

# **Engendering Local Governance: The Karnataka Experience**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

At the dawn of a new millenium close to a million women came into power as a result of the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments to the Indian constitution. To fully understand the magnitude of such change among and by Indian women, this study examines some of the historical factors that shaped women's political participation today. Second, through a detailed empirical analysis, this study examines the positive impact of women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Karnataka State. At the same time, the arenas where future action needs to be undertaken in order to lay out future strategies to facilitate women's political participation have surfaced. Karnataka is exceptional, in that, it led the nation into reservation by mandating that 25 percent of all seats be reserved for women in the term prior to the one after the Amendments. Consequently women's participation here must be examined in both terms and the change traced over **time**.

India is now entering the next phase of devolution with the revitalization of the Gram Sabha. To date its focus has been purely on revitalization of the Gram Panchayats. With the announcement of the Year 2000 as the Year of the Gram Sabha, sweeping changes have been announced to revitalize the community. These changes amount to having an outside mediator or observer to prevent the President or secretary from dominating the gram sabha, and to hold regular more frequent gram sabhas and to ensure that decisions made in them are binding. Given that India is about to undergo a new set of sweeping reforms that will now involve the community, it is important that all possible facilitative efforts in this regard such as dialogue, systematic documentation and strengthening of community based organizational participation must take place.

### Methodology and Scope of This Study

#### Methodology

This study has conducted an extensive review and analysis of secondary data as well as fieldwork on women's political participation in PRIs in Karnataka. The study took place in 3 districts, Bijapur, Dharwad and Mysore, supplemented by prior field visits done in Shimoga district. The districts were selected based on identification of the best practices in women and Panchayati Raj through interviews with organizations in Karnataka such as Mahila Samakhya Karnataka (MSK), India Development Service (IDS), Institute of Social Science Trust (ISST) and Hengasara Hakkina Sangha (HHS). These field visits basically include an in-depth qualitative analysis of experiences related by elected women representatives in Panchayati Raj over their last term.

#### *Scope of the report:*

This study covers the historical backdrop against which the events concerning women and Panchayati Raj in the state of Karnataka emerged including:

- Mandal Panchayat Act, the Karnataka Panchayati Raj Act and state level policy changes that shaped the structure of the PRIs.

- The implications of the national events that led to the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments and their implementation in Karnataka.
- The experiences of women in their first and second terms of power is outlined, followed by a comparison.
- Finally, this study derives its conclusions and recommendations for future action and strategies through the above analysis and directly from practitioners' and elected women representatives' recommendations.

## **Conceptual Framework**

The two variables examined here are:

Improved Governance: Governance is improved if it is more transparent, accountable, equitable, sustainable and participatory for the community at large.

Improved, Engendered Governance: Governance is engendered and improved if it is more transparent for women, accountable to women, equitable for women, has lasting sustainable changes for women and invites not just community participation but women's participation in particular. Indicators accompanying engendered governance include:

- Engendered Transparency
- Engendered Accountability
- Equity for poor women
- Sustainability for women
- Participation of women

## **Key Findings**

Women's participation has been through a process of evolution over the last two terms. The second term findings show an increase in the participation and the functioning of the women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Elected women representatives (EWRs) now have a clearer vision of their needs and responsibilities in the PRIs. In this term there are examples of self-motivated candidates and also of members who have retained their post even after being ridiculed or threatened. Another important characteristic of this term is that the NGOs and the State Governments trained the elected women representatives across the country on the Panchayati Raj process. This training had a great impact on the functioning and participation of all stakeholders of the system.

### *Organizational Interventions*

Organizations act as a strong support system to EWRs reversing initial passivity, as a result of fear or ignorance, by providing training and generating awareness. Where there are CBOs this support system is further enhanced by.

- Creating awareness on the electoral process prior to elections.
- Supporting campaigners and fostering community participation in the voting process during elections.
- Training elected members on the governance process.
- Ensuring the participation of all sections of the community.
- Developing networks and federations at all levels for dialogue and dissemination.
- Acting as catalysts to facilitate the participation of women at all levels

The intervention and information transfer via organizations becomes a crucial input in helping women get into the panchayats, and once in power, getting access to procedural information and panchayat resources.

### *Training*

The second term witnessed a consolidation of training needs of the EWRs.

Content: The most essential training modules now include:

- Functioning of the PRIs, roles, responsibilities, rules and regulations.
- Gender training, i.e. skill and confidence building, role clarification, attitudinal changes on gender.
- Budgets and finances of the PRIs
- Programmes implemented through the PRIs

Approaches: The project and the process approaches are two main types of approaches used for training. In the former, training is conducted only at a specific period of time and there is no follow up. Whereas in the latter, training is a continuous process that allows for follow up and reinforcement of important issues.

Training Methods: Some of the insights gained on training methods are:

- Prioritize and have interactive and participatory training.
- Performance oriented rather than traditional paper and pencil methods are more effective.
- Training must demonstrate that for a more equal society both men and women have to be educated together in a non-formal atmosphere. One strategy suggested by the trainees themselves was that the men should train the women and vice versa.
- A holistic approach yields long-term solutions.

### Impact of Training:

Pedagogical Impact: Attitudes and pedagogical learning can be measured by interviewing the secretaries and members of the Gram Panchayats, the members of the community, the women themselves and government officials.

### *Action Impact:*

- Capacity to govern: Training Gram Panchayat members helped them access information about government programmes, the functioning of PRIs, how to participate, where to get funds, and were therefore better equipped to govern. After the training noticeable changes in women were reported. They started asking more questions and wanted to monitor the programmes more closely.
- Training taught EWRs that 20 percent of funds should be allocated for SCs/STs. This helped them channel funds towards these marginalized sections.
- Training has helped EWRs develop their articulation skills, planning skills and has build their confidence.

### *The New Areas Currently Being Developed via the Panchayats*

New areas are starting to emerge where training can be seen as both facilitative as well as highly innovative:

- Legal Literacy and Literacy: Work here can facilitate equity concerns as women and EWRs are made aware of their rights. Literacy gives them access to information.
- Environment: Work on environment via the panchayats can facilitate environmental sustainability of governance and development.
- Health: This is also an issue of long term sustainability of the human resources of an area and is increasingly being seen as a concern of local government.
- Reproductive Health: Issues such as AIDS, the devadasi system and all other kinds of reproductive health related issues with taboos associated with them when taken up by the panchayats can actually help demystify these taboos.

The initiatives in these areas need to be systematized and dialogue forums can then consolidate the lessons learnt.

### *Participation*

Participation was measured using indicators such as the presence of women in decision-making fora, the nature and extent of their functioning in the PRIs and in the Gram Sabhas (which indicate community participation). It was found that:

- The physical presence of the women in the Panchayats and the gram sabhas **has increased** at all levels.
- Opportunity for training EWRs **increased** and there has been a demand for literacy, which some organizations have responded to.
- Leadership skills of EWRs improved leading to an **increased capacity** to raise issues, intervene, implement decisions and **increased access to resources** for the community.
- Training has facilitated the articulation of EWRs, changed attitudes, **enhanced their interaction** with local institutions such as schools, government agencies, police, among others.
- While more Gram Sabhas are held and Panchayat monthly meetings regularized, the participation of women in the Gram Sabhas has been mainly in the form of attendance with a few instances of vocal EWRs and sangha representatives. In the Panchayat meetings however more women were seen articulating their views and concerns.

### *Transparency*

Transparency was measured by the extent to which EWRs were aware of the governance process, and whether and how they were able to bring this knowledge to others in the Gram Panchayat and in the Gram Sabha. Findings indicate that EWRs have been able to bring about a higher degree of transparency as is indicated by the instances where:

- Knowledge of the actual rules and procedures gained through Panchayati Raj training makes the governance process transparent first for the EWRs themselves and, where they are in dialogue with women from the community, for the larger female constituency.
- EWRs have questioned corruption and where possible checked it by monitoring Panchayat work.
- EWRs have asked for meetings to be held only in the presence of a full quorum.
- EWRs have expressed the need to provide information to those who are not literate by reading out minutes, circulars and so on.

### *Accountability*

Accountability is measured by the extent and degree to which decisions made by the Gram Sabha are carried out and elected representatives are accountable to their constituencies. Engendered accountability, defined by EWRs themselves takes accountability a step further by expanding it to the more marginalized, particularly to women.

- Improved Accountability: For many EWRs, being in power meant doing work for their communities and explaining Gram Panchayat activities to people. Furthermore, their work was directed towards the welfare of the larger community, not themselves. It has been found that after the EWRs learn about the Gram Sabhas they insist on holding regular meetings and that decisions be taken in front of all the people. More Gram Sabhas held means a larger possibility for more people being aware about the transactions and decisions of the panchayat. It is at the Gram Sabhas that beneficiaries are chosen. Therefore one forum at which members can be held accountable to their election promises and to their constituencies is the Gram Sabha.
- Engendered, improved accountability: Women elected officials in implementing government programmes first make sure that the needy are included and that they take up women specific issues. They have also tried to eliminate alcoholism through banning the consumption and sale of liquor in their villages. Alcoholism is typically seen as a gender specific problem where the interests of the families are sacrificed for gratification of this addiction. Therefore accountability from the EWRs' perspectives meant being responsive to the most marginalised namely the poor and women (as opposed to being accountable only to their voting constituency).

### *Equity*

Equity is measured by ensuring equal access to resources and opportunities for all groups. Engender equity is measured by the degree to which women in those groups get access to resources and opportunities.

- Social inclusion/acceptance: The EWRs ensure equal opportunity to all members of the community via panchayat proceedings. They pay particular attention to marginalised groups including the widows, Devadasis and lower castes.
- Access of poor to programmes and resources: They prioritize the marginalized by:
  - Ensuring that resources set aside for the lower castes reach them.
  - Opening up access to water resources, temples and other public services and facilities for the lower castes.
  - Ensuring that the most needy get priority in access to resources and opportunity.
- Equity for women: In challenging patriarchal norms and practices EWRs have tried to equalize the conditions for men and women. They have done this by challenging customs such as dowry in their families. They have also done this by providing more access to resources for poor women, widows and access to resources for sanghas.

### *Sustainability*

Strictly speaking sustainability has been used in the context of ensuring environmental balance and to ensure that natural resources of the community are not depleted. However sustainability also has another connotation, i.e., it includes those projects/activities that can be pursued and maintained in the long run. Among such lasting changes are:

- Change in literacy levels which can be a tool of political empowerment
- Change in attitudes of men in the community and officials
- A redefinition and engendering of leadership notions
- Building a stronger institutional set of relationships between the sanghas and the PRIs

Environmental sustainability: Gram Panchayat women members raised environmental issues such as cleaning up ponds and public spaces in their areas. The male elected members have different priorities. Some NGOs are taking up the issue of environment via the panchayats thereby raising the awareness on environment in the communities.

Developing, redefining and engendering leadership: Women through being in power have started to redefine for themselves what they consider leadership. An engendered perspective of a leader is that of a person who does not lie, does not lose his/her patience, is willing to explain the programmes to people and to say what they can do for people and is broad minded. Leadership meant honesty, openness about the available resources, decision making and implementation of schemes and in the last instance directing their work towards their constituencies. This view is radically different from the traditional view of leaders being charismatic public speakers and being overtly strong.

Leadership is a quality that is also fostered through collective support. The sanghas are non-traditional spaces where women are given the opportunity to develop and define their leadership skills. Sanghas acts as training grounds for inculcating this new engendered form of leadership where women leaders emerge knowing what other women value. Leadership therefore also meant being accountable to community women who were instrumental in bringing them to power and to lower castes when elected on a reserved seat for the lower castes and other backward communities.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

In the first term women had barely entered politics and were just getting their feet wet. Many did not know what their roles were, training barely existed to tell them their roles and what was expected from them. Moreover the national consensus that came with the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments which made officials at every level open to these changes was not there for women in their first term. However in the second term a completely different scenario was found. Not only had women entered politics but also NGOs and the government were geared and ready for them with training on the functioning of the PRIs from day 1. As women progressed through the term other NGOs with their myriad experiences and expertise, brought their skills into the panchayat making gender sensitization a standard and bringing legal literacy within the panchayats. Towards the end of the second term NGOs were beginning to introduce newer areas into local government such as environment, health, reproductive health and AIDs into the Gram Panchayats and had started experimenting on education and planning for action for these new areas. By the end of this term the various forms of training that are essential were clear and the new areas being adopted were still in an experimental stage.

Karnataka has a great deal of experience to offer in terms of best practices to other states. For one it has large women's organizations such as Mahila Samakhya which has close ties with the government. Organizations such as HHS is again unique in that it is one of the few organizations that brings legal literacy and rights awareness to women at the village level both within and outside the Panchayats. Organizations such as ISST play a training and dissemination role responding to the needs of EWRs. Uma Prachar, their quarterly journal has a wide audience and is appreciated as one of the major sources of information on the Gram Panchayats in the country. The other striking feature about Karnataka is the number of women in the Gram Panchayats possibly because of women being in the panchayats for more than one term. The result is that while women constitute barely 33 percent in other states as per the requirements of the constitutional amendments, they constitute much more than that in Karnataka.

## **Recommendations**

### *Preparation on Further Decentralization i.e. Towards the Gram Sabha*

- Year of the Gram Sabha: Over the last decade a transition from decentralization of power and decision making from within government to the electorate (community) where it should actually be, has occurred. Both the Panchayat and the community must be prepared for this new phase of devolution which requires the following facilitative measures to be taken:
  - Dialogue forums between Gram Panchayats, and CBOs must be arranged
  - Federations of Panchayats and CBOs at cluster, block and district level are needed to begin bottom up planning where the community takes a larger role.
  - Intervention of NGOs via training of the electorate/gram sabha is required to take on their roles in making governance more accountable.
  - To engender the gram sabha, women's collectives must be positioned through training and establishing linkages.
  - Systematic documentation of the experiments on the gram sabha in the next term and of best practices to determine conditions for success is needed.
  - Organizations like MSK with a wide base of CBOs can set the tone for positioning women in the Gram Sabha and train other NGOs on the same.
- Roles and Responsibilities: The Gram Panchayat, women members, the community at large and towards sanghas in particular should be made aware of their roles and responsibilities in making governance transparent, accountable, equitable, sustainable and participatory.

### **Training**

Serious thought is needed on the overall design of training modules for the next generation of elected officials. Given that the next term will have a mix of fresh candidates and those previously in power, training need to be designed to cover the basic functions of the PRIs, but also become more specialized immediately without having women need to articulate these needs. For training to be effective:

- It must facilitate convergence of all stakeholders including elected officials (men and women), CBOs, NGOs, government, banks, police, schools, colleges, other major institutions, media, policy makers, and academia.

- It should facilitate a new mix between traditional knowledge and scientific expertise.
- Systematize Training: Five types of training modules need to be designed and administered systematically nationally for both men and women members. These include broad training on the PRIs, gender training, legal training, budgetary training and training on government schemes.
- Chilly Climate Syndrome: Having recognized as a universal problem what was described earlier as the chilly climate syndrome that cuts across district, caste, class or religion, it is extremely important that women are not left to just “suffer it out” each time. Instead a responsible response is to start each fresh term by gender training on the “chilly climate syndrome”, and to list its indicators so both men and women recognize them and then find ways to challenge and confront it.
- Training Methodologies: For Gram Panchayat members to learn, training methods need to be participatory, hands on and continuous.
- Resources: Existing resources such as Mahila Samakhya can be consulted to facilitate such linkages and train trainers on interventions on women in the panchayats.
- Initiate the Right to Information Campaign: Just having women in power will not help them govern well unless they have full information. Therefore, the Right to Information to all aspects of PRIs, need to be initiated in Karnataka as in Rajasthan.
- Literacy: Organizations with the existing capacity to eradicate illiteracy in less than a year can both train trainers from other NGOs and replicate these efforts.
- Finally, training in the emerging areas needs to be systematized.

#### *Validating Gender Concerns*

- Gender issues: Across several villages women are raising gender specific issues such as alcoholism and measures to support women need to be designed and adopted.
- Critical mass: Several EWRs an equal representation of men and women (50:50).
- Engendering leadership training: Leadership training must now incorporate a newly emerging grassroots gender perspective on what constitutes a good leader. This image of leadership, which need not clash with women’s images of themselves as women but still gives them the freedom to act decisively and be taken seriously and this is important to universalize.
- Gender audit: It is essential to have a regular Gender Audit of PRI budgets to examine the amount of resources women are getting access to.

#### *Linkages*

- Federations at the Gram Panchayat level should network and share experiences and strategies.
- Women Panchayat members-mainstream institutional linkages: Linkages between women panchayat members and other institutions via melavas or study tours to the banks and government agencies should be facilitated.
- Sangha-panchayat linkages: Dialogue forums between sangha women and Gram Panchayat women to hold women members accountable are needed.

### *New Areas*

- In-depth documentation on the new areas within the panchayats need to take place including systematizing the dialogue, debates and creating training manuals that facilitate the work of organizations trying to start such efforts in their areas. The new areas include legal literacy, health, particularly reproductive health and environmental issues via the panchayats.
- Resource centers/library should be set up to make available legal documents on a variety of fields (legal literacy, women and the law, governance, the police and the law, environmental work, and reproductive health) which HHS is well positioned to host. Case studies and other resource/training material can be made available through existing organizations such as ISST or HHS.

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

At the dawn of a new millenium close to a million women came into power as a result of the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments to the Indian constitution which mandate that a third of all positions in local government be reserved for women. Close on its heels came the proposed 81<sup>st</sup>, now 84<sup>th</sup> Amendment Bill, which aims to allocate one third of parliamentary seats to women. To fully understand the magnitude of such change, it is important that we do not see it as having occurred in a vacuum. The historical and structural forces, that have shaped today's political configuration and its implications for women, spell out both its potential and pitfalls.

India is now entering the next phase of devolution with the revitalization of the gram sabha. To date it's focus was purely on revitalization of the Gram Panchayats. With the announcement of the Year 2000 as the Year of the Gram Sabha, sweeping changes have been announced to revitalize the community. These changes amount to having an outside mediator or observer to prevent the President or secretary from dominating the gram sabha, and to hold regular more frequent gram sabhas and to ensure that decisions made in them are binding (Refer to Annexure VI for the details of the new reforms).

This study will examine the positive impact of women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) otherwise known as institutions of local self-government in Karnataka State. The state of Karnataka has a history of reservation, which was the precedent to the national reservation policies that followed. Further, it will surface gaps for future strategies to facilitate women's political participation. Several aspects of women's participation in the formal political arena, nationally as well as at the state level, need to be outlined to contextualize and understand the performance of women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions in Karnataka today.

### *1.1. Methodology and Scope of This Study*

#### 1.1.1. Methodology

This study conducted an extensive review of case study material from the ground on the functioning of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Karnataka. In addition it supplemented this analysis with findings from field visits in three districts. The districts were selected after conducting interviews with Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Karnataka to help identify some of the best practices in women and Panchayati Raj.

The three districts chosen included Dharwad and Bijapur for being economically backward in the north, and H.D. Kote in the South. In addition, one of the most important and historic cases, Mydolalu village with Karnataka's only all-women panchayat, Shimoga district in Central Karnataka was also visited. Bijapur was chosen due to the presence of Mahila Samakhya, a large women's organization. H.D. Kote was chosen because of the Panchayati Raj training conducted by Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST). Areas in Dharwad were chosen based on legal literacy training conducted

by Hengasara Hakkina Sangha (HHS). All these areas were purposively chosen for the sample based on interviews with the above NGOs where they directed us towards their best interventions and where they claim to have the maximum impact.

These field visits basically included a qualitative analysis of collecting compelling stories and experiences narrated by elected women representatives (EWRs) reflecting on their experiences in the Panchayati Raj in their last term. The interview schedule included in Annexure IV served mainly as a guiding instrument not as a quantitative survey instrument. Based on these field visits and extensive background research we have surfaced conclusions and recommendations on Panchayati Raj and women. The report is therefore organized as below.

### *1.1.2. Scope and Limitations of the Report:*

The Introduction is followed by Chapter 2 which includes the historical backdrop against which events concerning women and Panchayati Raj occurred. This chapter starts with the historical events of women's participation outside the formal political arena, followed by their participation in formal politics. It ends with a broad overview of the history of Panchayati Raj itself. Chapter 3 contains key findings from the field as well as a review of secondary data. It is presented in the form of stories that is divided into three sections, namely women's participation in the first term, followed by the second term and ending with a comparison between the two. These findings provide the basis of our analysis and recommendations provided in Chapter 4.

Time and resources proved to be major limitations of this study. The methodology chosen focussed only on best practices. Therefore, while one is aware of the many instances where women elected officials are proxies, or are completely dis-empowered and do not participate, this report has deliberately sought only those instances where women have actively participated. This study therefore will only report the most cutting edge changes and not the status quo so to speak. The findings therefore may represent an insight into where we would like women to be in the next term and what are the most important lessons learnt from the last term. It will deal mainly with where did women participate the most and why? How do we then replicate those instances?

## CHAPTER II: HISTORICAL BACKDROP

### 2.1. Women's Participation in Arenas outside Formal Politics.

This section covers briefly women's participation in historic movements such as the Independence movement and brings the reader up to their participation in the contemporary women's movement. It provides a backdrop by which we can contextualize the events leading up to the Amendments and further emphasizes that the political events at the end of the millennium have been part of a continuing struggle for women's political empowerment.

#### 2.1.1. Nineteenth Century Participation

The roots of women's participation in contemporary politics can be traced all the way back to the nineteenth century with the beginning of the reform movement and even beyond it. The mythical history of India as handed down by the major epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and Indian history at large has given women a prominent role in public life. The nineteenth movement emerged as a result of conflict between the Indian bourgeoisie trying to wrest control from the British. According to Radha Kumar (1995) as one means of justifying self rule, this class tried to reform itself, initiating campaigns against social apartheid, including issues related to caste, purdha, child marriage, women's lack of education and sati, seeing them as 'pre-modern' elements. In the early 1850s a campaign on widow remarriage was launched resulting in the passage of a bill in 1856 which allowed widow remarriage but denied them the right to their husbands or his family's property. Several eminent women reformers were a part of this movement including Pandita Ramabai, women preachers such as Manorama Majumdar and Mai Bhagwati. Recognizing the need for more than just a widow remarriage bill, Swarna Kumari Debi started a women's organization, Sakhi Samiti in 1886 for widows to become self-reliant while also spreading women's education. She was also one of the two delegates elected from Bengal to represent the state at the 1890 Congress session. Sarala Debi Goshal another social reformer started Bharat Stree Mahamandal for the education of women.

#### 2.1.2. Women's Participation in the Independence Movement

The Swadeshi movement in Bengal (1905-8) marked the beginning of women's participation in nationalist activities on a larger scale. Many women were from families involved in nationalist politics. Middle class women contributed jewelry, money and even grain to the movement. They took active part in non-cooperative activities against the British such as the boycott of foreign goods. Thousands of women joined in the salt Satyagraha, which is "generally remembered as the first time 'masses of Indian women' got involved in the struggle for Independence" (Kumar 1995, p. 78). Several women's organizations were formed to mobilize women to participate in nationalist activities including processions, pickets, charka spinning and so on such as the Ladies Picketing Board, Desh Sevika Sangh, Nari Satyagraha Samiti and Mahila Rashtriya Sangh. Sister

Nivedita is reported to have become a member of the National Revolutionary Council and in that capacity, organized women for nationalist activities. Like her, there were several others seen as a threat by the British including Agyavati in Delhi, Madame Cama who was described by them as the recognized leader of the revolutionary movement and Kumudini Mitra who started a journal called Suprabath which linked nationalist politics to women's traditional power. Madame Cama, a Parsi woman nationalist, persuaded the International Socialist Congress to support the Indian independence movement and also began a monthly journal called Bande Mataram towards this end.

Women who were strong leaders in the Independence movement were Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Aruna Asaf Ali, and Basanti Devi. A strong supporter of women's rights, Sarojini Naidu worked with the Congress and the Muslim League. She was instrumental in the passage of a resolution to support women's franchise and became the first Indian woman to become the elected President of the Indian national Congress. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay participated in the Satyagraha movement of the 1930s. Aruna Asaf Ali's first major political involvement was in the Salt March at which she was arrested and prosecuted. She was active in the quit India movement, edited Inquilab magazine of the Congress and established the National Federation of Indian Women. She came to be known as the Grand Old Lady of the Independence Movement and heroine of the 1942 movement. Basanti Devi took active part in anti-British activities and was arrested for picketing foreign goods shops, and in 1922 presided over the Bengal Provincial Congress committee.

Several women were active in this period on causes other than the Independence movement including Prabhavati Mirza (a powerful trade unionist), Kamini Roy (a social reformist), and Aghorekamini Roy (started a social welfare women's organization). According to Kumar, in December 1917 Annie Besant, Margaret Cousins, Sarojini Naidu and eight other Indian women went to meet Mr. Montague around the issue of women's suffrage. The 1920s also witnessed a second generation of feminists advocating for women's rights including Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Lady Piroj Bai Mehta, Mrs. N. Sengupta. A number of these reformist and revolutionaries women were also writers including Nagendrakala Mustafi, Mankumari Basu, Kamini Roy, Kasibhai Kanitkar, Mary Bhore, Godavaribai Samaskar, Kamala Sathianandan, Rameshwari Nehru, Roopkumari Nehru, Parvatibai and Rukmanibai.

During 1910-20, several all-India women's organizations came into being. In 1917 the Women's Indian Association was founded by Malathi Patvardhan, Ammu Swaminathan, Annie Besant, Dorothy Jinarajadasa, Mrs. Dadabhoy and Mrs. Ambujamal. Described as the first truly feminist organization in India, it strongly supported the Home Rule Movement. In 1926, the All India Women's Conference was formed and became extremely active on the question of women's suffrage, labour issues, relief work and nationalist work.

### 2.1.3. Women's Participation in Other Movements

Women's participation was noteworthy in the 1948-50 Telangana movement (a militant sharecropper's movement). Thousands of women were active in strikes and rallies. The movement itself paid unusual attention to women's issues such as wife beating. However, women leaders who did take the lead in the guerilla movement that followed, felt isolated and had to fight to get in. In the second wave of this movement, however, women were far more active.

Women participated in the thousands in the Shehada movement for land rights forming Shramik Sanghatana. There were mass uprisings against oppressive practices of landlords. This organization was galvanized into action and relief work during drought and famine. As women grew more militant, gender-based issues such as wife beating were raised. This in turn led to the anti-alcohol issue, which became a part of a broader based anti-alcohol movement.

In the Nav Nirman movement of 1974, originally a student's movement against soaring prices, corruption and black marketeering, changed into a women's movement as middle class women joined in the thousands. Their methods of protest ranged from mass hunger strikes, to mock court-passing judgements on corrupt politicians. Women with rolling pins and thalis gheraoed the Members of Parliament and industrialists. The focus of the movement was Lokhniti (people's rule of law) as against Rajniti (state rule of law).

*In environmental movements as well, poor women have started playing a key role. One instance is the well-known Chipko movement, which began as an environmental movement but as women, began to participate in mass, was celebrated as a mass based women's movement. In this movement women came to the forefront and transformed the struggle. They protected the trees in their area from contractors with their own bodies even when the men were not around to help. Women academics globally started to make the links between women and environment through women's agency in this movement. The movement served as a precedent for other communities globally where women started resisting mining, deforestation and the building of dams for environmental reasons.*

### 2.1.4. Women's Participation in the Contemporary Feminist Movement:

Dowry has increasingly become a cause for all forms of domestic violence like wife battering, a primary concern of the women's movement. The Progressive Organization of Women (POW) in Hyderabad was the first of the contemporary feminists to protest against dowry in 1975. Although their demonstrations had a participation of even 2,000 people at times, it did not grow into a full-fledged movement. In Delhi, two years later, the issue was taken up again where violence associated with dowry was the focus of the protest. The movement's stronghold has since been Delhi, it having the highest concentration of dowry deaths. As a result of these and other agitations, legislation against dowry began in 1978. However it took many years before the anti-dowry cells

actually began functioning. In December 1983 the Criminal Law (second amendment) Act was passed which made wife beating a cognisable, non-bailable offense.

In post-Independence India, the agitation against rape started with campaigns against police rape and the Mathura rape case. Police and landlord rape were seen as the two major categories of rape cases. Several organizations in particular feminist groups such as Stree Shakti Sanghatana and Vimochana were active in this agitation. Other organizations that came into being included the Forum Against Rape in Bombay, Lawyers Collectives and Stree Sangarsh. In response, a bill was finally passed in 1983, which dealt with the issue of custodial rape.

Agitation against sati again came to the forefront with the Roop Kanwar case in 1987. The agitation began almost immediately after the incident. Major demonstrations took place in 1987 in Delhi where college women, schoolgirls and feminists all took out processions against sati. A Joint Action Committee Against Sati was formed. The Indian feminist movement differed in constituency and issues taken up from the contemporary grassroots women's movement which paid less attention to what are termed "specifically women's issues" and instead, more to the "survival" issues of women.

### **2.1.5. Contemporary Grassroots Women's Movements**

What distinguished the grassroots women's movement of today from the earlier movements for women's rights and women's agency in the nationalist struggles is the rise of separate organizations for women at the grassroots and the mass based participation of poor women. The number of mahila mandals and/or sanghas with or without the help of the government has grown tremendously in the last four or five decades. State initiatives to facilitate the rise of women's collectives will be described in the next section. Here the initiatives of civil society deserve brief mention.

A large number of organizations facilitate the growth of women's collectives. These include Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP), Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centers (SPARC) and Mahila Milan, CDF, Myrada, SEARCH, all have organized women into collectives to work on community based issues (Purushothaman, 1998). There are also organizations such as Working Women's Forum (WWF) and Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) which organize women by occupation across communities. These organizations focus more on the working conditions of women as workers. They either have a history of union activity or have organized in parallel ways but are different from unions in two respects. For one, their mass base is women. Second, the women they organize are located in the informal sector not the organized sector (Purushothaman, 1998). Several NGOs have formed women's community based organizations to facilitate their work on the ground and to help empower communities.

The issues that these collectives addressed were employment, food, shelter, reproductive health, education among others. The strategies that emerged to deal with these issues focussed on self-actualization of women therefore promoting income generation, savings and credit and training related to accessing government resources. The form and level of

organization facilitated the communities to assess their needs, skills and map their resources and design indigenous strategies.

## 2.2. Overview of Women's Political Participation in the Formal Political Arena

Women's participation in formal politics can be gauged by examining the following indicators:

- Women's participation in the Parliament and state legislative assemblies
- Women's participation in the electoral process both as a constituency and candidates
- Women's status in political parties

The analysis of these indicators reveal both that historically women have shied away from politics and at the same time political parties and other formal institutions have not validated their participation. Alternatively it is important to validate women's leadership and status in spaces outside the formal political arena. But first, let us examine the status of women's participation in the formal arena as defined above.

### 2.2.1. Participation of Women in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha:

Women are poorly represented at higher leadership levels as represented by the two houses especially in comparison to their leadership and participation in institutions of local governance. Historically and even less so today we see that women's participation in positions of power such as in parliament has never exceeded 20 percent of all seats. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 show the participation of women in both houses of the Indian parliament from 1952 onwards. Evidence provided on women's participation in the two houses indicates that their participation is higher in the upper house.

Years	Number of Seats	Number of Women	Percentage
1952-57	219	16	7.3
1957-62	237	18	7.6
1962-67	238	18	7.6
1967-71	240	20	8.3
1971-76	243	17	7.0
1977-80	244	25	10.2
1980-84	244	24	9.8
1985-90	244	28	11.4
1990-91	245	24	9.7
1991-96	245	38	15.5

Source: Election Commission of India

However as rightly pointed out by some, women's participation in the Rajya Sabha has been by indirect election and nomination, unlike the Lok Sabha.

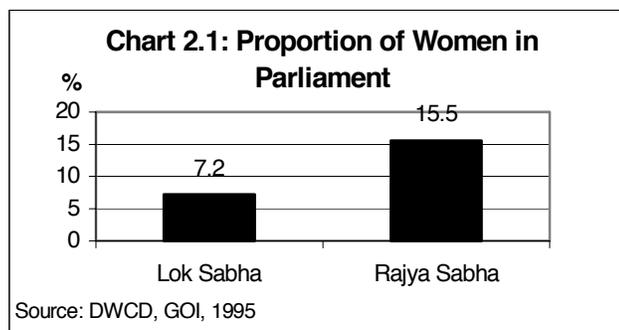
Lok Sabha	Years	Number of Seats declared	Number of Women	Percentage
First	1952-57	499	22	4.4
Second	1957-62	500	27	5.4
Third	1962-67	503	34	6.7
Fourth	1967-71	523	31	5.9
Fifth	1971-76	521	22	4.2
Sixth	1977-80	544	19	3.4
Seventh	1980-84	544	28	5.1
Eight	1985-90	544	44	8.1
Ninth	1990-91	529	28	5.3
Tenth	1991-96	509	36	7.1
Eleventh	1996	537	34	6.3

Source: Election Commission of India

In terms of the nature of the participation of even the few women in power the issue arises as to whether they are able to fully exercise their powers. Studies on women's participation in parliament show that "women participate more actively in women's issues – health, welfare, atrocities against women, crimes like dowry and violation of human rights... In issues of defense, finance politics etc. their participation is relatively limited." (Government of India, 1995) Therefore, even for those who have managed to make it to the bargaining table the gamut of issues they have been able to deal with has been, at best, limited. Here, whether their exclusion has been by their own choice or through the marginalization by men, nevertheless it takes on a new form of being excluded from decision-making areas where power rests. Table 2.2 indicates that the peak of women's participation was during the eighth Lok Sabha (1985-90) where there were 44 women (8.1%).

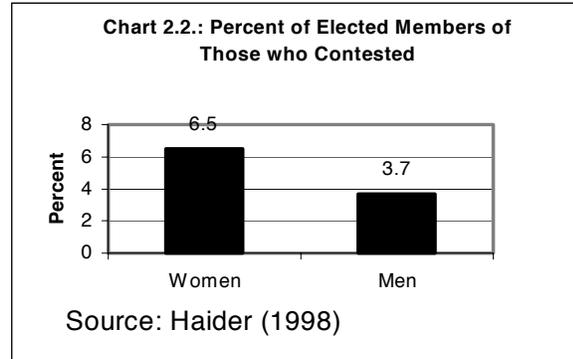
### 2.2.2. Women Contesting Parliamentary Elections:

According to the Coordination Unit (1994), "The number of women contestants in parliamentary elections has not increased significantly over the years. Political parties seem uniformly reluctant to field women candidates." In 1991 women in the Lok Sabha won 39 seats out of 536 (7.2%) and in the Rajya Sabha they



had a slightly higher representation of 15.5 percent where women won 38 seats out of 245 (Chart 2.1).<sup>1</sup>

In 1996, the number of women who contested the elections for Lok Sabha seats were 599 of which 39 won (6.5%) (Chart 2.2). In comparison 13,353 men contested of which 504 (3.7%) won the elections. Therefore while women constitute only 6.5 percent of the Lok Sabha polity, their chances of winning an election are double that of men. Also according to Saraswati Haider (1998, p. 386), one encouraging fact that emerges from Lok Sabha election data from 1952 to 1996 is that “the total number of women who contested elections has been consistently going up.” In 1998 women constituted 8 percent of the Lok Sabha.<sup>2</sup>



### 2.2.3. Representation of Women in State Legislatures

Women’s political representation at state level (Table 2.3) as gauged by their membership in state legislatures is abysmally low, with the highest number of women members in Bihar (13) followed by Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh with 12 members each. Delhi had the highest proportion of women members (7.1%) but the gender breakdown for the last assembly with a 70 member total is unavailable. Other states with relatively high proportions of women include Haryana (6.7%), Orissa (6.1%) and Kerala (5.7%). Women’s participation at the state legislature level is even lower than their participation at the parliamentary level and the reasons for the same need to be understood. What is clear however is that given the situation as represented above some type of state corrective is badly needed. States where women’s participation has historically been low include those in the north east region. In states like Maharashtra, reputed to have the strongest women’s movement, the participation of women is surprisingly low.

