

Opportunities and Challenges of Women's Political Participation in India

A Synthesis of Research Findings from
Select Districts in India

2012

Research in Government of India-UN Women Programme, 'Promoting Women's Political Leadership and Governance in India and South Asia'

In 2009, the Royal Norwegian Embassy, India signed an agreement with Unifem, now UN Women, South Asia Regional Office to initiate a three-year programme entitled 'Promoting Women's Political Leadership and Governance in India and South Asia'. The programme aims to empower elected women representatives in local governance to make public policy and resource allocation patterns responsive to women's human rights. The programme covers 5 countries of South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Pakistan). In India, the programme is co-owned by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India.

The Programme has been designed with the spirit to capture the specific issues and challenges with regard to women's political empowerment that each country experiences. This is a demand driven programme that seeks to understand and address issues of women's participation in local governance from the grassroots perspective. Generation of a body of knowledge on women's political leadership and governance in India and South Asia is one of the key outcomes of the programme.

There are two main purposes of the research component of the programme –

- (a) To build a body of knowledge on women's political leadership and governance in India and South Asia – this is especially significant since no on-going programme on women's political empowerment in the South Asia region is working at the grassroots level – down at the level of the village councils. This being the value addition of the programme in the region, and there being very little existing policy literature which analyses governance at its fundamental grassroots institution; this programme provides an opportunity to develop innovative and unique literature based on experiences from the programme on strengthening village councils – the structure of local governance closest to ordinary citizens – to enable women as equal and fair participants and decision makers at the local level.
- (b) As we build this body of knowledge, the data gathered from field experiences will in turn help to inform programme implementation and fine tune the intervention strategies as the programme progresses. Such a large and complex programme is, by nature, dynamic, and hence useful feedback in terms of baseline data, focused studies such as barriers and promoters of women's political leadership and governance in India and South Asia throughout the course of the programme will be useful for the programme interventions.

UN Women

UN Women is the United Nations organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their rights worldwide.

UN Women supports United Nations Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the United Nations system's work in advancing gender equality.

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International Centre for Research on Women

The International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) is a global research institute with headquarters in Washington D.C., and regional offices in Nairobi, Kenya, and New Delhi, India. We also have project office in Mumbai. ICRW is comprised of social scientists, economists, public health specialists and demographers, all of whom are experts in gender relations. We are thought leaders driven by passion to alleviate poverty and rectify injustice in the world. And we believe that women and girls – in collaboration with men and boys – are essential to the solutions. We know that when their quality of life improves, families are healthier and economies are stronger. ICRW's mission is to empower women, advance gender equality and fight poverty in the developing world. To accomplish this, ICRW works with partners to conduct empirical research, build capacity and advocate for evidence-based, practical ways to change policies and programs.

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ICRW – UN Women Joint Publication

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Message

India has witnessed the world's largest experiment in grassroots local democracy, triggered by the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution, which created a third tier of governance – Panchayati Raj Institutions (Village Councils) and urban local bodies. These are elected bodies and cannot be dissolved by administrative order. Since 1995, three rounds of elections have been held; and as one-third of seats (proposed to be increased to 50 per cent) are reserved for women, more than 1.5 million women have been elected to office in each round. It is evident therefore that first generation issues of framing the 'rules of the game' and creating an understanding about them have been addressed.

The UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) aims to address second generation issues of democratic governance under its programme 'Promoting Women's Political Leadership and Governance in South Asia' with focus on Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan. The programme works with women – both elected and aspiring at the local level – to achieve three main outcomes: (1) Strengthened legal frameworks and policies for women's political participation in local governance in India and South Asia by 2015; (2) Elected women and men representatives in local governments have the knowledge and capacity to transform and implement policies, programmes and resource allocations for gender sensitive governance in five states in India by 2015; and (3) Key capacity development and media institutions and structures in India and South Asia are strengthened to mainstream gender into their policies and programmes by 2015.

Research for evidence based advocacy is an integral part of this programme. It plays a very important role in capturing the ground level situation in India and South Asia and informs programme implementation. Research supported under the programme is contributing to the body of knowledge on what enables and/or prevents women's political leadership and governance in India and in South Asia.

The research thus far is presented in a set of four publications. The research conducted by ICRW has provided the programme with a conceptual clarity on 'gender responsive governance'; the effects of economic disempowerment and violence against women on women's political participation; the status of women's political participation and leadership in South Asia; and finally, the determinants of women's political leadership and participation in three districts – Alwar (Rajasthan), Gajapati (Odisha), and Mysore (Karnataka) in India.

I congratulate the ICRW team and the many women and men, elected as well as aspiring representatives who have contributed to further the understanding of issues pertaining to women's political leadership and governance in India and in South Asia.

I hope you find the report useful and insightful for understanding and promoting women's political leadership.



Anne F. Stenhammer
Regional Programme Director
UN Women South Asia Sub-Regional Office
New Delhi

Message

It is with great excitement that we launch this important publication, “Opportunities and Challenges of Women’s Political Participation in India: A Synthesis of Research Findings from Select Districts in India.”

As the world’s largest democracy, and one that has taken important steps to open opportunities for marginalised groups, including women, to lead, India is an important case study for global policy dialogues around good governance. This research not only contributes to our understanding of how quotas mandating women’s representation on local governing bodies—the *Panchayati Raj* Institutions (PRIs)—are playing out for the individuals who comprise them and for the policymaking process in the three states studied, but it also shines important light on a matter of increasing international interest: how to achieve gender responsive governance and advance the cause of gender equality and representative democracy?

In this exciting collaboration with UN Women, we have uncovered important lessons. We reaffirm the power of gender roles and social norms to shape behaviour. We find that female elected representatives desire to re-contest but are more likely to do so if they have a supportive husband who is helping with chores at home. Among women who do not re-contest, we see the number one reason for withdrawing from public life being the time burden of home and child care. We see powerful and challenging attitudes among women and men as to what role women can and should play in leadership, and we find that PRIs are not considered to be spaces where gender issues, such as domestic violence, can be raised.

These findings inform key conclusions. We confirm the value of gender quotas as an important tool for moving us toward our goal of gender responsive governance, insofar as the mere presence of women can transform patriarchal frameworks. Yet we find that the simple adage of “add women and stir” is insufficient on its own—women cannot be solely expected to carry the burden of transforming the governing process into a gender responsive ideal. Additional work needs to be done—at the policy and at the individual level—to transform these spaces into truly democratic and gender-equitable realms.

This report makes an important contribution to the discourse on gender responsive governance, and it comes at a critical time. This is the kind of evidence we need to inform our strategies to achieve true equality and democracy and a future where girls will not need a quota system to achieve parity in their local, state and national governing bodies. It is a future well within our reach. Let’s make it happen!



Sarah Degnan Kambou

President, International Center for Research on Women

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We received unflinching and cheerful support from our colleague Prakash Mishra towards data analysis. Prasenjit Banerjee provided unflinching and efficient support to manage the finances of the grant. Ellen Weiss, our Technical Editor kept us on our toes through her meticulous editing and eye for detail. Several colleagues within ICRW have supported us at different stages of the project – we specially thank Pranita Achyut and Kavya Bopanna. We also received support from Ms. Swati Chakraborty and Ms. Mukta Banerjee for specific aspects of the research study.

We acknowledge with sincere thanks the support we received from the Governance Unit of UN Women, South Asia Sub Regional Office, New Delhi and for according significance to the issue of gender responsiveness within local governance and envisioning the need for evidence on this critical issue. Thanks are due to the UN Women team, Suraj Kumar (Head, Governance Unit), Renu Wadehra (Senior Advisor, Royal Norwegian Embassy, India) and Diya Dutta (Research Analyst) for their support and inputs during the course of this project; and to Ms. Anne F. Stenhammer, Regional Programme Director for her passion and vision on this issue. We also thank Dr. Hrusikesh Panda, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India for his suggestions and advice during the initial phase of conceptualising this research project. We wish to thank government officials in the states of Karnataka, Rajasthan and Odisha for their support and cooperation during data collection. We also thank Sangeeta Gandotra and Minaram Patnaik (District Project Officers, UN Women) for their support during the implementation of the study. We also thank the Royal Norwegian Embassy in India who has sponsored the UN Women programme on, 'Promoting Women's Political Leadership and Governance in India and South Asia'.

Finally, and most importantly, we acknowledge the respondents of our study for sparing their time and sharing their experiences with us, and trusting that their individual contribution will enable the realisation of a gender responsive governance system that has social justice and gender equality as its core principles.

