting training to update their knowledge about the role, responsibilities and new provisions in the Panchayati Raj system. It also came out that Panchayat Raj Department did not organize these in a systematic manner which is evident from the fact that all the Pradhans did not get trainings together at a place like the IGPRS or any other training centre. Some Pradhans never took any interest in the trainings organized by the Government of Rajasthan in Kerala where only one Pradhan went.

Shortfall in Training

Generally participants did not find any shortfall and gave the following suggestions:

- i) Two day training was not adequate for understanding the issues of concern to them.
- ii) Trainers do not explain in details what they want to convey. It is thus difficult to make out what they wanted to say.
- iii) Sometimes batches are too big.
- iv) Training was not imparted in a way that the content is easily understood by every participant.

What modification would you suggest?

For the modification or changes in training contents, the following suggestions were gives:

- i) Training should have more audio-visual aids
- ii) The trainer should be a female.
- iii) Training material should be given in the form of a CD so that they can run it later also for better understanding.
- iv) For less educated, the training system should be different.
- v) Duration should be more.
- vi) More emphasis should be on practicals.

What difficulties you faced

No Pradhan faced any difficulty in attending training camps expect that the TA was not paid immediately.

Subject on training needed

Each Pradhan was asked about the subject on which they would like to get training for their working in the areas. There were 13 subjects suggested to them and results show that:

▪ Water conservation	-	Nil
▪ MGNREGS	-	Nil
▪ Agriculture	-	Nil
▪ Women and Child Development	-	5
▪ Social Justice	-	Nil
▪ Education	-	3
▪ Health	-	1
▪ Community Mobilization	-	2
▪ Hygiene	-	1
▪ Administration	-	2
▪ Finance & Account	-	3
▪ Information Technology	-	2
▪ Related to Law & Regulations	-	6

The Pradhan wanted more emphasis on subjects of law, finance and accounts and administration. On development they showed interest on women and child development followed by education. It also means that they already know enough about water conservation, MGNRES, agriculture and social justice. Surprisingly, health and hygiene had few taken. With a poor health status of not only women and children but men also and with poor hygiene in the rural areas, they must be trained in these areas as well.

Information about training modules

Seven out of ten Pradhans had full knowledge about training modules, except two. On shortfalls in training modules, there were varied answers. (1) No detailed information was provided in the training programmes, CDs should be given. (2) Modules do not give details of the training contents.

Regarding the feedback of trainings all ten stated that no feedback system existed. They suggested that feedback should be taken so that in future modification and improvement could be made.

From the answers of Pradhans it comes out that the training modules need a lot of improvement in content and there should be a proper feedback taken from all the participants to make necessary improvement in the training programmes.

Budgets

All the Pradhans were aware about the total funds available for the Panchayat Samiti along with sources like BRGF, TFC, SFC and untied funds. (BRGF is only for Udaipur district).

Expenditure varied from one district to another according to activities. Besides the above mentioned sources, funds also flow to the Panchayat Samiti for works permissible under MGNREGS and watershed development. All the Pradhans showed full knowledge about these major centrally sponsored schemes for which funds were provided by the Government of India.

All the Pradhans talked about the shortage of funds for roads, water channels, social justice schemes like the old age pension and the widow pension. They also desired increase in the untied funds.

Awareness

Out of the five, three became Zila Pramukhs by taking advantage of the reservation policy. However, two were elected from the general category. In the Zila Parishad meetings, they take part in all the discussions and also consult other members, but the final decision is taken by them by and large. All of them felt that after they became Zila Pramukhs, their area of work had increased and they became more busy. Their political and social responsibilities also increased.

In order to achieve their goals, all of them were of the opinion that inadequate budget and non-cooperation from the administration were major hurdles in achieving the targets.

Transferred subjects

Zila Pramukh were not happy with the five transferred subjects to the Panchayati Raj as they were not getting cooperation and coordination from the officers of those departments. They also felt that in the absence if any power they were not effective in getting work done. Similarly, they also had problems in the implementation of central and state specific schemes owing to bureaucratic hurdles.

Zila Pramukhs were critical about drinking water and hygiene (cleanliness) and suggested that the staff for sanitation should be paid from other sources like the MGNREGS.

Inadequate resources were coming in the way of development programmes, they also stated.

Coordination

Generally, Zila Pramukhs do not feel any difficulty in dealing with the male staff members as they all follow their instructions. They also consult other Zila Pramukhs, both males and females,

before taking some decisions. Some take decision as per party line and government guidelines with their own input.

Atrocities against women

All Zila Pramukhs were of the opinion that illiteracy among rural women was the main reason behind eradication of the veil system, foeticide, the witch system, domestic violence, etc. They were making efforts to remove them from the society. Similarly, they had partial success in reducing violence against women and corruption but were continuing their efforts against them.

Meetings and Inspections:

In Zila Parishad meetings they raise issues of common interest and provide their own views on road construction, education, health, electricity, drinking water, etc. They, however, felt that due to interference of the local administration they do not get the desired results. They inspect *Anganwadis*, which are only partially successful but need improvement. Similarly, they would like to improve the quality of education as teacher-student ratio was not favorable for good teaching. The enrollment of the girl child is also not satisfactory and they were making efforts to improve the same by making women aware about it. They inspect programmes which have been transferred to the Panchayat but felt that it was not effective and total. Because of illiteracy SC, ST and OBC people were not getting the benefits of many good schemes.

Health

Zila Pramukhs were of the opinion that the increase in population was coming in the way of development and they try to reason with village women for family planning. They also were making rural women aware about their health and improving medical facilities in their areas.

Budget

All Zila Pramukhs were of the opinion that budget provisions were inadequate in heads like TFC, SFC and untied funds. They would like to get more funds for drinking water, road and permanent structures.

Voters perception

In order to find out the general perception about the working of women Sarpanchs, the survey included a format for voters. The respondents were both males and females numbering 150. The results were compiled and tabulated to find out what a voter thinks about the women Sarpanch. The following are the results:-

1. All the voters knew the name of their Sarpanch.
2. Most of them participated in the election and gave their votes for the development of their villages. Some even considered educational level and reputation as an honest person, to give their vote to a candidate.
3. According to a majority of voters, their elected women Sarpanchs did some constructive work in the village like road, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, social justice, BPL housing, etc.
4. Voters did convey their problems to the Sarpanch for redressal.
5. Voters were told in the Gram Sabha meetings about the on-going government schemes which they also learnt through the media.
6. Role of their women Sarpanch was, in general, appreciated by voters for making efforts to remove social evils through various measures. They also agreed that they were making some efforts to make people aware about these evils.
7. Voters had different views about the work by their Sarpanchs. Some stated that they did good work in education, sanitation, women and child development, etc. Some were critical that they could not do much in the absence of power in their hands.
8. On the question whether their women Sarpanchs did work by themselves or depended on their husbands and male relatives, some interesting answers were recorded. Seventy five out of 150 voters (50%) said that the women Sarpanchs work themselves and 60 said that the husbands or other male family members did their work. The remaining 15 were related to male members. This shows that even today 50 per cent elected women representatives depend on their husbands/male relatives for doing the Panchayat work.