Left to itself, it is likely that both historically and today, women will continue to be under-represented. In this context the 84<sup>th</sup> Amendment Bill which asks for reservation for women of a third of parliamentary and legislative seats becomes an extremely important alternative. One can expect that women’s participation in the Panchayat Raj institutions would also have been similarly low but for the electoral quotas.

Today, there are 282 million women voters in India. Over the last two decades women’s participation in formal elections has declined. The percentage of voters declined between 1989 to 1993. However, the percentage of women voters declined more sharply (20.8 percent), relative to male voters (11.1 percent) for the same time period.

<sup>1</sup> DWCD, GOI (1995, p.71).

<sup>2</sup> National Centre for Advocacy Studies (1998)

State	Last year for which Data was available	Total	Male	Female	Percent Female
Andhra Pradesh	1994 -	292	283	9	3.1
Arunachal Pradesh	1984 -	30	29	1	3.3
Assam	1985 -	126	124	2	1.6
Bihar	1990 -	324	311	13	4.0
Delhi	1983 -	56	52	4	7.1
Goa, Daman & DIU	1984 -	30	30	0	0.0
Gujarat	1990 -	182	178	4	2.2
Haryana	1990 -	90	84	6	6.7
Himachal Pradesh	1985 - 92	68	65	3	4.4
Jammu & Kashmir	1983 - 85	76	76	0	0.0
Karnataka	1994 -	224	217	7	3.1
Kerala	1991 -	140	132	8	5.7
Madhya Pradesh	1993 -	320	308	12	3.8
Maharashtra	1990 -	288	282	6	2.1
Manipur	1990 -	60	60	0	0.0
Meghalaya	1983 -	60	60	0	0.0
Mizoram	1984 -	30	30	0	0.0
Nagaland	1982 -	60	60	0	0.0
Orissa	1990 -	147	138	9	6.1
Punjab	1992 -	117	111	6	5.1
Rajasthan	1993 -	198	189	9	4.5
Sikkim	1989 -	32	32	0	0.0
Tamilnadu	1984 -	234	225	9	3.8
Tripura	1992 -	60	58	2	3.3
Uttar Pradesh	1993 -	425	413	12	2.8

Source: Election Commission of India

#### 2.2.4. Voting Patterns

Year	Male Voting Percentage	Female Voting Percentage
1952	53.0	37.1
1957	56.0	38.8
1962	62.1	46.6
1971	66.7	55.5
1977	69.7	49.2
1980	65.6	54.9
1984	57.7	51.2
1989	63.6	68.2
1991	70.9	43.9
1993	52.6	47.4

Source: *Issues, Towards Beijing*, New Delhi: Coordination Unit, 1995

### 2.2.5. Percentage of Women Members in Political Parties and their Committees

Leadership at the national level can be gauged by examining the number of women in the decision-making bodies in the respective political parties. The Coordination Unit (1995) provides data on the number of women and men in the Congress Working Committee, Bharathya Janata Party (BJP) National Executive, JD Central Office-bearers, Central Committee of the CPI (M) and the National Executive of the CPI (Table 2.5).

Name of Party	Women	Men	Percentage of Women
Congress (I)	2	17	11.7
BJP	8	62	12.5
JD	3	25	12.0
CPI (M)	3	58	5.1
CPI	2	18	11.1

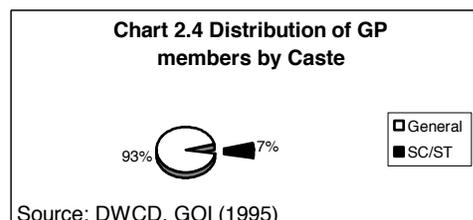
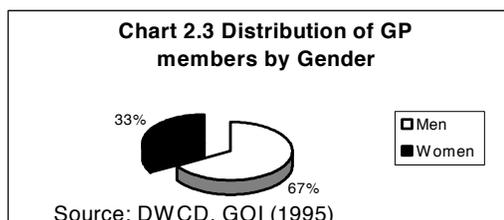
Source: Coordination Unit (1995)

“The figures reveal that women in the decision making bodies of the major political parties range from 5.1 percent in the CPI (M) to 12.5 percent in the BJP.” (Coordination Unit, 1995, p.8) These figures indicate that most parties do not place women in leadership positions and therefore women's access to decision-making bodies remains poor. It is also significant that the party representing the Hindu majority also happens to be the party with more women in decision-making positions.

### 2.3. Women's Political Participation in the Panchayati Raj Institutions

#### 2.3.1. Number of Women in Gram Panchayats

The National Picture: Rural India has a total of 2,25,000 Gram Panchayats (GP) with a membership of 22,50,000 elected officials. Of these, women constitute 7,50,000 or a



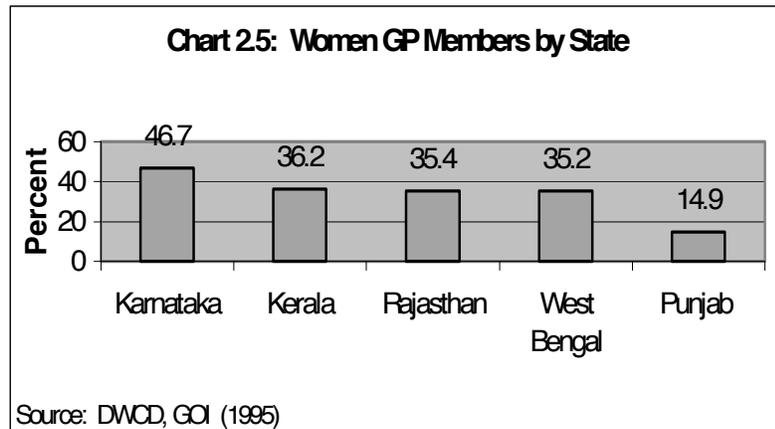
third (Chart 2.3 ).<sup>3</sup> Of 1,50,000 scheduled caste and scheduled tribe members, 50,000 are women. Of a total of 2,25,000 chairpersons, again 75,000 are women. (Chart 2.4).<sup>4</sup>

State Wise: Women's political representation varies widely across states. Despite most states having at least 33 percent women as a direct consequence of reservation, with the

<sup>3</sup> DWCD, GOI (1995, p.71).

<sup>4</sup> i.b.i.d

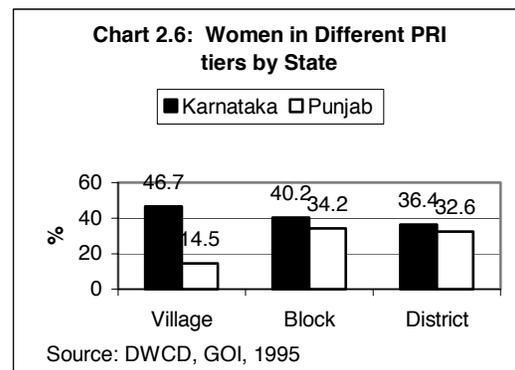
exception of Bihar (where PRI elections are yet to be held), some states even exceeded the 33 percent quota. These include the states of Karnataka (46.7%), Kerala (36.2%), Rajasthan (35.4%) and West Bengal (35.2%) (Chart 2.5). Karnataka, the state with the highest proportion of elected women in 1993 had 5,641 Gram Panchayats with 80,627 members of which 37,689 were women constituting 46.74 percent of the total membership. Kerala follows closely, with 990 Gram Panchayats and 10,700 members, of which 3,878 women (36.2%). On the other side of the spectrum, are states like Punjab where only 14.5 percent of the Gram Panchayats membership are women and Bihar where no elections have taken place.<sup>5</sup>



### 2.3.2. Number Of Women at Others Levels of the PRIs

**The National Picture:** As a result of reservation again one third of all electoral bodies are women. For instance, at the district level, there are 475 Zilla Parishads with 4,750 members, of which, women constitute 1,583 or a third. Zilla Parishads are headed by 475 chairpersons, of which 158 are women. Similarly, at the block level, there are 5,100 block samitis with 51,000 members of which 17,000 are women. The Panchayat Samitis has 5,100 chairpersons of which 1,700 are women.<sup>6</sup>

**State Wise:** Similarly, on a state by state basis, the representation of women within each state at the block and district levels is approximately a third. In Karnataka, the Gram Panchayats representation of women is high but declines at the higher levels, 46.7 percent at the village level, declining to 40.2 percent at the block level down to 36.4 percent at the district level (Chart 2.6). Surprisingly Punjab shows the exact opposite trend, 14.5 percent at the village, 34.2 percent at the block and 32.6 percent at the district levels.<sup>7</sup> In Punjab, where one would expect an even lower representation of women at the higher levels but the evidence shows just the reverse. In Karnataka one would expect that because of a



<sup>5</sup> i.b.i.d

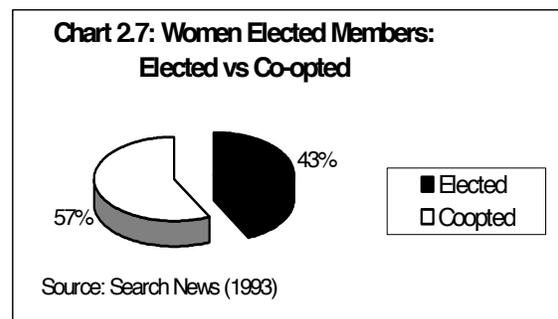
<sup>6</sup> i.b.i.d

<sup>7</sup> i.b.i.d

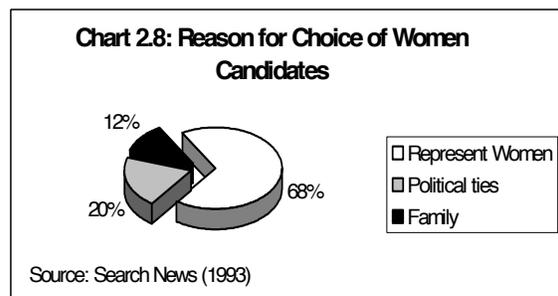
longer history of reservation, the numbers of women at the higher tiers of the PRIs would be high. Here instead we find the percent of women decline as we go higher. It is still quite high i.e. women exceed the 33 percent quota in all three tiers while in Punjab women met the quota only at the block level. It is surprising that at the village Gram Panchayats level in Punjab the 33 percent quota is unmet despite it being mandatory and the reasons for the same need to be surfaced.

### 2.3.3. Contesting Elections

Batliawalla, Srilatha, et al. (1998), while discussing gender differentials in participation in the different PRI tiers state, “Even in the panchayats, women have contested only in the Gram Panchayat elections, while several men report contesting not only these, but taluk panchayat, zilla panchayat, cooperative society and other elections.”<sup>8</sup> This implies that while women in Karnataka exceed the quota at the ZP and PS levels it still does not imply that they were elected. Rather it is through nomination. Elected members tend to have more ties with their constituencies than those nominated. They are also more easily held accountable as those who have voted for them have certain expectations from them. The expectation underlying reservation of seats for women is that once in power, women elected officials will be more responsive to other women in their communities. However, if women are not elected by other women but nominated instead, the likelihood is that they will be less accountable to women and more to those who nominated them. Therefore intervention prior to election or during the time of campaigning becomes an essential input.



Studies show that more women are coopted (57%) into the PRIs than are elected (43%). (Chart 2.7) In a study conducted in Punjab<sup>9</sup> on women’s participation in the Panchayat Institutions, it was found that though women constituted 13.64 percent of the GP membership, only 5.83 percent of which were elected and the rest were co-opted. Out of these co-opted women, “68.33% were chosen to accommodate a particular section of society, 20% were chosen because of their relationship with the sarpanch and 11.67% were chosen because of their (or their family’s) political leaning and bureaucratic pressures.”<sup>10</sup> (Chart 2.8)



<sup>8</sup> Batliawalla, Srilatha, B.K. Anitha, Gurumurthy, Anitha and Wali, Chandana S. (1998, p. 282)

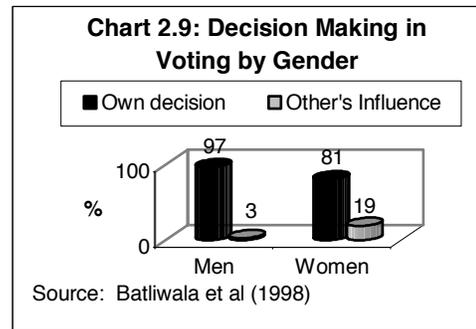
<sup>9</sup> “Right to Equality and participation of Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions in the State of Punjab.”

Regional Center, Jalandar and National Law School of India, Bangalore, *Search News*, January-June, 1993.

<sup>10</sup> i.b.i.d.

#### 2.3.4. Voting Patterns of Women:

*State Wise:* Detailed data on voting patterns by gender is easily available in Karnataka State.<sup>11</sup> Batliwala et al.(1998) found that more men (97%) voted in the 1994 GP elections than women (81%). See Chart 2.9. Furthermore, they show that more women (19%) made their decision to vote through the help of others than did men (3%). According to Batliwalla, Srilatha, et al. (1998, p. 281), “Decision making about voting is a complex process: Voting patterns are increasingly being determined by caste and community based political affiliations, not to mention the diktat of the village elite/powerful.” [sic] Unless women vote independently for their own candidates, accountability of women elected officials to their constituencies will not be easy. Women’s political participation needs to therefore be more broadly defined for the quota system to really achieve its desired effect.



#### 2.4. The History of Panchayati Raj Institutions

**There is evidence of the existence of self-governing bodies like the village ‘sabhas’ (councils or assemblies) and ‘gramins’ (village elders) from time immemorial in India. The transformation of these sabhas through colonial rule and beyond, needs to be examined to contextualize the tradition of local government in India**

**Mathew (1995).**

Panchayats in the Pre-colonial period: Village bodies took the form of panchayats (assemblies of five) which governed Indian villages, with policing and judicial powers. This form of local governance remained through the medieval period and through Mughal rule. The panchayat represented the administrative center, social center and was the center of village life in general.

British Colonial period and the National Movement: The panchayat system continued to exist even through early British rule. However, as early as in 1870 this system was converted to nominated panchayats, which levied and collected taxes through the Bengal Chowkidari Act. The Ripon resolution of 1882 and the adoption of a Resolution by the 24<sup>th</sup> session of Congress at Lahore gave the term self-government more meaning by recommending that two thirds of the members be elected. The recommendations remained on paper till the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1900, which lead to a

<sup>11</sup> Batliawalla, Srilatha, B.K. Anitha, Gurumurthy, Anitha and Wali, Chandana S. (1998, p. 280)

number of state acts passed for the establishment of the village panchayat. The 1935 Government of India Act and the inauguration of provincial autonomy under it marked another important stage in the evolution of the panchayats in the country.

Post Independence Period: Gandhi had an explicit commitment to the Panchayat system and to the Gram Panchayats. Despite this commitment, at the time of independence the PRIs were still not given constitutional status. This would appear to be a curious oversight particularly since India prior to the British had a history of local governance via the panchayats. In fact even the Community Development Programme in the 1950s did not integrate the panchayats into its conceptualization nor into its implementation. This was surprising, as one would expect that fostering community development would naturally call for a re-examination of the role of local government, particularly as a facilitator of local development.

The thinking on the Gram Panchayats however had to wait. There were several committees, which shaped and evolved the thinking around Panchayati Raj institutions beginning with the Balwantrai Mehta Committee. Their report re-asserted the need for democratic decentralization and brought to the forefront the concept of Panchayati Raj as a process of governance distinct from panchayat, which refers to a local body (Mathew, 1995, p.5).

Rajasthan was the first state to inaugurate Panchayati Raj in October 1959. "By 1959, all states had passed Panchayat Raj Acts and by the mid-1960s panchayats had reached all parts of the country." (Mathew, 1995, p.5) Simultaneously there was not a complete buy-in, from all parts of the government into this concept. Conflicting tendencies within the state emerged in the form of a variety of programmes including IADP (Intensive Agriculture Development Programme), SFDA (Small farmers Development Agency) among several others introduced outside the purview of the PRIs. These tendencies did not allow the PRIs to fully exercise the function of local governments channeling and directing development from the ground up instead of development being directed from above. In fact the Ashok Mehta Committee in its evaluation of the PRIs confirmed that developmental activities were more bureaucracy related and did not flow through the panchayats. "The bureaucracy had probably its own role in disassociating the PRIs from the development process." (Ashok Mehta Committee, 1977, p.5) The appointment of this committee led to the emergence of a new "generation" of PRIs, which shed their local development skin and took on their legitimate place as a political institution. This committee also made the first official recommendation to give constitutional status to the PRIs. This was the first step towards the revitalization of the PRIs. Right through the 1980s debates grew across the country and several issues emerged as a result. These included that of mandatory elections, a four-tier governance system at the centre, state, district and village, strengthening of the PRIs, and the growth of an interactive system between the district government and PRIs.

Need for Constitutional Support and The Constitutional Amendment: By 1988 a committee chaired by P.K. Thungon recommended strengthening the Panchayati Raj system, against which the 64<sup>th</sup> Amendment bill was introduced in parliament in May

1989. Opposition to this early version arose due to the lack of freedom accorded to the individual states. The bill was finally passed in 1993 as the Seventy Third Amendment giving the PRIs the much awaited constitutional status. Such a major historical victory could not have been better served by accompanying the revitalization of institutions of local governance and devolution with reservation for women. Reservation for women prior to this moment would not have had the same meaning or potential as it had once the status of the PRIs themselves had been elevated. Also, if reservation had not taken place at this historical juncture, the Amendments would have been just one more incidence of power passing from the hands of men nationally to the hands of men locally.

It is against this backdrop of historical events and through this confluence of forces that close to a million women emerged into power in the early 1990s. And it is with these factors in mind that we now start to examine the enormous challenge these women took on as they entered the formal political arena. The challenges as the reader will see spans the gamut of social, political and economic disparities that women face once in power. The purpose of such an examination is for us to identify as supporters and witnesses of these events the next steps to facilitate their full participation in the political process.

The expectations, hopes and concerns that accompanied this transformation were several. On the one hand the concerns were that:

- Several of these women had never been in power before and could easily be co-opted.
- Several were inexperienced and/or illiterate meaning they could be easily manipulated by local elites and other vested interests.
- Of equal concern was the fact that historically Indian women who have risen to power have done so as a result of familial or other elite connections. Their rise to power has rarely been the outcome of the voting decision or power of a female constituency. Rather, these women have typically been more accountable to those who helped them get into power, i.e. their families, caste, or political party connections.
- The concern that 33 percent as a number deny them their voting majority on issues of concern to women and leave them without the power to make the changes expected of them. This would mean that even after historic democratic experiments of such magnitude a million women would not necessarily have the majority in any given decision making body to actually make a difference.
- The safeguards required to protect women in power were not all in place, namely, a strong supportive women's constituency, awareness of their rights and powers once elected as Gram Panchayat members<sup>12</sup>, a sensitization of male elected members, and training and information dissemination on governance process itself.
- Consequently the even greater concern is that their experiences would be negative (in the form of no-confidence motions, coercion, and a male backlash), which may act as an overall deterrent to their future re-entry into politics.
- Finally the legitimate worry that electoral quotas are not really a long-term solution. Instead, the real hope is that women choose to come into power of their own accord,

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<sup>12</sup> Gram Panchayat is the lowest tier of the Panchayati Raj Institutions at the village level.

based on their own standing (not their husbands' or families' standing) and are voted in by women as a block, accountable as a result to women as a constituency.

On the other hand, equally, the accompanying hopes to the Amendments were that:

- Women would finally be able to share a space in the decision-making arena with men as equals, thereby reversing generations of inequality.
- Women would actually transform politics and could be expected to bring about real change. Women would transform governance by making it more transparent, accountable, equitable, participatory and less hierarchical. They would thereby change people's perspectives about entering the political arena making it a more hospitable place for those who intend to actually work for and be accountable to their constituencies. They would civilize politics by transforming it from a space where muscle power and goondaism were center stage to one where other factors would determine the right of members to govern, such as the ability to deliver the goods in an equitable manner.
- Women would be able to bring a gender perspective into the political arena. This means that women's needs, concerns and perspectives would not be sidelined and that the concerns of the entire family would be taken into account including children's needs. That the family's needs would replace the need for profit as a central developmental concern and be its driving force.
- Finally, the entry of masses of women into politics was happening at a moment in time where state devolution of decision making, resources and power was revitalizing the lower rungs of institutions of local governance. The combination of these two equally powerful forces held potential for women to spear head real change and not to be mere token political figures. They, along with other Gram Panchayat members, would have available potential resources, through increased tax collection capacities and more powers vested in them as members of the newly revitalized PRIs than ever before in history.

It is thus with a conflicting mixture of tremendous expectations as well as with deep concern that Indian women have embarked on new political terrain. Let us now turn to the developments on the ground that, show us the realities of women's experiences in the PRIs.

## **CHAPTER III: WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN THE PANCHAYATS OVER TWO TERMS**

This chapter explores the experience of women panchayat members in Karnataka

- In their first term (1988-93) prior to the constitutional amendments where women constituted a little more than 25 percent of the panchayats
- In the second term (1994-99) after the passage of the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments where women constituted more than a third of the panchayats.
- A comparison of the two terms

Differences between women's experiences in both terms will be analysed. However what this report will examine through out both terms is whether and to what extent is governance is improved and/or engendered as a consequence of having women in power.

### ***3.1. Conceptual Framework on Improved and Engendered Governance***

The means by which we will look at governance will be through the following conceptual framework. The two variables examined here are:

- Improved Governance: Governance is improved if it is more transparent, accountable, equitable, sustainable and participatory for the community at large.
- Engendered Governance: Governance is engendered and improved if it is more transparent for women, accountable to women, equitable for women, has lasting sustainable changes for women and invites not just community participation but women's participation in particular.

Why do we make this distinction? It is because while a panchayat may hold gram sabhas and open up its accounts, budgets and decision making processes to the gram sabha, it may be said to have improved governance. However, if women are not present in that gram sabha then it implies that while the panchayat has become more transparent and accountable to the larger community, it has not to women. Even if women are present at meetings but do not talk, are excluded in any way or are due to illiteracy or other factors are unable to access the same information, then governance is not engendered despite the best of intentions. Therefore while governance has improved to the larger community it has not improved vis-à-vis women. What are the indicators and measures of each indicator of these two variables?

These variables obviously have indicators that are gender sensitive in order for the variable governance itself to be engendered. Table 3.1 provides a listing of the first such indicators to be developed. These measures are used to guide the analysis as we examine the field evidence to see to what extent these indicators reflect the ground realities. The measures for each of the indicators below differs sharply vis-a-vis their sensitivity to women. Table 3.1 outlines the indicators and the next section will examine the measures associated with each indicator.

<b>Table 3.1. Indicators of Improved and Engendered Governance</b>	
Improved Governance	Engendered Governance
Transparency	Engendered Transparency
Accountability	Engendered Accountability
Equity for rich and poor	Equity for poor women
Sustainability	Sustainability for women
Community participation	Participation of women

### 3.1.1. Measures of Indicators of Governance:

Increased transparency	Extent to which budgets and decisions are made public. Number of public assemblies held per year. Extent to which people participate in assemblies Extent to which elected officials are accessible to people Extent to which programmes are explained to people
Engendered transparency	Extent to which women participate in the assemblies Extent to which elected officials are accessible to women Extent to which programmes are explained to women Extent to which information is accessible to women
Increased accountability	Nature of communication between elected officials and the community
Engendered Accountability	Communication between elected officials and women
Equity	Increased access to resources of the voting constituency Improved standard of living
Equity for women	Increased access to resources for women Improved standard of living for women
Sustainability	Lasting changes for the community
Sustainability for women	Enduring changes for women
<i>Community Participation</i>	<i>Increased participation of the community in decision-making processes</i>
Participation of women	Increased participation of women in decision making Increased participation of the sangha at panchayat meetings Extent to which the panchayat consults the sangha

Dependent variables are engendered governance and improved governance. Throughout this chapter indicators and measures of the two dependent variables are looked at.

### 3.2. Women in the Panchayats in Their First Term (1988-1993 term)

As early as in 1976, the Committee on the Status of Women first demanded representation of women in Panchayati Raj. In Karnataka, through the Act of 1985, in the Mandal Praja Parishads 25 percent of all seats was reserved for women. As a consequence in the 1987 elections, 26.6 percent of women got elected to the Mandal

Panchayats when the elections were fought on party lines.<sup>13</sup> According to Narayanan (1993), there was belated realisation that 25 percent would translate into 14,000 women elected to the PRIs and then “a mad scramble ensued to find women candidates to contest. Very often it operated on the principle of being someone’s wife, someone’s sister, someone’s daughter.” However as she rightly points out that may be the modus operandi for entering politics for both men and women.

Section 3.1. provides evidence of women’s experiences when they first entered the political arena in 1988 prior to the Amendments and consequently prior to the national environment created where change was expected. The environment in 1988 was much less supportive of women and therefore more difficult for them to take charge of their situations once elected. These stories bring to light:

- The modus operandi of entering politics.
- The ways in which governance was transformed albeit limited.

The reason for providing these stories is in fact to bring out the contrast between the two periods and the growth of EWRs, organizations and their interventions in the second period. Further evidence in this section examines the relationships women developed between the panchayats and sanghas, once elected.

### *3.2.1 Modus Operandi of Entering Politics*

In the first term of the Mandal Panchayat the women entered politics via their involvement in the Sanghas (Mahila Mandals as they were known then) or they were forced to come into politics because of the reservation. The reasons women entered politics can be classified as follows:

- Compelled to contest election: Typically women entered politics as a result of being the kith or kin of local leaders. Otherwise they entered politics because the seat was reserved for lower castes and it was mandatory.
- Evolution from Mandal/community leadership: The sanghas also provide a space where potential panchayat members can be groomed. There are examples where the women were not members of the panchayat but showed the potential to become future elected members.

### *Change in Local Governance*

On becoming members women are initially only spectators. But slowly, most women have shown improvement and as have managed to successfully implemented government programmes. Though the changes are not as perceptible as in the second term they act as a stepping stone towards real change that follows in the second term as women build on these experiences and get training and other necessary inputs.

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<sup>13</sup> Search News, 1993.

### ***Case Study 1***

K.K. Pushpa Gowda, Mandal member, Malalur, Chikkmangalur taluka, Chikkmangalur district is married with two children, 32 years old, and completed her PUC. She was president of a women's group or Mahila Samaj for 5 years from 1982-87. She was compelled by her village people to run for elections. She had no idea what Mandal Panchayat was all about but nevertheless was elected to Malalur Mandal panchayat. During the first few meetings she only watched the procedures. She had a three day training programme though is unclear about it. People have approached her to submit applications for government programmes and to tell her their problems.

Source: Jain, L.C. (1992)

This is an instance of how women's leadership in civil society/community based organizational spills over into the PRIs. The reason why her village community chose Pushpa Gowda was because of her prior visibility as a community leader. Furthermore because of this perception, despite her initial hesitance, people still approached for government programmes.

### ***Case Study 2***

Kallamma, member of Mandal Panchayat, Mailemoney village, Chikkmangalur taluka, Chikkmangalur district, 38 years old, studied up to 4<sup>th</sup> standard, is a scheduled caste wage labourer. Although the village had a Mahila Mandal she was not a member and when she contested, she was not aware of the political party through which she contested, nor the name of her opponent. Siddaiah, a local leader who forced her to stand, accompanied her while canvassing. She observed him promising people that he would get them streetlights, borewells and loans and imitated him. After the elections when she was informed that she was elected, she was scared. She was also unable to understand the rules and regulations and her role initially. The women GP members sat together in psychological support. In the first meetings they were quiet and signed what they were told to sign. Subsequently however they learnt to stand up to the men. When the sanction for a water pipe connection and tank was not granted for Hukkunda village the women united and got it sanctioned. Kallamma had never heard of IRDP or got loans sanctioned for her people. She had not heard of gram sabhas and instead spoke of how women were discouraged from attending the meetings. Nonetheless she was able to achieve some things including recommending people as beneficiaries, solving electricity and water scarcity problems, getting electricity connections to all houses of her street and five borewells for her village. Prior to this everyone lived in the dark without even a single bulb in their houses. Kallamma's experience was positive enough for her to want to run again for elections.

Source: Jain, L.C. (1992)

Another similar instance where women did not know much, were also afraid initially but were still able to work together is in the case of Mailemoney village. The most important factor to note here was that despite a hostile environment for women, they were still able to unite and to see strength in their unity. Only through this unity were they able to get money sanctioned for areas they felt were important. Furthermore one sees how women evolve from being scared to standing up for what they believe in. It even shows that

despite the fact that there was very little training in this term on government programmes and budgets, women learnt to get their constituents access to resources. This however took time. This is also borne out in the case of Sulochana below.

### ***Case Study 3***

Sulochana Shankar Kadam from Uchchgaon, Belgaum district was a member of a Mandal Panchayat, forced to contest by her father-in-law due to reservation. She was asked to sign papers and given prior instructions, like other women members. Nonetheless she felt that reservation was important for women to listen to and represent the problems of other women. During her 5-year tenure in the Mandal Panchayat system, 5 women obtained widow pensions, ten received maternity allowance, and one received old age pension.

Source: Jain, L.C. (1992)

In fact, not just for women in the Mahila Mandals but for all women in the village, evidence shows that it would be more comfortable for them to approach women Gram Panchayat members rather than men. In Uchchgaon, for example, it can be observed that as a result of having a woman in power several women benefited. Women received pensions, and got resources during her term. Clearly women also found Sulochana easier to approach than the men in the panchayat. The implications are that even in the first term, at least on the indicator of *equity for women*, there was increased access to resources for women by having women in power.

What these instances point to was the compelling need for training in the absence of which women members did not know about loans, government programmes, and that gram sabhas are mandatory. This is significantly different from the second term as the next section will demonstrate where women demand this form of training and even get it in the middle of their political tenure.

### ***Case Study 4***

Susheela Lakshman Patil is a member of the Zilla Parishad, Belgaum District. She is also the president of the Mahila Mandal. This Mahila Mandal was a lot more active and had better access to resources and information as a consequence of this connection. The Mahila Mandal runs a Balwadi, an adult education programmes, tailoring classes, sports, singing, and cooking. It also held competitions sponsored by the Lions Club and conducted camps on health awareness and immunization. They also undertook family planning, water and household problems.

Through her activities in the Zilla Parishad she was able to get 50 people pensions and according to her was successful in whatever activity she undertook. She enjoyed her work in the Zilla Parishad and never allowed any other member to over ride her. She got along well with the Zilla Parishad president who was supportive of her. She prioritized education while in office and consequently most of the villages under her had more than one school. She also ensured that all the villages under her had sufficient water. The Balwadi, while initially funded from the membership fees of the Mahila Mandal, was later funded by the Mandal Panchayat.

Source: Jain, L.C. (1992)

A far more successful instance of the relationship of the Mahila Mandal and the Zilla Parishad is seen in the case of Susheela Patil who was a member both. The benefits for the Mahila Mandal are clearly visible as a result of her involvement in the Zilla Parishad. In fact, entry into political power at higher levels i.e. at the block and district levels seems to allow even greater access to information and resources. Also some activities of the Mahila Mandal are now being funded by the panchayat. These activities such as the balwadi benefit the entire community but mostly it benefits women as it allows access to child care. The priority Susheela placed on education by starting a Balwadi and adult education in the Mahila Mandal continued during her tenure in the Zilla Parishad on a much larger scale with consequently every village having a school. This further depicts the priorities women have, namely water and education, that has been on their political agenda and scaled up once women obtain power. By bringing women's issues into the political arena such as children's education and child care, accountability extended from Susheela's community to women in particular. Thus evidence of *engendered accountability* is visible in the first term.

#### **Case Study 5**

Lakshmi bai Deshmukh, while a Mandal Panchayat member is also Chairman of the Mahila Mandal, Chairman of the taluka Mahila Federation in Aurad town, Aurad Taluka, Bidar district. She was not forced by her family to run for elections but by the people in her town. In fact, while she contested through the Congress (I) the party did not pay for her election campaign. Instead it was the women who canvassed and got her elected. The president of the Mandal Panchayat is from the Janata party but has to heed the discussions of the women. After getting elected she calls women together and informs them about the programmes and facilities available to the community via the Mandal Panchayat. She encourages them to come forward and work for people, mainly for women. The Mahila Mandal began with 200 women but expanded over a period of 20 years. There are monthly meetings wherein the mandal runs tailoring classes and basket making classes. In addition, they have obtained loans for poultry and cattle rearing. Women gather every week for a bhajan session. Furthermore the Mahila Mandal also has helped politicize and sensitize women members on caste and gender issues. For instance, in the meetings they talk about dowry, harassment of girls, and family planning. In the Mahila Mandal they also encourage the participation of women from all religions. They have explicitly stated that they want to abolish caste/creed differences. The Mahila Mandals has been funded by the government (Rs. 3,000) as well as through membership fees and donations. The Taluka Mahila Federation began about a decade after the Mahila Mandal was established. This federation brought together several Mahila Mandals and has helped Lakshmi find out about the problems of women in surrounding villages. She has personally visited these villages. She has got loans for women in these Mahila Mandals, widow pensions for 150 widows, sewing machines and housing loans from HUDCO. Lakshmi is an extremely aware person and is capable of going to any office or department and getting things done. She states that not many women are willing to enter politics as they feel that it is not their domain.

Source: Jain, L.C. (1992)

Going by this indicator we see evidence of even greater accountability to women in the case of Lakshmi Bai Deshmukh. She not only helped increase women's access to resources in her village but saw her role extending to other women, including those in other villages. Lakshmi Bai played multiple roles in many institutions. This was a rare case where women were the primary voting constituency, not the family nor the party. Consequently the outcome is also very different. As an elected representative she remained primarily accountable to women. She even went a step further in making the resources and government programmes transparent to women by informing them about these resources, encouraging them to undertake work for women, to run for elections and overall served as a role model to them. Thus we see evidence of *engendered transparency*. The question is why was she more accountable to women than to men. The reason as far as the evidence points that unlike most women panchayat members, even those who were members of the Mahila Mandal, Lakshmi Bai Deshmukh's voting constituency was women. Furthermore her long history of activism with women has helped her develop a keen sense of issues important to women and of gender oppression. Lakshmi represents one of the few women who is both gender sensitive and politically sharp. She managed to make it in politics without losing this quality. For her, the political domain has become the extension of her work with women moving from the Mahila Mandal at the village level to the federation at Taluk level.

#### **Case Study 6**

Vittobai is a member of the Mandal Panchayat of Bhagdai, Bhagdai taluka, Bidar district. She is illiterate and started a Mahila Mandal with 30 other illiterate women. They taught women tailoring and the teacher's salary was paid by the panchayat. The Mahila Mandal meets on a bi-monthly basis. She was forced to stand for elections via the Janata Party because of the reservation for women. Initially she was scared because she was neither aware of her role as an elected representative, nor was she aware of the rules and regulations. She observed the other Panchayat members for about 3 months and then she spoke about the problems of her village. The first gram sabha held led to serious discussions and confusion among the crowd. During her 5-year tenure only 3 gram sabhas were conducted. People basically fought for access to programmes and resources available through the panchayat.

There were 23 male members and 7 women members in the panchayat, all of who were from the Janata Party. The president was a man, also from the Janata party and illiterate like her. He too needed the help of the Secretary to read the agenda, details of the programmes, accounts etc. However these details especially those regarding funds were not discussed during the meetings. She asked the Secretary to read out the details of the accounts and was asked by the panchayat President to keep quiet. She then stopped asking for details of the accounts. Now that she has some experience she has gained confidence and wants to contest in future elections. As a member of the Panchayat she helped 13 people get access to credit through IRDP, 2 people got loans from the Backward Community Office. A borewell was sanctioned and water provided for the scheduled caste colony. Widows were identified and recommended for pension.