Nandita Bhatla
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English equivalents of some commonly used terms

Gram Sabha	Village Council meetings
Zilla Parishad	Local Government Body at the District Level
Gram Panchayat	Local Self Government
Nyaya Panchayat	System of dispute resolution at the village level
Gram Kachari	Local Judicial Council
Sarpanch	Elected Head of a village level statutory constitution of local self-government, the gram panchayat (village government)
Panchayat Samiti	Local government body at the <i>tehsil or taluka or mandal</i> (administrative division at the village level)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS



ANM	Auxiliary Nurse Midwife
BDO	Block Development Officer
BPL	Below Poverty Line
CBO	Community Based Organisation
DV	Domestic Violence
EWR	Elected Woman Representative
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GP	Gram Panchayat
IAY	Indira Awas Yojana
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NFHS	National Family Health Survey
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRHM	National Rural Health Mission
OBC	Other Backward Classes
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institutions
PS	Panchayat Samiti
SC	Scheduled Caste
ST	Scheduled Tribe
SHG	Self Help Group
PESA	Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act
VAW	Violence against Women
ZP	Zilla Parishad

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is growing momentum among governments and civil society to foster and ensure women's participation and leadership in the political arena, and specifically within local governance structures. Establishing quotas for women's representation at different levels of government has been a strategic tactic in achieving this goal in many countries. In India, the Constitution (73rd Amendment Act), enacted in 1992, mandated the reservation of a minimum of one-third of seats for women (both as members and as chairpersons) within all of India's locally elected governance bodies commonly referred to as *Panchayati Raj* Institutions (PRIs). The amendment also entrusted panchayats with the responsibility of furthering the agenda of economic development and social justice.

Affirmative action to ensure women's political representation is an important step in democratising and engendering local governance. However, it does not guarantee effective participation or ensure that issues of concern to community and women will automatically be addressed by local governance structures. Such issues reflect women's practical gender needs as well as their strategic gender interests. Practical gender needs are immediate needs such as water and healthcare, which fall within women's socially defined roles. While the importance of these issues cannot be undermined, attention to only these does not necessarily challenge women's status in society, transform power and gender relations to enable gender equity and social justice.¹ There is a need then to better understand how PRIs can become more engaged

and proactive around strategic gender issues and provide spaces to promote gender equity within an overall framework of gender responsive governance. By gender responsive governance we mean a process that occurs at different levels with a clear purpose to impact issues that foster women's empowerment and promote gender equity and social justice.

The current study, conducted by The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), is part of UN Women's programme titled "Promoting Women's Political Leadership and Governance in India and South Asia". It is a field-level exploration in three of UN Women's programme districts, one each in the states of Rajasthan (Alwar district), Karnataka (Mysore district) and Odisha (Gajapati district). The overall aim of the study is to understand whether PRIs are gender responsive institutions where gender issues are raised and discussed. With a deliberate focus on the *Gram Panchayat* (GP) level, the study examines the factors that influence such discussions through an emphasis on the issue of domestic violence, one of the most pervasive and daily manifestations of gender inequity.

The study findings are based on a survey with close to 3,000 elected women and men GP members and qualitative data on select themes collected from *Sarpanches*, members of *Panchayat Samiti* and *Zilla Parishad* and other stakeholders in the three select districts. This paper presents the synthesis of key findings across the three study districts on specific aspects of gender responsiveness of PRIs and highlights overall conclusion and recommendations.





The study finds that women are moving into leadership positions through both reserved and unreserved seats and that many perceive positive outcomes as a result of being a GP member, including increased self confidence and improved status in the family and community. But women face a number of barriers such as low literacy, poor preparatory training, a high household work burden and negative attitudes towards women in public office that constrain their ability to fulfil their governance roles or that make them unlikely to re-contest. We also see that the PRIs' mandate results in a tight focus on development concerns like water, sanitation, transportation and eligibility for social welfare schemes – all important for meeting a number of women's practical needs. But little attention is paid to addressing women's strategic gender issues. Our research shows there is a sharp disconnect between the frequency with which women privately raise gender issues – especially domestic violence – with their GP representatives and the frequency with which those issues are brought to the table during panchayat meetings. Traditional attitudes among both women and men elected leaders around domestic violence contribute to it being perceived as outside the realm of public and political discourse. Yet, there is perceived space and commitment to discussion on these issues, as a small but not insignificant proportion of elected representatives raise these issues within meetings. The perception of importance accorded to such issues by the panchayats is the single most significant factor that increases the likelihood of raising these issues manifold.

These findings indicate that for PRIs to be an effective mechanism for gender

responsive governance several changes must be made. First, there is the need for the government and all actors committed to gender responsive governance to undertake a systematic review of the mandate of local governance bodies and of existing social justice structures and mechanisms within the local governance framework – such as the *Nyaya Panchayats* and the *Gram Kachehri*. Such focused research will pinpoint the structural and operational changes needed so that local governance structures can be spaces and platforms for addressing social and gender inequalities.

Second, state governments that offer training for new panchayat members must do a better job of equipping them to effectively fulfil their roles. These trainings must focus on the key concepts of gender equity, social justice and equitable development as core principles of panchayat functioning. They must promote the adoption of gender equitable attitudes among all elected representatives as well as how they can effectively respond to strategic gender issues like domestic violence. Given the huge expectation and need of the community for recourse on these issues, elected bodies and members must play a central role to ensure that responses are in keeping with rights and justice frameworks and denounce biased and patriarchal efforts. Trainings must be made relevant for members with minimal literacy skills, and build perceptions of self worth and confidence to undo the impact of historic gender disparities. Discussions around rationale and content of laws, acts and provisions related to such issues as domestic violence, child marriage and education must be incorporated.

Third, programmers and policy makers must take into account the impact of gender related barriers and disparities and adopt specific strategies to enable women elected representatives to participate effectively and have political aspirations. The gender division of labour and attitudes towards women in public roles are important components for discussion with families, communities and administrators. Institutional support services must also be advocated for.

Fourth, discourse around community participation and expectations of their elected representatives and bodies must be engendered. Concepts of citizenship and people's participation in platforms of local governance are too often limited by their perception of "benefits" that panchayats are able to provide them within the framework of specific practical needs. While the rules and procedures governing the functioning of the panchayats need a critical analysis through the lens of inclusive and equitable development, the divide between private and public issues at the community level that often perpetrates exclusion, inequities and loss of opportunities too needs re-examination.

The study emphasises that the onus of redefining public and private spaces to make them gender equitable cannot be on women alone. Society at large needs to make a collective effort as well. This will help to understand the efforts made towards effective participation of women elected representatives, and examine the impact of their participation on panchayats. In the effort to justify their presence and participation, women members too will aim to perform along well established patterns of power, authority and functioning, and not forge newer lines of discussion. Their skills, capacities and outlook need not automatically be different from those around them. Thus, the mere presence of women can initiate change but cannot ensure that priorities set by patriarchal frameworks are transformed. The redefining of the democratic space of the panchayats also requires policy changes through defining a focus and creating operational guides to prioritise and support this outcome. Social indicators of gender equality are matters of concern today and engagement of PRIs on strategic gender issues cannot be left to chance. Any development that is bereft of equality and justice loses its meaning.



INTRODUCTION

Women's leadership and effective participation is increasingly on the development agenda of governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies, and non-governmental organisations, including women's rights groups. Evidence from programmes and research demonstrates the important role women play as key actors and decision-makers in the development process across a wide range of sectors.ⁱⁱ In the political arena in particular, there is growing momentum among governments to foster and ensure women's participation and leadership in governance structures. Establishing quotas for women's representation at different levels of governance has been a strategic tactic in achieving this goal in many countries.

In India, affirmative action for women and disadvantaged groups has been enshrined into the constitution. The Constitution (73rd Amendment Act), enacted in 1992, calls for the reservation of a minimum of one-third of seats for women (both as members and as chairpersons) within all of India's locally elected governance bodies commonly referred to as Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) (see Box 1). More recently in 2009, the Government of India approved a 50 per cent reservation for women in PRIs; and many states, including Rajasthan and Odisha, have passed similar legislation. The same amendment also calls for PRIs to "prepare and implement plans for economic development and social justice." Affirmative action to ensure women's

Box 1: Panchayati Raj Institutions

According to Article 243(B) of the Constitution of India, Gram Sabha is a "body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised with the area of Panchayat at the village level." The Panchayati Raj (Rule of Village Committee) system is a three-tier system in the state with elected bodies at the Village, Taluk (Block) and District levels. It ensures greater participation of people and more effective implementation of development programmes in rural areas.