9. Voters stated in details about their role in the gram panchayat meetings. In these meetings they often raised local issues of like *pucca* roads, sanitation, shortage of teachers, working of *Anganwadis*, issue of BPL cards, encroachment, etc. Some time these issues are taken seriously by Sarpanch, particularly if the Sarpanch is a woman.
10. Voters regularly have meetings/discussion with the Sarpanch only and do not meet the Pradhan. Voters convey their problems to the Sarpanch who take them to higher levels, if needed.

THE PRADHAN

Ten women Pradhans per district were also interviewed to find out their achievements and problems. It was meant to help in formulating policies, programmes and to suggest any modifications in the training component and in improving the Panchayati Raj System.

- Background of the Pradhans** : It is summarized in Table-5.3
- Age** : Seventy per cent women Pradhans were below 40 years of age, which was quite heartening to note. Three were old of more than 51 years of age. There was no one from middle age group (Table-5.3).
- Type** : As seen in case of female Sarpanchs, most Pradhans (60%) belonged to nuclear families. Thus, in rural areas of Rajasthan nuclear family system is spreading like in urban areas.
- Income** : There were five Pradhans with monthly family income of Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 60,000 (50%). Only one Pradhan had income of near Rs. One lakh or above. From income point of view all Pradhans were well-off.
- Caste** : Only one Pradhan belonged to general category and rest nine were OBC, SC and ST. This shows that reservation policy of the government has helped providing opportunities to these categories of women to hold Pradhan's position in Panchayati Raj System of the state.
- Education** : From education point of view Pradhans were very much educated then the

Sarpanchs as 60 per cent were graduates (30%) and post-graduate (30). There was no illiterate Pradhan and only one was literate. Similarly, no Pradhan was secondary pass and only one was senior secondary pass.

Response given : Most of the Pradhans provided answers by themselves as most of them were educated and had some experience of local polities. Only two of them did not answer any question and their husbands/relatives spoke for them.

Political background : Similar to the response by the Sarpanchs, 60 per cent of Pradhans had a political background but 40 per cent were new to politics.

Table : 5.3
Background of Elected Pradhans in the Five selected Districts

Variable	Categories	Number	Percent
Age (Years)	Young(<30)	5	50
	Middle(31-40)	2	20
	41-50	0	0
	Old(>51)	3	30
Type of Family	Joint family	4	40
	Nuclear Family	6	60
Monthly family income(Rs.)	<10,000	2	20
	10,000-30,000	3	30
	30,001-60,000	2	20
	61,001-90,000	2	20
	>90,001	1	10
Caste	Gen	1	10
	Other backward class	5	50
	Scheduled Castes	3	30
	Scheduled Tribes	1	10
Education	Illiterate	0	0
	Literate	1	10
	Middle	2	20
	Secondary	0	0
	S. secondary	1	10
	Graduate	3	30
	Post graduate	3	30
Response given	Self	8	80
	Husband/Relative	2	20
	With Husband/Relative	0	0
Political Background	Yes	6	60
	No	4	40

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SARPANCHS

Your role in decision making in the Gram Panchayat

The answer to this question was mixed as most women took decisions in consultation with their husbands, relatives and ward panchs. Only some took decisions by themselves (17 out of 50) but also consulted others (Table-6.1). This shows that stigma of 'Panch Pati' still prevails where the woman sarpanch is a dummy/puppet in the hands of his husband and it is the husband who functions as the *de facto* decision maker.

Table: 6.1

Decision Making by Female Sarpanchs

	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total
Own	7	3	0	3	4	17
Husband	9	9	6	6	7	37
Relative	1	1	4	3	1	10
Ward Panch	10	10	10	10	10	50

What are the main requirements to represent women?

On the issue of main requirement, needed to represent women in Panchayati Raj, the answers were multiple as no one requirement was complete. Out of 50, large number of 35 said economic freedom. Family support was also mentioned by 50 per cent of them (Table-6.2).

Table: 6.2

Main Requirements for Women's Representation

	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total
Economic Independence	8	6	8	8	5	35
Family Support	7	5	3	7	3	25
Role and responsibility	7	5	6	6	2	26
Transparency	0	1	4	4	2	11
People support	3	2	2	4	4	15
Ability of conversation	8	8	6	2	4	28

Conversation skill was next to economic freedom as 28 women said so. Transparency was suggested by only 11 Sarpanchs. This shows that economic freedom as well as own skills in taking across one's point of view were major requirements to be successful people's representatives. This underlines importance of education of girls who would be competent to take up leadership roles in the future.

As Sarpanch, have you changed?

More than 50 per cent (26 no.) of Sarpanch thought that they inculcated positive attitude after they became Sarpanch (Table-6.3), where as rest said it in negative terms. In tribal area of Udaipur 6 out of 10 Sarpanch thought in positive way and 7 OBC in Ajmer were of same opinion.

This in overall sense is an encouraging signal for the society and further justifies the importance of reservation for women.

Table: 6.3
Attitudinal Changes

	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total
Yes	6	7	3	5	5	26
No	4	3	7	5	5	24

What were the goals for you

A large number of women Sarpanchs were of the opinion that development of infrastructure was their primary goal, followed by social development (Table-6.4). Only 8 of the 50 Sarpanchs thought of economic development. It seems that economic development was not quite clear to many as development of infrastructure will in fact lead to economic development as well as social development. This shows a need for proper training to women representatives about the various facets of developmental aspects and exposure.

Table: 6.4
Goals of Female Sarpanchs

	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total
Basic infrastructure development	10	9	9	10	8	46
Social development	8	4	4	3	3	22
Economic Development	5	1	0	2	0	8
Other	0	1	0	0	0	1

Hurdles in achieving targets

On the questions of problems and hurdles in achieving their targets, 23 out of 50 Sarpanch were of the opinion that **lack of administrative cooperation was major one followed by inadequate budget provision.** Some cited lack of coordination also. Sarpanch of Udaipur and Ajmer had more problems with administration than Sarpanch of Ganganagar, Alwar and Jodhpur (Table-6.5). This again brings out need for sensitization of officials and training of women Sarpanchs in administrative affairs to know about each others works and workings.

Table: 6.5

Hurdles in Achieving Targets

	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total
Lack of Budget	1	2	2	9	4	18
Lack of administrative cooperation	8	7	4	1	3	23
Lack of coordination	1	1	0	0	3	5
No Problem	0	0	4	0	0	4

Your knowledge about five transferred subjects

In 2010, Government of Rajasthan transferred five subjects viz. education, health, women & child development, social justice and agriculture to the Panchayati Raj Department. As a result Panchayats were given budget and responsibilities to make schemes and implement all government programmes as per their need of the area. The responses from women Sarpanchs were not encouraging as 18 of them had no information, while 30 had some knowledge about this (Table-6.6). **This again brings out need for awareness and training to provide all information to elected members about the role and responsibilities of Panchayats.**

Table: 6.6

Knowledge about Five Transferred Subjects

	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total
No information	3	3	3	4	5	18
Some knowledge	6	6	7	6	5	30
Full information	1	1	0	0	0	2

How you convey to women about government schemes

In order to derive full benefits of government schemes, it is important that beneficiaries know about them for their involvement. According to 34 Sarpanch, they organize meetings to convey about the schemes (Table-6.7). Use of *Anganwadi* was also mentioned by many (13). This shows that media of meeting was most desired and it is very effective also as there is one to one approach to explain about any scheme and clear confusions.