Source: Jain, L.C. (1992)

Vittobai's case is in contrast to that of Lakshmi's bai where transparency and accountability is not gender specific. Vittobai is seen demanding transparency while the male members were not willing to comply. The demand for increased transparency for the GP or community at large improves governance but does not necessarily engender it. Moreover, with some experience she gained confidence enough to want to contest future elections. Despite her lack of literacy and inability to get accounting and funding details, she was still able to obtain funds for vulnerable populations such as widows and backward castes. For Vittobai, like many others, the experience of having been in power taught her about gram sabhas, gender relations and corruption. She began to understand why things did not work, an equally valuable lesson.

This example also demonstrates the power of the secretary of the village, who is literate, over that of the rest of the panchayat members, male and female. The need for training in literacy to enhance transparency, and to clarify the role of the secretary was of vital importance for the PRIs to function in a democratic manner. The next section will demonstrate that in the second term as organizations experienced in helping women become literate bring their skills into the panchayats and literacy alone transforms the possibilities for the women members to govern better.

#### ***Case Study 7***

Kusumvathi Kumbani is a member of the Gram Panchayat and resident of Agadi village, Mundgod taluka, Uttar Kannada district. She attended meetings regularly but saw her role as ending with this and the men's role as getting the job done. She did however express the need for both training and for a Mahila Mandal.

Source: Jain, L.C. (1992)

The need for training was also confirmed by others such as Kusumvathi not just to obtain knowledge on government programmes but also to clarify roles and responsibilities. In Agadi village not only do we see this need expressed but also the need for a Mahila Mandal which can support the women panchayat members. The need for training was felt despite the fact that the government (Department of Women and Child Development) has conducted training programmes in the area. Therefore, clearly it is only with the advent of the Amendments and their increased emphasis on training that we start to see a more systematic attempt to impart information. Furthermore new approaches are needed within training that includes a gender sensitization process that not only clarifies gender roles but also instills confidence in women and a sense of accountability to other women. In this regard, organizations like MSK would introduce women panchayat members to their sangha members even inviting them in to become sangha members themselves.

The next case shows an example of a Mahila Mandal which plays the role of providing input and feedback to the panchayat in the planning of services. Through her relationship with the Mandal Panchayat, Ayeshabi has provided the space for the Mahila Mandal to play a larger role in monitoring and needs assessment for the community.

The sangha plays a role of an organized constituency whose demands are constantly being placed before the governing body and who also demands accountability from

elected officials. Thus on yet another important indicator, increased *community participation* and increased *participation of women* we see strong evidence of improved and engendered governance.

### **Case Study 8**

Ayeshabi, a 40 year old woman has played multiple roles. She was the secretary of the Mahila Mandal for 6 years. She held a job as a nurse for 9 years, which she left after she became a member of the Mandal Panchayat. The Mahila Mandal was extremely active providing training to women for income generation activities such as Agarbathi and Papad production and poultry farming. Besides this the 47 members of the Mahila Mandal meet monthly to discuss issues such as family planning, nutrition, immunization, child care and so on. She contested the elections because her brother who was the Chairman of the old panchayat forced her to compete with against a Hindu candidate and she won. Through her work in the panchayat she was able to get streetlights and 5 borewells for the Muslim colony which she lives in. Additionally, 5 more borewells were sanctioned and house loans for 10 people and loans for another 20 more was sanctioned for the purchase of rickshaws. In addition small shopkeepers and vegetable vendors were also given loans. The Mahila Mandal provided feedback to the Mandal Panchayat on what is needed in the village. As a consequence, streets and roads have been repaired. Also, the women demanded drainage facilities. Ayeshabi intends to run for elections again and is confident of winning. Her future plans are even more expansive including the establishment of a milk cooperative and a show room to sell readymade garments.

Source: Jain, L.C. (1992)

In the case of Ayeshabi we see many unusual factors. For one she represents a Muslim constituency and despite belonging to a minority community she is highly successful in providing them access to resources and facilities. Ayeshabi is able to be accountable both to the Mahila Mandal as well as to her community and clearly sees no contradiction in both the roles she plays.

What is remarkable about Ayeshabi's case is the growth and empowerment one can read in her story as she moves from being a nurse, to founding a Mahila Mandal and gaining administrative experience to running for elections and representing her people. Once in power she is able to provide water, electricity and credit to her people but then grows even further to want to contest the next elections and even plans to build new institutions, which can service women. The experience of political office, for her, has not been bitter or disempowering but a real success story, which has not only benefited her but her entire community and the women in it. Like her, there are several women who wear multiple hats, play multiple roles gracefully and these stories need to be told in light of the challenges faced in the first term.

Several Mahila Mandal members have evolved to become Panchayat members at the different levels of the PRIs. Characteristics that emerge from sangha participation such as leadership qualities, being community-oriented and being able to identify the needs of the community are prevalent in members who were associated with the Mahila Mandals.

Being part of the Sangha allowed for strong interaction with the Mahila Mandals even after becoming an elected representative of the larger community.

***Case Study 9***

In Hungund Panchayat, the advisory committee of the anganwadi consisting of the teacher, parents and the Panchayat member meets monthly. Sujatha the anganwadi teacher wants the Panchayat to pay for the firewood for the anganwadi and asked them to do so via the member on the advisory committee.

Source: Jain, L.C. (1992)

One important factor therefore becomes the extent to which the Panchayat members are involved in the day to day functioning of local institutions such as the anganwadi, schools, police, Mahila Mandals, Yuvak Mandals etc. For example, in the above case of Hungund Panchayat in Mundgod Taluka, it is because one of the women members is on the Anganwadi committee that the teacher was able to voice the need for the panchayat to provide firewood to the Anganwadi. Furthermore, because this member was a woman, issues related to child welfare could perhaps be raised with her more easily.

***Case Study 10***

Shabakka Dattaja Rane from Uchchgaon, Belagaum district started a Mahila Mandal in 1968 which became extremely active training about 1,000 women in tailoring and conducting adult literacy classes for about 90 women per year and a Balwadi which benefited 100 pre schoolers per year. Shabakka reports that while she was a Gram Panchayat member she was able to implement many programs but since her term expired the Mahila Mandal has stopped getting funds nor do they get any information about funding streams.

Source: Jain, L.C. (1992)

Partly the involvement of women allows institutional representatives to voice their concerns to the Panchayat members and partly it provides them access to information about programmes, programs and funding sources. For example, in the case of Shabakka Dattaja Rane, Uchchgaon, Belagaum district, as long as she belonged to the Panchayat, the Mahila Mandal was also able to get funding. After that, it stopped.

Haladkeri village represents another instance of a mutually beneficial relationship between the Mahila Mandal and the Panchayat. In this context the presence of a Mahila Mandal, leadership within it and the evolution of that leadership into the Panchayat is important. When a Panchayat woman member grows into her position through prior leadership in the Mahila Mandal, we find a higher degree of transparency and accountability w.r.t. women. Here women leaders go a step further by taking issues, which may be considered socially taboo into the panchayat. By more transparency is meant more forums where the Gram Panchayat interacts with the public such as the Gram sabhas. In several villages Gram sabhas are not even held. However in 2 instances where the women Panchayat members emerge out of the Mahila Mandal we see more gram sabhas being held such as in the cases of Ayeshabi and Thayamma both. This time,

Thayamma's prior experience in the Mahila Mandal helped her perform better in the Panchayati Raj system.

### ***Case Study 11***

Thayamma is a Mandal Panchayat member of Haladkeri village in Bidar taluka, Bidar district. The Mahila Mandal in her village was started 11 years ago and she has been the President right through. It is a highly active sangha. Even so, she ran for elections and won she was still nervous, initially. Over time as she gained confidence, she has managed to achieve a lot for her people.

Through Jawahar Rozhgar Yojana she got roads in her village repaired, removed the water problem that existed earlier by installing borewells, got people loans to buy buffaloes, rear sheep and start poultry projects. Furthermore she has even got a school and an anganwadi for her village. She feels that since the Mandal Panchayat and her involvement things have started to happen. However it must be kept in mind that unlike the other women with no experience she emerged as a leader with a tremendous amount of prior experience. For example in the Mahila Mandal, they were able to link through the Family Planning Association to encourage family planning, run tailoring classes and arrange for talks by resource persons from outside the village. Through the Central Social Welfare Board the salary of the tailoring teacher was paid. As a member of the Panchayat she feels that girls need to become more aware of the social problems in the village and learn how to deal with them.

Source: Jain, L.C. (1992)

Furthermore as can be seen by her statements on women, she was more aware of the problems of women and sensitized to them relative to other male or even women members. Again one sees the thread of continuity across women members in the PRIs in terms of issues they focus on, namely education and water. In this case issues related to the girl child, were prioritized by her even in her capacity as panchayat member.

### ***Case Study 12***

Rathnamma a 30 year old literate SC woman became a Mandal panchayat member Bagdhal village, Bidar district. She is part of a Mahila Mandal organized by Mahila Samakhya to create awareness among rural women about their basic rights. There are 20 other literate members, all married. They hold weekly meetings and discuss issues such as getting access to IRDP loans, spreading literacy, supporting each other and analysing social problems. As a group the Mahila Mandal fought for drinking water with the Mandal panchayat president and were consequently given water the next day itself. They approached the Zilla Parishad for a bore well and the Karnataka Electricity Board (KEB) for electricity. Women in the Mahila Mandal fought for what they think is due in their village. They are not invited to the gram sabha but approach the panchayat and demand their rights. She and the other women get information about programmes and resources from Mahila Samakhya based on which they approach the panchayat.

Source: Jain, L.C. (1992)

There are also women like Rathnamma who are extremely grateful to the Mahila Mandal and grow only as a result of the Mahila Mandal and the NGO intervention that formed the

Mahila Mandal. This is particularly true of women from the lower castes and tribes who are historically oppressed where the Mahila Mandal is one of the few spaces where they can develop their leadership capacities and skills in a safe environment prior to their entry into politics.

Rathnamma is a panchayat member but due to her caste and lack of prior political connections had to fight for the rights of women in her panchayat. Here the intervention and information transfer of NGOs such as Mahila Samakhya becomes a crucial input in helping women fight for resources available via the panchayat. Given the fact that women are not invited to forums where such information is discussed, they would not know what to ask for and how to act. Therefore even more than the CBO's role here the NGO's larger role in accessing information and making it accessible to women GP members helps in crucial ways to engender governance.

Caste played a major role in this village and even after forming the sangha when women approached the existing Mahila Mandal they were told they could not become members because they were from the scheduled castes. MSK by working with the poorest of the poor and particularly with lower castes helped these women not only form their own sangha but get access to important information in their capacity as panchayat members.

In the case of Sumithra as with many women, party politics is of more harm than good. For men party support helps them win elections and pay for their campaign expenses while for women it is the sangha that provides support. Her case represents one of the myriad instances of how party influence works to the detriment of women in the PRIs and why women feel that there should be no backing of candidates by political parties as it gives men an unfair advantage. Often we find women are contesting elections without the support of parties. Despite the opposition that she faced it is interesting that she turned to youth groups as a space to intervene and promote fresh leadership.

### ***Case Study 13***

Sumithra S. Karanth is the president of the Mahila Mandal, Koteshwara, Kundapura taluka, Dakshin Kannada district. She was a Mandal Panchayat member. The Janata Party nominated her to contest the Zilla Parishad elections in 1987. However, as a Mandal panchayat member she faced a lot of resistance from the Congress members in the panchayat and finally resigned in 1988. The rest of the panchayat members who were from the Congress Party suppressed her views. She was also openly challenged and harassed by a Congress Party member in a meeting following which she resigned. She still has a lot of confidence in the Yuvathi Mandali where new leadership is being promoted essential for the leadership in the PRIs. The main goal of the Yuvathi Mandal is to spread education among the people, as it would lead to proper implementation of developmental programmes. Therefore, this is a forum for awareness generation and understanding and access to resources. She is also confident of winning the next elections. She feels that there should be no party back up for candidates in the Panchayati Raj and that women should be treated equal to men.

Source: Jain, L.C. (1992)

If party backing is here to stay then some electoral reforms is needed in the form of campaign finance and helping women access public funds for electoral campaigns.

Typically women face opposition due to their gender. In situations where they face additional opposition due to the rest of the panchayat being part of another political party, the difficulties faced are compounded. There are always exceptions to the rule however. A contrasting example is that of Lakshmi Bhatt who won the elections as a result of the party support. She however is a classic leader, successful in many realms.

#### ***Case Study 14***

Lakshmi Bhatt is a member of the Mandal Panchayat in Parkala, Udipi Taluka, Dakshinn Kannada district. She is also the treasurer of the Taluka Mahila Federation, ex-secretary of the Parkala Mahila Mandal, President of the Priyadharshini Mahila Mandal. She is an extremely active social worker. She entered the Mandal Panchayat due to the active support she got from the people she had worked with and who appreciated her work. She was helped by the Congress-I to contest elections. She also attributes her success to the cooperation of her husband. Despite the degeneration of politics, she is clear about her ideologies and role in politics. She says she involves herself as a social worker rather than a party person. During the 1987 Zilla Parishad elections the men were opposed to women standing and have resulted in the women themselves now being hesitant to stand for the Zilla Parishad elections. Lakshmi feels that the unity of women will help in such situations. Her future plans include getting women together and motivating them to stand for all the levels of the panchayat.

Source: Jain, L.C. (1992)

Lakshmi Bhatt is a rare example of a woman leader, who has played multiple roles in public life before entering the political arena. Her support system of family, husband, party and the community is also quite encouraging and positive relative to the general situation in this period. This instance highlights the ideal kind of support that any women leader could possibly get in the PRIs. Despite her success in a man's world, Lakshmi Bhatt still sees value in women's unity as she has also experienced opposition while contesting for a seat at the higher levels of the PRIs where the stakes are higher. Her future goals clearly are related to engendering governance through getting more women into the PRIs.

Shamsunnisa, like Lakshmi Bhatt plays multiple roles within women's groups, PRIs and a cooperative society. Of her myriad accomplishments many were addressed to the poor. Shamsunnisa is a Muslim woman and despite the problems faced by religious minorities in participating in the panchayat which she refers to briefly, she was still able to accomplish a great deal. Her participation in elections helped facilitate her leadership in other spheres as well, especially in cooperatives. The encouragement of minority women leaders like Shamsunnisa, is extremely important to educate women on politically sensitive areas such as family planning. Another thread one finds through the case studies is the focus and use of community based youth groups to generate awareness and create the foundation for the growth of a new leadership for the PRIs.

**Case Study 15**

Shamsunnisa, is a Mandal Panchayat member and president of the Mahila Mandal, Yeshwan Taluk Panchayat, Malur taluka, Kolar district. She joined the Mahila Mandal in 1985. In 1986 she was forced to stand for the panchayat elections by the then Pradhan and the people. She was hesitant, as she would be standing against another woman. After winning the elections she became a member of the Malur Sudhakara Samithi, in 1989 she became the treasurer of the district cooperative union and is also the taluka leader of the district women's multi-purpose cooperative society. There were restrictions on Muslims participating in the panchayat, but with the support of her husband and the community she continued her work. She has created awareness among women regarding family planning and collects and distributes medicines to the villagers. She has also accomplished a lot of community development such as repairing of roads, construction of a community hall and IRDP loans for the needy. Under the HUDCO scheme, 14 people were sanctioned loans to construct houses. Under the Rozgar scheme drainage system was introduced in the village. A link road connecting the village to the main road was constructed. She feels that the youth club should also be involved in creating awareness among the people.

Source: Jain, L.C. (1992)

Sumathi challenged the existing panchayat and governance system by contesting elections and giving herself the opportunity to participate in the political arena. It is however because she is given the opportunity to both recommend poor people for programmes and services as well to observe the lack of genuine participation of women members that she felt motivated to stand for elections. This is also a rare case where the panchayat takes her opinion into consideration in identifying beneficiaries. In that sense, women who are currently acting as proxy also serve as examples to other more capable women leaders wherein it becomes obvious to them that they can do a far better job if they were in power.

**Case Study 16**

Sumathi is the president of the Yuvathi Mandali in Padubidri, Udipi taluka, Dakshina Kannada formed by 50 members. She is seen as an active community leader and representative of the poor due to her work in the Yuvathi Mandal and as a volunteer in the literacy programme. She is invited by the Mandal Panchayat to participate in their meetings in the capacity of identifying the poor and recommending them for loans through income generation programmes and the women who she recommended were able to get loans. The poor often approach her to recommend their names and when she is not successful in helping them she ends up regretting their efforts. Her observation of the women elected representatives is that they agree to everything and their participation is in name only. She feels that the corruption among the officials is too high and the poor are not being served as a result. Panchayat members divide up all the funds among themselves. She plans to stand for elections and support the cause of the poor and the needy.

Source: Jain, L.C. (1992)

In the case of Sumathi she was recommending people to the panchayat and playing the role of a GP member despite not being one, better than those women who were actually in power. Here training women to see their own leadership as deserving of an electoral position is important. The poor often see panchayat or other “official leadership” positions as only the purview of the rich. Changing these attitudes and showing women how the panchayat work is often an extension of their community work becomes an important part of pre-election training.

There are further examples of extremely active Mahila Mandals with potential leaders who despite being able to build institutions and raise funds were unable to contest elections. In Ermalu, women leaders in fact express the explicit need for training to contest elections and participate in politics. Often women do not know how to contest, get nominated, or campaign for elections and remain in informal leadership positions as a result. Here too the Mahila Mandal has played a historic role in the village in community needs assessment determining who is eligible for pensions and other types of funds.

#### ***Case Study 17***

Sheela Shetty a 45 year old woman, is a Mandal Panchayat member and the president of the Shreenidhi Mahila Mandal in Ermalu, Udipi taluka, Dakshin Kannada district. She is also the President of the Mahila Morcha of the BJP and secretary of the Taluka Mahila Federation. She is a highly active leader. The Mahila Mandal collected funds for a building for the Mahila Mandal. They have arranged various cultural activities. They have also conducted income generation and asset building activities paying for sewing machines and salaries for teachers. Twenty two members were identified for bank loans. They established a milk cooperative and a ration society for women. The members recommended the names of widows and old people for pensions to the Mandal Panchayat and names of students for scholarships to an NGO. So far no woman has contested for elections. However, Sheela Shetty feels there is a need to train women to prepare them to participate in politics.

Source: Jain, L.C. (1992)

The Mahila Mandal is one of the main community based institutions that has both the capacity and the linkages within the community to conduct needs assessment of recipients for all the poverty alleviation programmes such as IRDP, DWCRA as well as the infrastructure related programmes of the government. These latter instances point to the need for pre-election training.

The following major findings surfaced from women’s experiences in this term:

- Women leaders seem to play an active role via the Mahila Mandals in trying to impact the decision-making processes. Even when they are in the Panchayats often their entry-point is via the sanghas.
- Overall in their first term women are a lot more reticent and unaware of the system of local governance, their roles and responsibilities. Nonetheless they make serious attempts to ensure that work gets done in their constituencies and that resources get accessed and utilized. Several want to get reelected, have learnt their lessons from

their first term in power and now see things differently. Never more clearly do we see the need for training, which in the next term is far more easily available.

- The fact that the women and their husbands conceded their contesting elections shows the change in the social and political conservatism preceding this period.
- A change in the general attitude of the community in accepting women in such roles even if it is with vested interests is seen.
- The tolerance and acceptance of power structures among women members at the initial stages is higher than among men.
- Women are more flexible and akin to training and are not yet power hungry.
- A research team from ISST after an in-depth analysis of women's performance in the panchayats in this first term reported that "many of the women were committed and task oriented despite their family commitments." (Narayanan, 1993, p.38)
- Also at a round table on "Women in Panchayati Raj" held at ISST in June 1992, a former Vice President of the Bijapur Zilla Parishad said that "the presence of women members in the Panchayats itself led to a more orderly and disciplined behaviour. She also mentioned how people appreciated the fact that women representatives were always accessible – they were found to be either at home or in their work place, whereas the men were hardly accessible." (Narayanan, 1993, p.38).
- Clearly on most of the indicators of improved and engendered governance, some evidence existed although limited and sporadic pointing to a significant change in the nature of governance even in the first term of women coming into power.
- There has been a great deal of development, scope of the PRIs with the possibility of long term sustainability of these institutions.
- In this initial stage NGO intervention was also sporadic at best. As we will see in the next stage NGOs bring a lot more of their skills and expertise into the panchayats.

At the time of the term end it was recommended that

- Women needed training in various aspects of governance and several training modules have emerged since then.
- An information base was also badly needed at the time. For this at ISST, a resource center was set up.
- Furthermore women members needed a forum for communication which was set up by ISST through a popular magazine called UMA PRACHAR which to date is one of the main regional providers of information on women and the panchayats to a popular audience.
- Longitudinal work was seen as important to track the changes within specific panchayats and these types of studies have begun in the National Institute of Advanced Studies.

## **Panchayat Women Speak Out.....**

Chandravva Daramani, Mudhol taluk, Bijapur district

Chandravva is a sangha member and right before the elections, the sangha chose another women to run. The village community asked Chandravva to stand for elections and approached the sangha and asked them to support Chandravva, which they did. Mahila Samakhya Karnataka an NGO working on women's empowerment also supported her. A Devadasi woman ran against Chandravva who was asked to withdraw her nomination by the village but did not and lost because no one voted for her. Chandravva won and the chairperson's seat, reserved for a Scheduled Caste, was offered to her, which she declined as she did not have the confidence. So, the previous chairman, a Reddy, from the upper castes took the seat.

Initially when she came to power she claimed she did not know anything. She saw the Panchayat people fighting for resources. If and when they spoke she never said anything. Then she went for training to Mahila Samakhya Karnataka where she learnt about the schemes and about 20 percent of the funds being reserved for the lower castes. So, she organised her people, made a plan of their needs and presented it to the Gram Panchayat. The Panchayat chairman got very angry as he thought she would do whatever he wanted and asked her why she had done this. Her response was, "I was voted in by these people and that is why I am doing this. It is my duty to explain things to them and do things for them." After this incident, the fight between the two of them began. Initially the secretary and chairman used to quietly give off the most important schemes to the people they chose. Then she got to know the secretary and things changed.

Initially when she used to ask questions in the Panchayat meetings every one used to laugh at her. In those moments she used to feel that she should have never come into the Gram Panchayat. Mahila Samakhya Karnataka made her a Non-Formal Education centre teacher through which she met other teachers and came to know about the Devadasi Rehabilitation programme (DRP). She managed to link 4 women to DRP and get them money. The president found out and realised that she could do work outside the Gram Panchayat. He invited her to his house and cursed her asking her why she was giving people money through the DRP directly. She said, "You have been in power for 20 years and were re-elected because you did something. You did not allow me to do anything through the Gram Panchayat, so I did something outside it. In life you get only one chance to do this kind of work and I have my duty to fulfill now that I am in power."

Next she went directly to the bank manager and asked for an Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) group loan for the sangha. Many of the sangha women's husbands were defaulter and the bank manager said that, "If you pay the defaulter's loans off I will give the sangha the scheme directly and listen to the president or the secretary. If they regularly pay they will get a subsidy as well."

### **3.3 Women's Participation in Panchayat Raj in the Second Term (1994-1999)**

Karnataka is one of the few states where quotas for women have been in place for two terms and this next term will represent a third era of experimentation with quotas. This implies that some women will now enter politics for the second or perhaps even their third time. This will give us the opportunity to trace their evolution across three terms. In this section however we will trace the evolution of women in the second term only.

Following the first term the recent Karnataka Panchayati Raj Act of 1993 was passed, written in accordance with the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments. This Act substituted the Mandal Panchayat system with a new three-tier system of PRIs at the village, block and district levels. It replaced 2,500 Mandal Panchayats with about 5,000 Gram Panchayats. Second it required that the elections to these bodies be on non-party lines.

The Amendments ushered in a new era across the country of decentralization and revitalization of the PRIs along with national quota requirements. The new act comes under critique in Karnataka as it is not seen as pro-women and it changes the existing system of Mandal Panchayats. Other changes that accompany women's entry into politics during this second term are the change in the quota from 25 percent in the first term to 33 percent as is consistent nationally. Finally the anti-alcohol movement takes off around this same time period and as a result several elected women representatives in the panchayats take up the issue.

The women now have clearer vision of their needs and their responsibilities as the elected representatives of the PRIs. In this term there are examples of self-motivated candidates and also of members who have retained their post even after being ridiculed threatened. Another important characteristic of this term is that the NGO and the State Governments had planned in their agenda to train the elected representatives in the Panchayati Raj process. This training had great impact on the functioning and participation of all stakeholders of the system. In keeping with the earlier methodology, this section will also examine the validity of the conceptual framework designed for this research and study the extent to which governance has improved or been engendered using the indicators described in section 3.1 of this report. This section is primarily based on interviews conducted with EWRs in the districts covered by field visits in this study.

#### *3.3.1 Participation*

*Participation of women in the Panchayats is one major indicator by which the impact of the amendments on engendering governance can be measured. One indicator of improved governance is community participation but the participation of women implies that governance is both improved and engendered. The participation of women includes several aspects:*

- *The physical presence of women in the Panchayats, Panchayat meetings and in the gram sabhas*
- *Whether women voice their opinions in these meetings,*
- *Whether the issues taken up are of concern to women*

## **Panchayat Women Speak Out.....**

Chandravva Daramani....continued

Chandravva approached Mahila Samakhya Karnataka and with their help the sangha women paid off the defaulters loans and got access to the schemes. This first time the chairman never knew. The second time however she wanted to submit 10 more people for a loan. This time he found out as they needed their ration cards. She sent them to ask the Gram Panchayat to issue ration cards and the chairman asked them why they needed a ration card? They responded saying that Chandravva was getting them a group loan. The chairman then called her to his house and asked her, "Why she was doing all this?" She said, "For so many years there were devadasis for whom nothing was done. So many died and nothing was done. We are now giving them schemes and knowledge to rehabilitate them. Unlike you we are doing something for them." He then became a little calm and told her, "You write up the letter and I will sign." He asked if the bank is issuing the loan and she said yes. He then told her that she is giving people schemes directly and that people will start saying that he is not doing anything. He told her, "You must include me in your work or you will become better known than me. No one will believe in me or reelect me. Let us work together." In response, she told him that four people in her area were given loans for leather when none of them worked with leather. Twenty people were given plots of land without asking her. His response was that, "I spoke to the elders in your area." She in turn replied, "If you can do all this without asking me as a Gram Panchayat member why cant I do all this work without asking you?" He then kept quiet only muttering again and again "You are going ahead of me."

The neighboring village sangha women also had devadasis living there for whom they wanted to get funds through the DRP. They found out and approached Chandravva for help who called them for a meeting saying she would help. The neighboring sangha women came for a meeting. The chairman saw this gathering and came over to find out what was happening. He challenged Chandravva openly saying, "How will you get them loans without me?" She went directly to Mahila Samakhya Karnataka whose contact was in charge of the Devadasi Loan Programme and was easily able to get the loan for the women. The chairman was surprised as to how she had managed without him.

*Soon after there was a village function, attended by the MLA and taluk panchayat. Chandravva approached them with a list of the needs of the village. The MLA stood directly in front of the chairman and the rest of the Panchayat and referred only to her list in his speech and promised to fulfill those needs. After this the Gram Panchayat realised she had grown way beyond what they thought she was capable of. At a later meeting, the MLA wanted to meet Chandravva who refused to meet him saying that "Why should I meet him? He has not fulfilled his promise." The MLA overheard her and wanted to talk to her and called her. She refused to go. The Chairman came running over and said, "How can you treat him this way? We are all running after him and he is calling you and you are not going." The MLA then came over and asked her why she was upset. She told him, "You never fulfilled your promise."*

- *Whether women bring up issues for the betterment of the community*
- *Whether women have actually been able to do work, help people in the community, particularly women.*

*Let us first examine the question of whether there has in fact been an increase in the participation of women in meetings.*

Increased participation in Gram Sabha, Gram Panchayat, Taluk and Zilla Panchayats: In the first term, while fewer women attended meetings even those who did were mere spectators. The beginning of the second term witnesses a repetition of this scenario. For instance, when Chandravva Daramani<sup>14</sup> used to ask questions in the Gram Panchayat meetings every one used to laugh and ridicule her. This is one of the most painful barriers that women have to face despite the fact that they are in the Panchayat for the second term in a row. In other words, even though men by now should have been used to the presence of women they still chose to systematically ridicule them or make them uncomfortable. This is done in many ways by calling them names behind their backs, by sitting in front and seating the women at the back, by exchanging looks, laughing at them, over-riding their comments and making decisions without their input, or worse still reversing decisions after meetings. All these actions amount to what is generally referred to as the “chilly climate syndrome” which women face in many decision making arenas the world over. This represents one of the strongest barriers to women’s participation and does not change despite having women in power for a long period of time. What is interesting is that women in the Panchayats report not only having experienced these barriers but also having taken strong stands against men who subject them to this type of treatment and consequently managing to reverse their attitudes. In contrast to women’s experience in the first term, women in the second term turned the situation around. Chandravva now talks about the respect she has earned in her community. She used to be called by her name but now she is called “akavva” (sister). She tells the people who say this, “You call me sister in front of me but if you are saying things behind my back then do not call me sister. You have to be clean in your heart if you are to call me sister.”

Sivamma<sup>15</sup> was an extremely inhibited woman who was motivated by the local NGO personnel and her husband to contest for the post of Gram Panchayat member. On winning the post, she was trained by ISST to execute this role. Being in the minority in a male dominated body she was constantly rebuked. Despite this, Sivamma did not give up and continued confidently through her term.

Having recognized this hostility that women face as an universal problem that cuts across districts, caste, class, ethnicity and even nationality it is now important to not let women suffer it out every single time. This may deter even their immediate or future participation. Instead a responsible societal response would be to start each fresh term by gender training on the “chilly climate syndrome”, and to list its indicators so both men

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Chandravva Daramani, Machakuru village, Mudhol taluk, Bijapur district, September 1999.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Sivamma, Hindu Harijan, Hampapura Post, Hommbargalli, H.D. Kote, Mysore District, September 1999.

## **Panchayat Women Speak Out.....**

Chandravva Daramani....continued

It was followed up and found that the bore-wells were rejected by one official on the following grounds, "There is a canal nearby and water for 12 months of the year. Why should we sanction bore-wells here?" She replied, "In the neighboring village there was a canal, they have 12 months water and they have 9 bore-wells, why not 1 here?" The MLA sat quietly with his head in his hands when she said this. The actual situation was that of 5 acres of land, only 2 acres were being benefited and the rest of the 3 acres which was on a higher level do not get water. As there is tax paid on all the land all people living there should be benefited.

So the MLA suggested that they report this to the secretary. Four other people had the same problem so the application was changed and resubmitted and finally 5 bore-wells were installed instead of 1. Furthermore 20,000 was sanctioned for the temple. The chairman collected 20 boys and went around the village garlanding him claiming that he had got all these funds for the village and did not mention Chandravva's name at all. The people in her gully got angry and said, "You have been running around and why does he get all the credit?" She calmed them down saying, "So what? Let him take the credit, this money is finally for us only."

As I turned out the Rs. 20,000 was not enough so the chairman put in some of his own money as he did not want to be seen as someone who could not complete a project. When funds were sanctioned for the sangha building in Chandravva's name he quietly took the funds without telling her about it and asked the villagers not to tell her. She found out anyway and confronted him. He told her that money was for the temple but she insisted on seeing the paper work and saw that was sanctioned by the MLA in her name. She then demanded that the money be given for the sangha building but he said it had already been spent on the temple. She then went to the MLA and stopped the rest of the funds from coming in. Nobody got the money. The chairman came to her and said he had put in 1.5 lakhs of his own funds and how could he get compensated for that. She asked to see the accounts and bills for the 20,000 and for the 1.5 lakhs that he had spent and offered to go to the MLA once he showed her these accounts, which he was unable to. So she refused to go to the MLA again.

Today everything has changed and she is planning to run for the Z.P. elections. There is a lot more responsibility on her than the rest of the Gram Panchayat as she is seen as someone who can get things done. She used to be called by her name but now she is called "akavva" (sister). She tells these people, "You call me sister in front of me and if you are saying things behind my back do not call me sister. You have to be clean in your heart if you are to call me sister."

and women recognize them and then find creative, constructive ways to challenge and confront it. This includes even men recognizing it in other men or in themselves and challenging each other to stop such behaviour.

To counter this hostility, one remedy suggested by Puttavva<sup>16</sup> is a larger presence of women in the Gram Panchayat. This critical mass of women will make them more courageous in voicing their demands and in even getting them implemented. She was a member of the Mandal Panchayat before and the villagers used to come to her for all their problems. She also reported that in her village women discuss issues with other women before bringing them up in the Panchayat as they communicate with each other and gather information. This makes the issues more valid as women can easily state that they are not just speaking for themselves but instead have a larger voice.

Also women are more concerned about the poor and other women who in turn find it easier to talk to women as they are afraid to talk to men. The male panchayat members, on the other hand, bring up issues that they think are important which are less about the community's demands. Tarabai Managoli<sup>17</sup>, believes that "women's participation in the system is the only means to empowering women". She is now preparing to stand for the next elections. Chandramani,<sup>18</sup> a Gram Panchayat member, is also a sangha leader and a NFE teacher. She said if more women were in the Gram Panchayat, they would read out the circulars and inform the women who were unaware or illiterate. This would enable the illiterate to better participate and overcome the barriers related to literacy.

Critical mass: Like Puttavva, Gowramma Tegu, a Taluka Panchayat member,<sup>19</sup> also feels that there should be more women in the Panchayat but for other reasons. Right now in her Panchayat, there are only eight women as compared to 12 men. Even though this constitutes 40 percent and is higher in proportion than most other panchayats, still according to her even if she misses a meeting they can pass resolutions without her.

Kenchamma Kanakaggra Bellari<sup>20</sup>, thinks that it would be a good idea to have 50 percent women and 50 percent men in the Panchayat as according to her, women are smarter and should come forward. In other cases, they find that issues brought up by them don't get passed only because they do not have the numbers. Most women Gram Panchayat members feel that one answer to this problem is to have a critical mass of women i.e. a voting majority or at the very least an equal number of men and women in the Panchayat.

Increased articulation: One measure of increased participation of women is the extent to which they are able to articulate their issues. Their sheer presence at meetings will not

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with Puttavva, Ulihalli village, Ranibennur Taluka, Dharwad District, September 1999.

<sup>17</sup> See Alladi Jayashri (1999). Tarabai Managoli, Gram Panchayat member, Burannapura Gram Panchayat, Bijapur district.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Chandramani, a Gram Panchayat member, Medhakamu village, Bijapur district, is also a sangha leader and a NFE teacher, September 1999.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Gowramma Tegu, Iranna village, Taluk Panchayat member, Ranibennur Taluka, Dharwad District, September 1999.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Kenchamma Kanakaggra Bellari, Herebidhiri, Gram Panchayat member, Ranibennur Taluka, Dharwad District, September 1999

## **Panchayat Women Speak Out.....**

Chandravva Daramani....continued

Chandravva actively campaigned for the women in her village. She gave in an application for space to build a sangha building. Space was allocated to them. Later it was given off to a male sangha. She got all the women together and said this is our place. The men said that this place was allocated to them. The women then asked for the paper work. The chairman asked, "Why are you fighting between yourselves? Let the men take the place by the road and the women can take the place by the well." Chandravva said, "We put in the application first. We will decide where to put our sangha building. Whatever space is left we will give to the other sangha." There was a fight and the women said "We will look at the paperwork and then decide." The male sangha had no paper work. The women sat down at the place saying that since they had the paperwork why should they be scared. The men then realised that the women were not going to back down and gave them the space where they have started building the sangha. They got Rs. 15000 from Mahila Samakhya Karnataka and the rest is coming from the MLA. Her relationship with the sangha is very strong. They always support her when she has problems. They support her regardless of whether she is a Gram Panchayat member. She said "I have earned nothing in this, no house, no fields, no gold. I have earned people's faith. That is why I have done all this."