Key provisions of the Constitution (73rd Amendment Act)

- The establishment of a three-tier PRI structure, with elected bodies at village, block and district levels (States with populations less than 2 million are not required to introduce block-level Panchayats);
- The recognition that the Gram Sabha constitutes a deliberative body at the village level;
- Direct elections to five year terms for all members at all levels;
- One-third of all seats are reserved for women; reservations for SCs and STs proportional to their populations;
- Reservations for chairpersons of the Panchayats – Sarpanches – following the same guidelines;
- State legislatures may provide reservations for other backward groups;
- A State Election Commission (SEC) will be created to supervise, organise and oversee Panchayat elections at all levels;
- A State Finance Commission (SFC) will be established to review and revise the financial position of the Panchayats on five-year intervals, and to make recommendations to the State government about the distribution of Panchayat funds.
- At the village level, the most important provisions relating to participation and accountability are those governing reservations and the Gram Sabha. Under the 73rd Amendment one-third of all seats must be reserved for women. Likewise, reservations for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are made in proportion to their population.

Affirmative action to ensure women's political representation is an important step in democratising and engendering local governance

Box 2: What is Gender Responsive Governance?

This study defines **Gender Responsive Governance (GRG)** as ‘a process that embodies measures, attitudes and practices of different stakeholders, both men and women, at different levels of governance with a clear purpose to impact issues that foster women’s empowerment and promote gender equity and social justice. It is a process that promotes and sustains the ability of women to fully participate in the governance and development process, enhances their ability to raise critical questions about inequity and collectivise without fear and pressure, and ensures gains from services.’

Elected women representatives articulate and emphasise priorities that are different from men, although these priorities largely remain within the framework of development

political representation is an important step in democratising and engendering local governance. However, it has not been adequate to ensure women’s leadership and their effective participation in local governance,ⁱⁱⁱ as elected women representatives (EWRs), both members and Sarpanches,^{iv} continue to face several institutional and social barriers. At the institutional level, the capacity of local governance structures to implement reforms, institutionalise accountability systems, decentralise functions and facilitate women’s active engagement plays a role in determining whether women are able to emerge as political agents and actors.^v Social barriers include lack of education, lack of respect for women in PRIs, physical violence against women in the public and domestic spheres, and oppressive patriarchal and caste structures.^{vi} Traditional power hierarchies are tilted in favour of men and resist giving space or recognition to women’s attempts to be part of the political scenario. Although there are women Sarpanches who have taken the initiative and made remarkable changes on behalf of their constituencies,^{vii} it is widely acknowledged that generally EWRs face many facets of gender discrimination.

The presence and participation of women in local governance structures also does not guarantee that the issues community women are concerned about and those that underlie social injustices will be taken up and addressed by PRIs. Studies^{viii, ix} have highlighted that EWRs articulate and

emphasise priorities that are different from men, although these priorities largely remain within the framework of development (i.e., access to basic amenities and infrastructure). Such priorities at best serve women’s practical gender needs and not their strategic gender interests. Practical gender needs are immediate perceived needs identified by women such as water and healthcare, which fall within their socially defined roles. Meeting these needs does not necessarily involve challenging women’s status in society or a focus on gender equity.^x However, approaches that respond to women’s strategic gender interests seek to transform gender relations and change women’s position in society rather than only improve their condition.

Research shows that the success of panchayats in focusing on women’s strategic gender interests has been mixed.^{xi} There have been some positive outcomes for individual women, and instances of women chairpersons and members taking on cases of alcoholism and violence against women.^{xii} However, examples of panchayats being forums that systematically address and challenge the violation of women’s rights, gender inequities and different forms of violence are few. There is a need then to better understand how PRIs can become more engaged and proactive around strategic gender issues and provide spaces to promote gender equity within an overall framework of gender responsive governance (see Box 2).

FOCUS OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on gathering evidence on whether PRIs are gender responsive institutions and the extent to which they are playing a role in addressing strategic gender interests at the local level. In keeping with the definition of GRG, the study attempts to specifically understand: (a) whether PRIs are spaces that encourage dialogue on gender issues; (b) whether strategic gender issues are recognised as priorities for PRIs as a whole; (c) the gender attitudes of its members; and (d) the personal and political gains for EWRs. This exploration also focuses on the enablers and challenges to women and men's entry into the political arena as well as their functioning once elected.

The thematic exploration of strategic gender interests in this study centres around domestic violence, one of the most pervasive manifestations of gender inequality and male power and control over women. By domestic violence we mean the different physical and non-physical forms of violence perpetrated by intimate partners and their families against women in the household.^{xiii} The study provides an in-depth look across the districts of the

engagement of panchayats and individual members with the issue of domestic violence. Data on intimate partner violence in India, one important component of domestic violence, indicate it is a widespread problem with important health and development implications. For example, according to the National Family and Health Survey, 50.2 per cent, 41.2 per cent and 22.5 per cent of ever-married women aged between 15 and 49 report the experience of physical, emotional or sexual spousal violence in Rajasthan, Gajapati and Mysore, respectively.^{xiv}

The study places a deliberate focus on the GP level because this level represents a true democratic space where the concerns of the community can be raised and addressed either directly by community members in Gram Sabha meetings or through their elected representatives. In addition to women, the study also aims to understand the perspectives, attitudes and practices of men given that gender responsive governance requires the transformation of personal and collective spaces, including political spaces, of both men and women.

This study focuses on gathering evidence on whether PRIs are gender responsive institutions and the extent to which they are playing a role in addressing strategic gender interests at the local level



RESEARCH SITES

In consultation with UN Women and the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, ICRW selected the following three districts representing different social and demographic contexts for research: (1) Mysore (Karnataka), (2) Alwar (Rajasthan), and (3) Gajapati (Odisha).

Among the three districts, Mysore has the longest history of progressive legislation supporting local self-governance and ensuring women's involvement in it. Its sex ratio has increased from 964 to 982 females for every 1,000 males over the last decade, which is higher than both the state and national average. According to the Census Report 2011, the female literacy rate is 66 per cent, while the male literacy rate is 78 per cent.

Alwar is a district steeped in traditional caste politics and patriarchal

structures such as the Purdah system. Indicators such as a sex ratio of 894 females per 1,000 males (Census 2011) and a startling gap in literacy rates (only 56 per cent of the female population is literate compared to 87 per cent of the male population) are reflective of extremely high levels of gender inequality.

Gajapati has a predominantly tribal population, and changes mandated by the Constitution (73rd Amendment Act) have been superimposed on the tribal systems of community planning that have existed previously. The sex ratio of the district is 1,042 females to 1,000 males, an interesting contrast to the sex ratio recorded in the other two sites. The overall literacy levels, however, are extremely low with the male and female literacy rates being 65 per cent and 44 per cent, respectively.

METHODOLOGY

Primary data was collected from elected representatives at all three tiers of governance using quantitative and qualitative methods.

GP members in each of the study districts completed a cross sectional, quantitative survey. To make the study as representative as possible, the sample included GPs from all blocks of each district. The final samples are 1,006 GP members in Mysore (500 women and 506 men), 1,000 members in Alwar (502 women and 497 men), and 975 members in Gajapati (463 women and 512 men).

A range of qualitative methods was used to collect data from men and women from the same villages where the selected GPs are operating. A total of 26 key informant interviews were conducted with officials connected with the PRIs and community opinion leaders to obtain their views about local governance and women's leadership. Men and women Sarpanches and elected members at the district and block level participated in 89 in-depth interviews to share their experiences of governance processes. Additionally, four focus group discussions were

held in each district, two with men and two with women, to understand the community perceptions of panchayat meetings, issues of concern to the community and their participation in panchayat meetings (Details of qualitative and quantitative sample by district is mentioned in Annexure 1)

Challenges and Limitations

The data collection process faced a number of challenges, including accessing difficult physical terrain, non-cooperation from some informants and getting private, uninterrupted time for the interview, especially with women. This in part could have contributed to lower reporting on some of the more sensitive issues explored in the study. In addition, the study does not attempt to address all aspects of women's strategic gender interests at all three tiers of the PRIs. Instead, the study centers around the GP level, with domestic violence being a central focus. Additionally, the study relies on reports from GP members and others of GP and Gram Sabha meetings instead of observation of these meetings by the researchers.