Table: 6.7

Conveying Women about Government Schemes

Via-media	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total
Anganwadi	2	1	5	3	2	13
Meetings	6	9	5	6	8	34
Media	1	0	0	0	0	1
Social cultural events	0	1	0	1	0	2

Panchayat Meetings

With regard to working of women Sarpanchs, it seems that they regularly attend Gram Panchayat meetings (Table-6.8) and the meetings out side their Gram Panchayat. In all the districts, exactly the same 5 meetings per month were attended by each woman Sarpanch.

Table 6.8

Gram Panchayat Meeting

	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total
Gram Panchayat	4	4	4	4	4	20
Out side of Gram Panchayat	1	1	1	1	1	5
Total	5	5	5	5	5	25

This shows their seriousness about the work which was reflected also in their taking up development related issues at these meetings (45 out of 50 Sarpanchs) (Table-6.9). All the women Sarpanchs from Udaipur, Ganganagar and Alwar were more active in this respect as compared to Ajmer (8), and Jodhpur (7). However, they said that they were not happy as actions were not taken by the local officials on their suggestions. This indicates their serious concern about village problems and the need of doing something.

Table: 6.9

Development Issues taken by Women Sarpanchs

	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total
Development related issues	10	8	7	10	10	45
Issues not taken by the local authorities on their suggestions	4	2	3	0	0	9

Trainings

Training about the roles and responsibilities of panchayat representatives is an important aspect as only these trainings make them aware about their role in the Panchayati Raj system. All the 50 women Sarpanch from the five districts took trainings on the roles and responsibilities. The duration of trainings varied from two days to seven days. Out of these, the seven days training schedules were more popular as compared to others. This was followed by five-day and three-day trainings. The seven-day trainings were taken by eight Sarpanchs of Alwar district and the remaining two Sarpanchs took training of five-day duration. Similarly, in Jodhpur seven Sarpanchs took training of seven days, two of three days and one of five days. At Udaipur no women Sarpanch took a training of seven days.

Table: 6.10

Trainings

Training Duration	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total
2 Days	3	0	0	0	0	3
3 Days	1	8	2	1	0	12
5 Days	6	2	1	3	2	14
7 Days	0	0	7	6	8	21

With regard to the agency providing training to women representatives, 10 each from Ajmer, Ganganagar and Alwar were imparted training at the Panchayat Samiti level by the concerned BDO's (Table-6.11). In Jodhpur also nine were trained by the BDO. It is interesting that in Udaipur, only three Sarpanchs took training at the Panchayat Samiti and five at Zila Parishad. No one from other districts took training at Zila Parishad level. Similarly, except in Udaipur (two Sarpanch), no one from other districts took any training at Panchayati Raj Sansthan. Different training imparting agencies may have varied approach and this may reflect on the understanding of

women Sarpanch. Therefore, it would be better if training is held at Panchayat Samiti (BDO) levels and one training for all is imparted at the Indira Gandhi Panchayati Raj Sansthan.

Table: 6.11

Agencies Providing Training

	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total
Panchayat Samiti	3	10	9	10	10	42
ZP	5	0	0	0	0	5
PRI	2	0	0	0	0	2

Regarding the usefulness of training programmes, most were convinced about their need but felt that the contents needed much better and detailed explanations so that they could understand them fully. It is also only once that such trainings are organized. Government rules and regulations are complicated and should be explained fully. It was also suggested that more women trainers should be used because they would be more comfortable with them.

Table: 6.12

Usefulness of Trainings

	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total
Most useful	0	1	5	4	0	10
Useful	10	7	6	2	6	31
Less useful	0	2	1	4	4	11

On development issues they showed more interest, rightly so, for water conservation, followed by information technology and community participation, social justice, education, administration and health. They gave equal importance to MGNREGS, agriculture, women and child development and least to hygiene, which was rather surprising.

Table: 6.13

Areas of Concern in Training Programmes

	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total
Water conservation	4	4	6	2	4	26
MGNREGS	4	1	2	1	3	11
Agriculture	2	1	4	1	3	11
Women and child development	2	1	3	1	4	11
Social justice	4	5	6	3	5	23
Education	3	3	8	2	6	22
Health	1	2	3	3	3	12
Community Dynamism	1	5	6	7	6	25
Sanitation	0	0	4	2	3	9
Administration	4	4	6	0	5	19
Financial accounting	8	7	9	8	7	39
Information Technology	4	6	5	2	8	25
Legal aspects	6	10	9	8	9	42

On training modules, 40 of them were aware about these and only 10 had no knowledge (Table-6.14). About shortfall in these modules, again (Table-6.15) a large number (17) said that these lacked details.

Table: 6.14

Awareness for Training modules

	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total
Yes	10	7	7	7	9	40
No	0	3	2	3	1	9

Table: 6.15
Shortfall in Training Modules

	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total
No shortfall	10	5	2	4	2	23
Details not given	0	2	5	3	7	17

Regarding feedback procedure, almost all of them (48) said no system was employed and only 2 at Ganganagar stated that a test was done during training period (Table-6.16).

Table: 6.16
Feedback of Trainings

	Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Total
No system was adopted	10	10	9	8	10	47
Test During Training	0	0	0	2	0	2

On the issue of budget, it seems that all of them were aware about the funds varying from Rs. 7 lakh (0.7 million Rs.) at Ajmer to Rs. 9.27 lakh (0.927 million Rs.) at Udaipur (Table-6.17).

Table: 6.17
Budget to Panchayats

(Rs. In lakh)

Udaipur	Ajmer	Jodhpur	Ganganagar	Alwar	Average
9.27	7	7.5	8	8	7.95

Opinion of Sarpanchs about development programmes

Views of women Sarpanchs were sought about major schemes like MGNREGS and watershed development (Table-6.18). Their opinions are summarized as under:

Table: 6.18

	Strengths	Challenges
MGNREGS	Provided employment	Permanent works are not being done in this scheme
	Created basic infrastructure	Permanent works are not being done and works are not done based on identified area basis
	Reduced migration	Corruption in the scheme has increased No timely monitoring
Watershed programme	Water collection and conservation	Lack of budget
		No proper planning for moisture conservation
		Impurity of water
Nutrition and immunization	Control of diseases	Vacant positions of ANMs
	Improvement in nutrition	Distance of PHC Immunization programme not working properly
Health	Health Benefit	Shortage of Staff
		lack of extension
		absentism of doctors
Education	Girls education has improved.	Shortage of Teacher
	All students was getting free education	In remote village, serious problem of drop-outs.
		Lack of cooperation from higher authorities Quality of education not satisfactory
Pension Schemes:	People were benefited under the scheme	Late payments
		Government rules are complicated
		Shortage in budget
		At Jodhpur termites damaged files and as a result people did not get pension for long time
PDS Distribution	Every village has a fair price shop	Black marketing
		Ration shops far away from villages
	Shortage of ration items at ration shops	Not available timely Only wheat and kerosene were available and other items were not available on ration shops.
IndiraAwas/ CM Awas Yojana	Poor people got the benefit under the scheme	Shortage of funds
		Unfinished structures due to diversion of funds by local authorities
		Funds are spent in other works

MGNREGS

Both positive and critical opinions were given by women Sarpanchs. Some were of the opinion that this scheme had provided employment, created basic infrastructure like roads, and migration of people from villages to urban areas had reduced. No quantitative estimates could, however, be provided. There were some Sarpanchs who thought that under this scheme permanent works were not being done and works were not done based on identified area basis (or watershed basis). Further, corruption in the scheme had increased and there was no timely monitoring. These are well known comments/observations of even common men and Sarpanchs supported this public opinion.