Earlier she had studied up to the 4<sup>th</sup> standard and did not know how to read and write. She never even used her fingerprint. She attended a Mahila Samakhya Karnataka workshop for fourth standard dropouts where she learnt how to read and write. Without that she would never have been able to manage. She keeps the sangha documents, the NFE center's documents and does the Gram Panchayat application forms. She could have never got this far without literacy.

After the five years was over the chairman went to campaign for the party from village to village. Everywhere he went, her name came up. He came to her and said "All this time you have done things alone. Now please do not leave me alone." He asked her to accompany him wherever he went as she has become famous in so many villages. He apologized for his past behavior and asked for her cooperation. This overwhelmed her and she came to Mahila Samakhya Karnataka office the next day and started crying. She said, "I have got all this from Mahila Samakhya Karnataka." She wrote down her feelings and gave it to them. She said that now all people consult her. Bank managers ask for her recommendations, Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe corporation also asks for her recommendations. This is because they know that the people she recommends will repay the loans. If Mahila Samakhya Karnataka gives the women money others can take it away but the confidence and the knowledge they have given them can never be taken away from them.

make a difference. It is in making that presence felt that makes the difference of having women in the Panchayats.

Kenamma<sup>21</sup> became a Gram Panchayat member to help the poor. As she put it, “In India, it is our duty to save our country. There is a lot of work that needs to be done to help the poor.” The Congress asked her to stand for elections and it was the first time that she coming into power. She was asked to go for training but she did not go. She feels that if she had gone she would have made a better member. Despite this, she is able to talk to the Gram Panchayat members and the men encourage her to speak. She is not scared of talking to the men and to bring up issues. When asked if there was a woman president it would have been better she said that if women come forward they would serve as role models and other women will be encouraged to come forward.

Sivamma<sup>22</sup> is the only articulate women in a Panchayat of seven women representatives. She is motivated and not disillusioned to contest for higher level elections with support of the sangha members in her village. She believes in the strength of women representatives, hopes to win, serve her people and prove her lot. Training helps the women understand the functioning of and the various programmes available via the panchayats. For women to be able to voice their needs and opinions they have to be articulate. As Gowamma Tegu, a Taluk Panchayat member in Dharwad district puts it “*In the Panchayat articulation is your capital. Without speaking nothing gets done.*”

Increased Participation of Women at all levels: Ratnamma<sup>23</sup>, an EWR, provided drinking water, street lights, repaired the roads, and built an anganwadi center for the poor. She took an active role in school development activities. Women are now not only active in the Gram Panchayats but also at higher levels. There are women who have been motivated by their term in the Gram Panchayat and now want to go to the higher levels to be able to work more effectively. Chandravva’s<sup>24</sup> future plans include running for the Zilla Parishads elections for which she had several sources of funds including her own savings. She said, “The Zilla Parishad is where the funds come from. So I can do more.”

### 3.3.2 Transparency

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with Kenamma Kanakagra Bellari, Herebidhiri, Gram Panchayat member, Ranibennur Taluka, Dharwad District, September 1999

<sup>22</sup> Interview with a scheduled caste Panchayat member, Hampapura Post, Hommbargalli, H.D. Kote, Mysore District, September 1999.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Maria David, ISST, August 1999. Ratnamma is a member of Dundur Gram Panchayat, Tarikare taluka, Chikmangalur district.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Chandravva, a Gram Panchayat member Machakuru village, Mudhol taluk, Bijapur district, September 1999.

*Knowledge of administration procedures: Knowledge of the actual rules and procedures make the governance process transparent for women in two ways. One is the women members can with knowledge hold other GP members accountable to implementing the GP rules. Second by doing so several mandatory processes such as Gram sabhas hitherto not in place now by virtue of being implemented elicits even more transparency.*  
Tarabai

### **Panchayat Women Speak Out.....**

Laxmibai, Gram Panchayat and Sangha member, Biraldhini village, Bhagyawadi Taluk, Bijapur district.

Laxmibai described how when she first was elected she did not know anything about governance. The field worker from Mahila Samakhya Karnataka (MSK) suggested that she stand for elections. Initially her father in law was against it but later he supported her. People asked her how she was going to run for elections when the seat was not reserved for the lower castes. The sahayogini advised her to run on the general seat. So she paid the nomination fee of Rs. 150 herself. This was all she spent on the elections and she won with the highest number of votes. There are 13 members in the panchayat of which 7 are women and 6 men. After she won every one decided to take out a procession to celebrate her victory which she declined. She was trained in Bangalore thrice and then in Bijapur. UMA Prachar, Institute of Social Science Trust (ISST) provided the training in Bangalore, where she learnt about the law.

In the first Gram Panchayat meeting there was a puja and the chair asked her to conduct it. He said to her "You are a sangha member and are experienced. You have traveled all over and have a lot of knowledge." She was put in front by the rest of the Panchayat including the chairman. Initially she and other women members were scared to even sit on the chairs but then decided that since they were elected they should take the chairs.

The legal training she got through UMA Prachar, ISST and from MSK's literacy training helped her read the material gave her the knowledge she needed in the panchayat. Therefore when the chair would say something she would counter him and would refer to the training materials and books given to her. One example was that 20% of all funds had to be spent on the lower castes. It was decided by the panchayat to spend it on the general category and to buy house items for the relatives of the Panchayat members. She objected saying that, "This grant is for the scheduled castes how can you spend it on the general population?" They answered that, "We provided funds for the lower castes in the last 5 years so this year we thought we should give it to someone else." She said, "If you did it in the last 5 years then the first one's turn comes back again. These funds are meant to be spent on the lower castes and therefore must be spent on the lower castes."

Soon Laxmibai found out that reports of meetings differed from actual decisions taken. She insisted that all minutes be read out loud in meetings. She told the Panchayat that the training taught her to minute the meetings and decisions and read it out in the meetings.

"We used to get a notice the day of the meeting." She told the panchayat this was illegal. She also told them that 7 days prior to a meeting a notice must be sent out.

*Maragooli<sup>25</sup> twice stopped the Gram Panchayat meetings from taking place and had the meetings postponed as the required quorum was not in place. She knew about these procedures purely with the help of training via MSK and was then able to ensure that the process of keeping quorum was maintained. This in turn ensured transparency for other women members who would have not known about decisions taken if the meetings excluded them.*

Transparency: Rathnamma<sup>26</sup> has set right the malpractice in the public distribution system of rations in her area. She took leadership, united women in the village and they collectively fought against the malpractice and arranged for the proper supply of food commodities to the community. “Nobody can point fingers at me. I am very clean and transparent in my work” says Ashwathamma<sup>27</sup>, with a lot of confidence. She is one of seven women in a 15 member Panchayat and she seems to be the pillar of this Panchayat.

When Chandravva Daramani<sup>28</sup> got Rs.20,000 sanctioned for the temple, the chairman collected 20 boys and went around the village garlanding him claiming that he had got all these funds for the village and did not mention Chandravva’s name at all. The people in her locale got angry and said, “You have been doing the running around for these funds and why does he get all the credit?” She calmed them down saying, “So what? Let him take the credit, this money is finally for us only.” The Rs. 20,000 was not enough so the chairman put in some of his own money as he did not want to be seen as someone who could not complete a project. When funds were sanctioned for the sangha building in Chandravva’s name he quietly took them without telling her about it and asked the villagers not to tell her. She found out anyway and confronted him. He told her that money was for the temple but she insisted on seeing the paper work and saw that it was money sanctioned by the MLA in her name for the sangha. She then demanded that the money be given for the sangha building but the chairman said it has already been spent on the temple. She then went to the MLA and stopped the rest of the funds from coming in. Nobody got the money as a result. The chairman came to her and said he had put in 1.5 lakhs of his own funds and wanted to be compensated for the same. She asked to see the accounts and bills for the Rs. 20,000 as well as the entire Rs.1,50,000 and offered to go to the MLA once he showed her these. Since he was unable to provide accounts she refused to go to the MLA.

Corruption: Tarabai Maragooli<sup>29</sup> has actively fought against corruption. The actual price of a ration card is Rs.45. But the concerned officer would take Rs.100 for each card. As soon as she found out, she went along with a few women and fought with the man in front of the shop. The police came to arrest her. Even then she fought bravely and was released with the help of a woman’s organization. Furthermore, in the Gram Panchayat

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with Maria David, ISST, August 1999.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with David, ISST, August, 1999.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with David, ISST, August, 1999. Ashwathamma, is the President of Chandapur Gram Panchayat, Snehal taluka, Bangalore district.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Gram Panchayat member Machakuru village, Mudhol taluk, Bijapur district, September 1999.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with David, ISST, August, 1999. Tarabai is a member of the Inapur Gram Panchayat, Bijapur Taluka, Bijapur district, August 1999.

## **Panchayat Women Speak Out.....**

Laxmibai .....continued

The Panchayat president did not know any thing about the law either. She was fortunate that he did not get angry or fight with her but simply accepted that she knew more. He took the books that ISST and MSK had given her and spent 3 months reading then himself and learnt what had to be done. The president was given training for a day on Panchayati Raj from the government but she was given much more from MSK and ISST. He asked her to ask MSK to train him as well. Both MSK and ISST provide women the resources such as a travel and daily allowance, which facilitates their attendance. He was not given this facility either. While the chair was not upset there was resistance from 3 upper caste members who were upset that she was the only one was talking about the law and that the rest of the Panchayat listened and supported her.

Through the panchayat Laxmibai was able to help women in myriad ways. She helped get space to build a sangha house. The neighbor of the land was unwilling to give the sangha that space. She used her place in the panchayat to facilitate the decision on the space for the sangha house and to get the neighbor to negotiate with them and compromise. In the first year of her tenure she got 11 sangha women access to IRDP loans for rearing buffaloes despite the fact that 3 of the women were defaulters she was successfully able to get them access to funds. In the second year of her term she helped 10 women in the sangha get funds for chulas. In the third year, she helped three people get agricultural implements such as sickles. In her fourth year she got four men funds for a bullock cart. As a result of her leadership the sangha was recognized by the bank. An Adharsh Gram Board was put up which said that the sangha had repaid their loan in less than a year and had a perfect record. From this point onwards, the sangha was always invited by the bank to participate in its programmes.

In distributing resources, Laxmibai would consult the previous list of recipients of those programmes and ensure that the same person did not receive funds twice for the same purpose. She would also ensure that those who were very poor got first priority. When there is a Panchayat meeting she would also hold a sangha meeting to inform the sangha about the programmes and the work being taken up by the Panchayat. For the JRY scheme the sangha made a plan and submitted it at a Panchayat meeting. Laxmibai also took the sangha women to the Panchayat meetings who were supported and seated them at these meetings. Earlier there were caste problems in the sangha with the upper caste women refusing to eat or sit with the lower castes. Now that has changed.

By including the sangha Laxmibai was able to get them resources for the sangha building, the IRDP loans and other issues of concern to women were taken up. The issues brought to the Panchayat's attention by the sangha included the need for a bus, the teaching at the anganwadi and getting Bhagyajyoti lights/bulbs. The outcome was that they applied and the bus started coming to the village but due to the low usage and the high fares, the bus stopped coming. The Anganwadi teachers were not encouraging the Harijan children to attend and the Panchayat managed to stop that and dealt with it.

records she found that records stated that 12 tube-lights were already installed in the village, which was not true. She fought hard and saw to it that the tube-lights were installed.

Monitoring Gram Panchayat work: In another incident Gowramma Tegu<sup>30</sup>, a Taluk Panchayat member, found out that the contractor was not building the school properly by using less cement and more sand. So, she went and complained, stopped the funds from being issued and first made sure that the contractor redid his work appropriately.

Monitoring work, fighting against corruption are all part of bringing about transparency in the work of the Gram Panchayat. It can be seen that women tend to be more transparent in their work while simultaneously ensuring that the other members are also transparent. It is probably this reason that the general opinion is that women should take on the responsibility of governance.

### *3.3.3 Accountability*

Accountability: Tarabai Managoli<sup>31</sup> saw what men were doing to keep women in the dark in the panchayat so she and the other EWRs went for a training workshop all the way to Mysore district. Here they compared notes with the other EWRs and realised that it was wrong to sign everything the men gave them without knowing what it was about. Soon Tarabai was made the leader of the six women members. Men tried in many ways to trick the women and this made Tarabai even more determined not to let them get away with it. She now makes sure that the minutes of the previous meeting are tabled before the meeting starts and that the Gram Panchayat secretary distributes copies of the monthly statement of expenditure, which in turn makes sure that the books are not tampered with. She ensures the distribution of necessary goods (chulas, sarees etc). The income from the levies and revenues from the stamp duties now go to the Panchayat instead of being siphoned off. She also makes sure that the teachers don't ill treat the Dalit children, and when the houses under the Ashraya scheme went to undeserving people she threatened to do a satyagraha.

In Saunshi village, the president's, Renukavva Madibanna, close relative who did not even belong to that village, interfered with the Panchayat matters. So the panchayat members signed a No-Confidence motion against Renukavva and removed her from the post. Simultaneously, 25 members resigned and for a year a government official worked as administrator. The elders in the village realised that the village was not progressing. So the officials from the Taluk and the Zilla level held elections. Twenty eight members were unanimously elected and Drupadavva Kai Bajranthi<sup>32</sup> was elected President. She then took on all the work that was pending over the past year and furthered the construction of open drainage system, improved the tap water system and repaired the

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<sup>30</sup> Gowramma Tegu, Iranna village, Taluk Panchayat member, Ranibennur Taluka, Dharwad District.

<sup>31</sup> See Alladi Jayashri (1999). Tarabai Managoli, GP member, Burannapura Gram Panchayat, Bijapur district.

<sup>32</sup> Kiran Kumar R., unpublished paper, Drupadavva Kai Bajranthi, President, SC woman, Saunshi Gram Panchayat, Hosahalli hamlet, Kundgol Taluk, Dharwad (south)

## **Panchayat Women Speak Out.....**

Laxmibai .....continued

They also managed to solve the water problem, a caste issue where the water never reached the lower caste area. The Panchayat took up the issue and reached consensus that the lower castes should be allowed access to water wherever available including in the upper caste areas. Later they installed a borewell in the lower caste area as well. Bhagyajyoti bulbs were provided to address the problem of electricity.

When asked if and how men and women govern differently, Laxmibai said Panchayat men ask for funds mainly for themselves never for women. Or they ask for what other villages are getting, saying "If you are giving this to that village why not to us too?" Some Panchayat men collected Rs.500 from the lower castes to get their applications processed through the panchayats. We told the Scheduled Caste people of these villages that we are getting our work done without giving any money so why were they being made to pay? They then raised this issue with their Panchayat leaders who told them not to compare their village with Laxmibai's village.

Laxmibai claimed, "We never knew about Gram sabhas but found out in the training. The Panchayat also never knew about the Gram sabhas." Women attend Gram sabhas but mainly sangha women, never other women. Other Panchayat women are upper caste who will not sit or drink tea with her. They were absent for two Panchayat meetings. She reminded them to attend saying that if they were absent for 3 consecutive meetings they would be removed from the Panchayat. The upper caste women even while attending never spoke even once. One member is a daughter of a Gowda. After missing three meetings, Laxmibai asked the Panchayat Secretary why she was not removed from the Panchayat and told him that this was the rule and that he was protecting her because she is the daughter of a Gowda. "If we did not attend thrice, you would have thrown us out." She said she knew the law because of training and support from Mahila Samakhya Karnataka and because of being in the sangha. The other people who got IRDP loans did not know their rights and paid Rs 500 to get it. "We know because we are in the sangha and we are trained not to pay to get this work done. We have general knowledge and information because of our involvement in the sangha. We have support both from MSK and the sangha. We can ask them for anything and do anything." The other Panchayat woman is upper caste and the daughter of a Gowda, yet she is unable to do anything.

Laxmibai says that she does not have a husband. She applied for a widow's pension. She got the money once and then for 6 months she never received any money. She went to the Tehsildar's office and they asked her for Rs.100 and she said it was Mahila Samakhya Karnataka's policy not to pay for the work to be done. The result is she went back and forth a few times and asked the office to give it to her in writing that they required Rs. 100 but her work never got done. In the end she got tired because it was costing her more to go back and forth and she paid them the money and got her pension.

roads. From then onwards the work went on smoothly. Later the old president Renukavva was re-elected from the same ward as she had good support and had done some good work like building a temple, yuvaka sangha and auditorium for the welfare of the backward people.

For Chandravva Daramani<sup>33</sup> her duty as a panchayat member meant that she did work for her people. She asked her constituency about their needs and presented it to the panchayat. When questioned about why she was doing this, her response was, "I was voted in by these people and that is why I am doing this. It is my duty to explain things to them." Initially the President resisted her efforts. Now everything has changed. There is a lot more responsibility on her than on the rest of the Gram Panchayat as she is seen as someone who can get things done.

Legal Literacy and Accountability: HHS trained women on the panchayati raj act and the roles and responsibilities according to it. Now if women have a road or a water problem they know that they can take it to the Panchayat. In Birwali village, Kalgatti taluk, Dharwad district there was a water problem which the SHG women took up. They locked up the Gram Panchayat office and then took the matter to the taluk panchayat who resolved the water problem. It is only after this training, that these women felt entitled to take such strong action and were able to take the matter to the Taluk Panchayat to hold the Gram Panchayat accountable.

In Gangati village, Kalgatti taluk, the PWD had commissioned a contractor to build a 2 km tarred road. The workers put up a pole to indicate that they finished laying the road and had only a ditch to cover up. It is at this point that the village realised that a tarred road had been commissioned. They asked the workers, "How can you claim that you have finished building a road when not even a two wheeler can be driven on it." The contractor said that they had already spent the money and the next time they would do it. This was the first time the villagers had ever raised an issue with officials and contractors. This was because they had been told in HHS training that they had the right to question the Gram Panchayat on the road and other facilities in training.

Issues taken up by women elected representatives: From interviews in the field and secondary data one common finding is that EWRs in implementing government programmes first take care of the needy. In the implementation of government programmes such as IRDP, JRY, housing under Ashraya, lighting under Bhagyajyoti and so on, they make sure that the needy, the poor, the lower castes and women benefit first. For instance, Basamma<sup>34</sup> belongs to the backward Kuruba community educated up to class 7. During her tenure she stressed programmes concerning health, Anganwadi, community development and income generation programmes. She persuaded the authorities to provide streetlights, roads, water and even schools. As a result of her efforts, bathrooms were provided through a village sanitation programme to every house.

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with Chandravva Gram Panchayat member Machakuru village, Mudhol taluk, Bijapur district, September 1999.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with President, (Sarpanch) of the Mydolalu Gram Panchayat, belonged to the backward Kuruba community educated up to class 7, July 1999.

## **Panchayat Women Speak Out.....**

Laxmibai .....continued

Laxmibai claimed never to have missed a meeting. No matter what the problem is she attended meetings because of a sense of responsibility to the sangha for getting her elected into the Panchayat. She also felt she should know if major decisions are taken and that there would be problems if she was unaware of them. Even during the month her husband died she attended meetings. When she has to attend meetings or go out for Panchayat work, the kids and housework is taken care of by sangha women, neighbors or relatives. She has 2 boys and 2 girls and one is in 7<sup>th</sup> standard. Her daughter lives and studies in the Mahila Shikshan Kendra for young girls.

She studied up to second standard and never knew the alphabet. She got into the sangha and went to night school. Through the initiatives of MSK she learnt to read and write. After four years of preparation she first appeared for the fifth standard exam and then appeared for the seventh standard exams a year later. The school teachers were very cooperative and explained everything to her. Her children were studying for their B.Com exams. While they were studying their relatives were teaching her children but she too sat with them and learnt. Her boys would keep giving her letters and articles to read. She worked for 3 years with the child care center and when the teacher was writing a report she too would practice writing. "Without the literacy there would have been a lot of problems and complaints in the panchayat and I would not have known." Laxmibai wants to study more. She now wants to study English. She said she can now write the English alphabet from A to Z. But she cannot recognize which letter goes with which words so she cannot read or write words.

The Panchayat never thought about dealing with health. "What I learnt from the sangha I put forth in the Panchayat. Initially I never used to bath my children regularly. I learnt about health and cleanliness from joining the sangha. I myself changed. I started wearing different kinds of saris, more modern saris." Two people in the village died because of AIDs. That was when I heard of AIDs. I then learnt about AIDs from Mahila Samakhya Karnataka programmes. Through the Panchayat and the sangha both she told people what she had learnt about AIDs and its prevention. "I told them that for 2-3 Rs. not to risk their health. Buy new syringes during checkups, blood tests and transfusion." She educated Devadasis by telling them that by being with many men they can get AIDs and can infect their children with AIDs as well. They never knew this.

MSK support changed Laxmibai's life in several ways. Sangha women learnt about herbal medicines and used the medicines for piles and headaches. Being in the sangha and part of the Mahila Samakhya Karnataka's Economic Development Programme, has provided her 3 meals.

Furthermore, the Primary Health Centre was reactivated and the District Health Officer was forced into immediate action to appoint a doctor and to provide other basic facilities. Funds allocated for Scheduled Castes and scheduled tribes were distributed in kind to avoid it being wasted on liquor while some funds were diverted to the Ambedkar Bhavan.

EWRs often raise concerns regarding corruption or the inappropriate use of funds. Kasibai Bansodi<sup>35</sup> upon finding out that 20 percent of funds allocated for the lower castes and tribes, went back to the Gram Panchayat where she raised the issue about houses for them. She ensured that the ten houses allotted under the Ashraya programme went to the lower castes first. Tarabai Maragooli<sup>36</sup> argued with the panchayat president who had retained 24 smokeless chulas<sup>37</sup> reserved for the poor and succeeded in getting the chulas provided to the actual beneficiaries.

EWRs also tend to take up women specific issues. For example, one common issue raised by women is that of alcoholism. Ballavva Harijan,<sup>38</sup> a Gram Panchayat member and a sangha member raised the issue of alcoholism in her Panchayat meetings. In Kagri village, one EWR<sup>39</sup> said that whatever the demands of women were, the sarpanch listened and responded to them. The only unresolved problem was a pond with a lot of waste near it. EWRs repeatedly raised this issue but nothing had been done about it. She also said that if there were only male Gram Panchayat members, then women would not be able to talk freely and voice their demands. Now that there are women members, the women in the community can approach them for any problem that they may have. The woman Gram Panchayat members wanted more anganwadis, hospitals, and buildings while the sarpanch also wanted a library, wedding halls and a bus stand.

Increased Frequency of Gram Sabhas and Monthly Meetings: In Kagri village,<sup>40</sup> gram sabhas are held regularly (twice a year). Women attend gram sabhas and voice their issues there. Women also attend the Gram Panchayat meetings regularly. In fact it is the men who miss the meetings more than the women. It has been found that after the EWRs learn about gram sabhas they insist that they be held regularly and that all the decisions are taken in front of all the people. More gram sabhas being held implies more people knowing about the affairs and decision making in the panchayat. It is at the gram sabhas that beneficiaries are chosen. Therefore one forum at which members can be held accountable to their election promises and to their constituencies is the gram sabha. Given that 2000 will be the Year of the Gram Sabha and that sweeping reforms will accompany the rejuvenation of the gram sabha, training EWRs and the community in this area is a crucial input needed for the coming term. It is only in the revitalization of the gram sabha that full transparency, accountability and all other indicators of improved

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with Kasibai Bansodi, Sirabi, Indi taluk, Bijapur district, September 1999.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with David, ISST, August, 1999. Tarabai Maragooli is a member of the Inapur Gram Panchayat, Bijapur Taluka, Bijapur district.

<sup>37</sup> Stoves which use fire wood.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Ballavva, Bellubi village, Bijapur taluk, Bijapur district, September 1999.

<sup>39</sup> Focus group discussion with the Gram Panchayat Sarpanch and Women Members, IDS workers, Kagri village, Ranibennur Taluka, Dharwad, September 1999.

<sup>40</sup> Focus group discussion with the Gram Panchayat Sarpanch and Women Members, IDS workers, Kagri village, Ranibennur Taluka, Dharwad

### **Panchayat Women Speak Out.....**

Laxmibai .....continued

"Earlier we never used to eat properly. I also got education. Earlier I had only 2 saris, now I can afford to wear whatever saris I want. Earlier I used to take the children to work whenever I did and they would earn Rs 10 but I stopped that. I got my children to study including my girls. I now work 3 shifts as a coolie at times to educate my children as well as do my work for the panchayats. If there is strength and confidence everything is possible. I send them clothes, Colgate toothpaste, soap, shoes as they have been admitted in a better school for higher studies and I want them to feel good. I had to pay Rs. 5000 for admission per child, which amounted to Rs.10,000 for 2 children. The teachers told me that my children were extremely intelligent and to send them to a better school for their higher education. Now they are studying with the children of officers and are the only two scheduled caste children in that school. They are doing better and have scored 25 marks more than those children. My little girl was to be married off young by my husband but I stopped that since I said I did not want to be questioned by MSK women." Alcoholism was eradicated here with the exception of two old men. The children here are educated and so it stopped. The children do not smoke either. This is because there is a lot of knowledge about the ill effects of these things.

A good leader according to Laxmibai is someone who gets information and gives it to everyone, not to only a few people, someone who does not take money from anyone and does work for others. For the coming elections she said, "I want to run for the next election but I feel it is more important for another sangha member to get the opportunity so I am trying to encourage them but they are not ready. If no one else from the sangha stands then I will run for elections again." Two other women in the sangha tried to become literate and did not succeed. Other women and NGOs have come here and Laxmibai has helped them start two other sanghas in the village. She has also gone with other sangha women to three other villages and helped form Sanghas in those villages.

### **Panchayat Women Speak Out.....**

Karthiyani, 33 years old, Enbalathur Village, H.D Kote Taluk, Mysore District, elected GP member in 1994. A poor, backward widow was being harassed by the land lord over a land that was mortgaged by her husband. Karthiyani asked her to return the money and redeem the land but the landlord refused to do so and instead warned her of dire consequences if she pursued the issue. Accordingly he sent to the police to arrest her. Slightly perturbed by the presence of the police, Karthiyani did not know what to do. Suddenly she remembered the training session by an NGO on 'Women and law' and questioned the Inspector for a warrant and also specified that only a lady officer can arrest the lady. Confused by the smartness and knowledge of the woman he agreed to help them against the landlord and redeemed the land.

governance can truly be realised. Only with increased participation of women in the gram sabha, can improved governance be engendered.

### 3.3.4 Equity

Social inclusion/ acceptance: Tarabai Maragooli<sup>41</sup> fought against the injustices committed against the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward castes and succeeded in bringing about social justice. Shavantravva G. Jakati<sup>42</sup>, collectivized around 20 devadasi women and raised awareness to help them come out of the devadasi system and lead an independent life. She recognized worked through the Panchayat to resolve the problems of devadasis. Chandramani<sup>43</sup> initiated the Devadasi Rehabilitation Programme (DRP) in her village. Access to these resources was not gained without a fight.

Chandravva<sup>44</sup> got to know about the DRP projects and managed to link 4 people to DRP to get them funds. The president found out about this and realised she could do work outside the Gram Panchayat. She said, “You have been in power for 20 years and were re-elected because you did something. You did not allow me to do anything through the Gram Panchayat, so I did something outside it. In life you get only one chance to do this kind of work and I have my duty to fulfill now that I am in power.” She added, “For so many years there were devadasis for whom nothing was done. So many died and nothing was done. We are now giving them programmes and knowledge to rehabilitate them. Unlike you, we are doing something.”

Generally in a male dominated panchayat the lower castes and the devadasis tend to get neglected even though there are government programmes and funds specifically for them. The women in power concentrate on these and other marginalised people of the community while implementing programmes.

Access of poor to programmes and resources: Shavantravva G. Jakati<sup>45</sup> has got maternity allowance for women, ration cards, Bhagyajyothi lights, and a school building for the community. Tarabai Managoli<sup>46</sup> has also implemented programmes relating to community toilets, widow’s pensions, and welfare programmes for women and children.

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with Maria David, ISST, August, 1999. Tarabai is a member of the Inapur GP, Bijapur Taluka, Bijapur district.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Maria David, ISST, August 1999. Shavantravva G. Jakati is a member of the Tamba panchayat, Indi taluka, Bijapur district.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Chandramani, a Gram Panchayat member, Medhakamu village, Bijapur district, is also a sangha leader and a NFE teacher, September 1999.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Chandravva, Gram Panchayat member Machakuru village, Mudhol taluk, Bijapur district, September 1999.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Maria David, ISST, August 1999. Shavantravva G. Jakati is a member of the Tamba Gram Panchayat, Indi taluka, Bijapur district.

<sup>46</sup> See Alladi Jayashri (1999). Tarabai Managoli, Gram Panchayat member, Burannapura Gram Panchayat, Bijapur district.

### **Panchayat Women Speak Out.....**

Ballavva Harijan, Bellubi village, Bijapur taluk, Bijapur district.

Ballava is a sangha member and a Panchayat member. She joined Mahila Samakhya Karnataka and built a sangha through going to one of their melas. She had never been out of the house before. There was a resistance to her attending the mela by the community who told her that MSK would take her out and dump her in the dam. Resistance persisted and her husband protested by refusing to touch food till she returned several days later. At the mela women learnt how to dance. When she returned she formed a sangha with 20 women. Men who looked through the window curious about the newly formed sangha saw 20 women dancing and jumping around and asked each other "What are they doing, they have learnt to dance and jump but do nothing else". This impression however was a fleeting one. In fact since the formation of the sangha, women stopped alcoholism. Earlier they were scared of the police and officials, now even if they have to go to court to solve an issue they will. Ballavva is one of the eight Panchayat women members out of a total of 19, and raised the alcoholism issue in the Panchayat. Once she, along with sangha women, physically stopped a jeep bringing in alcohol supplies. Women held on to the jeep whose driver hurt them while trying to move it. The men in the jeep implored the women not to lodge a complaint and were finally allowed to leave. The men then promptly complained to the police who came the next day to question the women. The police scolded Ballavva saying "Being a panchayat member how can you do this?" Fortunately, she was able to cite a recent brawl between two drunken brothers where one was killed. She said "This happens often, so we have a right to stop it." Her accountability to the sangha drove her till alcohol was banned.

### **Panchayat Women Speak Out.....**

Bhimavva Baskode, Mudewal village, Bijapur district.

Bhimavva Baskode stood for elections because the sangha asked her to. The husband of another sangha member persuaded his wife to run despite knowing that the sangha had chosen Bhimavva. Once she won, they tried to break her in several ways. First, he slapped a court case on her by setting fire to their house and blaming her for it. Next, they claimed that she destroyed the sangha documents. Fortunately the key to the trunk containing the documents was with her and she was able to produce them and got released as a result. The same sangha woman who opposed her tried to accuse her children of raping her. Despite this enormous pressure she persisted in her role as a Gram Panchayat member and was able to perform in this role.

Santamma Gujjal<sup>47</sup> was the upa-pradhan<sup>48</sup> at the Mandal Panchayat level yet, in the absence of the pradhan, all the responsibilities were transferred to her. She very methodically went about all the ongoing and pending work in the villages in her constituency. Accordingly, she prioritised works like sanitation, construction of schools, health programmes and properly utilised programmes like the JRY, Ashraya Yojana and IRDP. Due to the reservation policy she later became the president of the Zilla Panchayat. Here she had a tough time controlling the 67 elected members who were nominated from 17 taluks of the “old” Dharwad district. Her major task was the allocation of funds to the different taluks based on the priority of their needs. After the division of the district of Dharwad, the new district consisted of only five taluks and a limited number of members. She then very easily listed priority sectors and addressed the problems of diary, veterinary services, health, and women and child development. Because of her initiative pukka roads replaced kaccha roads. An amount of over Rs. 2 crores was allocated to her constituency, which therefore developed overall. She set up Yuvaka Sanghas and motivated them to clean rivers and plant trees. A unique feature in her constituency is the presence of a petrol bunk and good drinking water facility.

In Kagri village<sup>49</sup> the issues for which women have approached the sarpanch are road repairs, IRDP loans, loans for widows, houses and light under the Bhagyajyoti scheme. The women also question the Gram Panchayat about the expenses and revenues that the Gram Panchayat gets.

Equity for women: In challenging patriarchal norms and practices women elected officials have tried to equalize conditions for men and women. They have done this by challenging customs such as dowry in their families. They have also tried to eliminate alcoholism through banning the consumption and sale of liquor in their villages. Alcoholism is typically seen as a gender specific problem where the interests of the families are sacrificed for gratification of this addiction.

As a result of Chandramani<sup>50</sup> being in the Gram Panchayat (and also being a sangha leader) a lot of women benefited. Through her work in the Gram Panchayat, six women in the sangha got a group loan from DWCRA to do dairy production. Six sangha women got access to loans under the IRDP scheme 3 times. In addition 30 sangha members got access to loans. She got 12 houses for women under the Ashraya scheme and 20 Janata plots allotted out of which 12 went to women. As she was also a sangha member, the sangha women got to know about the programmes first who in turn discussed it among themselves and decided who should be the beneficiaries. Unlike other Gram Panchayat members she has paid special attention to women’s issues and programmes.

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<sup>47</sup> Jayasimha K., Kiran Kumar R & Thyagarajan R, unpublished paper. Ex-President, Zilla Panchayat, Village Hansi, Navalgund Taluk, Dharwad, Scheduled caste community.

<sup>48</sup> Upa-pradhan stands for vice president while pradhan stands for president.

<sup>49</sup> Focus group discussion with the Gram Panchayat Sarpanch and Women Members, IDS workers, Kagri village, Ranibennur Taluka, Dharwad, September 1999.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Chandramani, a Gram Panchayat member, Medhakamu village, Bijapur district, is also a sangha leader and a NFE teacher, September 1999.

### **Panchayat Women Speak Out.....**

Kasibai Bansodi, Sirabi, Indi taluk, Bijapur district.

Kasibai is one of the three Panchayat women members out of a total of nine. She did not know about the reservation of seats. She found out from Mahila Samakhya Karnataka and stood for elections. Other women from the sangha were ready to stand for elections but they chose her. She won even though another women ran against her. Initially she knew nothing about what to do in a meeting. Her son, who is literate, told her to ask for poles and tube lights. So she got a requisition written up and signed by sangha women and put it in front of the Panchayat. It was approved. In the MSK training that followed at Bijapur she learnt how to participate, where to get funds and what were the schemes. She went back to the Panchayat and raised the issue about houses for the two schedule castes in the village, the Madars and Harijans, and asked how many houses were allotted for each. It turned out that earlier 10 houses were made and all allotted to the general category. She insisted that this time around the houses would go first to the Harijans, next to the Madars and last to the general category. In another incident when she recommended a homeless person for sheets for a roof, the Panchayat allotted it to someone with a house. When she questioned them the Panchayat tried to make excuses but she put her foot down and said, "I will not participate if you will not listen to me." They asked for her pardon and finally gave the man not only a sheet but also a house.

### ***Panchayat Women Speak Out.....***

Sivamma, Hindu Harijan, Hampura Pura Post, Hommbargalli, HD Kote, Mysore District, Mother of 4 was an extremely inhibited women who was motivated by the local NGO personnel and her husband to contest for the post of GP member. On winning the post, she was trained by the NGO to execute the role of a member. Being part of a group of majority of male members she was constantly rebuked. Sivamma did not give up and continued confidently through her term. On suggestion from the NGO she single handedly promoted an innovative strategy at a local school and founded a Children's Panchayat of 35 girls, after an election, observed and conducted by the head master of the school. The agenda of the this Panchayat was similar to that of the GP. Accordingly she motivated and shared her learning about the Panchayat system and the governmental policies with the children for discussion and dialogue. She also had representation from parents mainly women who had also attended training sessions conducted by the local NGO. This innovative practice has been recognised by the NGO and would be taken at national level for duplication. Sivamma is the only articulate women in this Panchayat of seven women representatives. She is motivated and not disillusioned to contest for higher level elections with support of the sangha members in her village. She believes in the strength of women representatives and hopes to win and prove to serve her lot.