Primary data was collected from elected representatives at all three tiers of governance using quantitative and qualitative methods



OVERVIEW OF THE SYNTHESIS REPORT

The study has gathered data from women and men elected representatives on several aspects of gender responsiveness in the three selected districts—Mysore, Alwar and Gajapati. The detailed findings of each of the three districts have been presented as individual case studies.^{xv} This report describes the findings across the study sites on key aspects of gender responsiveness. In line with the focus of the study, the data from the survey with GP members forms the basis for this analysis, though data from elected representatives from other tiers is also presented.

We begin by presenting a profile of GP members followed by a synthesis of the findings organised around a number of the study's core questions. These include

- What motivates men and women to contest elections to become GP members and to what do they attribute their success?
- What are the issues raised in panchayat meetings and what do the GP members consider priorities for discussion at these meetings? Are there spaces for dialogue on strategic gender interests?

- Are gender-related issues concerns of the community and do they expect GP members to be engaged on these issues?
- How do GP members respond to concerns of domestic violence (DV)? Is their response influenced by their attitude towards violence against women?
- How common is it for GP members to raise issues of DV in panchayat meetings and what impacts their likelihood of raising the issue for discussion?
- What enables GP members, particularly women, to function effectively and what are the constraints to their effective participation?
- How have women's experiences as GP members affected their self perception and their future aspirations, including their desire to re-contest?

As each of the districts represents diverse contexts, similarities and differences are highlighted. The final Section presents the conclusions and recommendations that emerge from the overall study.

This report describes the findings across the study sites on key aspects of gender responsiveness

PROFILE OF GRAM PANCHAYAT MEMBERS

Across the districts, the vast majority of the GP members are aged 30 years and older, though in Mysore, approximately 20 per cent of women members are 29 years of age or younger (see Table 1.1). The level of education presents a stark gender gap between male and female GP members irrespective of the district. There are more women GP members who have not received any education as compared to their male counterparts in each study site. Close to half the women GP members report that they were married before 18 years in Mysore and Alwar. There is a large proportion of male GP members in Alwar, and about a third in Gajapati who report being married under the legal age of 21. More than half of the women members in Mysore and Gajapati are affiliated with a self-help group (SHG), whereas this is reported by very few women members in Alwar.

A total of 85 per cent or more of GP members across the three districts are first time entrants into panchayats. Compared to women, more men report being elected a second time in each site. It is also interesting to note the wide variation in the type of seats the GP members have stood for: in Mysore fewer women GP members have stood for elections from reserved seats (43 per cent) as compared to Alwar (60 per cent) and Gajapati (86 per cent). For men, there is considerably less variation across the districts. In Mysore, very few GP members (male and female) report being elected unopposed; this is in sharp contrast to the scenario in Gajapati where a majority are elected uncontested. These findings affirm the variations in the socio-political situation at the GP level in the districts of study.

The level of education presents a stark gender gap between male and female GP members irrespective of the district

Per cent of GP members surveyed who:		MYSORE	ALWAR	GAJAPATI
Are aged ≤ 29 years	Female	21.8	12.4	15.8
	Male	7.1	9.3	7.4
Ever been to school	Female	57.4	38.4	53.8
	Male	85.1	77.1	80.3
Married below legal age	Female	48.3	47.1	16.6
	Male	8.5	63.2	33.1
Affiliated with SHG	Female	58.0	5.6	62.0
	Male*			
Contested from a reserved seat (either by sex or caste)	Female	43.4	60.0	86.4
	Male	52.9	40.8	62.7
Elected Uncontested	Female	8.0	27.7	79.9
	Male	5.5	28.7	72.9

*Self Help Groups (SHGs) are formed primarily for women, hence reported for only women.

KEY FINDINGS

What motivates men and women to contest elections to become GP members and to what do they attribute their success?

The GP members state varied reasons for wanting to contest elections. In both Gajapati and Mysore, the community appears as a critical factor influencing both women and men's decision to contest, in conjunction with their own interest. In Gajapati, the role of the community is most pronounced. In contrast, in Alwar half of the women report that they decided to contest elections because "my family wanted me to", and this was the highest reported reason, followed by their interest to work for development. For men, the community and personal interest remain the top two stated reasons across all the districts, though it is interesting to note that family was cited as a reason by one-third of men in Alwar as well.

If we combine the responses given by members into exclusive categories of self motivation, motivation by others or a combination of both,^{xvi} the comparative picture emerges more clearly, as seen in Table 1.2. In Mysore, the reasons for entering into politics at the local level are more to do with self motivation for both male and female mem-

bers, while it is the least so in Gajapati where the influence of 'others only' is most pronounced. The impact of motivation on raising of specific issues within the panchayat and member's aspirations to re-contest elections will be detailed in the following sections.

Irrespective of who or what influences the decision of GP members to contest elections, encouragement from spouse emerges as one of the primary reasons attributed to success in the elections by women across the districts and by men in Mysore. Women GP members in Mysore and Gajapati attribute their success equally or more to support from women in the community. This is in line with the community being cited as an important factor influencing their decision to contest. For men in Mysore, support from the family – both natal and marital – is cited as the other important factor after spousal support. On the other hand, for men GP members in Alwar none of these figure in the top two reasons attributed to a successful win. Here 80 per cent of the men cite support from a political party, followed by 72 per cent who mention education as a factor. In Mysore too, support from a political party is mentioned by a substantial proportion (53 per cent women and 41 per cent men GP members).

Irrespective of who or what influences the decision of GP members to contest elections, encouragement from spouse emerges as one of the primary reasons attributed to success in the elections by women across the districts

Table 1.2: Per cent distribution of GP members by reasons for contesting elections to GP by district

		MYSORE	ALWAR	GAJAPATI
Self motivated only	Female	42.0	22.3	17.7
	Male	55.5	36.4	25.4
Motivated by others only	Female	22.8	30.3	36.3
	Male	4.6	15.3	22.8
Self + others	Female	35.2	47.7	46.0
	Male	39.9	48.3	51.8

The reporting on barriers during the election has been low in Mysore and Gajapati (approximately 85 per cent report facing no barriers while contesting elections), but it is reported by a substantial proportion of members in Alwar. Here a high proportion of women report multiple barriers such as lack of education (80 per cent), inadequate finances (73 per cent), non cooperation from spouse (58 per cent) and lack of time for election activities due to household responsibilities (66 per cent). The overall reporting on barriers for men was comparatively lower in Alwar with non cooperation from spouse (42 per cent) and lack of time due to household responsibilities (36 per cent) being cited as the primary impediments.

What are the issues raised in panchayat meetings and what are considered by GP members to be priorities for discussion at these meetings? Are they spaces for dialogue on strategic gender interests?

Panchayats in the three districts function as platforms to address women's practical gender needs rather than their strategic gender interests. According to male and female GP members, concerns related to infrastructure – water, sanitation, road construction and electricity – are the main issues discussed in GP meetings. Pension disbursement and issues related to wages and employment also emerge as common topics. These are also important priorities for GP members. However, not all issues deemed as priorities by the GP members are discussed in panchayat meetings. In Gajapati, for example, around half of the GP members report concerns around health, education

and women's development as priorities for the panchayats, but these issues do not find space for discussion either in GP meetings or the Gram Sabha. Similarly, housing in Mysore and education in Alwar are issues that are cited as priorities by 40 per cent or more of the members but are not reported as issues that are discussed in meetings.

Specific probes around women-related issues raised in the last three GP meetings reveal that most of the issues prioritised are either in the context of available schemes for women, or around their practical gender needs. In Alwar and Gajapati, between one-third and two-third of male and female members point to two specific schemes/programmes, namely Widow Pension and Indira Awas Yojana.^{xvii} Schooling for girls is reported by over 40 per cent of members in Gajapati. Domestic violence and alcohol abuse are referred to by less than 15 per cent of members in Gajapati and less than 10 per cent in Alwar. In Mysore, around 70 per cent of members state that no women related issue was raised in the last three GP meetings. Among the issues that were raised, Widow Pension again ranks the highest as mentioned by 14 per cent of respondents. All other issues are reported by less than 10 per cent of both male and female members.

The patterns of reporting on issues discussed in the Gram Sabha are similar to the GP meetings. Less than 10 per cent of GP members in Alwar and Mysore report that community women raise issues specific to domestic violence in these meetings. The reporting in Gajapati is more encouraging with 28 per cent of GP members reporting that domestic violence is raised by community women in meetings.