Watershed Programme

The government of India is implementing a number of projects for area development under which works are done on the concept of watershed. The basic aim of these projects like DPAP (Drought Prone Area Programme), and DDP (Desert Development Programme) is water resources development for collection, conservation and judicious use of water in the water scarce state.

Many women Sarpanchs agreed that watershed programmes have helped in water collection and conservation which was not there before the scheme. On the other hand, many also thought that adequate budget was not provided for the programme and there was no proper planning for moisture conservation. The quality of water was also not satisfactory. It seems that Sarpanchs were not aware about the planning, implementation, maintenance and monitoring of watershed based schemes, which resulted in ambiguous comments. What exactly is the programme should be explained to them.

Social Assistance Programmes

The opinion of Sarpanchs was also sought on other social development programmes like nutrition, immunization, health services and education (Table-6.20). it is true that there was some control of diseases and some improvement in nutrition but there were vacant positions of ANM, at the sub-centres and immunizations centres.

Regarding health programmes, most of the Sarpanchs complained about shortage of staff, lack of extension for awareness and absentism of doctors, although, benefits of health programmes were also there.

On education there were many views as under:

- i) Girls education has improved.
- ii) All students were getting free education.
- iii) There is shortage of teachers in schools.
- iv) In remote villages there was the serious problem of drop-outs.
- v) Lack of cooperation from higher authorities.
- vi) Quality of education not satisfactory.

Therefore, women sarpanchs should play greater role and show greater responsibility in improving conditions in the health and education sectors by an active involvement in implementation and monitoring of these programmes. They will have to motivate villagers for sending their children, particularly girls to school. Their coordination with district authorities will be vital for increasing pace of development works in rural areas.

All 50 Sarpanchs were also asked about their opinion on the development programmes like old age/widow/disability pensions, distribution of ration (food) and Indira Awas Yojana/Chief Minister Awas Yojana, being implemented in their constituencies (Table-30). Both negative and positive views were expressed by Sarpanchs.

On the positive side, it was opined that pension schemes were providing help to the needful, people were getting ration items at fair prices and poor people were getting houses to live. On the negative side a number of issues/challenges were cited like:

Pension Schemes

- i) Late payments
- ii) Government rules are complicated
- iii) Shortage in budget
- iv) At Jodhpur termites damaged files and as a result people did not get pension for long time

Public Distribution

- i) Black marketing
- ii) Ration shops far away in villages
- iii) Shortage of ration items at ration shops
- iv) Only wheat and kerosene were available and other items were not available in ration shop.

Indira Awas/CM Awas Yojna

- i) Shortage of funds
- ii) Unfinished structures due to diversion of funds by local authorities.

The issues raised by the Sarpanchs are well known and authorities should look into these to rectify the situation. The administrative lapses may have negative impact on the smooth functioning of the Panchayati Raj System.

Perception of Male Sarpanchs

Perception of male Sarpanchs on election of female Sarpanchs was sought for five Sarpanchs in each district. Their reactions are analysed here.

Reservation

Forty four percent male Sarpanchs were of the opinion that females have got this chance because of reservation only whereas, 56 % Sarpanchs told the view that they have got this position on the basis of their candidature and caliber.

Regarding female reservation policy 65 percent male Sarpanchs agreed with the policy and emphasized that there should be reservation for females in the 'Panchayati Raj'. According to them, many women have set examples like getting out of home in politics and proving themselves. This has led to women empowerment. Remaining 45 percent still did not support female reservation as they believe that women do not possess political knowledge and tactics and this was because of lack of education. Due to such lack of knowledge, they were not able to perform their duties and responsibilities and it leads to male interference. The prime reason for this is 'not so good' condition of rural women. Despite many changes, the '*pardah pratha*' still prevails as a result of which, women are not able to communicate freely with the elders and hence, are not able to make justice to their responsibilities and are incapable of decision making. But 65 per cent men believed that women have made an effort to prove themselves and have contributed in numerous development works. The women needed to be encouraged so that there is an improvement in their capability.

Limitations

Women are uneducated because of which they are not able to work properly and males have to take care of all tasks. They have got an opportunity but they are not in a position to make use of it and the male dominant society is preventing them from coming forward.

The perception of elected male Sarpanchs on female reservation clearly indicates their bias against providing greater role and responsibility to women in governance at panchayat level. Education is an important aspect but cannot be the sole reason for their not coming forward and performing well in panchayats. The attitude of male dominated society must change to being more women in to the election process and after their election to the local bodies, active support of families and cordial cooperation of local administration are essential requirement for their success.

CAPACITY BUILDING OF PRIs CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

Present Efforts for Imparting Training to the PRIs

The state of Rajasthan presently carries out the training of all the elected representatives and officials within the period of six months from the date of election. The national training policy goal of “**Training for All**” was initiated since the year 2000. At the State level, the training of PRIs is steered by the State Institute for Rural Development (SIRD) *namely Indira Gandhi Panchayati Raj & Gramin Vikas Sansthan – IGPR&GVS*. The IGPR&GVS is the apex training institute for PRIs and other rural development issues.

Imparting the training to around 1.3 lakh new entrants of PRIs and their counterparts officials/personnel is a huge task. The task becomes more complex when the target group is of low literate members. Moreover, the educational status of elected women representatives - which comprise more than half of the PRI leadership - by virtue of reservation for women having being enhanced to 50 per cent seats, from the current round of recent elections held in 2010- is far behind than their male counterparts. Out of total number of Elected Representatives (ERs) comprising more than 1.20 Lakh ERs, more than 60,000 are from reserved categories. The reserved categories include Women, SC, ST, OBCs and by virtue of rotational reservation system, there is a turnover of more than half of the elected representatives in PRIs every five years. The reserved constituencies rotate with every five yearly electoral round. Thus, the challenge of Capacity Building of PRIs is to start afresh with every round of fresh elections.