### 3.3.5 Sustainability

Definition of Sustainability: Strictly speaking sustainability has been used in the context of ensuring environmental balance and continuity to ensure that natural resources of the community are not depleted. However sustainability also has another connotation, i.e., it includes those projects/activities that can be pursued and maintained in the long run, i.e. lasting changes that can be sustained.

Among such lasting changes include:

- Change in literacy levels which can be a tool of political empowerment
- Change in male attitudes
- A redefinition and engendering of leadership notions
- Building a stronger institutional set of relationships between the sanghas and the PRIs

Education improvement/demand for literacy as a means to improve participation:

Literacy has proved to be an enormous barrier for women both to enter politics as well as to participate effectively in the Panchayats. Bamma<sup>51</sup> of Hirevenkelkunta village in Raichur district was elected as a Panchayat member and hoped to become the President. Three men came to her house and asked her to sign a meeting notice. She did so readily taking them at their word since she could not read. They then took her away in a jeep saying there was a meeting that she had to attend and abandoned her in a hut, saying the vehicle had broken down. Coming home the next evening, she was told that the election was over and the other male candidate was elected in her absence. When she took the matter to the DC, he pleaded helplessness, as she had signed the withdrawal papers without reading them. Bamma was then determined to learn to read and write. She has now reached the stage of reading small words and doing simple arithmetic. The lack of literacy among the women elected representatives has been identified as one of the biggest hurdles to their effective participation. Women like Bamma could only be tricked into signing papers because she could not read.

*Tarabai Managoli<sup>52</sup> was asked to stand for the 1993 elections by the village when there was reservation for women due to the amendments. Tarabai, a Dalit woman, was curious but had no illusions about entering politics. She found herself standing against an influential woman who had no ethical problems about buying votes. Yet Tarabai won by a margin of 75 votes. To better equip herself she started attending night school and then took up the problems of her village.*

*Most EWRs see the need for literacy. Gowamma Tegu's<sup>53</sup> opinion was that EWRs should be educated up to class 8 as it gives them the confidence to participate and speak. According to her, "Even if women attend meetings regularly or become the president, only if they are smart can they make a difference, otherwise they will be like*

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<sup>51</sup> Documents from Mahila Samakhya Karnataka.

<sup>52</sup> See Alladi Jayashri (1999). Tarabai Managoli, Gram Panchayat member, Burannapura Gram Panchayat, Bijapur district.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Gowamma Tegu, Iranna village, Taluk Panchayat member, Ranibennur Taluka, Dharwad District, September 1999.

*dolls in the*

### Stories From the Field...

In Birwali village, Kalkati taluk there was a water problem. SHG women went to the GP and locked the office. They then took the matter to the taluk panchayat who came to the village and made sure that the water problem was solved.

In Dohri village, Dharwad taluk, there was a problem relating to alcoholism and as a consequence beating up their wives. Women first complained to the excise department asking them not to sell in the area. The second time the women, together with the GP and the gram sabha, stopped the sale of alcohol.

In Gangati village, Kalgatti taluk, the PWD had commissioned a contractor to build a 2 km tarred road. The workers put up a pole to indicate that they finished laying the road and had only a ditch to cover up. It is at this point that the village realised that a tarred road had been commissioned. They asked the workers, "How can you claim that you have finished building a road when not even a two wheeler can be driven on it." The contractor said that they had already spent the money and the next time they would do it. This was the first time the villagers had ever raised an issue with officials and contractors. This was because they had been told that they have the right to question the GP on the road and other facilities.

*hands of men. In the Panchayat articulation is your capital. Without speaking nothing gets done.” For Neelamma<sup>54</sup>, also president of the Anganwadi and a member of the school committee, her education has helped her enormously in her work. She personally writes down the problems of the people in her jurisdiction before she presents them to a helpful BDO and ensures that appropriate action is taken.*

*In Kagri village,<sup>55</sup> incentives were given to parents to send their children to school. If there is 100 percent attendance then the parents get 3 kgs of rice and for SC/ST children the parents get Rs. 75. The sarpanch of the village said that the incentives were not the only reason that the children were sent to school. The women said they were also getting their children educated because at least 30 percent of them get jobs as teachers. Moreover if the children are educated they can take on occupations other than agriculture.*

Earlier Chandravva<sup>56</sup> had studied up to the 4<sup>th</sup> standard and did not know how to read and write. She never even used her fingerprint. She attended a Mahila Samakhya Karnataka (MSK) workshop for fourth standard dropouts she learnt how to read and write. Without that she would never have been able to manage. She now keeps the sangha documents, the Non Formal Education center documents and does the Gram Panchayat application forms. She claims she could have never got this far without literacy. Like her, several women in the panchayats have been made literate and this has substantively improved their capacity to govern.

*Given the myriad incidents of women getting tricked into signing papers without knowing what they are signing, it is clear that the organizations which have been able to provide women education and overcome this hurdle of illiteracy (MSK and IDS) need to share this experience with other organizations. MSK and IDS are able to help women overcome illiteracy in less than a year. Given that organizations now have learnt to deal with this problem in such a short period of time, there is no reason why EWRs should remain illiterate in other parts of the state. Whether this entails having trained personnel from these organizations train EWRs across the state or train trainers in other organizations or whether it involves setting up training centers specifically for this, whatever the strategy illiteracy should be dealt with.*

Change in male Gram Panchayat member’s attitudes: The relationship between Chandravva Daramani<sup>57</sup> and the chairman of her Gram Panchayat was wrought with conflict and resistance for five years. After the term was over, when the chairman went to campaign for the party from village to village, Chandravva Daramani’s name came up everywhere he went. He came to her afterwards and said “All this time you have done things alone. Now do not leave me alone.” He asked her to accompany him wherever he

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<sup>54</sup> See UMA PRACHAR (1995, p.4). Neelamma, Upadhyakshini of the Mallasandra Gram Panchayat

<sup>55</sup> Field visit, Kagri village, Ranibennur Taluka, Dharwad

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Chandravva Daramani, Machakuru village, Mudhol taluk, Bijapur district, September 1999.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Chandravva, Machakuru village, Mudhol taluk, Bijapur district, September 1999.

went, as she has become famous in so many villages. This gesture overwhelmed her. When the men in the Gram Panchayats realise that the women are not just puppets and

### Stories From the Field...

Narayan from CHINYARD (Chetna Institute for Youth and Rural Development) related a story on a village in a Lambani area. The women from the village attended the HHS training and as a consequence raised the issue of alcoholism. The village 2 government run shops and 4 kms away from the village Lambani women were selling country liquor. All the men would drink and ask their wives (SHG members) to take loans for the men to buy alcohol. Five mahila sanghas got together and decided to stop alcoholism. They wrote a letter asking to stop the sale of alcohol in the area and sent copies to the police station, GP, Tehsildar and the DC. They threatened to strike if the shops were not shut down. No action was taken. The women decided to take the alcohol out side and burn it. Just as they were about to burn it, the jeep with fresh supplies arrived. The women requested the men in the jeep not supply alcohol, as it was destroying their families. The men replied that they had a contract and would lose money if they went back without supplying the alcohol. They offered the women money and in return wanted to supply fresh stock. The women refused saying, "This money will not last us long. If you insist on selling alcohol we will set fire to the jeep and to ourselves." The argument raged on and the men were held there for a day. They called the police. The inspector came and yelled at the women saying, "Instead of looking after your household hearth, you are creating fire here." The women replied that they had complained to the police who had done nothing about it. The police then got the men to agree not to sell alcohol in the village and the jeep was sent back. The two shops were closed down but the drinking in the country liquor shop increased. The men used to go there get drunk, come back and beat up their wives saying, "Now we have to go all the way there because of you." The women then called for a meeting at the temple asking for every family to send one man and one woman. Functionally this represented a real gram sabha where it was decided that any one who got drunk would be fined Rs. 500. And any who informed would get a gift of Rs. 25. For a month this was implemented. Rs. 5,000 was collected. Men used to drink and wait in the fields till they were sober and then come home. Finally the men them selves stopped drinking, as they felt bad about it.

that they can get things done there is a change in the attitudes even if it is a self serving change as in the above case. With such attitudinal shifts also comes less resistance.

There are cases where men support women on their issues. For instance, 20 lakhs was granted to the Taluk Panchayat, and each member decided to distribute 1 lakh among themselves to construct buildings in their villages. Gowramma Tegu,<sup>58</sup> objected saying that this amount was not needed by each. Moreover if each planned to construct a building with 1 lakh then half that money or Rs. 50,000 would be taken by contractors. Instead her suggestion was to put some money aside to build facilities in the Taluk Panchayat office. She got them to build separate rooms for the president, for the women and a few other rooms including toilets for women. Thus she was able to claim space for women which is crucial to facilitate their participation. This also shows that men can and do listen to women.

Developing and redefining leadership: Leadership is a quality that is also fostered through collective support. The sanghas are non-traditional spaces where the women are given the opportunity to develop and define their leadership skills. Sanghas acts as a training ground for inculcating this new engendered form of leadership where women leaders emerge knowing what other women value. Leadership therefore also meant being accountable to sangha women when they were instrumental in helping them come to power. Finally this also translated into being accountable to the lower castes when they were elected on a reserved seat for the lower castes and other backward communities.

*When sangha women come into the Gram Panchayats they are able to handle hostility more easily because of sangha support. Mariamma from Itiga village, Gulbarga taluk, Gulbarga district talked about an acute water shortage in her village. Sangha women, led by Mariamma, a sangha member who contested the Gram Panchayat elections, organised a “Rasta Roko” and stopped all vehicular traffic on the highway, 4 kms away. They allowed only one bus to pass through because it was carrying a woman in an advanced stage of pregnancy. The “Rasta Roko” brought Itiga’s plight to the notice of the Deputy Commissioner and the next day, the villages got water. Mariamma was not disheartened when she lost the election to a man from the dominant caste. After the agitation, villagers realised her worth and said, “In the next election, we will vote for Mariamma”.*

Training also helps women develop their leadership skills. Basamma, President, of the Mydolalu Gram Panchayat, belonged to the backward Kuruba community and was educated up to class 7. At first she shuddered at the thought of shouldering such responsibility but soon it became a challenge. Training and experience helped her overcome initial problems and she learned to tap into her innate leadership qualities. Women through this experience have started to redefine for themselves what constitutes good leadership. For Kenchamma,<sup>59</sup> a good leader includes a person who does not lie,

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<sup>58</sup> Interview with Gowramma Tegu, Iranna village, Taluk Panchayat member, Ranibennur Taluka, Dharwad District, September 1999.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Kenchamma Kanakagga Bellari, Herebidhiri village, GP member, Ranibennur Taluka, Dharwad District, September 1999

does not lose his/her patience, is willing to explain the programmes to people and to say what they can do for people, and is broad minded. This view is radically different from the traditional view of leaders being charismatic public speakers and being overtly strong.

Building Relationships Between the Gram Panchayat and Sanghas: Ballavva Harijan<sup>60</sup> joined MSK and built a sangha because she attended the Bidar mela. She had never been out of the house before. The community resisted her attending the mela telling her that MSK would take her out and dump her in the dam. Resistance persisted in the form of her husband protesting by his refusal to touch food till she returned several days later. At the mela women learnt about sangha activities and other things including how to dance. When she returned she formed a sangha with 20 women. Men who looked through the window curious about the newly formed sangha saw 20 women dancing and jumping around and asked each other “what are they doing, they have learnt to dance and jump but do nothing else”. This impression however was a fleeting one. In fact since the formation of the sangha, women have stopped alcoholism. Earlier they were scared of the police and officials, now even if they have to go to court to solve an issue they will.

In Masabi Khan Mohammad's<sup>61</sup> village there was tremendous opposition to the sangha by the Gram Panchayat while there was strong police support. It started with the sangha challenging a case of dowry death which was passed off as a natural death. They reopened the case, conducted a post mortem and registered it as a dowry death. Consequently, the Gram Panchayat banned the sangha for 6 years. Through out this time the sangha fought for a place. Twice they got a place and both times the Gram Panchayat got the court to issue a stay order. Fortunately the sangha had police support as well as MSK to back them. MSK visited this village every 15 days and also asked the police to handle any problem for the sangha on behalf of MSK. Over the 6 years the sangha grew and began taking up issues from even outside the village. Finally the Gram Panchayat relented and invited the sangha back into the village saying, “Your sangha is very big and strong. We did not realise this. Let us compromise.” The result was that the sangha was given a space in recognition by the Gram Panchayat.

The Mahila Mandal Zubadabi<sup>62</sup> was in and the Panchayat worked hand in hand tackling issues raised by women. They initiated income generation programmes for the use of the mandal members. Two acres of land was leased out, rent collected and deposited in the Mahila Mandal account. A petty shop, under the DWCRA scheme, was run by a group of 15 members. All the income earned this way was used as a credit scheme for women.

Subadra Vagmare<sup>63</sup>, lives in an extremely interior village with no school and no bus. Her son is working in Hubli and in one visit to Hubli she met an MSK sahayogini. Two more sahayoginis visited asking her to form a sangha. She went to meet women in another sangha in a nearby village. They told her they were just starting and advised her to start one as well. She then started a sangha and women got resources from programmes for

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<sup>60</sup> Interview with Ballava, Bellubi village, Bijapur taluk, Bijapur district, September 1999.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Masabi Khan, Budhnipidi, Mudhol taluk, Bagalkote district, September 1999.

<sup>62</sup> See Mukta Bannerjee (1998). Zubadabi is panchayat member, Mydolalu village, Shimoga district.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Sangha member, Hatali village, Indi taluk, Bijapur district, September 1999.

widows and children as a result. They were able to get Rs. 50,000 from the government towards building bunds. After having traveled to several places through MSK their networks increased. Nearby sanghas came to them with their problems. Here the sangha was able to get the programmes from the Gram Panchayat due to training.

Environmental sustainability: In Dharwad district, EWRs raised environmental issues such as the cleaning up of ponds and other spaces in their areas. The male Gram Panchayat members did not listen to them. However it shows the difference in women's thinking and concerns. Kasibai<sup>64</sup>, a Panchayat member related how training taught her the importance of a clean environment and that the presence of trees helped purify the air. Parallel institutions in Dharwad led by S.R. Hiremath are also taking up the issue, of environment via the panchayats. Consciousness raising on the environment is now starting to take place as a result. For instance IDS has got 60 cases filed by the fishermen on environmental concerns as a result of legal literacy training they received showing new and interesting possibilities for overlap. This is one consequence of legal literacy training and the familiarity with the legal system generated through training.

Engendering Governance: After women have come into power they not only speak up in the meetings they also question the decisions taken. Previously all power was in the hands of the men.<sup>65</sup> Whatever decisions taken in the Gram Panchayat were communicated only to men. Now women also get to know about these decisions and are therefore able to question them. The president of Kargi village also said that earlier the women used to be scared to talk but now they have become courageous.

### 3.3.6 Other Impacts

Women gain courage to stand up for their rights: Honamma Nayker<sup>66</sup> was asked to refuse the post of the president, reserved for a scheduled tribe member. She was eligible to stand for the post but the general category members tried to get her to refuse the post. With the help of officials at the Taluk and Zilla levels she was able to govern. She even approached the High Court in Bangalore for her continuation as the president. Upon resolving her presidency she continued holding meetings with the sufficient quorum of three members. Other members too used to attend one in three meetings and sign the register, as their membership would be otherwise terminated. The first term in contrast saw many instances of no-confidence motions which women were unable to withstand.

Evolution of women within the PRIs: Some women members decided not to re-contest as Gram Panchayat members so they could go on to higher levels of the PRIs and thereby get more work done. Women like Chandravva voiced similar intentions.<sup>67</sup> Santamma

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<sup>64</sup> Interview with Kasibai Bansodi, Sirabi village, Indi taluk, Bijapur district, September 1999.

<sup>65</sup> Focus group discussion with the Gram Panchayat Sarpanch and Women Members, IDS workers, Kagri village, Ranibennur Taluka, Dharwad, September 1999.

<sup>66</sup> Honamm Nayker, Dumavada Gram Panchayat member, Kalghatgi Taluka, Dharwad district

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Chandravva Daramani, Machakuru village, Mudhol taluk, Bijapur district, September 1999.

Gujjal<sup>68</sup> in 1987, with the support of the Mahila Mandal stood for the Mandal Panchayat elections and was unanimously elected as the upa-pradhan from Morab constituency. During her tenure of five years she focussed on improving the status of women. After the 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment was implemented, she was elected unopposed to the Gram Panchayat. On realising that more substantial work could be done at the Zilla level she refused the position of Gram Panchayat president, resigned from the panchayat and stood for Zilla Panchayat elections. The seat was reserved for backward caste women in the Zilla Panchayat, and she won the elections with a huge margin of 9600 votes

Change in Panchayat attitude towards the sangha: Budhnipidi represents a village<sup>69</sup> where there was tremendous opposition against the sangha by the Gram Panchayat. Over six years the two confronted each other and finally the panchayat had to acknowledge the sangha and invite them back into the village giving them a space.

Improved Coordination between CBOs, the Gram Panchayat and the Gram Sabha. In Dohri village, Dharwad taluk, there was a problem relating to alcoholism and as a consequence beating up their wives. Women first complained to the excise department asking them not to sell in the area. The second time the women, together with the Gram Panchayat and the gram sabha, stopped the sale of alcohol. This is an example where the issues taken up by the Gram Panchayat are engendered as a result of HHS training women on the PRIs. It has also helped women understand that the gram panchayat and the gram sabha can better address some of their issues relative to the government departments.

Increased visibility of women GP members: In a village function, attended by the MLA and Taluk Panchayat, Chandravva<sup>70</sup> a GP member approached them with a written list of the village's needs. The MLA stood directly in front of the president and the rest of the Gram Panchayat and referred only to her list in his speech promising to fulfill the needs listed. After this the Gram Panchayat realised she had grown way beyond what they thought she was capable of. At a later meeting, the MLA wanted to meet Chandravva who refused to meet him saying that "Why should I meet him? He has not fulfilled his promise." The MLA overheard her and wanted to talk to her and called her. She refused to go. The Chairman came running over and said, "How can you treat him this way? We are all running after him and he is calling you and you are not going." The MLA then came over and asked her why she was upset. She told him, "You never did anything about what you promised." She also told him about her applications for getting funds for a temple and bore-wells being rejected. She had kept copies of these applications safely and showed them to him. He then followed it up and found out the reasons for which bore-wells were rejected by one official who said, "There is a canal nearby and water for

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<sup>68</sup> Santamma Gujjal, Ex-President, Zilla Panchayat, Hansi village, Navalgund Taluk, Dharwad, SC Community, (Jayasimha k, Kiran Kumar R & Thyagarajan R., unpublished paper).

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Masabi Khan Mohammad, Budhnipidi, Mudhol taluk, Bagalkote district, September 1999.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Chandravva Daramani, Machakuru village, Mudhol taluk, Bijapur district, September 1999.

12 months of the year. Why should we sanction bore-wells here?" She replied, "In the neighboring village there was a canal, they have 12 months water and they have 9 bore-wells, why not 1 here?" The MLA sat quietly with his head in his hands when she said this. The actual situation was that out of the 5 acres of land, only 2 acres were benefited and the other 3 acres, on a higher level did not get water. As tax is paid on all the land everyone should benefit. So the MLS suggested that they report this to the secretary. Four other people had the same problem so the application was changed, resubmitted and 5 bore-wells were installed instead of 1. Chandravva<sup>71</sup> said that all people now consult her. Bank managers and the SC/ST corporation asks for her recommendations because they know that the people she recommends will repay the loans given by them.

Fighting social evils: Ballavva Harijan<sup>72</sup> is both a Gram Panchayat member and a sangha member. Through the sangha, women stopped alcoholism and have gained courage to confront the police and officials. Ballavva is one of 8 EWRs out of a total of 19 panchayat members, and raised the issue of alcoholism in the Gram Panchayat. Once she, along with the sangha women, physically stopped a jeep bringing in supplies of alcohol. Women held on to the jeep whose driver hurt them while trying to move the jeep. The men in the jeep implored the women not to lodge a complaint and were thus allowed to leave. The men in turn promptly complained to the police who came the next day to question the women. The police scolded Ballavva saying "Being a Panchayat member how can you do this?" Fortunately, she was able to cite a recent brawl between two drunken brothers where one was killed. She said "This happens often, so we have a right to stop it." She was thus able to handle the police and stop alcoholism.

Neelamma<sup>73</sup> Gram Panchayat Upadhyakshini, led an anti arrack agitation and continues to prohibit liquor trafficking. For Basamma<sup>74</sup> her most important achievement was stopping alcoholism. Both men and women of this village were addicted to arrack. Repeated requests to the BDO were finally heeded and the dealer's license withdrawn. One outcome of having an all-women Panchayat was the ban on the sale and consumption of arrack in the three nearby villages. This ban was achieved despite opposition of male leaders.

Paravati Walikar<sup>75</sup> owned an arrack shop until she realised the effect it had on people. During the 1993 elections she was forced to contest and was elected as the President of the Aliabad Gram Panchayat. Even after being elected she continued her profession. But one incident changed her life completely. One day she heard some noise outside her shop and as adhyaksha she felt that it was her duty to investigate. She found people around a man who was lying on the ground who was badly beaten up. She inquired the reason the man was in that state. The men around told her that he had gone to the nearby flour mill to borrow money to buy arrack. The owner gave him only half the amount. The man

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<sup>71</sup> Interview with, Chandravva, Machakuru village, Mudhol taluk, Bijapur district, September 1999.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Ballavva, Bellubi village, Bijapur taluk, Bijapur district, September 1999.

<sup>73</sup> See UMA PRACHAR (1995, p.4). Neelamma, Upadhyakshini of the Mallasandra Gram Panchayat

<sup>74</sup> Interview with President, (Sarpanch) of the Mydolalu Gram Panchayat, belonged to the backward Kuruba community educated up to class 7, July 1999.

<sup>75</sup> See UMA PRACHAR (1995, p.12) Adhyaksha of Aliabad Gram Panchayat, Bijapur Taluka, Bijapur District

demanded more and started to tear off his clothes and act like a mad man, then the people came and beat him up. At this point some one in the crowd suggested that arrack should be banned, but another person laughed and said “How can we do that when the village leaders who are supposed to look after the village harmony and development are themselves selling arrack?” These words affected Parvati and she not only decided to shut her shop, which gave her extra income, but also to clear the village of any arrack sale. In fact she officially mobilised 200 villagers and met the district commissioner and the excise department to withdraw the license of all arrack dealers. When she announced her decision at the Gram Panchayat meeting, all the members supported her but felt that the surrounding shops should also be shut with causing financial problems for the owners. They went to the District Commissioner who asked them to pass a resolution to the effect and shut it down, which they did. The villages were happy, but there were alcoholics who harassed her every time they saw her. To make sure the arrack dealers did not lose out, she got them IRDP loans. One woman took a bank loan and started a tea shop after closing down her arrack shop.

In many villages, the first thing women have taken up is the alcohol issue. In quite a few places they have been able to ban alcohol within the village. While this is a major achievement in and of itself, Paravati Walikar went one step further. She not only got alcohol banned, she also made sure that the people who owned the shops were financially secure by getting them loans to start other businesses. She is a panchayat member and therefore accountable to her people. By getting them loans she made sure that they were not left financially bereft.

Importance of Community-Based Organizations: Subadra Vagmare<sup>76</sup> feels that the Gram Panchayat is not just for programmes and because of the sangha focuses on a variety of issues including health, pregnancy, immunisation, AIDS, eye check ups, and domestic violence. The Gram Panchayat has issued delivery kits, which now the women are using. They are also educating the community on AIDS through film shows, workshops and pamphlets. In addition sangha women have taken initiative of distributing contraceptive pills and the Gram Panchayat distributes condoms. The sangha also takes initiative in organising health check ups and eye camps. In Bijapur, MSK, the District Health Officer (DHO), sanghas and the Gram Panchayats dialogue to identify those villages where checks are necessary and issue circulars to conduct health check ups. For the eye camps spectacles are paid for by the Rotary and Lions club. The sangha takes responsibility for organising the neighbouring villages to attend the camp and for arranging the logistics for those who have to stay for 4-5 days for eye operations.

Sanghas in villages neighboring Machakuru village have Devadasis for whom they wanted to get funds through the DRP. They approached Chandravva<sup>77</sup> who said she would help them. The sangha women came to her village for a meeting. The chairman saw this and came over to find out what was happening. He challenged her openly saying, “How will you get them loans without me?” She went directly to MSK whose person was in charge of the Devadasi loan programme and was easily able to get the loan

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<sup>76</sup> Subadra Vagmare, Hatali village, Indi taluk, Bijapur district.

<sup>77</sup> Gram Panchayat member Machakuru village, Mudhol taluk, Bijapur district.

for them. The chairman was surprised as to how she had managed without him. Her relationship with the sangha is very strong. They always support her when she has problems. They support her regardless of whether she is a Gram Panchayat member or not. She said *“I have earned nothing in this, no house, no fields, no gold. I have earned people’s faith. That is why I have done all this.”* The sanghas form a strong base through which the women can take a lead. They support their women in the panchayat who in turn can get a lot of work done.

Importance of the NGOs: The village people asked Chandravva Daramani to stand for elections.<sup>78</sup> Initially when she came to power she did not know much. She saw the Gram Panchayat members fighting between themselves for access to funds. While they spoke, she never said anything. After training she learnt about the programmes and that 20 percent of these funds are reserved for the lower castes. So, she organised her people, made a plan of their needs and presented it to the Gram Panchayat. Initially the secretary and the chairman used to quietly give off the most important programmes to the people they wanted. Then she got to know the secretary and things changed. However, according to her, the key factor that facilitated these changes was the strong training inputs and support received from MSK. In fact, through her term she faced tremendous opposition from the chairman and finally was able to overcome these problems by her sheer determination and performance. When the chairman five years later conceded that it was she who had been doing good work all along, that he now needed her support and acknowledged that she was in the right, she came in tears to MSK, touched by all they had done for her. She wrote her feelings down in a letter to MSK. Given that she was illiterate when she first attended an MSK meeting, even that final gesture of the letter would not have been possible if it were not for their consistent training. Summing up her input from MSK she said, *“If MSK gives the women money others can take it away but the confidence and the knowledge they have given them can never be taken away from them.”* Chandravva’s comments sums up the need for training. Training not only gives the members information about the various programmes and the functioning of the Gram Panchayat, it also builds their confidence. They realise their roles and responsibilities and take up issues themselves without any one pushing them

T.S. Jyoti<sup>79</sup> from IDS narrated a story about a handicapped SC couple who were living in a hut and wanted funds from the Ashraya scheme to build a house. They approached the Gram Panchayat who said, *“Why should we sanction this money to you when you already have a house.”* The Gram Panchayat was actually planning to sanction it in their name but give the money to somebody else without their knowing. They then asked the Gram Panchayat to give it to them in writing as they were felt they were entitled to these funds being Scheduled Castes. They were going to take it up with the Zilla Panchayat. Then the Gram Panchayat gave them the sanction for the house. This was the consequence of receiving training on legal literacy from HHS where women were told they could question the panchayats on decisions related to programmes.

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<sup>78</sup> Gram Panchayat member Machakuru village, Mudhol taluk, Bijapur district.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with T.S. Jyoti an NGO staff person from IDS (India Development Service), IDS office, Dharwad district, September 1999. Jyoti had undergone training on legal literacy with HHS.

Karthiyani<sup>80</sup> is a poor widow and was being harassed by the land-lord over a land that was mortgaged by her husband. She wanted to return the money and redeem the land but the landlord refused and instead warned her of dire consequences if she pursued the issue. Accordingly, he then sent the police to arrest her. Perturbed by the presence of the police, Karthiyani first did not know what to do. Suddenly she remembered the training session by ISST<sup>81</sup> on 'Women and law' and asked the inspector for his arrest warrant and also specified that only a lady officer can arrest her. Confused by the smartness and knowledge of the woman, he agreed to help her fight against the landlord and redeemed the land. In all the above cases women were able to stand up and fight. With their knowledge of the police and other functionaries they were able to question them when they knew that something was being done incorrectly. Women like Karthiyani managed to turn the tables by getting the police, who were coming to arrest her, to fight for her instead of against her.

Best Practices: Sivamma<sup>82</sup>, upon a suggestion made from a Myrada staff member, single handedly promoted an innovative strategy at a local school and founded a Children's Panchayat of 35 girls, after an election, observed and conducted by the head master of the school. The agenda of the Children's Panchayat was similar to that of the Gram Panchayat. Accordingly she motivated and shared her learning about the Panchayat system and the governmental policies with the children for discussion and dialogue. She also had representation from parents mainly women who had also attended training sessions conducted by the local NGO. This innovative practice has been recognised by this NGO who wants to duplicate it nationally.

### **3.4. Comparison of Women's Experiences in the Two terms**

Between the first and second terms we see women undergoing a change from being reticent, frightened and trying to do their best to coming out strongly and forcefully wherever they have been trained and given an opportunity to do so. Their participation picks up momentum as they learn from previous women in power as well as more quickly while in power themselves due to training, networking and NGO intervention.

Sanghas also become more active in elections and getting their women into power. They are more able to support their candidates' election campaigns financially and respond quickly to dealing with barriers that may have in the past prevented their candidates from getting elected. Once in power more women are now accountable to sanghas in the second term as more sanghas have been responsible for paying for women's electoral campaigns and for voting them into power.

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<sup>80</sup> Interview with Karthiyani, September 1999, a 33 years old woman from Enbalathur Village, H.D. Kote Taluk, Mysore District who was elected as a Gram Panchayat member in 1994.

<sup>81</sup> Staff interview, HHS, a Bangalore based NGO which provides training on legal literacy to women, August 1999.

<sup>82</sup> Interview with Sivamma, a Hindu Harijan, in Hampapura Post, Hommbargalli, HD Kote, Mysore District, September 1999.

The community at large is also much more accepting of women in these new roles for several reasons. For one, the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments provide national legitimacy to women coming into local government. These Amendments are accompanied by media support and coverage of women in the PRIs across the country on radio, television and in the print media as well. It becomes a lot easier therefore for women, men, bureaucrats to accept women in the second term as a consequence. Second, in Karnataka in particular having been in power already for one term women now re-enter politics a little wiser as do the men who have already dealt with them.

Nonetheless women still go through initial hostility from men, more so the lower caste women. Yet gender training as well as women's evolution and support systems helps them confront and overcome this hostility more easily in the second term.

NGOs who in the first term are still suspicious of local government and unclear of their roles by the second term have developed training modules on the Act, and on the roles and functions of the PRIs. They have gone a step ahead of the government and developed gender sensitization modules, have brought legal training to the PRIs and in general, have started playing a much stronger role in local governance than in the first term. The government too because of the emphasis on training in the Amendments are more systematic in their training initiatives. Overall training becomes both more widespread, as it does innovative while systematic on the part of NGOs and government.

Documentation and gathering resources also starts in the second term though it takes place through more popular media such as GRAMSAT and magazines like Uma Prachar trying to reach the mass of EWRs. By the end of the second term the acceptance of working through the panchayats seen now as a new political space for intervention for NGOs is high. Consequently, many more NGOs start to plan for creative ways by which they can bring their previous expertise into the panchayats. An explosion of new areas being tackled through the panchayats starts to take place by the end of the second term as local governance starts to be viewed more holistically. Just as training by the end of the first term is seen as lacking in basic rules and functioning of the panchayats, by the second term end the lack of systematic documentation and development of training materials in these new areas is identified as a clear gap.

Finally, the gram sabha becomes more important by the end of the second term. While in the first two terms it has been important to train women to contest and participate in the elections and in the panchayats, now it is important to train the electorate to take more responsibility in making governance more accountable and transparent. In the very near future, women in the community and sanghas will be increasingly focussed on as the group that will truly engender governance not the EWRs as in the last two terms.

One of the most interesting developments is the women's redefinition of leadership once they have been in power. This redefinition will cause a fundamental shift in societal values as it becomes more universally adopted. Women now define a good leader as one who is not corrupt, not power seeking, vocal though not necessarily loud, articulate though not necessarily a public speaker, patient and transparent about resources available

in the panchayat. They see the need to prioritize the poor and their needs once in power. They furthermore tend to prioritize basic needs, such as electricity, water, roads, and education as opposed to building and large infrastructural investments. These new prioritizes and concerns will lead to changing developmental processes fundamentally as women enter politics on scale for the third time in a row.

## **CHAPTER IV: ORGANIZATIONAL INITIATIVES, TRAINING AND NEW AREAS FOR INTERVENTION**

### **4.1. Organisational Initiatives**

In Karnataka there are more than 500 NGOs working on developmental issues. The challenge, posed by the Constitutional Amendments, was to move towards a more holistic form of development that involves and makes accountable the local political infrastructure. This strategy of reactivating local government brought about the potential for the simultaneous accountability and sustainability of the political infrastructure and decision making processes and consequently of development to local communities. The communities were thus able to draw upon the resources, skills and comparative advantages of the range of institutions present including the PRIs, NGOs, bureaucracy as well as Self Help Groups (SHG) at the grassroots, all engaged at various levels of development.

Prior activities of NGOs included environmental projects, dry land development, savings and credit, income generation programmes, health projects, formation of agricultural labour unions and cooperatives. Previously, NGOs had little to do with institutions of local government. NGOs, historically, doubted the ability of local government (i.e. PRIs) to engage in rural development or in the empowerment of the rural poor. This reservation of PRI ability was justified up until the passage of the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments. Till the Amendments came into being, the PRIs served purely as implementation agencies for the bureaucracy. NGOs also saw the PRIs as dominated by local vested interests and subject to a great deal of corruption, excessive bureaucratic interference and political party manipulation. NGOs historically also tried to steer clear of party politics and in fact even now deliberately remain aloof from elections at higher levels of the PRIs, where there is party involvement. The constitutional amendments resulted in the reservation of a significant proportion of seats for marginalized groups, which sparked NGO enthusiasm to now associate more closely with the PRIs.

With the revitalization of local government, several NGOs felt the need to engage in the political process to democratize and engender it at every level, starting at the grassroots. This also proved to be an easy entry point as they had worked for years with poor women and their communities and could now easily extend this work into the PRIs. The new Amendments reinforced NGO goals related to empowerment and advocacy of rights of the most marginalized i.e. women, the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, by bringing these groups into local government. Moreover, this newly emerging form of governance needed to be monitored and questioned to become more transparent and functional. In short over the 1990s, the goals of NGO intervention now expanded to include:

- The political, social and economic empowerment of the poor and the oppressed.
- Strengthening people's organisations and their say in the political agenda.
- Strengthening, re-energising and rejuvenating movement related activities.
- The promotion of democratic practices and processes.

- Engendering local governance.

#### 4.1.1 Types of NGO

NGOs differ in the roles they play, depending on their scope of operation and their structure i.e. village level, slum-based, peoples' organisation and other indigenous organisations.

Broadly classified there are NGOs with

- Welfare or service oriented goals
- ***Empowerment or development oriented goals by providing education, income and other basic living amenities (water, electricity, credit and roads).***
- ***Support as their key objective as in training, evaluation and programme planning***
- Umbrella or Network oriented goals via formation of collectives and federations at various levels for effective exchange, dialogue and resource mobilization.

In addition, today, new NGOs and/or new initiatives within existing NGOs focus on governance, advocacy and democratic processes.