Most of the issues prioritised are either in the context of available schemes for women, or around their practical gender needs



Interviews with leaders from the upper tiers of governance report neglect of women's issues as well. According to a woman ZP member in Alwar:

Issues like dowry, domestic violence, rape, child marriage have not got proper attention in meetings at different levels of Panchayati Raj. There is no time to discuss these issues. These women related issues are completely neglected in Zilla Parishad meetings.

Are gender-related issues concerns of the community and do they expect GP members to be engaged on these issues?

Domestic violence and alcohol abuse are important concerns of community women as evidenced by the substantial proportions of GP members who say they are approached privately by their female constituents to discuss these issues. Thus, there is a significant gap between the issues raised for discussion in GP meetings and the issues that are important to many women in the study districts.

As shown in Table 1.3, more than half of both male and female GP members in Alwar report being approached by

community women on domestic violence; and more than 80 per cent report this for alcohol abuse. The numbers are comparatively less for the other two districts. The other significant issues that emerge are early marriage and school dropout for girls. Mysore shows the widest gap between reporting by male and female members on most issues, including domestic violence. Here, not only is the overall reporting of being approached for most gender issues the lowest among the districts, but more male members report being approached by community women, as compared to the female members. This could be due to the perception that male GP members are more approachable or because they are perceived as more influential in responding to such problems. The perception that male GP members have more authority and power by virtue of which they can effectively intervene and negotiate or even coerce male members of the complainant's family could be contributing to this. This is an area that requires further exploration. It also highlights the fact that engendering panchayats must include men in the discourse on gender equality.

There is a significant gap between the issues raised for discussion in GP meetings and the issues that are important to many women in the study districts

Table 1.3: Per cent distribution by district of GP members who report that women have approached them on a specific issue*

		MYSORE	ALWAR	GAJAPATI
Domestic violence	Female	28.0	53.7	35.8
	Male	49.6	56.7	40.8
Alcohol abuse	Female	14.4	83.6	28.7
	Male	24.9	82.8	33.9
Girls' early marriage	Female	14.4	24.0	13.3
	Male	9.3	21.1	14.8
Girls dropping out of school	Female	13.2	43.8	31.5
	Male	6.9	36.6	35.0

*The table includes issues that are reported by 25 per cent or more of GP members in any one district.

How do GP members respond to concerns of domestic violence? Is their response influenced by their attitudes towards inter-spousal violence?

To understand GP members' responses to domestic violence we first examine their attitudes towards the problem. GP members were asked whether they agree, partially agree or disagree with specific statements of which seven are about violence against women; the others are about women's leadership and domestic roles (Specific statements that were asked to GP members are presented in Annexure 2).

Looking at their scores on this 17-item Gender Equitable Scale (for detailed explanation refer to Annexure 2) as a whole, we find that most GP members, both men and women, across the sites fall into the moderate category, meaning that they hold attitudes that are moderately supportive of gender equity. But a fourth to 40 per cent of male and female respondents in Alwar and Gajapati fall in the low equity category, indicating greater acceptance of inter-spousal violence and more traditional views about women in leadership positions and domestic roles (see Table 1.4).

There is considerable difference noted across the districts on the responses to statements regarding inter-spousal vio-

lence. In Mysore, overall agreement on use and justification of violence is low, but more women than men support violence in certain contexts. For example, 15 per cent of male members feel that *'there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten'* versus 29 per cent of women. Similarly, violence under the influence of alcohol is acceptable to 28 per cent of female GP members as compared to only 6 per cent of males. That *'a woman should tolerate violence from her husband/in-laws in order to keep her family together'* is agreed to by 40 per cent of women and only 23 per cent of male members.

There is little difference between attitudes of male and female GP members towards violence in Alwar. Nearly 60 per cent of all GP members agree with the statement that *'a woman should tolerate violence from her husband/in-laws in order to keep her family together'*. And a third or more believe that *'wife beating by a husband is not a bad behaviour'*. However, justification of violence is much lower with less than 13 per cent of men and women GP members agreeing to the statement that *'there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten'*. In Gajapati, there is not much difference in responses of men and women GP members – about 40 per cent agree that a man should be forgiven if he

There is considerable difference noted across the districts on the responses to statements regarding inter-spousal violence

Table 1.4: Per cent distribution of GP members across categories based on Gender Equitable Scale scores by district						
	MYSORE		ALWAR		GAJAPATI	
Level of support for gender equity						
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Low	5.2	6.9	27.1	27.6	22.2	40.2
Moderate	53.2	78.1	57.4	55.8	65.9	57.1
High	41.6	15.0	15.6	16.6	11.9	2.7

Looking at how GP members respond to requests from community women for help on domestic violence, it was found that they respond in a variety of ways, revealing large differences by district and the sex of the GP member

beats his wife while drunk. Close to a half or more say 'a woman should tolerate violence to keep her family together'. And 70 per cent or more feel that family problems should not be discussed outside the home. The greatest difference is over the statement 'A woman deserves to be beaten sometimes'. Twice as many men agree as women (20 per cent vs. 9 per cent).

Looking at how GP members respond to requests from community women for help on domestic violence, it was found that they respond in a variety of ways, revealing large differences by district and the sex of the GP member (see Table 1.5).

In Gajapati, both male and female GP members report *advising the perpetrator* to stop violence as the most common response (more than 60 per cent), followed by *organising community meetings* (38 per cent), and then *consulting other GP members* (27 per cent).

In Mysore too, *advising the perpetrator* is the most often reported response.

Though reported by a lower proportion, *helping the woman register a complaint* is the next commonly reported response by both women (43 per cent) and men (32 per cent), followed by *consulting other GP members* (26 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively). It is a matter of concern that one-third of women in Mysore report *asking the woman to tolerate the situation*. This is significantly associated with attitudes towards domestic violence in Mysore. Thus, more women members who were likely to agree with the statement that 'a woman should tolerate violence in order to keep her family together' also report asking women to do so. This relationship is not found in Alwar or Gajapati.

Gender differentials are very pronounced in Alwar. Over 53 per cent of male members report advising the perpetrator, while only 21 per cent of women report this. On the other hand, women's preferred response (reported by 38 per cent) was to consult other GP members, while 17 per cent of men report this. Taking no action was

Table 1.5: Per cent distribution of GP members by district according to their response to being approached for assistance around domestic violence (multiple responses)

		MYSORE	ALWAR	GAJAPATI
Type of response				
Advised perpetrator to stop violence	Female	63.9	20.8	63.2
	Male	75.2	52.8	69.3
Asked women to tolerate violence	Female	32.6	6.0	5.4
	Male	3.5	3.8	8.9
Helped register a complaint	Female	31.9	19.5	9.9
	Male	43.5	25.8	15.2
Consulted other GP members	Female	16.7	37.6	26.9
	Male	25.9	17.0	28.5
Organised community meetings instantly	Female	0.4	6.0	36.8
	Male	7.4	0.6	38.9
No action	Female	1.3	12.1	4.4
	Male	0	2.5	1.8

Table 1.6: Per cent distribution of GP members by district who report that they themselves raised domestic violence issue in GP meetings

		MYSORE	ALWAR	GAJAPATI
Raised issue in GP meetings	Female	16.2	27	18
	Male	8.1	20	24

reported by 12 per cent of women in Alwar, the highest among the study sites.

The response *'advising the perpetrator'* needs to be viewed with caution, given that gender attitudes of members are largely biased against women; there is normative acceptance of domestic violence and a felt need to keep such matters private. Thus, arbitration may not stem from a rights and gender-based perspective, as can be discerned from a quote from a male Sarpanch in Mysore:

I go to their houses and talk to them about it directly. I tell them that house-related problems should never come up at the village level. If any complaint from the village goes to the station level, then it is a bad mark on me as the president of the village.

How common is it for GP members to raise the issue of domestic violence in panchayat meetings and what impacts their likelihood of raising the issue for discussion?