Existing Strategy of Capacity Building of PRIs: Indira Gandhi Panchayati Raj & Gramin Vikas Sansthan, Jaipur conducts PRI training in a decentralized campaign mode, through cascading approach. The Institute conducts 'Basic Training Orientation' for Newly Elected PRIs and the officials/personnel working with PRIs, besides scheme based refresher courses from time to time. The approach adopted by the institute has the following steps, which are being followed since the year 2000-

- **Training Needs Assessment (TNA)** - TNA is carried out through multi-stakeholder interactive workshops at Divisional Headquarters before every election. Three rounds of TNA have been conducted since 2000. The TNA helps in updating the existing training curriculum
- **Training Module & Material Development (TMD)** - Based on the findings of the TNA, the existing modules and reference materials are revised and updated. There are six basic types of orientation training modules for Training of PRI functionaries of all levels. These training modules are for Zila Pramukhs, Members of Zila Prishads, Pradhans of Panchayat Samitis, Members of Panchayat Samitis, Sarpanchs, and for Ward Panches. In each training, the officials/staff working at the respective levels also participates. The basic orientation course covers following core areas - Panchayati Raj Act & Rules; Roles, Responsibilities and Powers of ERs & Officials; Human Development Issues; Major Development Schemes implemented by PRIs; Financial Management; Administration & Office Management; Personal Development and Gender Sensitization; Topical Concerns/Emerging Challenges. In addition to the basic training modules, few scheme based and theme based modules and reference materials are also developed.
- **Training of Trainers (ToTs)** - The training is carried out by the Trainers, specifically trained for the purpose by the institute. These trainer teams are drawn from each block of the state, to deliver direct training to PRI functionaries and officials, based on the modules & reference materials developed by the institute. This six members trainers' team comprise of at least two/ three government officials, two NGO persons and one or two Ex-PRI

Elected Representatives- who have completed one-full-tenure. The efforts are made to include at least two women trainers.

- **Training of PRIs (TPRIs)**- Finally, the training of PRIs is imparted by these trainers directly in all the districts and blocks simultaneously. For monitoring, supervision and technical backstopping, state level monitors are deputed by involving senior government officials of RD & PR departments.
- **Training Impact Assessment (TIA)** – Before initiating any new round of training, the impact of the previous training is also assessed by the institute through multi-stakeholder interactive workshops. Efforts are also made to assess the knowledge and functioning of trained PRIs through workshops, meetings etc. time to time.

The Training Pedagogy is designed in such a manner so that the participation of all the participants can be maximized.

All these trainings, in general, have **combined sessions for both male and female** together.

The problems with the Training System

Ideally, the approach mentioned above looks very effective and complete in nature, but the practical side of this coin has a little different face. Despite of putting huge efforts, energy and time, the desired result of effective training is still missing. A critical assessment of the efforts, approach, modules and materials, execution pertaining to the training of PRIs in Rajasthan leads towards the several gaps, which need to be addressed effectively. Following are the crucial gaps-

- **Quantity verses Quality:** Reaching the numbers is important and is the first and foremost requirement but it also required to reach the numbers with quality. At present, the department through IGPR&GVS reaches not more than 80 per cent PRIs of the State, wherein the debate of attendance versus regularity is always on. Many of the PRIs attend the training program partially, thus the enrolment of participants increases but the content and knowledge imparted in the training program is received partially. Besides, the limited

infrastructure, logistic and training aids related arrangements also restrict the quality upto a large extent. For example, in a training of Ward Panchs or Sarpanchs it is prescribed that the venue of the training should be easily approachable, having residential arrangement with proper infrastructure, electricity etc. In a training program, educative films on Panchayati Raj should be screened; group work, role play etc. should be done. But many a time, the venue turns out to be less approachable, no alternative arrangements of electricity, training aids (like TV, VCR, mouse etc.) become dysfunctional or unavailable. No place, arrangements or capacity to carry out group work or role play make the training less quality oriented. Hence, the efforts to tap - (a) the remaining 20% PRIs and (b) to ensure desired level of quality at all levels are hardly seen in the present approach and efforts of the training program.

- **Ownership-** The training is being steered by the IGPR&GVS *prima-facie*, does not mean that all the responsibilities will only be lie with the institute. The department of Panchayati Raj and the Department of Rural Development are equally responsible to execute the training program. The state efforts are getting diluted once it reaches the districts and sub-districtlevels, where the need, necessity and importance becomes more crucial and sensitive. Training at the field level is usually considered to be a side activity.
- **Text Heavy Materials-** The educational status of the PR representative in Rajasthan particularly at the Panchayat Samiti and below levels is very poor. It further worsens when we analyse their category wise educational status namely Women, SC and ST. The Training materials and modules, prepared by the Institute are text heavy and monotonous. As a result, these remain in the shelf of the PRIs. The Assessment report of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Yojana (RGSY), a centrally sponsored scheme largely aimed at capacity building of PRIs, published in Oct. 2011, says that less than 30 per cent of PR representatives have gone through the reading materials distributed to them during the training. It is obvious that a semi literate, neo-literate or a primary pass PR can't read such text heavy modules and materials and for sure hardly enjoy such readings.
- **All-In-One Institute-** The IGPR&GVS is solely involved in all the activities and steps from the beginning. It designs the training, does the TNA, develops the training materials and

modules, selects the trainers, trains the trainers, and imparts the training through them, monitors the training, and does the impact assessment of the training and prepares the report of training and its output. Such an all rounded approach leaves very little scope of improvements and innovations and leads towards self claimed success.

- **Single Shot doses:** Conducting training on a particular time and season, leaves many entrants without the orientation. If a person misses out on one such program, she is left with little possibility of getting involved soon in the next such type of training program due to the wide gap between two such consecutive trainings. No strategy is available with the institute to capture left out or drop out trainees, besides ensuring training on a regular basis.
- **No Reward-No Punishment; No follow Up- No Action:** The training is implemented largely at district and block levels. The monitoring mechanism is not so robust, nor is any reward-punishment provision available for best and worst performers. The follow up of training's quality and quantity aspects along with curative actions are very fragile and neglected.
- **Mainstreaming Versus Exclusive Training:** The training of elected women representatives needs to be focused and exclusive but the present mode of training does not give any room for such 'exclusive' approach as the Institute believes on mainstreaming of women participants along with generating gender sensitivity among male counterparts towards issues related to women.
- **Absence of scientific analysis system of training:** The analysis of the training and its impact are usually done by IGPR&GVS in a workshop mode, more of a discussion based analysis. As no scientific system of research is being followed; as a result the result of the analysis can be questioned at any point of time and by anybody on any issue.

Innovations in Capacity Building of PRIs in the Recent Past

- **Exposure visits:** Exposure visits of PR representatives of all three levels were organised to the better states and institutes and the personnel working with the PRD. But these are neither the priority activity, nor a regular activity covering every PRIs.

- **Interactive Video Training Module and Films:** To provide quick access to the knowledge in an easy and effective manner, CD ROM based interactive video training modules and films are developed and are being developed by the department and the Institute. Presently, few good films and modules have been developed but the multiplication and distribution of these modules and the publicity of such effective tools are still very limited and sidelined.
- **Developing & Promoting Local Champions:** Documentary films are being made on the 'Good Work Done by the Panchayats' on various issues i.e. water and sanitation, health, hygiene and nutrition, encroachment reduction, plantation, roads and infrastructure development, promoting social security etc. Again, developing such good tools is one thing and encouraging others to do good practices by disseminating such documentaries effectively and widely is another.
- **Use of Technology:** Knowledge and information are being disseminated by using Satellite Technology (SatCom). But the use of SatCom is very limited and not widely and effectively publicized.