#### 4.1.2 Significant Organizational Initiatives in Karnataka in PRI

**SEARCH:** A significant intervention by SEARCH during the decade has been in the realm of strengthening Panchayat Raj by creating training modules that can be used by others in this area. They have trained 586 master trainers in eight districts of Karnataka who, in turn, have trained 11,081 elected women representatives of Panchayat Raj.<sup>83</sup> Their initiatives alone have covered a third of the EWRs. District offices reprinted the nine volumes of material on Panchayat Raj produced by SEARCH and circulated them to every woman Gram Panchayat member who attended their training programmes. SEARCH has thus pioneered a tripartite model of collaboration between the government, NGOs, and Gram Panchayats on scale. Their training agenda includes training for:

- PRI Trainers
- Taluk Panchayat Members
- Women and Men Gram Panchayat Members and
- Network Meetings and Exchange Visits for EWRs
- Strengthening Panchayat Raj Institutions

Mahila Samakhya Karnataka (MSK):<sup>84</sup> MS, a Department of Education Programme, Ministry of Human Resources Development, Government of India emerged out of the 1986 New Education Policy's emphasis on education playing 'a positive, interventionist role' in bringing about women's equality, and is in 8 states. MSK began in 1989, with the aim of empowering poor rural women through creating village sanghas (women's

<sup>83</sup> Search, Programme Calendar, 1999

<sup>84</sup> Kaushik Susheela, *Women and Panchayati Raj*, Har-Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1996.

collectives). Sanghas represent a non traditional space and time which enable women to articulate their situation, look at old problems in new ways, determine priorities, seek information, and initiate change at their own pace. The aim here, was to bring systemic change towards gender justice. MSK first began in Mysore, Bijapur and Bidar districts and expanded to Bellary, Raichur and Gulbarga. Its activities include savings (totaling Rs.3,868,583), income generation, health, social issues (anti-alcoholism), literacy, getting sangha women elected and training them once elected. Of 350 sangha women who contested, 210 won local body elections. Documentation is a tool for review, analysis and consolidation. MSK represents a unique, unusual blend of civil society and government institutions, successfully empowering poor women on scale with 973 sanghas totaling 19,414 women. It has the best of both worlds as being a government programme with wide reach, resources and infrastructure (75 crèches, 141 Non Formal Education, 76 Adult education, and 6 centres for female dropouts) it covers a large geographical terrain yet retains a flexibility and non-bureaucratic structure. Its vision is of strong sanghas federated with information and change spreading laterally from sangha to sangha as the most enduring form of social change. Mahila Samakhya activities include:

- Formation of sanghas
- Health initiatives
- Literacy programmes
- Legal training and Panchayati Raj
- Gender training
- EDP training

MSK Training on Panchayati Raj: covers awareness regarding reservation, importance of women representatives in the political process, encouragement and training.

- Pre election training including reservation of seats, nomination (paper work, fees, certification), campaigning and voting.
- Post election training including panchayat structure, roles and responsibility of the various members, committees, role of CBOs as pressure groups, funds, budgets, planning, programmes and public meetings.
- Training which is continuous and on going. Initial training is theory based. Training is designed based on the real experiences and problems members face, which surface on an on-going basis.

MSK also participated in a satellite programme called GRAMSAT where elected women spoke to each other and to a panel of experts

MSK's role was facilitative in bringing about awareness on reservation and the significance of women's political participation. They also placed emphasis on the strength of the collective. A unique feature of the election was that the women from MSK, who contested, hardly spent any money. They borrowed from the sangha fund to pay their land tax, a pre-condition for contesting the elections which also served as a last minute barrier to many who were not aware of this condition. In some villages like Rampur, their expenses were collectively born by the sangha women. The sangha women also helped in campaigning for candidates, who were chosen through a process of consensus. Their priority in the choice of candidate was the degree to which the sangha

woman was active and whether she had an good rapport with officials. Sangha women also helped convince the men and families of the women candidates to support their candidature. While canvassing, women faced several obstacles, from ridicule to even kidnapping, despite which the success rate of women proved their determination. The area with the highest proportion of women elected of those who contested was Raichur (100%) followed closely by Bidar (90%). In Gulbarga and Bijapur close to two thirds were elected while only Mysore had the low ratio of 43.3%. This shows that if backed by an organization, women have a much larger chance of winning elections.

In interviews conducted with MSK, the impact of the training was reported as:

- An increase in confidence among EWRs, who now question decisions in the panchayats and demand their rights.
- The EWRs lobbying for the sangha women's needs and demanding more attention to basic needs such as better drainage and water facilities for their communities.
- Getting wells dug under the Dashalaksha Bhavi programme and roads repaired.
- EWRs now having a visible presence in local government.

Hengasara Hakkinna Sangha (HHS): A unique kind of organisation, which specialises in legal literacy for poor women. HHS has brought out simple Kannada versions of the salient features of the Constitution. Fundamental rights and the Directive principles of State policy and Panchayat Raj Acts have been made available in simplified form for the paralegal training programmes for NGO staff and for poor women in rural Karnataka.

Training, to educate sangha women and elected representatives on legal aspects of governance and women and the law, has been conducted. This has not only helped in making sessions more participatory, but has also helped inculcate and underline the importance of a critical analysis of the law vis-à-vis women. Through training, participants are encouraged to apply their knowledge of the law to problems faced in their lives. Hands on learning through organised visits to local courts and legal aid agencies in which participants actually witnessed court proceedings help demystify the functioning of courts, lawyers and judges and puts a human face on the legal process. HHS's strategy centers on the empowerment of poor women through knowledge of their rights and accessibility of the law as a tool of empowerment.

Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST) is an organisation with special focus on the empowerment of women by improving their effective participation in local self-government (Panchayati Raj). Its field based initiatives stem from two decades of solid research in gender studies. It has three distinct interactive initiatives, namely research, training and dissemination. Special training modules were designed to strengthen women's participation in the three tiers of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), village, block and district. The training programme is a uniquely designed process reaching the illiterate and neo-literate women in rural society. This training increased the political participation of elected women representatives (EWRs), their articulation skills and knowledge resulting in more women demanding their rights. Moreover they were able to follow legal and political procedures to meet their demands. Constant networking and training has facilitated NGOs to follow up and support women in governance.

***Based on the experiences of women, who had participated in the Panchayat Raj institutions in the past, the study brought about documentation and a training programme based on felt needs.<sup>85</sup> Highlights of ISST projects include design and creation of:***

- A training cum awareness generation programme for women elected representatives and potential women leaders on all aspects of Panchayati Raj called Strengthening of Role of Women in Governance (SRWG).
- A window organisation which functions as an information pool and resource centre on Women and Panchayati Raj called Window on Women and Governance (WWG).
- A National Resource Centre (NRC) for women in Panchayat Raj, called Utsahi Mahila Abhyudaya (UMA). UMA, through its documentation and dissemination, has strengthened the solidarity and enhanced the capabilities of women in local politics by fulfilling the need for networking and exchange of information among individuals and organisations working in the field of Panchayat Raj.

The thrust towards information dissemination is through the NRC, which coordinates field activities, documents it through systematic data collection, facilitates research and the production of books. The NRC's most visible product is the quarterly Newsletter *UMA PRACHAR* that documents first hand information and experiences of EWRs. Published in English, Hindi and Kannada, it has a national circulation of 1,500. IIST today represents a regional base and a platform for all stakeholders to exchange, share, collect and disseminate information on Panchayati Raj.

***India Development Service is an organisation whose emphasis is on the involvement and development of the poorest in the community. IDS's activities include the formation of Village Development Sanghas (VDS) which is a federation of 7-10 village sanghas working with both men and women in each village. The VDS functions as a pressure group vis-à-vis the Gram Panchayats for both men and women and represents a functionally active Gram Sabha. This acts as a village forum to influence and hold the elected members accountable, help them govern effectively and assist the village Panchayat Raj institutions in local planning.***

#### **4.1.3 Generic description of the NGO Initiatives vis-à-vis the PRIs**

The traditional activities of NGOs were oriented towards collective empowerment and development of the communities they worked with. In the PRIs, this translated into support and sustenance of women and lower castes through the process of elections, governing after elections, re-elections, representation at higher levels and networking.

Pre-Election: NGOs typically work with women, illiterates, lower castes and other marginalised groups. Both the NGOs and the newly elected representatives initially had no knowledge of the practices and procedures of the PRIs. So the starting point for all was education and training on the existing system and its procedures. NGOs tend to

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<sup>85</sup> i.b.i.d.

collaborate with already established groups like the Mahila Mandals, Village Sanghas, Youth Sanghas and Anganwadi teachers towards this goal. They demystify the language of the constitution and the preambles of the country, the latest amendments of the acts related to local self-government and the functioning of the PR system into simple and vernacular dialects and communicate this information. Political education prior to the elections meant mobilising them to vote in the elections, filing nominations, campaigning and even questioning the candidates (both male and female). Those who did not contest had to be motivated to vote and at the very least critically examine the functioning of the PR system. NGOs provided support indirectly to boost the morale and sustain the confidence of the nominated candidate throughout campaigning.

Women had to be enabled to come forward in adequate numbers to make their representation in the elections a reality. The sangha experience in leadership and collective action needed to be directed towards political action. Special programmes were initiated that enabled women to realise their rights and roles as women “citizens”. Just having women in power will not help them govern well unless they have full information. Therefore, the Right to Information to all aspects of PRIs, need to be initiated in Karnataka as in Rajasthan. This includes full information on each candidate and on the PRI budgets and the scope of decision making arenas via the PRIs. Recently there have been initiatives in Karnataka that have crept in from other states such as the Right to Information (RTI) movement in Rajasthan, contact with whom has resulted in the spread of those practices here in Karnataka. RTI means that the electorate has a right to know about their candidates, the party and for whom they are voting. They have a right to know what to expect from their office bearers once in power. Its inherent implication is the creation of transparency of political processes.

NGO Intervention After Elections: Once elected, all GP members were faced with the tasks of forming a panchayat, initiating its functioning and understand procedures, roles and responsibilities. NGOs first tried to empower women and strengthen their self-image. EWRs had to be motivated to raise their voices regarding problems on the ground. Consequently NGOs played multiple roles.

- Training women on the effective functioning of the panchayats, mobilizing women to participate in them, responding to them and being articulate about their needs.
- Mobilizing women citizens, bringing them information, undertaking political education, setting up training systems and orientation programmes.
- Disseminating information on various government programmes, procurement, allocation of funds and administrative procedures.
- Gender sensitization to change the attitudes of men and others in the community who may have bearing on the capacity of elected members to govern.
- Providing links between rural women and the rural power structures viz. grass-roots organizations, local bureaucracies and panchayats.
- Collaborating with the government to implement programmes, plans and activities for women.
- Helping CBOs link to the Panchayati Raj Institutions.
- Guarding against any backlash targeted at successful elected representatives of the reserved categories that could potentially impede their effective participation.

NGOs have emphasised the prospects of change through the PR system for the politically marginalized. They provide education on the basis of concrete information on current political developments and trends, legislation, policies and programmes. They educate women on their economic and political rights such that they can learn to tackle their problems themselves.

In organizations like Mahila Samakhya whose base is sangha women, the women were educated on the Act, the Panchayati Raj system, and existing leaders were motivated to take the lead on representation at Gram Sabhas and to contest elections. NGOs who deal with both men and women took the lead in conducting training for elected representatives in the Gram Panchayats. NGOs without a mass base but with skills in legal literacy such as HHS brought those skills to the ground to educate sangha women and elected representatives on legal aspects of governance and law and the women. The corner stones of NGO contribution have been:

- their organizational foundation and base at the community level that helps them to organize a larger constituency to put up candidates and create voting blocks,
- to source potential leadership, build and sustain it
- to foster attitudinal change
- to bring new values into the Panchayati Raj system
- to create alternative leadership paradigms, and finally
- to bring about unity among sangha women and EWRs.

#### 4.1.4 NGO Support to Minority Groups during Elections (*in Karnataka State*)

<b>Those Benefited by NGO Support</b>	<i>Women (%)</i>	<i>Men (%)</i>	<i>Total (%)</i>
Scheduled Castes	31.87	12.75	4.62
Scheduled Tribes	19.34	4.18	23.52
Other Backward Communities	7.03	5.05	12.08
Others	10.33	9.45	19.78
Total	68.57	31.43	100.00

*Source: Praveen G. S. (1993)*

*A study of 16 NGOs working in 5 districts of Karnataka, briefly explains the support provided during the 1993 Gram Sabha elections. Majority of NGO support was extended to women, especially those of the schedule caste and schedule tribes, reflecting the community to be supported as the underprivileged women.*

Kinds of Support: NGOs rarely provide open support for a political candidate.

	<i>Total in Percentage</i>
Direct	23.08
Indirect	50.00

Source: Praveen S. (1993)

Many NGOs, in fact, have only supported contestants indirectly. This is due to NGO ideology to stay clear of the pressures and problems associated with party politics and local power structures. However as Gram Panchayat candidates are supposed to be free of party politics, it is easier for NGOs to intervene and support them more openly here rather than at higher levels of the PRIs.

***Means of Support: NGOs provide support by giving training, information and assistance in the nitty gritty involved in election, nomination/filing process.***

<b>Type of Support</b>	<b>In Percentage</b>
Financial	3.85
Information	92.30
Registration, Filing, Nomination	53.85
Campaign	15.38
Training	57.70
Others (pamphlets etc)	7.70

Source: Praveen S. (1993)

***Post Election: Training and facilitation camps grew in strength over the last term as women representatives began their work in the PRIs. This was partly because NGOs could see the immediate need for training and partly because the government was inviting NGOs to conduct training and in part it was because women representatives were asking for specific inputs. Articulate women challenging patriarchal norms in society, were getting ready for even greater challenges. NGOs envisioned in them the potential to both evolve within the system and simultaneously transform it. To this end they started training EWRs to enhance their knowledge base and skills in governance. They collaborated with various institutions and sanghas to establish federations and other support systems.***

The empowerment of elected members is no longer merely about improving their income or providing facilities or basic needs as it was in the past. Today it has the potential for women to influence policy and transform local governance. Local movements have been fairly organised in influencing policies, advocacy, lobbying, campaigns. Such effort have focused public attention on very crucial issues at local, national and international levels. Apart from benefiting the poor, they have also forced some political parties to include their issues in their agenda, albeit half-heartedly. Some NGOs facilitated the interaction between the sanghas and the PRIs resulting in a new social dynamism at the grassroots making PRIs more democratic and vibrant.

In some areas, during initial contact meetings at the village level, where men are also present, discussions were handled in such a way as to make them feel part of the process so that their support and co-operation is elicited right at the beginning. Life itself is a long and persistent trainer to rural women and the struggle of entering and participating in politics itself has immense potential for political training. NGOs training aimed at

essentially bringing out hidden potential, converting social failures and frustrations into political advantage and seeking to build political awareness on the basis of collectivity, common interest and community development. The sanghas, wherever they existed, have been one such collectivity. Women's co-operatives have involved an element of group action with women acting together towards the goal of economic self-reliance. In many villages, sanghas have proved to be an effective and often the first platform through which women participated.

#### **4.1.5 Federation of PRI, CBO and NGO Representatives**

The immediate tasks that such federations envisage include:

1. Ensuring that dialogue takes place among elected representatives such that they could share their experiences as they moved through their terms.
2. Assessing what the new acts meant in practical and real terms as opposed to on paper.
3. Ensuring that dialogue takes place between elected representatives and CBOs to assess community needs and begin creating the vestiges of a bottom up planning process.
4. Ensuring that NGOs took up issues that were emerging on the ground and translated them into advocacy and policy initiatives through lobbying.
5. Ensuring that EWRs get legal literacy on the PR system and on other laws pertaining to women.
6. Mobilising and rejuvenating community resources to explore the options for development on scale.
7. Fighting against issues that threaten the well being of women.

These initiatives would facilitate newly elected officials to shape, transform and establish the new Panchayat system as specified in the recent Amendments.

The main strategy of the sanghas' efforts is the empowerment mechanism, which is to enhance the collective bargaining power of women. Beginning at the village level this process of empowerment gradually leads to the formation of collectives at cluster, taluk and district levels. As the collectives grow from an individual unit at the village level into a district level federation, they take on larger responsibilities and play a more strategic role. In grassroots women's organizations a dialogue between sangha and Gram Panchayats helps prioritise women's issues and resource allocation for poor women.

At the village level: In grassroots women's organizations the sangha responds both proactively and reactively to social problems like violence, alcoholism, child marriage, devadasi dedication, economic issues like access to household and community resources and so on. In NGOs like IDS, the Village Development Sangha (VDS) is itself a federation of 7-10 village sanghas working with men and women. The VDS functions as a pressure group or as a functional Gram Sabha vis-à-vis the Gram Panchayats. In short some NGOs took to decisively making gram sabhas a functionally active village forum to influence and hold accountable the elected members, train the them to play their role effectively and help the Panchayat Raj institutions in grassroots planning.

At the cluster level, (group of approximately 10 villages): In grassroots women's organisations, individual sanghas along with local Gram Panchayat members are represented at the cluster (ghataka) level. The role of this larger group is to facilitate:

- Interactions between Sanghas, between sanghas and the Gram Panchayats, to let women learn from each other's experiences, and to look for new strategies.
- Representative leadership where women take turns to represent the sangha at cluster level meetings.
- Planning of programme inputs and interventions at ghataka level. Issues that are not resolved at sangha level are often tackled more effectively at the ghataka level.

This strategy has the potential to create a platform for convergence, dialogue forums with all stake holders where cluster level plans feed into district plans with appropriate needs assessment and ultimately lead to bottom up planning

***At the taluk level: For organizations with a large reach like IDS and MSK, taluk level and district level federations denote a larger presence of women. In the present system the Taluk is a liaison between the Zilla and the Gram panchayats and their role and power to execute any change or take decisions is limited.***

At the district level: NGOs have formed forums or federations like FEVORD at the district and state levels, which participate and interact to exchange strategies and conduct training. Representation of EWRs and key sangha members can take place at the district meetings. Some NGOs also promote federations of women presidents at the district level, exchanging their experiences and contacting higher authorities where necessary. With similar goals, NGOs in different districts are at varying levels of intervention and facilitation towards democratising the institutions of local governance.

#### *4.1.6 Gender training*

A gender perspective is crucial if the paradigm of human development is to break out of its current impasse. A gender perspective means recognizing that women stand at the crossroads between production and reproduction, between economic growth and human development. They are the workers in both spheres – those most responsible, and therefore with most at stake, those who suffer the most when the two work at cross – purposes and those most sensitive to the need for better integration between the two.

The implications of this understanding are:

- The need to engender the political process by integrating a gender-perspective at the highest policy levels and by strengthening women so as to enable them to hold economic and political policies and systems accountable.
- The collective need to uncover, research, support and strengthen the economic alternatives (policies, programs, models, experiences) that women have themselves created, and those which link economic activity and human.

Hence gender sensitisation and training mean supporting the development of women's potential to lead creative, useful and fulfilling lives. This is possible by transforming gender relations for the development of both women and men.

#### 4.1.7 Analysis of NGO Activities/Initiatives

An analysis of the activities of the NGOs through the PRIs reveals that:

- There has been an explosion of work done by NGOs in the PRIs in the last five years.
- NGOs have brought their skills and expertise into the arena of local governance creating several new areas of potential intervention within the PRIs such as reproductive health, environment, legal literacy and so on.
- Training by NGOs has become far more innovative and in the realm of gender sensitization it is mainly the NGOs who provide such training, not the government.

While NGOs have concentrated on strengthening the grassroots democratic institutions for bottom up planning and people centered development, they themselves have networked at the state level (and also at national level) to lobby and campaign for more power, space and resources for the PRIs and women. Such a process has combined democratization with grassroots development objectives and ultimately makes people play a more decisive role in larger socio-political processes and in governance.

#### 4.1.8 Impacts of NGO Initiatives

In the words of the joint secretary at the Zilla panchayat office at Mysore “ We (government) definitely need the NGOs to create awareness among the rural population. What can the government officials do? Poor fellows have enough on their hands to just implement the government programmes and monitor it”.

In the case of Karthiyani, a GP member we can see the impact of training. Karthiyani, a poor widow, was being harassed by a landlord who held a mortgage on her land and refused to let her redeem it. He even sent the police to frighten her. She remembered what she had been trained in a ‘women and law session’, confronted the police and even managed to get them to help her redeem the land. Stories like Karthiyani’s, bring out very clearly the importance of education and training conducted by NGOs.

Many EWRs like Sivamma of Hommbbaragalli village, H.D. Kote Taluk, Mysore district say that their ability to perform effectively in the Panchayat is solely due to the support and encouragement of the local NGO (Myrada Plan, H.D. Kote). Sivamma’s confidence is high and she is sure to contest in the forthcoming elections if possible at the Taluk or even the Zilla level.

#### 4.1.9. Limitations/gaps of Existing NGO interventions

- Collaborative work needs to be enhanced as networks and federations are still in their infancy.
- Primary education is still not available to a large majority and hence NGOs are forced to deal with this need as they try to empower women in local governance.
- Funds received by NGOs are area specific and limited and cannot be easily transferred or utilized to conduct activities on scale.

#### 4.1.10 Implications for future strategies

NGOs working in specialised fields for over 2-3 decades have now renewed their thinking and want to integrate their experience through the PRIs. This is evident in the case of legal literacy and health oriented NGOs working towards a new goal of Gram Panchayat members taking up these issues. Through such linkages government resources received for particular sectors can be directed towards those who need it the most and by this the effectiveness of the PRIs would grow.

*In the process of decentralising decision making, community members need to be informed, trained and educated in order to influence decision making at all levels. Despite the fact that women play a crucial role in various activities at home and in the care of the environment, they are the least informed vis-à-vis political processes. This can be reversed when women are recognised as agents of change and are integrated into the different aspects of development. If Panchayats represent the new space for change, basic issues such as health and sanitation, nutrition, education, legal awareness need to be dealt with by them. Only then can the community realise the full potential of the local body, work towards its proper functioning and foster a more holistic form of development.*

#### 4.2 Training

Though the government passed the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments, it did not do enough to help the women who were coming into power for the first time. These women need training so that they can face the challenges associated with their new roles as EWRs, make informed decisions, question and analyse the functioning of the Gram Panchayat. To do so, they need basic information on the day to day functioning of the gram panchayat, various facets of the Panchayat Raj Act, interactions between the local bodies and the bureaucracy and financial matters of the panchayat.

The Amendments resulted in 35,305 women being elected in the Gram panchayats in Karnataka. While some EWRs belong to the rural elite, most belong to the poorer sections with little or no control over resources. A majority of the EWRs are mere proxies for their husbands or other male family members.<sup>86</sup> Training should mobilize and inform women so that they would be able to identify, articulate and lobby for issues relevant to them and their communities. It is in this spirit that the amendments were implemented. For social change to take place, empowerment of the powerless has to happen not only at the individual and group level but also in the systems and structure of society as a whole. PRIs represent a three-tiered structure of local government that is the arm of the state closest to the community. Therefore, in order to restructure society, the systems and structures associated with it, the appropriate entry point is via local government, i.e. PRIs.

Training includes dissemination of information, skill and confidence building, role clarification and a new emphasis on gender awareness. It has been found in studies in

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<sup>86</sup> Uma project report, p6

Karnataka<sup>87</sup> that women are often not taken seriously because of their lack of knowledge, not experience. The areas where information is lacking include:

- The Constitutional Amendments, the powers and duties associated with them
- Gram Panchayat jurisdiction
- Income and expenditure matters
- Benefits and disadvantages of taking loans
- A broad understanding of the working of banks, government bodies and other relevant institutions
- Total financial outlay for a Gram Panchayat

Gram Panchayat members also need to develop skills in planning, analysis, collective action and lobbying, problem solving and leadership. This is especially true for women as these skills have been traditionally seen as male. Though developing skills is time consuming and quite often goes against the traditional norms and values of the family or community it is just one step forward. This has to be complemented with confidence building from local support groups.<sup>88</sup>

#### *4.2.1 Government Initiatives*

These include:

- Training for the Panchayats covering typically roles, responsibilities and procedures.
- Department of Women and Child Development Training of the Women Gram Panchayat Members on topics such as health and women's unity.
- Training on How to Hold Gram Sabha (recent circular being sent to all Zilla Parishads)
- Karnataka Vikasa
- GRAMSAT

Government Training: Government training covers the Constitution and the preamble and provides information on the PRIs, their structure, functions and responsibilities. They also discuss Government programmes and programmes, on holding of Gram Sabhas, administrative procedures, taking resolutions and so on.

Training on Health and Women via the Panchayats: Topics such as pregnancy, childbirth, nutrition, sanitation, and hygiene are covered by the Department of Women and Child Development. In districts like Mysore, training on AIDS, and reproductive health has also been conducted every three to six months for the Gram Panchayat members and other women (anganwadi workers and sangha women). Training on women's unity, women's programmes in the Gram Panchayat, importance for women to take part in the Gram Panchayat was conducted in districts such as Dharwad.

Training on Gram Sabhas: A recent circular issued by the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Government of Karnataka clearly defines the rules and

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<sup>87</sup> Training Initiatives: An Analysis, Anitha B.K. and Gayathri V. Unpublished paper, NIAS.

<sup>88</sup> Purushothaman and Purohit (1999)

regulations associated with conducting Gram Sabhas. The roles of the Gram Panchayat and other members in the Gram Sabhas are also specified. Moreover, they briefly outline what can be discussed in the Gram Sabhas, who can attend and states which government programmes can be handed out them.

Karnataka Vikasa: Karnataka Vikasa is a monthly journal published by the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj. It published articles on rural development and Panchayati Raj and programmes meant for the upliftment of the SCs, STs, and OBCs. "Special importance is given to publish the developmental works implemented by Zilla Parishads, Taluk Panchayats and Gram Panchayats. Important circulars and orders issues by the Department are also published for the information of the public."<sup>89</sup> Every month a total of 1,500 copies are sent out to the Zilla Parishads, Taluk Panchayat, Gram Panchayat, to Heads of Departments, public libraries and subscribers.

GRAMSAT: One of the more innovative initiatives has been when the government linked with NGOs to launch a training programme called GRAMSAT in mid- Feb '95. GRAMSAT is a satellite programme that uses a one-way video and two-way audio broadcasting technology. The video programme, a mix of live interviews, group discussions, role plays, skits, games and so on had been prepared in intensive sessions with women representatives in the two months preceding the broadcast. The women were taken to the District Training Institutes in districts across Karnataka for three days where the programmes were beamed. Though the video was one way, the women could ask any questions they had to the panelists. The topics covered were reservation, the role of women in panchayats, programmes and caste/class differences. This interactive facility made the women realise that they were not alone in their problems. After the transmission, participants found it heartening to see women who used to be confined to the kitchen, now taking part in politics.<sup>90</sup>

This led the department of Women and Child Welfare to organise a facilitation programme for the EWRs. Here, though it was not a satellite programme, there were 12 video modules on women's issues. These issues included the reservation for women to the Gram Panchayat, the Gram Sabha, the problem of illiteracy, and the importance of education, health, common property resources, alcoholism, caste and gender. These programmes gave hope that the government would take further initiatives in creating more innovative programmes such as these. In fact, the government does link with NGOs such as SEARCH to conduct training programmes.

Though training is provided by both government and non-governmental institutions, the former typically cover functions that pertain to governance in the PRIs. NGO training differs in that it raises awareness of issues relating to good governance, relationship between governance and community participation, gender awareness and so on. Therefore, for the very nature of governance to be transformed, for women to become more effective players and for the necessary attitudinal changes, training by NGOs is a

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<sup>89</sup> Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Government of Karnataka, Annual Report 1997-98, p. 66

<sup>90</sup> UMA PRACHAR march- May 1995

necessary complement to the procedural and administrative training of the government. The government can set up resource centers from where information can be disseminated as it has the resources to provide infrastructure. NGOs currently help in developing skills and in awareness generation. However, both the government and the NGOs efforts need to be systematized and coordinated.<sup>91</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Approaches

Two types of approaches are mainly used while conducting training i.e. the project and process approaches. In the project approach, training is only conducted at a specific period of time and there is no follow up. Whereas in the process approach, training is a continuous process with follow up. In the process approach even potential trainers are included. For trainees who are educated and have easy access to information follow up is not as essential. However, on sensitive areas, which can lead to a backlash, even educated women may need support along the way. If the participants are not educated and do not have easy access to information the process approach is more appropriate. Doubts can be clarified or extra information provided during follow up. The approach used depends on the people and content of the training.

#### 4.2.3 Content

Since training is a key factor in empowering women it has to focus on two things:

- Content (the PRIs, women's issues etc)
- Networking (with sanghas/collectives, between PRIs, PRIs and outside institutions)

As most training programmes are aimed at the EWRs training content would naturally pertain both to the PRIs and women. More important is to tailor training to the felt needs of trainees. Training programmes have to include topics such as:

- Constitutional Amendments, Panchayat Raj Act and its history, principles and objectives of the PRI
- Areas on which Panchayats can exercise power and have control which include :-
  - Agricultural development and minor irrigation
  - Women and child welfare
  - Provision of basic amenities
- Identification of beneficiaries for income generation programmes
- Basic procedures concerning meetings, functions and powers of members, Adyaksha, and Upadyaksha
- Standing committee
- Panchayat funds and mobilisation of resources
- Importance of Gram Sabha
- Rural Development Programmes
- Women & Child Development Programmes
- Nutrition
- Panchayat Raj Administration

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<sup>91</sup> Purushothaman and Purohit (1999)

- Public Health
- Women & Law
- Gender equity and sensitization
- Importance of Reservation for women.

Felt needs: Issues such as societal analysis and discrimination against women could lead to problems for the women in their homes and should only be taken up when there are long term, sustained interactions with participants. The women themselves recommend the following additional areas for training<sup>92</sup>:

- Additional knowledge on the functioning of PR System and budgets
- Government Programmes
- Literacy and education
- Skills to solve problems, communications skills and leadership skills
- Fostering confidence among members
- Community Development, needs assessment, action plan and participatory planning
- Implementation of programmes like health and nutrition
- Organisation of women / community

See Annexure VIII for survey results on felt needs for training of women in PRIs (Ekatra & Jagruti, 1999).

The content of training changes through time. Training needs of women in the initial part of their term needs to be more on basic knowledge on the Panchayat, the Gram Sabha and their functioning. Later, women ask for training on budgeting and programmes. Hence, the content of training has to evolve as needs of the EWRs change. In the next era as the new policy changes come into force in the Gram Sabha (see Annexure VI for details) and as NGOs start experimenting in new areas, new training modules are needed.

Areas in the GP which need Training Modules to be Developed

- Gram Sabha
- New areas emerging include:
  - Health and reproductive health
  - Legal literacy
  - Environment
  - Environment and women

#### 4.2.4 Methods

Information can be disseminated in two ways based on the participants and the content of training: a) writing/publications or b) orally. Either method or in some cases a combination of both can be used. The written or published material usually supplements

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<sup>92</sup> Ekatra & Jagruti (1999)

information given during training. Oral dissemination takes place in the form of talks, group discussions and lectures. Other aids such as audio-visual cassettes, charts, flexies, puppets, role-plays, simulation games, exercises and work sessions are used to involve participants. Written material must be available in simple language and well illustrated so that those with minimal literacy skills can also use them. There should be a conducive atmosphere whereby learning is better facilitated and where lacking, one should be created. In between training, games should be incorporated so that inhibitions of participants and any monotony that sets in is broken.

Several organizations in Karnataka, including ISST, IDS, SEARCH, MSK, HHS, have evolved effective methods of training. Some insights on training methods are:<sup>93</sup>

- To enable men and women to enhance their skills, prioritize their needs and to be effective training needs to be interactive and participatory.
- The most effective training methods were performance oriented rather than the traditional paper and pencil methods, such as lectures, and written articles.
- One major problem faced by trainers is the traditional norm whereby men dominate women in all spheres of life. The training programmes must demonstrate that for a more equal society both men and women have to be educated together in a non-formal atmosphere. A strategy suggested by trainees themselves was that men should train women and vice versa.
- The government should coordinate with NGOs to conduct more training programmes.
- Training should take place both before elections and immediately after the elections.
- A holistic approach yields long-term solutions. At the same time there are problems associated with the holistic approach. These are the constraints of time, opportunity, logistics and so on. The training programmes should also make full use of the local resources in their programmes.
- Training has to be essentially a continuous process in a phased manner with an emphasis on the participatory method where one can build on the input provided over time. This would be an interactive process that would enhance the ability of both men and women, help prioritize their needs and co-operate more easily in the process of development. Therefore a facilitation programme for a group of women cannot be a one-shot exercise. It has been recommended that a minimum of four or five camps must be held for the same group over a year or so.

#### *4.2.5 Impact of Training*

Improve women's capacity to govern: In field visits to the districts it was found that training Gram Panchayat members had a distinct impact on women's functioning in local government. Training provided information about government programmes and the functioning of PRIs. While most training is for EWRs, some training is also imparted to men and to mixed groups of men and women. NGOs and government in Kargi village conducted training programmes for women<sup>94</sup> on government programmes available via

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<sup>93</sup> UMA PRACHAR, Volume 5, no. 1. Jan-March 1998.

<sup>94</sup> Ranibennur Taluka, Dharwad

the Panchayat, after which the male president reported noticeable changes in the EWRs. They started asking questions and wanting to monitor the programmes more closely.

Kasibai Bansodi<sup>95</sup> knew nothing about attending meetings nor what to do in a meeting. Her son, who is literate, told her that meetings are where one asked for the community's needs. The training she received at MSK taught her how to participate in the Gram Panchayat, where to get funds and about the programmes. She went back to the Panchayat meetings where she asked for the number of houses allotted to the schedule castes in the village, the Madars and Harijans. Once she found out that earlier 10 houses were made, and none allotted to the lower castes, she insisted that this time, the houses would go first to the Harijans, next to the Madars and last to the general category. Training taught her that there are 20 percent of funds allocated for SCs/STs and helped her channel funds towards these groups. Other EWRs like Chandravva also learnt about funds sanctioned for the lower castes via training.

Shavantravva G. Jakati<sup>96</sup> contested elections on her own and was elected. But she did not know exactly what her roles and responsibilities as a Gram Panchayat member were she would attend meetings, have tea and biscuits and return home. Later she received training in five phases, which helped her change. Typical changes after training include the following:

Pedagogical Change: Pedagogical learning can be measured by interviewing the following actors:

- The secretaries of the Gram Panchayat s
- Gram Panchayat members
- The members of the community
- The women themselves
- Officials

Change in Actions: Attitudinal and other types of changes can be observed by looking at:

- The actual participation of women in the panchayat meetings
- Number of programmes and activities targeted towards women and other marginalized groups.
- Extent to which budgets, expenditures and decision-making have become transparent.
- The extent to which bribery, corruption and other illegal practices have declined
- The extent to which social evils such as alcoholism have been dealt with.

Most women say that training has helped them. For instance, they have become bolder and courageous in voicing issues important to them. They are better able to express their views because after training they recognize that they are responsible as elected members not only to women but also to the community at large. Training also helps them understand the existing social situation and how to overcome it.

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<sup>95</sup> Kasibai Bansodi, Sirabi, Indi taluk, Bijapur district

<sup>96</sup> Member of the Tamba Gram Panchayat, Indi taluka, Bijapur district

The philosophical underpinnings emphasizing the rationale for training today include:

- People have a right to information. Without that information, placing women in seats of power neither empowers them to govern nor to truly help and represent their constituencies. Therefore EWRs and the community at large (i.e. the Gram Sabha) need information on what constitutes governance for those in power to govern and for their constituencies to hold them accountable.
- Unless all stake holders, particularly male Gram Panchayat representatives, understand and accept the spirit underlying the Amendments, women in power will face opposition at every step from all quarters, including other women. Therefore attitudinal changes that need to accompany the implementation of the Amendments can only take place through gender training for both men and women.
- Unless and until hitherto marginalized populations are made aware of the elements that constitute good governance and the information they need to question those in power, they will not be able to change the nature of governance to make it more transparent, accountable and equitable. Therefore, making them aware of their moral responsibilities to speak up as well as providing the information, is required for them to be effective.
- Finally training needs should emerge from the EWRs themselves.