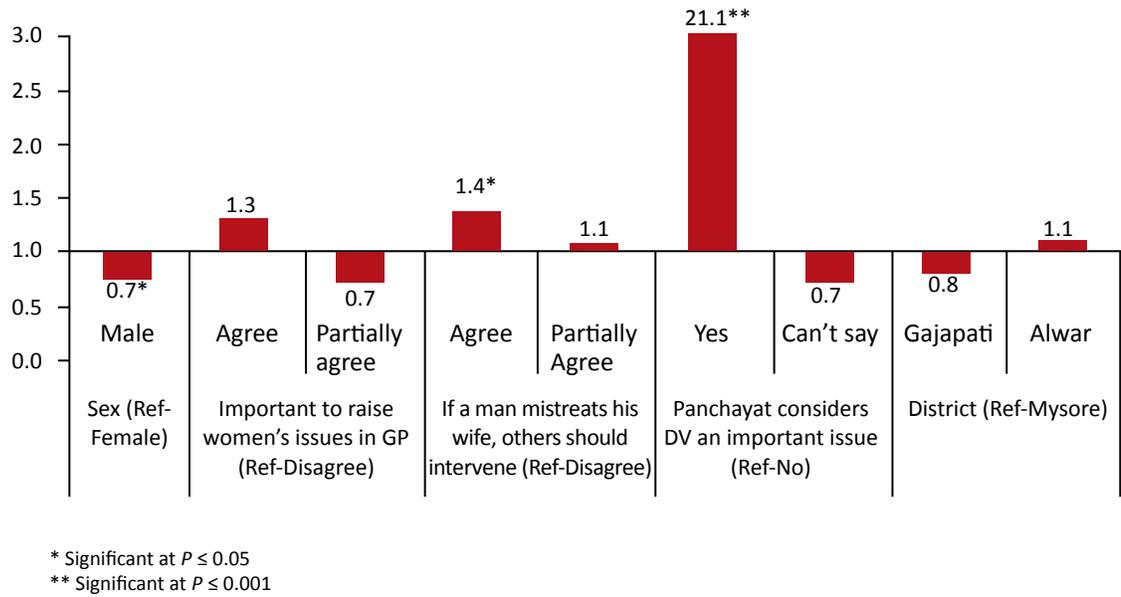
The proportion of GP members who have raised the issue of domestic violence ranges from 8 to 27 per cent, depending on the district and sex of respondents. However, the likelihood of GP members raising the issue has less to do with their personal or background characteristics; rather it is most influenced by the perception of support or space that the panchayats offer for such discussions. In Mysore, only 8 per cent of male members and 16 per cent of female members report

that they have themselves raised the issue of domestic violence in GP meetings. In Gajapati the proportion is slightly more, and it is the only district where more male GP members report this as compared to females. In Alwar, more than a fourth of women GP members and 20 per cent of male GP members report doing so (see Table 1.6). GP members report that they themselves as well as community women are constrained in raising the issue of domestic violence by notions of privacy. Feelings of shame and awkwardness further inhibit women from talking about this in public forums and seeking redress for it.

As shown in Figure 1.1, the factor that is positively associated across all districts for all GP members is the perception that domestic violence is an issue of importance for their panchayat. After controlling for age, education and caste, GP members who state that their GP considers DV as an important issue *are 21 times more likely to raise it* (Refer Annexure 3, Table 1 for details). Similarly, GP members who agree with statement (asked as part of gender attitudes) that *'If a man mistreats his wife, others should intervene'* were 1.4 times more likely to raise the issue of domestic violence than those who disagreed with these statements. Women as compared to men are more likely to raise domestic violence for discussion; and among the districts, the issue is more likely to be raised in Alwar than any other.

The likelihood of GP members raising the issue of domestic violence...is most influenced by the perception of support or space that the panchayats offer for such discussions

Figure 1.1: Odds ratio from logistic regression of raising domestic violence issues in GP meeting controlling for age, education and caste



The large proportion of GP members who do not raise DV issues in panchayat meetings report that they consider this to be a private issue and not one that should be raised in public meetings

The large proportion of GP members who do not raise DV issues in panchayat meetings report that they consider this to be a private issue and not one that should be raised in public meetings. Notions of privacy and shame associated with domestic violence are recognised as impediments to any action against it. An added dimension is the violence faced by the members themselves – this study finds that between 10 to 15 per cent of women GP members report facing domestic violence themselves. Thus, it cannot be assumed that GP members, including women, would automatically have better attitudes or the ability to raise and respond to this issue or any other gender related concern. On the other hand, these issues are obvious concerns for community women, and there is heightened expectation that GP members engage on violence and other gender related issues. This gap is a key area to address.

What enables GP members, particularly women to function effectively and what are the constraints to their effective participation?

Overall, family and community support are key enabling factors. For female GP members, support from spouse and community women is particularly important. But lack of education and training emerge in some sites as constraints to women's ability to function effectively in their leadership role.

With regard to family support, more women members across the districts report spousal support as a key enabler (61 per cent in Mysore, 88 per cent in Alwar and 59 per cent in Gajapati) as compared to around 10 per cent of men reporting this in Alwar and Mysore and over 30 per cent in Gajapati. On the other hand, there is less difference between male and female members within a district and across districts regarding family support – 50 per cent

Table 1.7: Per cent distribution of GP members by district who report involvement of family in panchayat related work

		MYSORE	ALWAR	GAJAPATI
Family is involved	Female	73.2	56.9	28.3
	Male	15.2	33.2	5.9

or more of GP members report it as an enabling factor.

Family support manifests itself in different ways. Respondents attribute it to success in elections as well as their day-to-day functioning as GP members. The role of the spouse emerges more prominently for women members than for men. Additionally, the involvement of the family in panchayat related work is mentioned more by women members, though there is a large variation across districts (see Table 1.7). Yet, this involvement can have different manifestations, being either controlling and directive or advisory (see Table 1.8).

Support of community women also emerges as a key enabler, though there is variation across districts. It is mentioned by approximately 60 per cent or more of male and female members in Mysore and female members in Alwar. Forty per cent or less of male members in Alwar and all members in Gajapati report this.

Prominent differences are observed across sites with regard to training and education being enabling factors. Reporting of PRI-related training as an enabler is at least three times more common among male members in Mysore and Alwar as compared to their female counterparts, while the gender gap is comparatively less in Gajapati. According to a woman Sarpanch in Mysore:

The government efforts for training are shameful because there is a lot of wastage of time and money in these. No practical knowledge is gained from these. Pradhans and Up-Pradhans who themselves do not have the complete knowledge about the functioning impart training. It raises a serious question over the authenticity of such programmes.

More members who report that the training equipped them for their GP role have higher education levels, suggesting a possible reason why women GP members who are less educated

Family support manifests in different ways. Respondents attribute it to success in elections as well as their day-to-day functioning as GP members

Table 1.8: Per cent distribution of nature of involvement of family in panchayat work, as reported by GP members by district

	MYSORE		ALWAR		GAJAPATI	
Nature of involvement	Female*	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
No involvement	26.8	85.5	43.1	66.7	72.0	93.9
Controlling/Directive+	30.2	3.0	17.0	9.5	18.4	2.2
Advisory #	43.0	11.6	39.9	23.8	9.5	3.9

*Significant at $P \leq 0.05$.

+Includes agreement on response, 'they decide and communicate and/or they take decisions, I am only spokesperson'

#Includes agreement on response, 'we discuss matters and they advise me'



Both male and female GP members believe that women are less effective than men at holding public office or at taking decisions related to panchayat matters

(than their male counterparts) are more likely to be dissatisfied with the training. Over 75 per cent of men in Alwar mention that their education has helped them function effectively as compared to 22 per cent of women; 48 per cent and 30 per cent report this in Gajapati, while 30 per cent or less of GP members report so in Mysore.

When asked about barriers to effective functioning, a lack of education is mentioned by over 60 per cent of GP members in Alwar. Reporting of barriers is much lower in the other two districts: over 75 per cent of both male and female members in Mysore, and close to 60 per cent in Gajapati report facing no barriers. But among those who do, an inadequate budget is mentioned most often in Mysore. In Gajapati, the lack of training and education is mentioned as a constraint by a third of women members and a slightly lower proportion. According to a woman Sarpanch in Alwar:

Due to lack of education it is time consuming to understand panchayat processes and rules.

Although not mentioned as a direct barrier to their effective functioning, the study reveals that both male and female GP members believe that women are less effective than men at holding public office or at taking decisions related to panchayat matters. As noted earlier, the Gender Equitable Scale included seven items on women's capabilities as leaders and decision-makers vis-a-vis men. High proportions of members in all districts agree with statements indicative of attitudes that men are better at holding public office than women. While in Mysore the gender differential is stark (more male members believe that men are better at these tasks than women),

it is less so in Alwar and in Gajapati the gap is minimal. Belief in women's ability to perform as representatives and leaders is a key attitude that deserves attention.

How have women's experiences as a GP member affected their self perceptions and their future aspirations, including their desire to re-contest?

Women GP members in all districts perceive positive outcomes as a result of being a GP member, though there is site specific variation. For women in Alwar, those who report that their status in the family improved or that they gained self-confidence because of being a GP member were significantly more likely to state that they will stand for elections again as compared to those who report no or minimal change. The most common reason women give for not re-contesting across sites is their high burden of household responsibilities.