Suggestions for Enhancing Efficacy

Training should be seen as an opportunity to streamline the system, to make our country as developed country, to aware the people for the betterment. The importance of training should percolated down to all levels. Following are a few suggestions to improve the effectiveness of training-

- **Training Material-** Training materials should be made interesting and targeting the semi-literate, neo literate and also the illiterate community. *The knowledge should go in the form of stories, with sketches, figures and photos. Local examples, local champions, local historical grandness etc. can be put into the module in the form of relevant knowledge and information.* Definitely, it is a time and energy taking task with innovation and creativity, but once it is done, a lot can be addressed.

Customized Training Materials should also be developed for specific target groups i.e. women, illiterates and marginalized classes and *dedicated training sessions* should be organized for them.

- **Mainstreaming of the capacity building efforts** – Capacity building should not be a onetime event. Efforts should be made to mainstream the capacity building activities effectively and practically. Conducting a training program needs coordination and participation of several stakeholders at the specific time and place. No doubt, the direct training mode is one of the most effective methods of training, but one needs to explore other methods, which can support and supplement the direct training method.

Producing computer based tutorials, interactive video training modules, multi media films, documentaries of good work done by the Panchayats of Rajasthan can serve several purposes and can be used at various levels. Such interesting and full of knowledge containing materials can break the monotony of the lecture mode training, can be used any time as per the convenience of the trainees, prevent knowledge leakages, can be revisited again and again to clear the doubts and queries of the recipients and can maintain the interest of illiterates, semi literates and neo literates besides educated people.

Wide dissemination of such useful materials is as important as the production of the same. Therefore, it should be ensured at all levels that the developed materials should reach the participants at all levels and the required paraphernalia should be available there at the receiving end. Publicity should be done effectively by way of officials meetings, visits, circulars, office orders, mobile messaging etc. so that the use of these materials can be ensured.

Satcom is an effective technology for disseminating such knowledge in an effective manner but SatCom alone cannot ensure the participation of the PRIs at all levels. The efforts are to be made to ensure the participation at all levels so that the participants can see the telecast a given time. Such efforts include informing the participants about the timing, place and dates of the dissemination, arrangement of paraphernalia i.e. adequate place in meeting hall, chairs etc, TV, Speaker, Mike, alternative arrangements of electricity etc. and one facilitator who can steer the show.

Exposure visits should be organized on a regular basis covering maximum PRIs of all levels including women PRIs. The *visits should be categorized on the basis of themes* i.e. exemplary work in the areas of devolution of powers, conducting Gram Sabhas, role of standing committees, Water harvesting, poverty alleviation, systems development, capacity building, health, sanitation, income generation, implementation of government's schemes etc. The visits can be conducted to beacon states i.e. Kerala beacons panchayats of Rajasthan and beacon institutes etc.

Talk show and question answer sessions can be organized by using technology and *sets of frequently asked questions (FAQs)* on various issues can be developed, disseminated and publicized. Constant use of mass media can be explored and cultivated effectively.

- **Quantity verses Quality:** The left out participants should be identified and special training batches should be conducted for them. The full participation of the participants is very important not merely attending the inaugural session or part of the training program. The pre and post evaluation, which is usually done at the State level training, should be done mandatorily at all levels (Ward Panch and Sarpanchs training also) and must be analyzed at the end of the training. Based on the results of the pre and post evaluations, the participants should be called for re-training. The logistic arrangements, training aids etc. should be ensured effectively. Conducting training has two major parts - one is coordination or facilitation and the other is actual imparting of training. Therefore, both the parts should be given an equal priority.
- **Invite the Critics for Betterment:** Third Party Evaluation, Independent Observers and comments from the others i.e. ex-PRIs, NGOs, officials from other departments, and academicians should be encouraged and used for corrections and ratification.
- **Developing a Training Ethos:** The training and capacity building should not be considered as a sideline activity. Training should not be organized for the sake of organizing it. Efforts should be made to develop a training ethos among the officers, staff and elected representatives of PRIs, so that it can leave its footprints on the path of development and empowerment.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Varma (1997) in his book 'Women's Struggle for Political Space' studied women's quest for attaining equity with justice in the political field. In the forward to this book T.N. Seshan has written that 'Participation of women in elections is not an end in itself. Further, the real struggle is for women to achieve her participation in the decision making process of governance. Little it is realized that in the absence of participation by women in the political process of any country including India every law and every regulation tends to be so drafted as to be discriminatory against women'.

Varma in summing up has stated that 'By and large, women still remain as powerless politically as they were before. Today, they represent half of the words' enfranchised population. According to him full political participation by women will mean that the government which have failed to take the following issues seriously so far, will find it nearly impossible to wriggle out of them now:

- 1) A strong commitment to women's issues at the highest level of the government.
- 2) Ministries or Bureaux of Women's affairs to have the status and resources required to influence the development and implementation of policy in all ministries.
- 3) A clear recognition that all ministries are equally responsible for addressing women's concern.

- 4) The setting up of appropriate mechanism to ensure the incorporation of women's issues in all areas and sectors of development, planning and economic management.
- 5) Women's full participation in all aspects of policy and programme planning and implementation.

It is well-known that political parties all over the world especially in the developing world have considered women not from the point of empowering them but mostly from the point of welfare whether it is at the National level or at the regional level or at the Panchayat level. Women have failed to emerge as a strong force to take advantage of development in the core sector. After 60 years of independence reservations for women at government level have been made only at the Panchayat level. Most of the women freedom fighters wanted to come into power of their own ability and felt that it was the only way to compete with men politicians.

It is not that women were totally left out of Panchayats. Before the 73rd amendment there was a provision of cooption of two women at the Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad levels. However, as was expected these women were totally ineffective at decision making level and women more than 60 years of age were more than in 21-30 age group. The majority came from the upper castes and were illiterate. Most of them were belonging to the families of influential land owners and were expected to take the line as per their men. This pattern of a symbolic presence of women with not much say in governance is still present. There might have been some improvement here and there but by and large women are still depending on their husbands and fathers for decision making. The reasons are many and have been brought out in our study.

The age old male dominated mind-set that women do not need power to govern and should look after their households only where they wield a lot of power, seems a major hurdle in bringing more and more women to join politics. Such mentality still prevails in both urban and rural areas of the country, the magnitude may differ.

To vote for a particular political party or a person is a personal choice of an individual. Still forces like political, social, family and even communal try to influence a voter. This results in others

making a decision, particularly in case of women voters. Village leadership has been a very influencing force on voting decisions, both for men and women.

Reservation for women

The issues of reservation of seats for women in the legislative and other decision-making elected bodies has been raised from time to time. It was debated in the First Round Table Conference in 1930-31 and again at the Second Round Table Conference in 1932. The Congress Party and Jawahar Lal Nehru in 1936 directed:

“We must also not forget that our women folk has consistently refused special and reserved representation in the legislatures. They have also protested against even partial representation that has been given to them. That attitude must be appreciated by the nation as a whole and we should see to it that they should not suffer for it. It is, therefore, necessary that we should provide for women candidates to stand for as many general constituencies as possible, apart from special seats allotted to them.”