#### 4.2.6 Future Needs of Training

Women's political empowerment allows them to engage in planning, decision making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development processes. Political empowerment implies the right to exercise their franchise, contest, campaign and win elections in an equitable manner and be allowed to represent their communities in political offices at all levels. For training to be effective it must facilitate the convergence of all stakeholders including elected officials (men and women), community based organizations (sanghas, youth groups), NGOs, Government officials, banks, police, schools, colleges, and other major institutions, media, policy makers, and academia. It should facilitate a new mix between traditional knowledge and scientific expertise.

Serious thought on the overall design of training modules for the next generation of elected officials is needed. In the first term there was a need for basic training. By the second term where basic training happened from the beginning, further training needs surfaced including budgeting, finances and programmes. Attitudinal changes of men and women also had to take place and gender sensitization modules were developed for this. At the tail end of the second term innovative training modules were emerging in new areas including health, legal literacy, reproductive health, environment, adult literacy. Given that the next term will have a mix of fresh candidates and those previously in power, training need to be designed to cover the basic functions of the PRIs, but also become more specialized immediately without having women need to articulate these needs. Finally training in the emerging areas needs to be systematized.

#### **4.3 The New Areas Currently Being Developed via the Panchayats**

The new areas where interesting developments are taking place include the following:

- Panchayats and the environment
- Panchayats and legal literacy
- Panchayats, reproductive health and AIDS
- Panchayats and population control
- Panchayats, literacy and education

There are a large number of initiatives that are being developed by NGOs where a variety of new issues are being dealt with via the panchayats. It is natural that civil society institutions would bring their expertise and experiences into the panchayats with the advent of the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments whenever and wherever it was possible. Therefore, organizations such as HHS whose focus is legal literacy naturally evolve a Panchayati Raj component on legal literacy. Organizations working with sanghas likewise start training sangha women to run for elections or try to build relationships between the Gram Panchayat women representative and their existing sanghas. Similarly, organizations focussing on health or the environment, such as IDS, see the new panchayats and their new resource base as an arena which should simultaneously be environmental aware and conscientious of the health and well-being of their constituencies.

The new Panchayati Raj therefore, as it has emerged after the amendments, represents a space where a tremendous amount of change is possible. What unfortunately has not yet occurred is the systematic study of the vast and myriad efforts in these new areas. It is imperative that a systematic attempt be made to bring together organizations doing work on each of these arenas (i.e. on health, education, legal literacy, environment separately) to ensure that through dialogue, interaction and documentation that the lessons on the ground are consolidated. Furthermore from these fora, practical training manuals on each area should inform organizations across the country on existing practices so that they need not reinvent the wheel each time. Although currently scant information is available on each of these areas, the attempt below is to systematize existing pieces of information on each area to see:

- Current initiatives
- The future direction the work in the panchayats may take and
- How to facilitate the efforts on the ground.

#### *4.3.1 Panchayats and the Environment*<sup>97</sup>

For the last several decades as a result of centralization, natural resources of any given community were being managed and controlled by the bureaucracy. People's indigenous knowledge base and traditional methods of resource management had been replaced by centralized management of the state. However change first began with civil society. Grassroots movements (such as the Chipko movement, the achievements of communities in Sukhomajri in the Shivalik ranges, Ralegaon Siddhi in Ahmednagar district; in Seed, an NGO, from the deforested Aravalli, and Narmada Bachao Andolan) have continually

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<sup>97</sup> Venkatadri, (1995b)

reaffirmed the power of collective action. People's democracy presupposes people's control over natural resources.

For effective environmental management, a paradigm shift, required that Panchayati Raj institutions be built on principal of participatory democracy with the ultimate power in the hands of the Gram Sabha and not just representative democracy, is imperative. Empowering the Gram Panchayats with the knowledge and legal information so that they can veto or regulate any development in their areas that takes away or pollutes their natural resources is only the first important step in that direction. Empowering both communities and the Gram Panchayats, with that knowledge and simultaneously allowing the Gram Sabha to be the final vetoing authority is a further step in the direction of facilitating community environmental resource management.

Dodda Hanumakka<sup>98</sup> is a Gram Panchayat Member of the Kuluvanahalli Gram Panchayat, Nelamangala Taluk, Bangalore (Rural) District. She, also the president of the Mahila Samaja and a member of the Water Management co-operative Society (a society registered for participatory tank rehabilitation formed by the Institute for Youth and Development) says, "There has been a degradation of our village resources. We can clearly see that the number of plant and tree species has gone down. Some trees have disappeared altogether. Hardly anything exists (of our common property resources). Animals used to graze in the gomal earlier. Now the gomal cannot support these animals." The entry of women like her into decision making bodies such as the panchayat would enrich the panchayat to both draw upon her vast experience on plant and tree species. It would also help dissemination of this information through her presidency in the women's collective and her membership in other bodies.

Recently, communities have been recognized as having the strongest vested interest in sustainable management of their environment and natural resources. This recognition has spearheaded decentralization of state power leading to the concepts of joint forest management and village level resource mapping. The Joint Forest Planning and Management (JFPM) programme came into being with the purpose of involving people in managing forest resources.<sup>99</sup> Unfortunately, in Karnataka, the JFPM seems to have run into rough weather and the whole programme has alienated forests from the people. It has also been well established that women are the stalwarts of protecting natural resources as they depend on fuel, fodder, food, medicines and manure for the family's sustenance. The biggest challenge now is for the Panchayats to initiate programmes for sustainable development linking traditional knowledge of communities, particularly of women, to environment friendly, scientific governance practices.

In Dharwad, NGOs have begun to view the environment differently. Of late, they see the Gram Panchayat as a means of intervention. These programs are in their inception and need systematic documentation as they unfold to understand how governance and development via the Gram Panchayats becomes environmentally sustainable.

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<sup>98</sup> i.b.i.d.

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Women, Environment and PRIs: Women with their obvious stakes in sustainable development are generally the best practitioners of the same and should be involved via the sanghas.<sup>100</sup> Dr. Somashekar Reddy of the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, who has worked on the management of natural resources with particular reference to indigenous management systems, sees a role for women in conservation of biodiversity. The philosophy of most development agencies' is "sustainable development", accepting the need to integrate environmental concerns into social and economic development. "Sustainability" focuses on inter-generational equity i.e. the availability of equal options for the well being of future generations relative to the present one. Micro-level studies were identified as important instruments in macro-level planning, where desegregated microenvironments and local initiatives must be analysed. Though overall economic development need macro-policies, linkages between development and use of natural resources is clearer from micro-level studies.

A recent theme that has emerged at workshops such as the UMA Mela, has been "Women in Environment". In the light of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment, one of the GP's functions is local environmental management namely agricultural, social and farm forestry, minor irrigation, water management and watershed development, maintenance of community assets. It is now accepted that conservation and management of natural resources, proper maintenance of Common Property Resources (CPRs), sanitation, optimum utilisation of land around houses and the reduction of excessive dependence on chemical fertilizers is needed. NGOs hope that by making women in PRIs aware of their role as environment resource managers they would, as elected representatives, be better able to foster sustainable development. In this context several ways of involving women in the resource management of their communities are being evolved, including<sup>101</sup>:

- Women are being encouraged to form Forest Resource Management Committees and are being warned about the decline in tree cover and consequent problems.
- The JFPM could include more women in its committees and in decision-making.
- Women are being trained to identify Common Property Resources (CPR) and their uses to women to understand their present state and methods of optimal use.
- Women are encouraged to make a checklist of local resources, their uses, and make an action plan for planning and management of resources for their panchayat.
- Women are also being educated on the merits of organic farming.

#### *4.3.2 Panchayats and Legal Literacy*

Hengasara Hakkinna Sangha (HSS) is an organisation in Bangalore working with women, by creating awareness among women members of Gram Panchayats about women's rights and laws related to women through training on legal literacy. Their training modules consists of social and gender justice, inequality, gram sabhas, Panchayat Act and meetings. The law is mystified by language, jargon and terminology, making it incomprehensible to the lay person. Information on government departments are useful for women especially those who have been elected for the first time to the Panchayats.

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<sup>100</sup> i.b.i.d.

<sup>101</sup> Venkatadri, (1995)

Further HHS also emphasizes that law is not the only means of redressal, particularly for the gram panchayat, much can be achieved through co-operative action and consensus.

HHS training specifically on legal literacy and Panchayati Raj covered the following:

- Information in the act
- Budgets and finances
- Programmes
- Role of women in the panchayats
- Gram sabha
- Role of people in governance

Role of women in the Panchayats: The programmes for women were discussed. The panchayat often misuse the funds for programmes for women. Lower caste women were told that programmes for lower castes were their entitlement. They then questioned the Gram Panchayat on these programmes.

#### Gram sabha

- Frequency of the gram sabha.
- Discussion in the gram sabha can include the needs of the community vis-à-vis water electricity, roads and so on as opposed to a space where beneficiaries are chosen.
- Importance of attending the gram sabha.

Other areas discussed included:

- The human rights committee, where they can addresses issues related to justice
- The MP fund, Rs one crore. Discussion for what this fund could be used for, namely that it was only for public works and not for individuals.

Impact: The impact of HHS training on legal literacy was tracked through interviews conducted with field NGOs and male and female elected representatives. Pedagogical impact as well as action and attitudinal changes were recorded.

Pedagogical Impact: According to NGO staff interviewed, 2 types of training were done by HHS, paralegal training for NGO staff and legal training for sangha women. The first was a training of trainers. NGO personnel were able to clearly outline what they learned two years ago. According to them, the first session discussed the women's problems and the role of the NGO in solving these problems. The sessions covered economic, social and other problems faced by women and the help of the law in solving them. According to HHS, going directly to the women about the law would not help them understand its relevance to their lives. Instead the decision was to train the NGO staff and let the staff tackle the problems of women as they surfaced. Therefore the staff would have the capacity to advice the women about the law with respect to a particular problem.

Through these sessions NGOs were able to list what they had learnt:

- Women and the law
- Child labour
- Wages for women
- International law

- Contract law and casual labour
- Hindu adoption, marriage and family act
- Medicine and female foeticide
- Inheritance under the Hindu, Muslim and Christian marriage acts
- Dowry
- Violence and atrocities act
- Police act, police and you
- Environment

It was clear from our interviews that the legal literacy training conducted by HHS had a strong enough pedagogical impact for participants to clearly outline all the modules listed by HHS for us prior to our field visits.

Action/attitudinal Impact: Before training HHS first conducted a field visit based on which they surfaced problems and tailored their training accordingly. The problems that surfaced included police harassment and gender related problems. During the training sessions a policewoman and a woman lawyer served as resource persons. The policewoman provided information on women and the law. The woman lawyer talked to them about the Hindu and Muslim marriage act. The methodology included:

- Roles plays
- Group discussions
- Lectures, based on which participants were asked to do role plays
- Field visits to the court to observe how lawyers and clients handle cases.

They visited the Dharwad Civil Court and met the lawyers there who told them to come to them if they had any problems and not to get scared. They met a judge and discussed some cases with him. Finally they observed the court in session regarding a case on inheritance. From this experience they learnt:

- The kinds of witnesses that are needed
- How to respect judges and their decisions
- How lawyers cross question witnesses
- How the villagers tend to answer the lawyers
- The overall court environment.

Since this training the contact with the lawyers has been maintained. The confidence of the NGO staff has also increased regarding approaching the court and the legal system.

Narayan<sup>102</sup> from CHINYARD related an incident of a woman whose husband wanted to get remarried. He wanted her to sign an agreement that he could take on a second wife. She refused to do so on the advise of an NGO but when she went to deliver her baby, he remarried. Unfortunately the baby died soon after. When she went to claim alimony in the court they asked her to produce proof of her marriage, namely the wedding photo and invitation. She produced the proof and it was decided to give her alimony. As a result of

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<sup>102</sup> Interview with Narayan an NGO staff person from CHINYARD (Chetna Institute for Youth and Rural Development), IDS office, Dharwad district, September 1999. Narayan had undergone training on legal literacy with HHS.

HHS training, the NGO staff were able to advise the woman not sign any documents that may preempt a court case and the woman herself had the courage to file a case and get alimony.

Narayan also spoke about two brothers who fought over property. The older brother, who was mentally disabled, had a son and a daughter. The younger brother took advantage of the older brother's disability and got him to sign documents transferring all the property to his name. He then took it to the village accountant to legalise it after which he asked his sister-in-law to vacate the house. She was a member of a self help group and brought the problem to the sangha. Since they had been trained on the law they advised her to lodge a police complaint. The police then began an inquiry on how the property got transferred. The brother claimed all the property as his and produced the documents. The woman said that he had taken her share and filed a case against him. They went to the lower court where the lawyers wanted some money. The younger brother had already bribed the lawyers so they took the case to the high court and got a stay order. The case is still on. If it were not for the legal training no case would have been filed nor a police complaint lodged and by now the brother would probably have been to claim the property as his.

Women have learned to work the legal system including the police, GP, tehsildar and DC offices. A relevant story related by Narayan is about a village in a Lambani area. The women attended the HHS training and as a consequence raised the issue of alcoholism. In the village there were two government run liquor shops and 4 kms away from the village, Lambani women were selling country liquor. All men would drink and ask their wives (SHG members) to take loans for them to buy alcohol. Five mahila sanghas got together and wrote a letter asking that the sale of alcohol in the area be stopped and sent copies to the police station, GP, Tehsildar and the DC. They threatened to strike if the shops were not shut down. No action was taken. One day the women decided to take the alcohol and burn it. Just then, the jeep with fresh liquor supplies arrived. The women requested the men in the jeep not supply alcohol, as it was destroying their families who replied that they had a contract and would lose money if they returned without supplying alcohol. They offered women money in return for allowing them to supply fresh stock. The women refused saying, "This money will not last us long. If you insist on selling alcohol we will set fire to the jeep and to ourselves." The argument raged on and the men were held there for a day. They called the police. The inspector came and yelled at the women saying, "Instead of looking after your household hearth, you are creating fire here." The women replied that they had complained to the police who had done nothing about it. The police then got the men to agree not to sell alcohol in the village and the jeep was sent back. The two shops were closed down but the drinking in the country liquor shop increased. Men used to go there, get drunk, come back and beat up their wives saying, "Now we have to go all the way there because of you." The women then called for a meeting at the temple asking for every family to send one man and one woman. Functionally this represented a real gram sabha where it was decided that any one who got drunk would be fined Rs. 500. And any informer would get a gift of Rs. 25. This was implemented for a month and Rs. 5,000 was collected. Men used to drink and wait in the fields till they were sober and then come home. Finally the men themselves

stopped drinking, as they felt bad about it. This represented an example of how women took action as a result of training.

Other evidence of impact was given by NGO personnel present at a focus group discussion on the women panchayat members linked to their organizations. It included:

- Increased accountability of the Panchayats to women
- Improved coordination between the panchayats and the community
- Women being able to deal with legal institutions
- Familiarity with the law and an increase in confidence to use the law when needed.

#### 4.3.3 Panchayats and Health

The amendments clearly specify that community health is under the jurisdiction of the Panchayats. Furthermore, resources earmarked for health have been devolved to the Zilla Panchayat. This provides an opportunity for activating Panchayats for the special health needs of women. Many State panchayat Acts have specified community health as a subject under the purview of the Zilla Panchayat Standing Committees.

**Reproductive Health:** For reproductive health the following services are needed:

- Antenatal Care: Health Workers play an important role in providing antenatal care including early registration of pregnant women, regular examinations, provision of appropriate antenatal care and referral of high-risk women. A sterile delivery pack is distributed with proper education to all pregnant women in the last trimester.
- Intra-natal Care: About 90 percent of deliveries can be conducted at home
- Post-natal Care: Immediate new-born and post-natal care can also be provided by locally trained workers who can inform the Anganwadi worker, who weighs and examines the child. If any complication is noted, the mother or new-born can be referred to the hospital. The family health worker finally supervises and provides appropriate post-natal care during her regular home visits.
- Anganwadi Services: The Anganwadi runs daily for about 3 hours in the morning. Separate growth cards can be maintained for each child while high risk children can be given special attention.
- Nutritional Services for Mothers and Children: Dais work with post-natal mothers to start breast feeding on the very first day and to emphasize the importance of colostrum. Distribution of iron folate tablets, the provision of supplementary nutrition can be done via ICDS.
- Family Planning (FP): Family Planning forms an integral part of Primary Health Center services. The health workers must work as a team with middle-level workers supporting and encouraging village level workers to convince and motivate people to accept any FP method. Village level workers should be involved in promoting FP services. Family planning should not be about meeting targets at the end of the year.

Here again if women GP members are trained they can take special care to bring up reproductive health care issues in the panchayats and spearhead a community-based system to ensure reproductive health needs are taken care of.

NGO initiatives on reproductive health: LORDS working with ISST on Reproductive Health via the panchayats in Karnataka jointly aims at ensuring that Panchayats take cognizance of health needs of the community, particularly reproductive health. This has set in motion a process to regularise the forum for articulation of such needs. These organizations aim to activate panchayats, both vertically and horizontally, to provide the institutional framework needed to cater to basic health needs of the community. In a federating effort LORDS conducted a workshop to discuss the issue of PRIs and reproductive health. The workshop highlighted the work done in the area and the implications to all its stakeholders including the community, the PRIs and the health system. Reasons for poor health and lack of control of women over their own bodies included:

- Early marriage and as a result early pregnancies
- Multiple pregnancies and deliveries as a male child is desired.
- Frequent Pregnancies, miscarriages due to inadequate pre and post-natal facilities.
- Lack of knowledge on reproductive health because girls are not sent to school or due to lack of schools.
- The prevalence of the Devadasi System
- Alcoholism among men
- Perceived need for large families to increase earning capacity

Solutions to the above problems center on raising awareness among the Gram Panchayat members, women and the community about:

- Minimum age for Marriage
- Issue of a girl child
- Anti-liquor drives and fines to be imposed
- Providing alternatives to the Devadasi system
- Fight the spread of diseases (AIDS, STDs) through preventative measures.

NGOs such as ISST and IDS intend to use the office of the elected Panchayat members, mainly the EWRs, to activate the three-tier structure to ensure the health needs of women in particular and of the community in general. These organizations aim to:

- Ensure a systematic monitoring and reporting of the health status by community health workers to administrators.
- Conduct health needs assessment of local communities
- Confirm the accessibility of health service delivery
- Evolve information dissemination and service delivery processes that integrate the PRIs with local health departments
- Make the system and its functionary accountable to the community and responsive to the articulated needs at the grass root level.
- Systematise the process of documentation and set up appropriate guidelines.
- Enhance the efficacy of the panchayat to use its structure to address, sensitize and create awareness on the gender discrimination in health matters
- Explore the potential in making the Panchayats accountable and also the potential meeting ground of all such communication.

Other organizations involved in this area of work include Child in Need Institute (CINI), Calcutta, SUTRA (Social for Uplift through Rural Action), Himachal Pradesh, and Leading Organisation for Rural Development (LORDS), Bellary district, Karnataka. CINI provides services for children with malnutrition and acts as a focal point for poor women seeking health care for their children. SUTRA has started work in four Panchayats through two women's organizations looking at health, income generation and community development. For LORDS, literacy, health care, watershed management and thrift and credit societies have been the main areas of focus.

Furthermore organizations working actively on herbal medicines via the sanghas can lend their knowledge and training to the area as more sangha members stand for elections. C.M. Gangamma is a health consultant of indigenous medicines for over a decade now. She started her career with DEED (Development through Education), later joined Mahila Samakhya in Mysore and is now a full time consultant with Mahila Samakhya Bangalore. Her publication 'Hithila Akka' (The Neighbourhood Sister), a manual on herbal medicines is an enduring contribution to rural women. This manual has been used by several NGOs for their work in the field.

Events such as The Health Mela in 1990 at Mysore and the State level Mahila Mahiti Mela in 1991 were resounding successes to the extent that several home remedies gained a new 'respectability'. A Women and Health Stall was organised to address women's health problems and to educate EWRs on how to integrate traditional knowledge with modern needs. The Health stall discussed linking the women with the Forest Departments Programmes and linking up EWRs with services provided by the State government. The EWRs were requested to identify wastelands and common grazing land in their panchayat areas and write to the Aranya Bhawan where the follow-up action would be taken i.e. testing the soil, and distributing free saplings and labour for setting up medicinal gardens.

Similarly a study group set up jointly by Indian Council of Social Science Research and the Indian Council of Medical Research, New Delhi, suggested ways to integrate health into the panchayat system. According to them, "The Panchayat Samiti through its Health Committee of each Gram Panchayat, will be the overall co-ordinator for health activities of the area and responsible for the efficient functioning of their Community Health Centre".

As EWRs, women should have the means to bring about the much needed change at the micro-level as envisaged by the planners. Decentralisation of health services will also be a reality if these women realise the potential of traditional medicines and in turn transfer this awareness to the people. Traditional medicine should replace the current imported and inappropriate model of health services which is top-heavy, centralised, heavily curative in its approach, urban, elite oriented, costly and dependency creating.

These dialogue forums brought out the following issues<sup>103</sup>:

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<sup>103</sup> Sreevidhya, K.R (1995)

- Women could develop private backyards where basic plants like tamarind, mango, drumstick, banana, coconut, jackfruit, neem, curry leaves, tulsi, leafy vegetables are grown, which are both nutritionally and medicinally valuable. This is a step towards self-reliance and self-sufficiency.
- One aspect of women's lives was evident here. Their gynaecological problems are the least discussed aspects in their lives apart from maternity. Training should take away the stigma attached to reproductive issues.
- EWRs could chalk out an action plan and carry out the responsibility of disseminating information to other women of the village about developing private gardens of essential medicinal plants, their utility and scope. Here effective methods such as naturopathy, the use of simple medicines, the practice of growing herbs needed in day-to-day illnesses in backyards or other places in every locality could be used.

Health awareness via the panchayats: Health awareness is an area that has recently emerged via the Panchayat. In some areas, the Panchayats ensure that regular health checks ups are conducted in their villages. For women like Zubadabi,<sup>104</sup> an illiterate Muslim woman, it is important that her daughters be aware of health related problems. Having gone through a lot of trouble in nurturing and caring for a large family, Zubadabi has always sympathized with the plight of her daughters. At a health camp for women, the men skeptical of the various family planning camps held in the past, interfered with the woman's need for privacy. Zubadabi understanding the situation chose to attend the camp without the men around. This marks the start of recognizing the need for women to seek information on their own terms. NGOs such as IDS have started a reproductive health programme via the Panchayat. Women are given information about the care that they should take during pregnancy, breast-feeding, AIDS, contraceptives etc. The Gram Panchayat members are trained who in turn spread this information among the community. Elected members of Kargi village claim that after the training there has been a lot of changes. Earlier the women used to leave it all up to God. Now they know that if there is anything wrong they should go the doctor first.

Panchayats and AIDS: While AIDS is rapidly spreading world over, here women are learning of AIDS for the first time. At an AIDS awareness workshop organised in Gulbarga by NARC (Bombay), the implications of contracting the disease and precautionary measures were outlined. Women in Bijapur, despite the district being earmarked as a danger zone for AIDS, did not know about it. AIDS is therefore being discussed to provide women with information and the women are then being called upon to persuade their men to use contraceptives, as 'Prevention is better than cure'. The dangers of unclean blades at the barber and unsterilized needles used for tattooing, blood tests and transfusion, common practices with most rural communities are discussed.

The central government has issued mandatory orders to Health departments to conduct training camps and awareness campaigns to at-risk populations vis-a-vis AIDS, particularly in rural areas where the Devadasi custom is practiced. Accordingly, the Zilla Panchayats have been conducting awareness campaigns for Gram Panchayat and Sangha

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<sup>104</sup> See Mukta Bannerjee (1998). Zubadabi is panchayat member, Mydolalu village, Shimoga district.

members, every 3 to 6 months. These camps elaborate the details of the disease, its prevalence, diagnosis, treatment, consequences and most importantly its prevention.

Field visits and interviews with panchayat members in Dharwad revealed clear awareness of AIDS, the need for the use of condoms, clean blades for shaving and fresh needles during the time of injections or blood tests. This was because information was being provided to them via AIDS training from IDS, one of the NGOs in the area who is planning to launch reproductive health via panchayati raj on scale in the coming years. ISST is also planning a similar initiative on a large and focused scale. In interviews with ISST and IDS, both stated the need for systematic documentation in this area and stressed the lack of availability of good case material from the myriad initiatives on the ground as a constraint to their work.

*Rationale for Addressing Health via Panchayati Raj: The need for health awareness is being surfaced from the ground, from the EWRs or the Gram Panchayats themselves, as a result of which NGOs have begun or are starting work on reproductive health, AIDS and with devadasis. The figures below show that devolution of finances earmarked for health has occurred from the state down to the PRIs. The problem is that the funds are still only at the Zilla Panchayat level not at the Gram Panchayat level. Karnataka's annual budget as of 1991 shows evidence to this effect.*

<b>Category for which funds are earmarked</b>	<b>Plan</b>	<b>Non-plan</b>	<b>Total</b>
Total Revenue Budget for medical and public health	40.69	174.93	215.62
Direct provision for urban health services	10.86	95.45	106.31
Total provision for rural health services	29.83	79.48	86.34
Transfers to the ZP	20.71 (69.4%)	65.63 (82.6%)	86.34 (79%)

Source: Antia. N. H. and Bhatia (1993)

Data from Table 4.4 implies that close to four-fifths of rural health budgets (79%) have been devolved down to the Zilla Panchayat and are now in the hands of the Zilla Panchayat representatives. Furthermore a second issue raised by IDS is that there are no committees on health at the Gram Panchayat level only at the Zilla Panchayat level. Health and education are both addressed via the Amenities Committee required by the Act at the Gram Panchayat level. Nonetheless health resources are in the process of devolving and consequently we need to find a system of health management that is more decentralized.

Nature of Diseases: Dr. N.H.Antia and Kavita Bhatia classify diseases in a unique approach, “not according to pathology but more according to the knowledge, skills and facilities required for their diagnosis, treatment, prevention and control.” They group diseases into five categories:

Category A: Psychosomatic diseases, which need just understanding and explanation.

Category B: Simple diseases which can be handled by the family or individual or the community including minor coughs, colds, diarrheas, body-aches, headaches, cuts, bruises, boils, minor allergies and other everyday conditions. These diseases can be handled by via local remedies or cheap, safe, non-prescription drug, like aspirin.

Category C: Non life threatening diseases that constitute a large part of the community's morbidity load, i.e. scabies, worms, moderately severe diarrhoea, dysentery, acute tracheo-bronchitis, moderately severe cuts, bruises, abdominal colic, osteoarthritis, chronic dermatosis, common fevers, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Properly trained paramedical workers can diagnose and treat these diseases with a minimum repertoire of safe but effective drugs.

Category D: This category comprises of dangerous or fatal diseases like gastroenteritis and dysentery, acute respiratory tract infection, tuberculosis, tetanus, leprosy, malaria, poliomyelitis, measles, pneumonia, rheumatic heart disease and sexually transmitted diseases, the knowledge and technology for which is simple, cheap safe, and effective. Experiments in Mandwa, Banaswari and Jamkhed reveal that, even these diseases can be effectively handled by the community (via paramedical workers).

Category E: Rare diseases which need skills and facilities of the medical profession and a well-equipped hospital. These include major medical and surgical problems and emergencies beyond the scope of the paramedical worker. The latter can however be taught to provide adequate first aid before referral, follow-up and after care. Early diagnoses by such workers is extremely important to lessen the risk for such diseases.

According to the above categorisation, most diseases can be handled by the community and para medical workers. The problem therefore lies not in the inadequacy of medical science and technology, but in its inability to reach people through a health system that is bureaucratic, over-professionalized, and costly. Many diseases can be prevented by attending to nutrition, environment, water and sanitation, besides the immunization of high risk groups within the community. Training can be provided using the panchayats as a vehicle.

The prescribed treatment regiment can then be given and supervised by the local workers, and the patient referred back for occasional check-up or if any of the well-known complications of the disease or untoward effects of treatment should arise. The role of the medical profession must be to guide, encourage and support. The role of the panchayats is to facilitate adequate health care via a community approach. As health finances get devolved downwards to the PRIs this facilitative role becomes even more crucial and training the panchayats, to facilitate the creation of a more localized, community based health care system, is now desperately needed.

Therefore for health care to be restructured the following steps must take place:

- Financial devolution of health related funds needs to occur a step further i.e. from the Zilla level down to the Gram Panchayat level. At the village level, health care needs assessment and action plans need to be submitted via the panchayats. Sanghas can help in this assessment to ensure that reproductive health needs are included.

- The Act should stipulate the need for a health committee at the Gram Panchayat level with EWRs and sangha members constituting at least half the committee to ensure that health care needs, particularly reproductive health care needs are prioritized.
- Understanding that most diseases can be handled at the community level and that community health care workers need to be trained. They should be employed by and answerable to the Gram Panchayat itself and not to any outside agency.
- Gram Panchayat members themselves must be trained by providing them basic information on adequate health facilities, how to assess the community's health needs, monitoring of community health systems, and about AIDs and other STDs.

#### 4.3.4 Panchayats and Population Control

Experiments in areas which are controversial and where consensus does not quite exist, such as population control via the panchayats, has begun. This includes providing incentives and role models to prospective contestants, elected representatives and the community at large to practice family planning. The expert committee headed by Dr. M.S.Swaminathan submitted The Draft National Population Policy to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India on 21st May 1994. Section 13 refers to "Political Will and Freezing of seats in Parliament and Legislatures". Recommendation 13.1 states. "Rajasthan and Haryana have enacted laws which debar prospectively persons who do not adopt the two child family norms from contesting elections for Panchayats, Zilla Parishada and Nagarpalikas. This reflects political commitment. Even if such legislation does not exist, there should be a code of conduct, which enjoins on all elected representatives of the people, from parliament to Panchayat, to adopt voluntarily the small family norm. Elected people's representatives will then become role models from the public to emulate. Future legislation in this area at central or state level should however safeguard the interests of women, particularly those belonging to the socially and economically underprivileged section sections of society". This, however, could act as a deterrent to women's political participation especially since it is not she who typically decides on how many children she should have.

## CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Karnataka State, unlike any other, had in place an extremely progressive legislation and set the precedent for the country on reservation beginning in 1987 with 25 percent reservation for women. The Mandal Panchayat Act created a two-tier system that gave the panchayats more executive power at the lower tier. The villages had the power to decide on issues that were important to them. They decided the uses of funds without any government orders. This power was taken away with the advent of the Panchayati Raj Act of 1993.

In the first term women had barely entered politics and were just getting their feet wet. Many did not know what their roles were and training was not prevalent to inform them of their roles and what was expected from them. Moreover, the national consensus that came with the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments, which made officials at every level open to these changes, was not there for women in their first term. However in the second term we find a completely different scenario. Not only had women entered politics but also NGOs and government were geared and ready for them with training on the functioning of the PRIs from the beginning. As women progressed through the term other NGOs with their myriad experiences and expertise brought their skills into the panchayat making gender sensitization standard and bringing legal literacy to the panchayats. Towards the end of the second term NGOs were beginning to introduce newer areas into local government such as environment, health, reproductive health and AIDS into the Gram Panchayats and start experimenting with education and planning for action for these new areas. By the end of this term the various forms of training that are essential were clear and the new areas being adopted were still in an experimental stage.

Karnataka has a great deal of experience to offer in terms of best practices to other states. For one, it has large women's organizations such as Mahila Samakhya with very close ties to the government. In scale, size and scope MSK offers women more than most NGOs, with a 2.5 crore budget and resources that can accommodate the formation of sanghas, health initiatives, literacy programmes, legal training and Panchayati Raj, gender training and EDP training. Organizations such as MSK can bring a large variety of skills to the PR system. For example, MSK could conduct gender training, legal literacy, training on the government programmes and through their emphasis on sangha formation could link the Gram Panchayats to the sanghas. These linkages were forged by helping women from the Gram Panchayats join sanghas, by helping sangha women run for elections and by creating dialogue forums between the two. Organizations such as IDS with their vast ties in villages with the VDS and sangha federations in each village were able to create a virtual Gram Sabha and such a model would help strongly in the Year of the Gram Sabha announced by the government. Organizations such as HHS are again unique in that it is one of the few organizations that is able to bring legal literacy and rights awareness to women at the village level both within and outside the Gram Panchayats. This has helped women become better aware of their rights and for panchayat representatives to govern more effectively with better information.

Organizations such as ISST play a training and dissemination role responding to the needs of women representatives. UMA PRACHAR, their quarterly journal has a wide audience and is appreciated as one of the major sources of information on the Gram Panchayats in the country. This has helped the rapid spread of innovative ideas on the Gram Panchayats across the state.

The other striking feature about Karnataka is the number of women in the Gram Panchayats, possibly because of women having been in the panchayats for more than one term. The result is that while women constitute barely 33 percent in other states as per the requirements of the constitutional amendments, they constitute much more than that in Karnataka. In fact, Karnataka represents the state with the highest proportion of women in 1993 with 37,689 women constituting 46.74 percent of 80,627 total Gram Panchayat members. Karnataka is also one of the few states with an All Women Panchayat while at the same time it also has several panchayats where women constitute close to 50% of the Gram Panchayat membership. This makes a very big difference in how close women get to form a voting majority on any issue in the GP. The result is clear in that just like in the all women panchayats where women banned alcohol sales through the panchayats, similarly in Gram Panchayats across the state women will be able to ban alcohol if they have a voting majority.

The anti-alcohol movement therefore lends some of its success to having effective women representatives who were able to take up issues on the ground. It is also indicative of a high level of gender consciousness and organizing of women on the ground. For example, the fact that the Devadasi issue is being taken up through the Gram Panchayats and these women are given an alternative to the practice through the Devadasi Rehabilitation Programme has been yet another achievement of the Gram Panchayats in Karnataka.

## **Key Findings**

The findings are of two kinds, empirical and conceptual. The empirical findings relate to NGO intervention, training and the new areas in the panchayats.

### *NGO Intervention*

NGOs act as a strong support system to EWRs reversing initial passivity, as a result of fear or ignorance, by training and awareness generation. Where there are CBOs this support system is further enhanced. NGO intervention is crucial at three stages:

- Prior to the elections by creating awareness on the electoral process
- During elections by supporting campaigners and fostering community participation in the voting process.
- Post elections involvement by training elected members on the governance process, ensuring community participation, women's participation and developing networks and federations for dialogue and dissemination.

### *Training*

The second term witnessed a consolidation of training needs of the EWRs.

Content: The most essential training modules now include:

- Functioning of the PRIs, roles, responsibilities, rules and regulations.
- Gender training and attitudinal changes.
- Budgets and finances of the PRIs
- Programmes implemented through the PRIs

Training Methods: The most effective training methods are:

- Interactive and participatory.
- Performance oriented, instead of traditional paper and pencil methods.
- Those conducted in a non-formal atmosphere.
- Holistic which yields long-term solutions.

Impact of Training:

- *Training Gram Panchayat members helped them access information about government programmes, the functioning of PRIs, how to participate, where to get funds, and are therefore better equipped to govern.*
- Training has helped EWRs develop their articulation skills, planning skills and has built their confidence.