Across the sites, close to 40 per cent or more of women GP members report increased self confidence as a result of being an elected member. The proportion reporting enhanced status in their family is also high, varying from 40 per cent in Mysore to nearly 70 per cent in Gajapati and Alwar. Gains in the ability to make decisions, including financial decision in the household are reported by similar proportions and improved status within the community is reported by a high proportion of women members across sites. A woman PS member in Alwar states:

Earlier I used to be at home but now after becoming a panchayat member I go out of the home and talk to differ-

ent people. I also attend meetings and people have started recognising me. It has enhanced my respect.

The affirmative action of reservation for women within PRIs provides an opportunity for women's entry into the political arena. A significant anticipated gain is the continued interest or aspiration of women to be part of the local political sphere, that is, to re-contest in GP elections. About one-third of women in Alwar and 40 per cent or more of members in all districts report that they would want to contest elections again. Though in both Mysore and Alwar the proportion of men wanting to re-contest is more than women, it is encouraging that many female members report aspirations to remain in local politics. Also, of the members who want to re-contest, at least 30 per cent or more in all districts aspire for higher positions; with the likelihood of male members preferring a higher tier of PRI and women members preferring to be Sarpanches. Alwar is an exception, where re-contesting for the position of Sarpanch is a preferred choice for both men and women.

The reasons for not wanting to contest elections for male and female members are different across sites. More than one-third of women members mention burden of household responsibilities in Mysore, and close to 60 per cent do so in Alwar, whereas only one-third of men mention this as a reason for not contesting in Alwar. Interestingly, in case of Gajapati, more than half of both male and female GP members mention household responsibilities as a crucial reason for not contesting elections.

Others reasons cited by women include lack of community support in Alwar and lack of money in Mysore while one fourth of male members in other districts mention lack of money.

Across the districts, women's decision to re-contest is not influenced by their age. Education too is not significantly associated with the decision to contest again for women members, except in Gajapati where the likelihood of re-contesting increases with the increase in education level. For male GP members age is significantly associated in all the three districts. The decision to re-contest elections by women presents patterns that are district specific. In Gajapati and Alwar, both male and female GP members who had stated that they entered into politics due to pressure from or desire of others were least likely to report that they will stand for election the next time around. Thus, self-motivation alone or support from others is significantly more likely to result in increased aspiration to stand for elections again for GP members in Gajapati and Alwar. There are no significant associations noted in Mysore. In Alwar and Gajapati, men who report no involvement of the family are significantly more likely to want to re-contest than those who report family involvement. While in Alwar, women who report support from family are more likely to do so. The help received from spouse for household work is significantly associated with the decision to re-contest for women in Mysore and Alwar and for men in Gajapati – the ones reporting that they receive help are more likely to want to re-contest (Refer Annexure 3, Table 2 for details).

Of the members who want to re-contest, at least 30 per cent or more members in all districts aspire for higher positions; though male members prefer a higher level of PRI, women members prefer to be sarpanches

Table 1.9: Per cent distribution of women GP members across districts who state they will re-contest by factors related to status and self

Factor	Women members reporting that they will contest again (per cent)		
CHANGE IN SELF CONFIDENCE			
	MYSORE	GAJAPATI	ALWAR*
Increased very much	48.4	55.7	46.2
Increased somewhat	44.6	45.6	52.3
No change	50.0	36.4	22.7
CHANGE IN STATUS IN FAMILY			
	MYSORE	GAJAPATI	ALWAR*
Status improved	47.4	53.5	51.3
No change in status#	47.4	42.2	36.6
INCREASED FINANCIAL DECISION MAKING IN HOUSEHOLD			
	MYSORE	GAJAPATI*	ALWAR*
Yes	50.9	53.6	62.8
No	45.6	43.0	42.0
CHANGE IN STATUS IN COMMUNITY			
	MYSORE	GAJAPATI	ALWAR*
Status improved	46.5	50.5	53.7
No change in status#	49.2	46.7	24.0

No. of women reporting status declined is < 6, hence not reported.

*Significant at $P \leq 0.05$.

As is evident from Table 1.9, it is only in Alwar that positive gains in terms of increased self-confidence and improved status and financial decision making within the household and community significantly impact women's decision to contest again. Thus, women who report that their sta- tus in the family and/or community improved or that they gained self-confidence because of being a GP member were significantly more likely to state that they will stand for elections again, as compared to those who report no or very little change.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study findings affirm the variations in the socio-political scenario at the Gram Panchayat level in the districts of Mysore, Alwar and Gajapati. Though most GP members are first time entrants into local politics, the terms of their entry vary with regard to whether they contest from reserved/general seats and whether they face opposition or not. Variations on key aspects of gender responsiveness are found not only across districts but also often among male and female members of the same district. The following conclusions emerge from the study:

- **Women GP members desire to be part of local governance institutions and perceive positive outcomes of being elected representatives. Their stated motivation to become GP members does not centre on their family's aspirations; rather it is based on personal interest and commitment to the community and to development.** The affirmative action and space provided to women is slowly translating into political gains for women in several ways, though the pace and contexts are varied across districts. Historic gender disparities in terms of education, ownership of resources and continual biased attitudes still act as barriers for GP members. However, within the specific district contexts, women are equally likely to contest from general seats; and many women do report entering into politics only because of their own interest and motivation around development concerns. The community emerges as a strong

influence in women's decision to contest elections. This calls for attention of programmers and policy makers on engendering the discourse around community participation and their attitudes and expectations of community of their elected representatives and bodies.

- **The family remains a key determinant of success and participation in the political process, though the involvement of family in panchayat work is not a given; there are huge variations across districts.** While the community supersedes the family as a determinant of entry, success and participation require family support, and for women, specifically spousal support. Lack of education and exposure to public life contribute in part to this, and this is noted significantly among the sarpanches and at higher levels of PRIs. These are also levels that are perceived of as having more power and influence. This support also becomes a necessity given the women's immense burden of household responsibilities and the need for help and support from members of the extended family, besides the spouse. These very tasks limit many women from wanting to re-contest again. However, involvement of the family in panchayat-related work is not a norm for women GP members. The study finds evidence of wide variation across districts where 27, 43 and 72 per cent of women members in Mysore, Alwar and Gajapati respectively report no involvement of family in panchayat-related work.

The affirmative action and space provided to women is slowly translating into political gains for women in several ways, though the pace and contexts are varied across districts





Women members, specially the GP members, aspire to re-contest; and a third of those who do, aspire for higher positions

There is need for further exploration on how women and their families negotiate the new roles that women come into, when are the families truly supportive and when do they become a barrier. Additionally, institutional mechanisms for support of childcare along with changing norms around gender roles are called for. At higher levels of PRI and among sarpanches, the dependence on the spouse is more pronounced. This is due to limited education and lack of exposure to public or political arenas as well as lack of confidence and lack of experience in decision making.

- **Women members, specially the GP members, aspire to re-contest; and a third of those who do, aspire for higher positions.** Those who do not are limited by traditional gender roles. Between one-third to half of women across sites report that they want to contest again, with the least reporting this in Alwar, and the highest in Gajapati. Within a district the proportion of men wanting to re-contest is slightly more than that of women, yet it is encouraging that female members report aspirations to contest again and even hold higher positions. The burden of household responsibilities is the single most prominent reason stated for not wanting to re-contest by women members in all sites. It is important to note that in both Mysore and Alwar, women who report receiving help from husband for household work are significantly more likely to say that they will re-contest. Other factors reported by lesser proportions include lack of money and support. Male members in Gajapati too report household responsibilities as
- **Though a substantial proportion of women across sites report increased self-confidence, status and ability to make decisions, these do not appear as significant factors impacting the desire to re-contest, except in Alwar.** The decision to re-contest appears to be influenced by interplay of various determinants, and further research and analysis may be needed to understand these. Perceived positive outcomes do not always appear to be enough for women to continue within local governance, as manifestations of gender roles, public support and perceptions of what can be achieved through this role could also be considerations influencing this decision. These factors need more teasing out.
- **Gender attitudes of both male and female GP members are a cause of concern, with attitudes towards women holding public office tending to be biased against women; these are worse among men members than women GP members.** There is no gender differential in attitudes displayed by men and women GP

a reason for not re-contesting, and those who receive spousal support are more likely to re-contest. This is an area that needs to be understood further for its obvious impact on women's continued political aspirations. More exploratory research that gathers empirical evidence on the determinants of continued political presence of women needs to be undertaken. It is obvious that there are a multitude of factors that impact the decision to re-contest, yet how they interact to create opportunities and continued political aspirations needs more focused exploration.

members in Alwar district with only about 16 per cent of both male and female GP members falling in the high equitable category (refer Annexure 2 for further details on Gender Equitable Scale). In Gajapati more men have worse attitudes than women members, while in Mysore more women report high gender equitable attitudes than men. Not only do gender attitudes influence the perception of women to carry out their roles as elected representatives, but they also impact the raising and resolving of strategic gender issues such as domestic violence.