Since then political parties and intellectuals have been debating for and against reservation of seats for women.

At the instance of Rajiv Gandhi, only in 1988 in National Perspective Plan, reservation of seats for women was supported. The Government of India decided to go by the theory of Drude Dahlerup which had been developed and applied in the Scandinavian Countries and which stated that once a women entered a legislature, her position had to be strengthened by support from an active women’s movement outside the political system and support of a critical mass of women colleagues (minimum of 25% to 30%) in the system. Only then can she realize her political potential and only then can women exert meaningful political influence (Varma, 1997).

Owing to Rajiv Gandhi’s thrust on strengthening the Panchayati Raj structure and providing a 33.3 per cent reservation for women, which was supported by other political parties also, the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 came into force with effect from 20 April, 1993. It inserted a new Part-IX called “The Panchayats” in the Constitution of India. It also

provided for a fixed tenure of five years to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) which could not be interfered with by the state governments and made provisions for reservation of 33.3 per cent seats for women entitling nearly 6.7 lakh (0.67 million) women to get elected to PRIs in the country.

In Rajasthan, the state government enhanced this reservation to 50 per cent before the 2010 Panchayat elections. This study has shown that out of the sample of 50 women Sarpanchs, 47 were elected because of reservation only. At all the three levels of Sarpanch, Pradhan and Zila Pramukh, women have occupied more than 50 per cent positions. The issue is how far these elected women's representatives in Panchayats have played their role smoothly and effectively?

To consolidate the financial position of the PRIs, the Constitutional amendment also provided for the formation of a Finance Commission every five years which would recommended the principles to govern the distribution of net proceeds of a state between the state and the panchayats, the *grants-in-aid* to the Panchayats and other measures to boost the resources of the Panchayats. The study has revealed that Sarpanch, Pradhan and Zila Pramukh mentioned about lack of budget from SFC (State Finance Commission) and TFC (Thirteenth Finance Commission) and support from MLA Local funds. Due to shortage of funds they could not perform as they wanted.

A number of areas of development were also earmarked for panchayats to prepare plans for economic development and social justice as well as implementation of such schemes. Twenty nine areas were marked for such activities and a new Eleventh schedule was added to the Constitution of India. A large number of women Sarpanchs, almost all Pradhans and Zila Pramukh know about the various development schemes of various departments. They, however, were critical about the implementation of these projects. On MGNREGS both positive and critical opinions were given. Some appreciated as this scheme provided employment opportunities particularly to women in the village itself and as a result migration to urban areas was reduced. Many of them suggested that permanent works were not done and not implemented as per plan (watershed plan). Further, they all raised the issue of corruption in the schemes. This shows that they were aware of such major schemes and their weaknesses and strengths. On watershed based projects like DPAP and DDP, they agreed that programme helped in collection, conservation and utilization of water in the water

scarce state of Rajasthan. On the other hand many also thought that adequate budget was not provided for the programme and there was no proper planning for moisture conservation. The quality of water was not good, they complained. Therefore, there is need to educate them properly about area development schemes like DPAP and DDP so they can exert their influence in peoples' participations for the success of such projects.

The opinions of women Sarpanchs on various social development programmes was mainly in the form of complaints like shortage of staff, vacant posts of staff and specialists, absentism of staff, etc. Benefits of health programmes were also mentioned by many. On education, there were many views. Women Sarpanchs showed greater concern in social justice programmes like widow pension, old-age pension, disability pension, ration distribution, etc. This was obvious but they pointed out corruption in the identification of BPL families and implementation of these programmes. It is, therefore, necessary that women Sarpanchs play a greater role and are given more responsibilities and power in implementation and monitoring of all the programmes not only of the social sector but also other infrastructural programmes.

As far as training of elected women representative is concerned a number of issues have emerged like i) Duration of Training, ii) Training providing agencies, iii) Training material and modules, iv) Audio-visual aids, v) Female trainers, vi) Proper feed back and vii) Uniformity in trainings. On training, a majority of women sarpanchs suggested more emphasis on legal aspects, rules and regulations, finance and accounts and administration and emphasized on the practical aspects of trainings.

For their effective role to be played in panchayat affairs they suggested that:

- a) More powers be given.
- b) Better cooperation of administrative officers.
- c) Greater coordination with the departments in providing notices for meetings and agenda notes.
- d) Their suggestions to be taken seriously for action.

Some disturbing observations have also come out from this study after fifteen years of providing constitutional status to Panchayati Raj. This may be coming in way of real women's empowerment on large scale and not as few examples, which was evident from this study. In order to strengthen the democracy at grass-root level and provide empowerment to women in real sense, young and educated women come forward to govern at local or panchayat level. The study shows that 60 per cent sarpanch were above 40 years of age and 40 per cent upto 40 years, of this only 22 per cent were upto 30 years of age. This situation has not changed for the last many years as reported by other workers also reviewed earlier. Similarly, picture of educational level has also not changes much as 60 per cent sarpanchs were either illiterate or just literate. Only 5 out of sample of 50 were secondary/higher secondary parts. This could be a big impediment in empowerment of women at panchayat level.

The family background also plays an important role in coming to public life, particularly for women in our society. The study revealed that nuclear or single family system was dominant for all Sarpanchs, Pradhans and Zila Pramukhs. This could be the outcome of development and modernization. In fact a large number of sarpanchs suggested that support of husbands and family members was required for them to take up the work of panchayats. Political background was another factor which came to light to come to local politics as almost 50 per cent sarpanch had support of politicians from family. The reality is this that husband who was sarpanch earlier and had influence in his village got his wife elected as sarpanch on women's reservation seat, whether she deserved or wanted was of no concern. This way he continued to govern as before. It came out in the study that 70 per cent woman sarpanch either did not answer any question at all (60%) or only partially spoke (12%). Thus, there own views were not available and answers were based on male members understanding. This is a very weak link in making women empowered in the society and govern as peoples' representative at grass-root level. This also came out while talking to voters.

1. Most Sarpanch and Pradhan were older than 40 and Zila Pramukh above 50 years of age. Reservation helped in electing 40 per cent women of less than 40 years of age.
2. Nuclear family system is spreading in the rural areas as majority of Sarpanch, Pradhan and Zila Pramukh live in nuclear families.

3. Family income of Sarpanch, Pradhan and Zila Pramukh varied between Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 60,000. There were few exception with higher income of Rs. One lakh or above.
4. Most of the elected women representatives in Panchayat belonged to OBC category, followed by SC.
5. Educational level varied from literate to post graduate levels. The situation is not satisfactory.
6. A large number of women representatives either did not reply to questions and left their husbands/relatives to answer on their behalf. This was upto Zila Pramukh level. In Udaipur 50 per cent Sarpanch replied their own questions. No one from Jodhpur relied their own questions.
7. Nearly half of the respondents belonged to political background.
8. Out of 50 Sarpanch, 47 would not have been elected if there were no reservation. In fact due to reservation 94 per cent women are Sarpanch.
9. A large number of Sarpanch, 37 out 50, stated that their husbands take decisions in Panchayat meetings. In Udaipur 70 per cent women Sarpanch taken their own decision whereas in Jodhpur move.
10. Economic independence was mentioned as a reason for women Sarpanch involvement in Panchayat affairs and support of family was needed for their working.
11. In order of priority majority suggested development of infra-structure like roads, drinking water, electricity, etc. This was followed by social justice issues like old age pension, widow pension, etc. Economic development was not properly impeastood.
12. A majority of Sarpanch, Pradhan and Zila Pramukh blamed lack of administrative support and no power given to than to deal with five transferred subjects to Panchayats. In fact 36 per cent women Sarpanch had no knowledge about transferred departments and only 4 per cent know about these.
13. Lack of budget was another reason for their not working effectively.