### **The New Areas Currently Being Developed via the Panchayats**

New areas are starting to emerge where training can be seen as both facilitative as well as highly innovative. These include training on:

- Legal literacy
- Literacy
- Environment
- Health and Reproductive Health

The change in women's participation in the second term manifests itself in the five indicators of improved and engendered governance as follows:

#### Participation

*Participation was measured by the presence of women in decision-making fora, the nature and extent of their functioning in the PRIs and Gram Sabhas. It was found that:*

- *The physical presence of women in Panchayats and gram sabhas **increased**.*
- *Opportunity for training EWRs **increased** and there has been a demand for literacy.*
- *Improved leadership skills of EWRs increased their capacity to **access resources** raise issues, intervene, and implement decisions for the community.*
- *Training facilitated the articulation of EWRs, changed attitudes, **and enhanced their interaction** with local institutions.*
- *While more Gram Sabhas and Panchayat monthly meetings are held regularly, women's participation in the Gram Sabhas has been more in the form of attendance and in the Panchayat meetings more women are articulating their views and concerns.*

### *Transparency*

Transparency was measured by the extent to which EWRs were aware of the governance process, and whether and how they were able to bring this knowledge to others in the Gram Panchayat and in the Gram Sabha. EWRs have been able to bring about a higher degree of transparency as is indicated by the instances where:

- Knowledge of actual rules and procedures gained through training makes the governance process transparent first for EWRs themselves and for women as a whole.
- EWRs have monitored Panchayat work and questioned corruption wherever found.
- EWRs have asked for meetings to be held only in the presence of a full quorum.
- EWRs have asked for meeting minutes to be read out for the illiterate.

### Accountability

Accountability is measured by the extent and degree to which decisions made by the Gram Sabha are implemented and elected representatives represent their constituencies. Engendered accountability, defined by EWRs themselves takes accountability a step further by expanding it to the more marginalized, particularly to women.

- Improved Accountability: For many EWRs, being in power meant doing work for their communities and explaining Gram Panchayat activities to people. Furthermore, their work was directed towards the welfare of the larger community, not themselves.
- Engendered, improved accountability: EWRs in implementing government programmes first make sure that the needy were included and that they take up women specific issues. They have also tried to eliminate alcoholism by banning the sale of liquor in their villages, as it is typically seen as a gender specific problem.

### Equity

Equity is measured by ensuring equal access to resources and opportunities for all groups and engendered equity by the degree to which women in those groups get such access.

- Social inclusion/acceptance: The EWRs ensure equal opportunity to all members of the community via panchayat proceedings. They pay particular attention to marginalised groups including the widows, Devadasis and lower castes.
- Access of poor to programmes and resources: They prioritize the marginalized by ensuring that resources such as set aside for the lower castes reach them and opening up access to water resources, temples and other public services and facilities for them.
- Equity for women: In challenging patriarchal norms and practices such as dowry EWRs have tried to equalize conditions for men and women. They also provide more access to resources for poor women, widows and for women's sanghas.

### Sustainability

Sustainability includes those projects/activities that can be pursued and maintained in the long run. These are a change in literacy levels which can be a tool of political empowerment, change in attitudes of men in the community and officials, a redefinition and engendering of leadership notions and building a stronger institutional set of relationships between the sanghas and the PRIs.

- Environmental sustainability: EWRs raised environmental issues such as cleaning up of ponds and public spaces in their areas while male elected members had different priorities. Some NGOs are taking up the issue of environment via the panchayats.

### *Engendered Governance*

Developing, redefining and engendering leadership: Women through being in power have started to redefine for themselves what they consider leadership. An engendered perspective on leadership is a person who does not lie, does not lose his/her patience, is willing to explain the programmes to people and to say what they can do for people, and is broad minded. Leadership meant honesty, openness about the available resources, decision making and implementation of schemes and in the last instance directing their work towards their constituencies. This view is radically different from the traditional view of leaders being charismatic public speakers and being overtly strong.

Leadership is a quality that is also fostered through collective support. The sanghas are non-traditional spaces where women are given the opportunity to develop and define their leadership skills. Sanghas acts as training grounds for inculcating this new engendered form of leadership where women leaders emerge knowing what other women value. Leadership therefore also meant being accountable to community women who were instrumental in bringing them to power and to lower castes when elected on a seat reserved for the lower castes and other backward communities.

The most interesting experiments however are only just beginning with:

- Many more NGOs now trying to bring their expertise into the panchayats. This has included a series of new areas such as the environment, health, literacy, legal literacy, and reproductive health now being brought into the panchayats. Consequently this term has seen an explosion of creative initiatives in the state.
- Further steps towards devolution and a new climate of change are accompanying the year 2000 which has also been declared the Year of the Gram Sabha. The reforms that get ushered in this new millenium will take devolution closer still to the community.

### *5.2 Recommendations*

Preparation on Further Decentralization i.e. Towards the Gram Sabha

- Year of the Gram Sabha: The coming year has been designated by the government to be the Year of the Gram Sabha. We see the movement over the last decade from decentralization within government to finally now decentralization of power and decision making to the electorate where it belongs. There needs to be training and preparation given to both the Gram Panchayat and the community on the Gram Sabha and the dawn of this new phase of further devolution. This entails the following facilitative measures:
  - Dialogue forums between GPs, and CBOs must be arranged
  - Federations of Panchayats and CBOs at cluster, block and district level are needed to begin bottom up planning where the community plays a larger role.
  - Intervention of NGOs via training of the electorate/gram sabha to take on their roles in making governance more accountable.
  - To engender the gram sabha, women's collectives must be positioned through training and establishing linkages.

- Systematic documentation of the experiments on the gram sabha in the next term and of best practices to determine conditions for success is needed.
- Organizations like MSK with a wide base of CBOs can set the tone for positioning women in the Gram Sabha and train other NGOs on the same.

This will allow all parties to understand their responsibilities in making governance even more transparent, accountable, equitable, sustainable and participatory.

- What Constitutes the Gram Sabha: Training on the gram sabha has to first explain what constitutes the Gram Sabha and broaden the rather narrow view that the Gram Sabha is the forum where beneficiaries for the programmes are chosen. It is important therefore that there be special efforts to show the Gram Sabha as a space with vibrant participatory input of the community on community needs, priorities, issues and social problems. It has to be seen as a space where not only the community participates but one at which all stakeholders are present.

### Training

- Systematize Training: It is clear from the last term the scope and content of minimal training that is needed for those who are in power for the first time. These include broad training on the PRIs, gender training, legal training, budgetary training and training on government programmes. Yet despite this clarity, training was unevenly administered. Not all women elected representatives got this training and in villages where women were trained 3-4 times, male elected representatives were not trained at all and were consequently ignorant of their roles, responsibilities and functions of the Gram Panchayats. For the next term it is clear that these training modules be designed and administered systematically across all villages and talukas for both men and women Gram Panchayat members.
- Chilly Climate Syndrome: Having recognized as a universal problem what was described earlier as the chilly climate syndrome that cuts across district, caste, class or religion, it is extremely important that women are not left to just “suffer it out” each time. Instead a responsible response is to start each fresh term by gender training on the “chilly climate syndrome”, and to list its indicators so both men and women recognize them and then find ways to challenge and confront it. This includes even men recognizing it in other men or in themselves and challenging each other to stop such behaviour. These behavioural issues include when men:
  - Laugh at women
  - Ridicule them when they speak or interrupt them
  - Make decisions when women are not around or override women’s attempts to make decisions
  - Don not listen to women
  - Call them names when they leave meetings

In several organizations women and men have been trained to identify these behavioural characteristics which helps them check themselves when it happens.

- Mainstream Gender Training: One major barrier experienced by really strong EWRs, was the ridicule faced from male members. Training on attitudes of men towards women, stereotypes of men and women representatives, responsibilities of EWRs to their larger constituency (i.e. their communities and other women) need to be clarified from the beginning. In fact exchanges between supportive male Gram Panchayat

members and ones who are not supportive need to take place so attitudinal changes are facilitated more rapidly.

- Training Methodologies: For Gram Panchayat members to learn, training methods need to be participatory and hands on. Therefore exchanges need to be organized between women Gram Panchayat representatives and support groups for these women need to be created across villages to learn from each other, plan for their area, and strategize on change.
- Resources: Existing resources such as Mahila Samakhya can be consulted to facilitate such linkages and train trainers on interventions for women in the panchayats.
- Initiate the Right to Information Campaign: It is clear that just having women in power will not help them govern well unless they have full information. Therefore, the Right to Information in all aspects of the PRIs including budgets, needs to be initiated in Karnataka as has been done in Rajasthan.
- Literacy: The fact that there exist organizations with the capacity and expertise to deal with illiteracy who can remedy this problem in less than a year lends to taking the issue of literacy among the Gram Panchayat members much more seriously. Organizations such as MSK or IDS can both train trainers from other NGOs to replicate these efforts in other districts.

#### Validating Gender Concerns

- Gender issues: Across several villages women are raising the issues of alcoholism or eradicating it. More thought and effort, to support these and other issues raised by women, on the part of the state is needed. For instance Maharashtra has passed a law by which if 50% of the women in a village sign a petition which says that they do not want alcohol sold in their village, then by law the Gram Panchayat has to shut down the existing alcohol shops in it. Similar such measures can be adopted here.
- Critical mass: Several EWRs recommended the need to increase the number of women in the PRIs to overcome hostilities faced, and to get a voting majority. Some even suggested an equal representation of men and women (50:50).
- Engendering Leadership training: Leadership training must now incorporate a newly emerging grassroots gender perspective on what, according to women, constitutes a good leader. It is important to universalize this image of leadership, which need not clash with women's images of themselves as women, but still gives them the freedom to act decisively and be taken seriously. Within this context, training on articulation as opposed to public speaking is important.
- Gender audit: It is essential to have a regular Gender Audit of PRI budgets to examine the amount of resources women are getting access to.

#### Linkages

- Federations at the Gram Panchayat level: Federations should coordinate and function effectively such that they help create realistic strategies of development through the PRIs and present an impact at the higher levels.
- Women Panchayat members-mainstream institutional linkages: Linkages between women panchayat members and other institutions via melavas or study tours to the banks and government agencies should be facilitated.

- Sangha-panchayat linkages: For women to govern effectively and serve their constituencies there need to be the type of dialogue forums created by organizations such as MSK, between sangha women and Gram Panchayat women to hold women members accountable. Since access to resources for women is more easily available via the sangha than for individual women, informing sanghas on what resources are available via Gram Panchayat is important.

#### New Areas

- In-depth documentation on the new areas within the panchayats need to take place including systematizing the dialogue, debates and creating manuals that facilitate the work of organizations trying to start such efforts in their areas. The new areas include legal literacy, dealing with health, particularly reproductive health and environmental issues via the panchayats. New experiments on AIDS, devadasis, reproductive health and so on are either in the planning stages or are just beginning. As work progresses, pioneering organizations such as IDS, ISST, HHS and MSK should serve as resource persons elsewhere and be in contact with each other through dialogue forums arranged on an issue by issue basis. Their work should be systematically documented, manuals made and disseminated to others starting work in these areas.
- Resource centers/libraries should be set up in HHS to make available legal documents on a variety of fields (legal literacy, women and the law, governance, the police and the law).
- Training Manuals on environmental work, legal literacy and reproductive health via the panchayats should be gathered, produced and made easily accessible to other NGOs which can be done through existing organizations such as ISST or HHS.

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April-June

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“Training Women in Panchayats” *UMA PRACHAR* Vol. 4 No. 1, Jan-Mar

*UMA PRACHAR (1994)*

“GRAMSAT” *UMA PRACHAR*, November.

UMA PRACHAR (1994)

“Forum: Population Control through Panchayati Raj?” *UMA PRACHAR*, September.

*UMA PRACHAR (1994)*

“*Panchayat Personalities.*” *UMA PRACHAR*, March.

*Venkatadri, Malini (1995)*

“*Women, Environment and Panchayat Raj.*” *UMA PRACHAR*, January

Venkatadri, Malini (1995b)

“Forum: The Greening of Panchayats?” *UMA PRACHAR*, September

Vyasulu, Vinod (1998)

“Panchayati Raj in Karnataka: Some Issues for Discussion.” Prepared for a seminar at the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla, Bangalore: Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, August 6.

**Note: For easy access to training manuals on Panchayati Raj please contact ISST, Bangalore, N-601 North Block, 6<sup>th</sup> floor Manipal Center, 47 Dickenson Road, Bangalore 560042, Email: [isstban@giasbg01.vsnl.net.in](mailto:isstban@giasbg01.vsnl.net.in)**

## ANNEXURES

- I List of participating organisations
- II Socio Economic Profile of Karnataka
- III Karnataka Panchayati Raj (Amendment) Ordinance 1999
- IV Interview Schedule
- V Glossary
- VI Extract of Article on Latest Policy Changes in Panchayati Raj
- VII Statistics on Political Participation
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- X Panchayat Raj Structure in Karnataka (1993 Act)

## **Annexure I: List of Organisations Resourced**

### *Indian Social Studies Trust*

N-601 North Block  
6<sup>th</sup> floor Manipal Center  
47 Dickenson Road  
Bangalore 560042

Mahila Samakhya Karnataka  
No. 68 1<sup>st</sup> cross,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Main, HAL IIIrd Stage,  
J.B. Nagar, Bangalore 560075

Mahila Samakhya Karnataka  
190, Sai Hrudaya  
Shastri Nagar  
Sainik School road

### *Bijapur*

Hengasara Hakkinna Sangha  
1353, 32 E road, 4<sup>th</sup> T block,  
Jayanagar,  
Bangalore – 560041

India Development Service  
Sadhankeri Road  
Dharwad  
Karnataka 580008

Myrada Plan  
H.D. Kote  
Karnataka

## Annexure II: Socio Economic Profile of Karnataka

Area: 191,791 sq. kms

(Source: Status of Panchayati Raj in the States of India 1994)

Demography (as of 1991)	
Demographic Characteristic	Value
Population	44,977,201.
Population growth	20.66%.
Density	235 per sq. km.
Sex Ratio	961 females/1,000 males

Economy (as of 1991)	
Labour Force:	
primary sector	41.83%
secondary sector	13.17%
tertiary sector.	19.46%
<i>Per capita Income (1989-90)</i>	Rs. 4,305 at current prices.
Per Capita Annual Consumption (1989-90)	Rs. 2,395.98 at current prices (provisional).
State Domestic Product (1990-91)	Rs. 21,328 crores (quick estimates)

Education (as of 1991)	
Literacy:	56.0%
Rural	47.7%
Urban	74.2%
Female rural literacy	34.76%(seven years and above)
Primary schools (1989-90)	23,539.
Upper primary	16,318.
School enrolment (1989)	7,884,215 (including nursery schools)
Primary schools	5,121,691
Secondary schools	2,440,764.
Primary School Teachers (1992-93) ratio	1/41 students.

Health	
<i>Life expectancy (1988-91)</i>	<i>62.7 years</i>
<i>Infant Mortality Rate (1990-92)</i>	<i>73 per 1,000 born.</i>
<i>Ratio of physicians to inhabitants</i>	<i>1/1,457 inhabitants (1990)</i>
<i>Ratio of hospitals to inhabitants</i>	<i>1/157,263 inhabitants (1989)</i>
<i>Primary Health Centres (1992)</i>	<i>1,173</i>

Others	
<i>Access to Potable Water (1991):</i>	
<i>Rural</i>	<i>67.31%;</i>
<i>Urban</i>	<i>81.38%.</i>
<i>Number of Fair Price Shops (1992):</i>	
Rural	12,815
Urban	4,549.
<i>Road Mileage (1987-88)</i>	<i>659 per 1,000 sq. kms.</i>
<i>Poverty Ratio (1987-88):</i>	<i>32.1%.</i>

Karnataka Panchayati Raj Institutions at a Glance	
Tiers, Members And Electorate	Total
Gram Panchayats	5,641
Panchayat samitis	N.A
Zilla Panchayats	20
Members of Gram Panchayats	80,631
Members of Taluk Panchayats	3,340
Members of Zilla Panchayats	909
Electorate	20,636,782

Area, Total, Rural and Urban Population, Density: Districts in Karnataka						
No.	Districts	Area Sq kms	Total population (1991)	Density (per sq. km)	Rural (1991)	Urban (1991)
1.	Bangalore(U)	2,191	4,839,162	2,208	669,909	4,169,253
2.	Bangalore(R)	5,814	1,673,194	288	1,369,908	303,286
3.	Belgaum	13,415	3,583,606	267	2,741,820	841,786
4.	Bellary	9,885	1,890,092	191	1,325,692	564,400
5.	Bidar	5,448	1,255,799	230	1,010,096	245,703
6.	Bijapur	17,069	2,927,990	171	2,239,244	688,746
7.	Chickmagalur	7,201	1,017,283	141	845,422	171,861
8.	Chitradurga	10,852	2,180,443	201	1,591,765	588,678
9.	Dakshina Kannada	8,441	2,694,264	319	1,931,670	762,594
10.	Dharwad	13,738	3,503,150	255	2,279,259	1,223,891
11.	Gulbarga	16,224	2,582,169	159	1,972,366	609,803
12.	Hassan	6,814	1,569,684	83	1,296,962	272,722
13.	Kodagu	4,102	488,455	119	410,514	77,941
14.	Kolar	8,223	2,216,889	269	1,699,906	516,983
15.	Mandya	4,961	1,644,374	331	1,377,570	266,804
16.	Mysore	11,954	3,165,018	265	2,224,724	940,296
17.	Raichur	14,017	2,309,887	165	1,829,765	480,122
18.	Shimoga	10,558	1,909,663	181	1,403,421	506,242
19.	Tumkur	10,698	2,305,819	215	1,923,656	382,163
20.	Uttara Kannada	10,291	1,220,260	119	925,744	294,516

### **Annexure III: Karnataka Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Ordinance 1999**

**(Promulgated by the Governor of Karnataka in the Fiftieth year of the Republic of India and published in the Karnataka Gazette Extraordinary on the Twenty-Eighth day of January, 1999)**

An ordinance further to amend the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, 1993.

Whereas the Karnataka Legislative council is not in session and the Governor of Karnataka is satisfied that the circumstances exist which render it necessary for him to take immediate action further to amend the Karnataka Panchayat Act, 1993 (Karnataka Act 14 of 1993) for the purposes hereinafter appearing:

Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by clause (1) of Article 213 of the Constitution of India, the Governor of Karnataka is pleased to promulgate the following Ordinance, namely:-

**1. Short title and commencement** (1) This Ordinance may be called the Karnataka Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Ordinance, 1999.

(2) It shall come to force at once.

**2. Amendment of section 4.** In section 4 of the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, 1993 (Karnataka Act 14 of 1993) (hereinafter referred to as the principal Act), in sub-section (1)

- (i) for the words “not less than five thousand and not more than seven thousand”- the words “ not less than ten thousand and not more than sixteen thousand” shall be substituted;
- (ii) In the first proviso, for the words “not less than two thousand five hundred” the words “ not less than six thousand “ shall be substituted;
- (iii) In the second proviso, for the words and brackets “ a radius of five kilometers (diameter of ten kilometers) the words and brackets “a radius of eight kilometers (diameter of sixteen kilometers)” shall be substituted;
- (iv) In the third proviso, for the words “either less than five thousand or more than seven thousand” the words “either less than ten thousand or more than sixteen thousand” shall be substituted.

**3. Amendment of section 5.-** In section 5 of the principal Act,-

- (1) in sub-section (1), for the words “ every four hundred population” the words “every one thousand population” shall be substituted;
- (2) In sub-section (4), the first proviso shall be omitted.

Khurshed Alam Khan  
Governor of Karnataka

## Annexure IV: Pilot Questionnaire for Female Panchayat Members

### 1. Demographic data

- 1.1.Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.2.Village: \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.3. Taluk/district: \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.4. Elected in which year to the G.P. \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.5. Name of G.P.: \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.6.Position in the G.P.: Sarpanch \_\_\_\_ Upsarpanch \_\_\_\_ Member \_\_\_\_
- 1.7.Elected for the first time: Yes/No

### 2. Participation

- 2.1. How was the experience for the last 5 years?
- 2.2. Have you regularly attended all the Panchayat meetings? Yes/No
- 2.3. Did you go alone \_\_\_\_ or accompanied by someone \_\_\_\_?
- 2.4. Did you speak in the meetings? Yes/No
- 2.5. What were the issues raised by you?
- 2.6. Did all the Panchayat members support the issue you raised? Yes/No
- 2.7. Was any action taken? Yes/No
- 2.8. What were you able to accomplish in the last five years?
- 2.9. Do men raise different issues? Yes/No
- 2.10. What are they?

### 3. Education Levels

- 3.1. Can you read and write? Yes/No
- 3.2. Does literacy help women govern better? Yes/No

### 4. Gram Sabhas

- 4.1. Were Gram Sabhas held? Yes/No
- 4.2. If so how many were held? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4.3. Did you attend all the G.S.? Yes/No
- 4.4. Do women attend the GS? Yes/No
- 4.5. Do they speak? Yes/No
- 4.6. If yes, what about?
- 4.7. Are resolutions taken? Yes/No
- 4.8. Did women participate? Yes/No
- 4.9. Were budgets discussed? Yes/No
- 4.10. If women have a problem how do they approach you?

### 5. Women's Collectives

- 5.1. Have you been a member of any sangha/Mahila Mandal etc? Yes/No
- 5.2. If yes, has the experience been helpful and how?
- 5.3. Do the GP women consult with sangha women? Yes/No
- 5.4. What is the nature of the relationship?
- 5.5. How have sangha women and GP women worked together previously and how can they in the future?

### 6. *Training*

- 6.1. Has there been any training for elected members? Yes/No  
6.2. Did you attend? Yes/No  
6.3. If yes, where was the training conducted and by who?  
6.4. What did the training teach you?  
6.5. Is there any other area that you want to be trained in?

### 7. *New Areas*

- 7.1. What can the GP do in the following areas:  
7.1.1. Health  
7.1.2. Reproductive health  
7.1.3. Legal literacy  
7.1.4. AIDS  
7.1.5. Any other

### 8. *Impact of their Involvement in the GP*

- 8.1. Your term as Panchayat member is coming to an end, how do you feel?  
8.2. Will you contest in the next elections? Yes/No  
8.3. If not contesting, why this decision?  
8.4. How did your family react to your political position the first time?

### 9. *Attitudes*

- 9.1. How have your attitudes/behaviour changed over the 5 year term?  
9.2. How have male members changed their attitudes/behaviour over the 5 year term?  
9.3. How have officials changed their attitudes/behaviour over the 5 year term?

### 10. *Changes*

- 10.1. Has there been any improvement in overall standards of living? Yes/No  
10.2. What other changes have you observed?  
10.3. Were there more development projects for women?  
10.4. What has been the role played by sanghas in facilitating governance?

## Annexure V: Glossary of Abbreviations or Terms Used

Agarbathi	Incense
Anganwadi	School for young children
Arrack	Country liquor
Ashraya scheme	A government programme for housing
Balwadi	Child care center
Bhagyajyoti	A government programme for lighting
Bhajan	Prayer
Bund	Small raised mud wall to direct water flow
CBO	Community based organization
Chairman	See Sarpanch
CHINYARD	Chetna Institute for Youth and Rural Development
Chula	Stove
CINI	Child in Need Institute
CPR	Common Property Resources
Crore	Rs. 1,00,00,000
Dai	Mid-wife
Dalit	Lower caste
Dashalaksha Bhavi	Dash means 10, laksha is a lakh while bhavi means a well. It is programme that provides funds for building wells.
DC	District Collector
Devadasi	Women who are dedicated to the temple as girls and are supposed to remain in service of the temple. In some areas this practice has deteriorated into prostitution.
Devadasi Rehabilitation Programme	A government programme to rehabilitate Devadasis and get them off the practice
DHO	District health Officer
<i>DRDPR</i>	<i>Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj</i>
DWCD	Department of Women and Child Development
DWCRA	Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas
EDP	Economic Development Programme
EWR	Elected women representatives or officials women
FEVORD	Federation of Voluntary Organizations in Rural Development
Ghataka	Cluster of 10 villages or so
GOI	Government of India
GP	Gram Panchayat or village level government
Gram Sabha	Public assembly
Harijan	Lower caste
HHS	Hengasara Hakkinna Sangha where Hengasara stands for women and Hakkinna for rights and Sangha for unity
IADP	Intensive Agriculture Development Programme
IDS	<i>ICDS</i> Integrated Child Development Services
	India Development Service

IRD P	Integrated Rural Development Programme
ISST	Institute of Social Studies Trust
JFPM	Joint Forest Planning and Management
JRY	Jawahar Rozhghar Yojana, a government programme which funds infrastructure.
Kannada	A Regional language and the official language of Karnataka state
Karnataka Vikasa	A monthly journal published by the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj
Kuchcha	Used to indicate "Mud" roads or houses
Lakhs	Rs.1,00,000
Lambani	Local tribe
LORDS	Leading Organisation for Rural Development
Madar	Lower caste
Mahila Mandal	Women's Group or collective or sangha or Mahila Samaj
Mandal Panchayat	The earlier form of panchayat which governed an aggregate of a few villages.
Mela	Gathering as in a fair
MP	Member of parliament
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MSK	Mahila Samakhya Karnataka
Narmada Bachao Andolan	A campaign to save the Narmada river
NFE	Non-formal education
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NRC	National Resource Center
Nyaya panchayats	Local village body that deals with justice issues
Papad	Food item
PHC	Primary Health Clinic
POW	The Progressive Organization of Women
Pradhan	See Sarpanch
PRIs	Panchayati Raj Institutions or three tiers of institutions of local self-government at the village, block and district levels.
Puccka	Used to indicate cement houses (as opposed to huts) or tarred roads (as opposed to mud roads)
Rasta Roko	Road-side Demonstration used indicating stop traffic
RTI	Right to Information movement
Sahayogini	Woman field worker
Samithi	Committee
Sarpanch	Head of panchayat, President, Chairman, Pradhan or
Adhyaksha	
Satyagraha	Demonstration
SC	Scheduled castes or the lower castes
SFDA	Small farmers Development Agency
SHG	Self Help Groups
ST	Scheduled tribes

STD	Sexually transmitted disease
SUTRA	Social for Uplift through Rural Action
OBC	Other backward castes
Taluka	Block
Taluka Mahila Federation	Federation of women's collectives at the block level
Taluk Panchayat	Panchayat or local governmental institution at the block Level
Tehsildar	Block level official
UMA	<i>Utsahi Mahila Abhyudaya (which is sanskrit for a progressive movement of women eager for change) UMA is a national resource centre for women in Panchayat Raj situated in ISST, Bangalore.</i>
UMA PRACHAR	A quarterly journal put out by ISST
Upsarpanch	Second to the head of the panchayat.
Upa-pradhan	Up-sarpanch or vice president
VDS	Village Development Sangha (collective)
Yuvathi Mandal	Youth group also called Yuvak mandal or Yuvaka sanghas
Zilla	District
Zilla Parishad	Panchayat or local governmental institution at the district level

Annexure VI: Extract of Article on Latest Policy Changes in Panchayati Raj:  
Revitalization of the Gram Sabha

Panchayat Raj Task Force Moots Change

**The sub-group of the Task Force on Panchayat Raj constituted by the Union Ministry of Rural Development has recommended sweeping changes to make gram sabhas more vibrant so that it can inculcate community spirit, increase political awareness among the masses and enable the weaker sections to progressively assert their point of view. In this context the Union Minister of state for Rural Development, Mr. Babagouda Patil said that instead of having uniform programmes in the villages all over the country it is better to have need based programmes. “Project proposals from each region should be sought before sanctioning money.” Both Mr. Patil and Mr. Prakash (Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj) admitted that the gram sabhas have not been working satisfactorily.**

- Appoint specified government officers or officers of intermediate/Zilla Panchayats as moderators/observers for gram sabha meetings. Such practice would be held in proper reporting of the proceedings and in follow up of the decisions taken.
- Hold gram sabhas throughout the state or throughout the country in the form of “gram sabha abhiyana” spread over a period of two weeks. This would be the most practical way of ensuring the regularity of gram sabhas.
- The agenda of gram sabhas should be of interest to the bulk of its membership and must cover a range of subjects that vitally affect their day-to-day affairs like the management of village schools, village water supply schemes, the functioning of the primary health centers and anganwadis, maintenance of records, etc.
- Even if the agenda is enlarged to cover the above subjects the gram sabha should not merely act as a recommendatory body or a debating forum for the people. The views expressed and the decisions taken in the gram sabha should compel the gram panchayats and other level of panchayats to act with speed to redress the grievances of the people or to fulfill their legitimate demands.
- If the decisions are not capable of being implemented the gram Panchayats should report to the gram sabhas the reasons for non-compliance.

Source: DH News Service, *Deccan Herald*, Tuesday Oct 5<sup>th</sup> 1999, p.4.

## Annexure VII: Statistics on Political Participation

<b>Table 1: Voting Population by Gender</b>			
Districts	Men	Women	Total
Bangalore urban	242450	208586	451036
Bangalore rural	487810	459659	947469
Chitradurga	584074	567655	1151729
Kolar	570194	552196	1122390
Shimoga	472151	449184	921335
Tumkur	678540	651156	1329696
Chikmagalur	293559	287125	580684
Dakshina Kannada	643773	669733	1313506
Hassan	456519	458635	915154
Kodagu	142046	140172	282218
Mandya	493896	470864	964760
Mysore	736243	700565	1436808
Belgaum	894999	883197	1778196
Bijapur	730501	720617	1451118
Dharwad	725334	688340	1413674
Uttara Kannada	299647	285190	584837
Bellary	413309	417502	830811
Bidar	347523	340616	688139
Gulbarga	661336	657414	1318750
Raichur	567253	582559	1149812
Total	10441157	10190965	20632122

**Table 2: Number of Gram Panchayats, Seats and Reservation in Karnataka**

Districts	No of GPs	Total Seats	SC	ST	BC	Others	Women
Bangalore urban	115	1713	457	121	570	565	765
Bangalore rural	226	3533	767	249	1183	1334	1527
Chitradurga	275	4159	974	734	1361	1090	1731
Kolar	305	4385	1175	456	1447	1307	1951
Shimoga	364	3565	940	409	1187	1029	1739
Tumkur	320	4931	1076	482	1642	1731	2093
Chikmagalur	225	2203	548	234	729	692	1087
Dakshina Kannada	354	5182	950	426	1719	2087	2260
Hassan	256	3422	785	260	1144	1233	1536
Kodagu	96	1091	216	137	368	370	509
Mandya	228	3556	684	228	1188	1456	1503
Mysore	361	5891	1412	459	1966	2054	2487
Belgaum	473	7206	1279	548	2393	2986	3147
Bijapur	363	5677	1241	380	1893	2163	2456
Dharwad	439	5832	1176	492	1947	2217	2562
Uttara kannada	209	2402	480	218	802	902	1135
Bellary	220	3374	794	435	1111	1034	1435
Bidar	176	2629	633	323	882	791	1124
Gulbarga	336	5095	1343	442	1706	1604	2256
Raichur	299	4781	988	542	1590	1661	2002
Total	5640	80627	17918	7575	26828	28306	35305

Table 3: Reservation of Seats in Taluk Panchayat Constituencies

Districts	No. of Seats	SC	ST	BC	Others	Women	Men
Bangalore urban	69	18(7)	3(3)	23(9)	25(9)	28	41
Bangalore rural	143	30(12)	8(8)	47(17)	58(22)	59	84
Chitradurga	172	39(15)	30(13)	58(23)	45(19)	70	102
Kolar	186	49(21)	16(11)	62(25)	59(24)	81	105
Shimoga	148	31(14)	11(9)	50(20)	56(21)	64	84
Tumkur	203	41(16)	19(11)	68(26)	75(30)	83	120
Chikmagalur	105	22(10)	7(7)	36(16)	40(17)	50	55
Dakshina Kannada	206	35(15)	10(8)	68(27)	93(34)	84	122
Hassan	143	30(13)	8(8)	48(19)	57(21)	61	82
Kodagu	48	8(3)	5(3)	16(6)	19(7)	19	29
Mandya	147	27(11)	7(7)	49(18)	64(23)	59	88
Mysore	243	52(19)	13(11)	81(30)	97(36)	96	147
Belgaum	287	48(19)	13(10)	94(34)	132(47)	110	177
Bijapur	226	42(16)	11(11)	76(28)	97(36)	91	135
Dharwad	248	42(17)	18(17)	84(36)	104(40)	110	138
Uttara kannada	123	22(11)	11(11)	44(22)	46(23)	67	56
Bellary	137	30(12)	17(9)	46(19)	44(17)	57	80
Bidar	107	24(10)	10(5)	36(15)	37(13)	43	64
Gulbarga	204	52(20)	13(10)	67(26)	72(28)	84	120
Raichur	195	36(16)	18(11)	64(25)	77(28)	80	115
Total	3340	678(277)	248(183)	1117(441)	1297(495)	1396	1944

Table 4: Reservation Of Seats In Zilla Panchayat Constituencies

Districts	No. of Seats	SC	ST	BC	Others
Bangalore urban	18(7)	5(2)	1(1)	6(2)	6(2)
Bangalore rural	38(14)	8(3)	2(1)	13(5)	15(5)
Chitradurga	46(17)	10(14)	8(3)	15(5)	13(5)
Kolar	30(19)	13(5)	4(2)	17(6)	16(6)
Shimoga	41(15)	8(3)	2(1)	14(5)	17(6)
Tumkur	54(20)	10(4)	4(2)	18(6)	22(8)
Chikmagalur	33(13)	7(3)	1(1)	11(4)	14(5)
Dakshina kannada	55(19)	9(3)	3(1)	18(6)	25(9)
Hassan	37(14)	7(3)	2(1)	12(4)	16(6)
Kodagu	17(7)	3(1)	1(1)	6(2)	7(3)
Mandya	39(14)	6(2)	2(1)	13(5)	18(6)
Mysore	64(22)	14(5)	2(1)	21(7)	27(9)
Belgaum	76(26)	12(4)	3(1)	25(9)	36(12)
Bijapur	60(21)	11(4)	2(1)	20(7)	27(9)
Dharwad	67(23)	11(4)	3(1)	23(8)	30(10)
Uttara kannada	38(14)	6(2)	2(1)	13(5)	17(6)
Bellary	38(15)	8(3)	4(2)	13(5)	13(5)
Bidar	29(11)	7(3)	3(1)	10(4)	9(3)
Gulbarga	55(19)	14(5)	3(1)	18(6)	20(7)
Raichur	54(19)	10(4)	5(2)	18(6)	21(7)
Total	909(329)	179(67)	57(26)	304(107)	369(129)

Annexure VIII: Survey of Felt Needs For Training

<b>Content Areas for Proposed Training Programmes</b>			
<b><i>Content areas for training</i></b>	<b><i>GP Members</i></b>	<b>TP members</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Additional knowledge on the functioning of PRJ System	50(50)	14(48.3)	64(49.6)
To make use of the Govt. Programmes	18(18)	9(31.1)	27(21.0)
To understand the polity of the country	3(3)	3(10.3)	6(4.6)
Skills to solve the problems	2(2)	-	2(1.6)
Bringing confidence among the members	3(3)	-	3(2.3)
Accomplishment of Development with limited resources	2(2)	-	2(1.6)
Implementation of the programmes like health & nutrition	2(2)	3(10.3)	5(3.8)
Organisation of women / community	-	-	-
Not Applicable	20(20)	-	20(15.5)
<b>Total</b>	<b>100(77.5)</b>	<b>29(22.5)</b>	<b>129(100)</b>

Note: The figures in brackets indicate the percentage. The above findings were based on a study conducted with 100 women GP members, 29 taluka panchayat members and 23 ZP women members from Mandya and Kolar districts in Karnataka.

Source: Ekatra & Jagruthi (1999)

**Annexure IX: Standing Committees Titles in Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act**

<b>Standing Committees in the Three Tiers of the Panchayati Raj Institutions</b>	
Gram Panchayat	Production committee Social Justice committee Amenities committee
Taluka Panchayat	General Standing committee Finance, Audit and Planning committee Social Justice committee
Zilla Panchayat	General Standing committee Finance, Audit and Planning committee Social Justice committee Education and Health Committee Agriculture and Industries Committee

**Annexure X: Panchayat Raj Structure in Karnataka (1993 Act)**

Source : The PR Act of 1993