14. Most of Sarpanch, Pradhan and Zila Pramukh were critical about trainings imparted to them which were not effective and no practical aspects were taught. Feedback of training programmes was totally absent as a result no improvement in training content was possible.
15. In training most respondents desired information's related to law and rules and regulations to deal with their responsibilities. Training in financial rules and accounts was next priority shown by them. Water resources development, information technology and social justice were other subjects of their interest.
16. Almost all women Sarpanch agreed that MGNREGS has helped in generation of employment facilities like gravel roads, etc and migration has reduced. They were, however, critical about works and corruption in the system.
17. They know about benefits of watershed development programmes for the water conservation. They, however, demanded more funds to expand this work. Jodhpur women Sarpanch suggested in area for the construction of water harvesting structure (Tanka).
18. Programmes of nutrition and immunization have been liked by 90 per cent women Sarpanch as this has helped in reducing diseases in children. They suggested that ANMs and specialist doctors' vacant posts should be filled unmediated.
19. All women Sarpanchs agreed that primary education has increased in villages, however, shortage of staff and drop outs, lack of transport facilities, particularly in Jodhpur, were some factors which prevents girls to go for higher education.
20. On social justice, 100 per cent women Sarpanchs agreed that schemes like old age pension, widow pension and disability pension were beneficial. They, however, complaint about delay in pension payment and complicated rules to get full benefits of these schemes.
21. Women Sarpanch suggested that ration shops should be in or near villages and along with only wheat and kerosene other items of necessity should be distributed.
22. On Indira Awas Yojana and Chief Minister Awas Yojana, they suggested financial support to BPL families and completions of construction work.

This study has reconfirmed that even after more than fifteen Panchayati Raj System in Rajasthan, status of women has not changed much, as desired. Fifty per cent reservation for women in Panchayat has helped more women contesting and coming as Sarpanch, Pradhan and Zila Pramukh. The educational level is poor in elected Sarpanch. Most respondent felt that strong economic base was necessary for women to give their best in Panchayats. Even today, husbands/relatives have answered questions put to women Sarpanch, Pradhan and even Zila Pramukh. Political background of women representatives also helped them in contesting and winning the Panchayat elections.

The training part seems to be weak as all women Sarpanchs did not know much about five transferred departments like education, health, social justice, women and child development and agriculture. Most of them thought that subject matter gives was not adequate and clear to them and desired more practical aspects of trainings. Feedback of training was totally missing. Majority of women Sarpanchs desired more training in aspects of law, finance and account related to Panchayat matter for their effective working.

Based on findings, summary and conclusions of this study, a SWOT analysis has been made and summarized below in table:

Perceptions Emerging from SWOT Analysis

Strengths of Women ERs:	Weaknesses of Women ERs	Opportunities for Women ERs	Threats for Women ERs
Capable of realizing their rights	A Woman opposes the initiatives of another woman	Expeditious resolution of problems faced by women desired	The culture of alcoholism in rural areas and resultant undignified behavior with women – adversely effects women’s mobility and their role performance
Realization of not submitting to exploitation by dominant forces	Lack of education due to lack of opportunities	Need to enhance their knowledge & skills	Socio-cultural impediments
High self-confidence	Despite reservation, women are not forthcoming	Need to increase opportunities for attainment of functional literacy	Indecent and insulting behavior by male colleageues
Knowledgeable about problems of their area and specific problems of women	Speak less in meetings (On account of socio cultural inhibitions)	Need for promoting economic independence	Fear of violence in remote areas
Articulate and assertive for building pressure on officials for resolving problems of their area overwhelm	Fear of making mistakes - while public speaking / participation in meetings and taking decisions	Need of sustained support & advice from official colleagues	Fear of not fulfilling people’s expectations
Women are givers of strength to each other and emerge strong as a group / collective	Fear of asking questions	Need to come out of the veil system	Inability to mobilize financial resources to fulfill people’s expectations in their constituencies
Winning elections in minimal expenditure (Rs 60,000 only), defeating candidates incurring expenditure to the tune of Rs. 80 Lakh and above	Are exploited by co – workers by way of being made to sign documents with out understanding the implications	Equal opportunity required to sit, as well as, to speak at par with men in Gram Sabha / Ward Sabha / other PRI Meetings	Fear of making mistakes in course of their work and being condemned
As a woman cares for her family with love and a sense of duty, similarly, she can be the best caretaker for development of her community and constituency	Fear of facing opposition after loss of post (Political power) after 5 years	Women Sabha should be organized before Gram Sabha, as per prevailing system in Maharashtra	Threat of being misled/misguided and exploited due to lack of education and awareness

Committed for development of entire work area (GP/PS/ZP)	Veil system (<i>Purdah</i>)	Sustained training for enhancing effective role performance	Directions of women ERs not being complied with – leading to feeling of disrespect
Dedicated to rise high in politics, eager to fight elections on general seats	Women are low profile, they do not publicize their work as men do	Exposure visits to other districts/states for peer learning from PRI ERs doing good work	---
Good leadership skills	Women are emotional and trust others easily making them vulnerable for being cheated	Special allowance for women ERs for support of domestic work and child care responsibilities	---
Women leaders conducted meetings peacefully and with patience.	High acceptance of male dominance	Vehicle facility for increasing mobility in their area	---
All women participate in Panchayat meetings regularly	Dependence on male escorts for travelling and mobility	Hand-holding support beyond training	---
	Hesitate in communicating with men	Laws related to ensuring security and dignity of women be publicized and strongly enforced	---
	Excessively burdened with household work – leading to denial of recreational & self - learning opportunities	The eligibility criteria for contesting elections to PRIs – should delete the two child norm eliminating criteria	---
	Lack of political knowledge and experience	Creche services be provided for women ERs in PRIs	---

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has very clearly provided a number of issues which are needed to enhance the role of women elected representatives in Panchayat and make them more responsible and effective in local governance. Some major recommendation are as under:

1. Reservation to women in Panchayati Raj should be continued.
2. Only elected women representatives should be allowed to attend Panchayat meetings.
3. Much more attention is needed on training programmes and contents of training modules. These should be in local language, simple, more audio-visual content and emphasizing practical aspects.
4. Greater attention in training is needed on legal and financial aspects related to their working so that Sarpanch can take proper and independent decision.
5. Coordination and cooperation of Government Department s and district authorities was essential for them to perform to their roles and responsibilities effectively. A system approach is needed so that their requirements regarding information are met promptly.
6. All departments should be bounded to send meeting notices with agenda well in time so that they are able to attend meetings and contribute also.

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