- **The framework of panchayat's role and mandate is set and limited to the disbursement of funds and development-related schemes and programmes.** Sarpanches are vocal about the limitations that this places on their autonomy. In most States, elected members have a limited role in prioritising issues and limited control over resources available with Gram Panchayat. The most consistent finding across districts and elected representatives is related to the issues raised and discussed in panchayat meetings. These remain largely confined to addressing the practical gender needs and those that are defined through the large flagship programmes. PR Acts and Rules must be reviewed from perspectives of democratic functioning as well as gender analysis.
- **Panchayati Raj Institutions are not perceived as spaces for discussion on gender issues, including violence or where concerns apart from those related to infrastructure and schemes can be discussed.** This reality is neither in line with con-

cerns of the community nor with the larger framework of social justice and equality. The study findings reveal that PRIs at all three tiers have not yet become spaces to discuss and deliberate on critical strategic gender issues, though a substantial proportion of PRI representatives are approached individually to deal with these problems. This highlights a glaring gap between people's concerns and expectations of panchayat members, and the role and institutional mandate that the panchayats are currently pursuing. Community concerns over domestic violence and alcohol abuse primarily remain outside the purview of public discussions of panchayat and gram sabha meetings, as clearly seen from the study findings across districts. The possibility, however, is not non-existent as a small proportion of members report these as priorities for their GP. Site specific measures to enhance this space and increase the proportion of these GP members are necessary. It is also important to note that spaces such as *palli sabhas* in Gajapati and *mahila mandal* meetings are reported to be relatively more conducive to such discussions, though this is not a norm. State governments can include provisions to mandate such meetings at village or ward levels and of women representatives separately that can be forums for more democratic and engendered debates before issues are jointly presented in the gram sabha and GP meetings.

- **A large proportion of GP members are approached individually to deal with gender issues by community women, yet building capacities**

Panchayati Raj Institutions at all three tiers have not yet become spaces to discuss and deliberate on critical strategic gender issues, though a substantial proportion of PRI representatives are approached individually to deal with these problems

Panchayat members by virtue of being public representatives are seen as authority figures and are thus approached to resolve problems

to address these issues are not included in panchayat trainings. Both male and female GP members report being approached individually for help. It has been well established that women experiencing discrimination and violence approach their immediate communities for help and support. Panchayat members, by virtue of being public representatives, are seen as authority figures and are thus approached to resolve problems. Strengthening their capacities at all levels and building their perspectives and capacities for an effective response to gender equality is a key area for action. More in-depth research is needed to understand how elected representatives at different levels engage with issues of gender – what are their motivations, what are the processes and mechanisms for them to do so, and is this a repetitive phenomenon.

- **Resolution of domestic violence too happens at an individual level, though a small proportion of women raise these issues within panchayat meetings. Perception of the importance accorded to this issue by the GP is the single most significant factor that increases the likelihood of members raising this issue in meetings.** GP members report adopting a range of responses to women's complaint of domestic violence (DV). Action on DV is influenced by attitudes towards gender violence, and the most commonly reported action of *advising the perpetrator to stop violence* must be examined more carefully. Both women and men ascribe to patriarchal values and the subser-

vient position of women, and thus building their perspectives becomes even more critical. There is a need to revitalise and revisit the debate on '*nyaya panchayats*', and the social justice function of PRIs. An urgent review through focused research studies must be undertaken of the different social justice structures and mechanisms existing within the local governance framework, such as the Nyaya Panchayats and Gram Kachehri. A systematic analysis can guide advocacy for effective structural and operational changes to address the pertinent social issues and inequalities.

- **Training and education are perceived unmet needs, especially in Alwar and Gajapati where overall education levels are low. Trainings need to meet the demand of women who have no or limited exposure to education; these need to go beyond information to include a focus on concepts of social and gender justice.** Current training programmes are structured in a way that gives knowledge about roles, responsibilities and schemes, largely within the context of rural development programmes. Attention to frameworks of rights, inclusiveness, social and gender equality is minimal. State governments and relevant institutes must ensure that trainings provided build these concepts and equip new GP members, including women, to effectively fulfil their roles and adopt effective response to strategic gender issues like domestic violence. Trainings must also be made relevant for members with fragile literacy skills; these must also include discussions around Laws, Acts and

Provisions related to issues such as child marriage, domestic violence, etc. Initiatives to strengthen adult literacy skills can be revived. With no or minimal investments on their perspective and ability, the importance and involvement of elected representatives on strategic gender issues remains limited and at worst could reinforce the existing gender bias and violations.

The study provides evidence and makes a compelling case for a much needed review of the mandate of elected local governance bodies towards achieving social justice; and for related actions to engender both the attitudes and abilities of elected representatives. It is interesting that while panchayats are seen as a platform and space for several innovative programmes both by civil society and the government to address social inequalities in sectors such as girls education and women's health, there is still a lack of momentum to overhaul its prevailing 'image' as an implementer of development schemes. Concepts of citizenship and people's participation in platforms of local governance too are limited by their perception of "benefits" that panchayats are able to provide them within the framework of specific practical needs. However, women's felt concerns and experiences of gender inequality in their daily lives make them approach GP members for help and solutions but largely at an individual

level. Elected representatives are limited both by lack of autonomy and by perceptions of their 'roles' to respond adequately. While the rules and procedures governing the functioning of the panchayats need a critical analysis through the lens of inclusive and equitable development, the divide between private and public issues too needs re-examining. There is a greater need for the community to participate more meaningfully in the governance process and also for the institutions to have spaces for participatory planning beyond economic development and towards social justice as was envisaged in the Constitution (73rd Amendment Act).

The study findings also reaffirm that women elected representatives face varied gender specific constraints. As more and more women aspire to take their rightful place within governance bodies, it is important for all institutions (state, family and community) to respond to women's specific needs such as bridging gaps in education, renegotiating gender roles, the gender division of labour and addressing biased attitudes. This, coupled with a discourse to engender institutional and operational frameworks to place strategic gender interests at the core of the governance processes will go a long way in exploiting the potential of panchayats as spaces of democracy and equitable development.

While the rules and procedures governing the functioning of the panchayats need a critical analysis through the lens of inclusive and equitable development, the divide between private and public issues too needs re-examining



ANNEXURE 1

Table 1: Details of Gram Panchayats from which survey sample was drawn, by site

ALWAR		MYSORE		GAJAPATI	
Total No. of blocks	14	Total No. of blocks	7	Total No. of blocks	7
Total No. of GPs	472	Total No. of GPs	214	Total No. of GPs	129
Name of Block (PS)	No. of GPs selected	Name of Block	No. of GPs selected	Name of Block	No. of GPs selected
Tijara	12	HD Kore	13	Nuagada	14
Reni	9	Hunsur	12	R. Udayagiri	13
Ramgarh	13	KR Nagara	13	Parlakhemundi	21
Bansur	13	Mysore	8	Kashinagar	12
Umren	13	Nanjangud	19	Mohana	32
Rajgarh	11	Periyapatna	11	Rayagada	18
Mandavar	14	T Narasipura	13	Gumma	10
Lakshmarangarh	15	Total	89	Total	129
Kishangarh Bas	10				
Kotkasim	8				
Neemrana	12				
Thanagaji	12				
Kathumar	15				
Bahrod	10				
Total	154				

Table 2: Details of the qualitative sample by district

	MYSORE	ALWAR	GAJAPATI
1. In-Depth Interview Sarpanch	13 (7 women, 6 men)	13 (7 women, 6 men)	13 (7 women, 6 male)
2. In-Depth Interview PS member	10 (5 women and 5 men)	9 (4 women and 5 men)	8 (4 women and 4 men)
3. In-Depth Interview ZP member	8 (4 women and 4 men)	8 (4 women and 4 men)	4 (2 women and 2 men)
4. Key Informant interviews	11 (include PDOs, community leader and SHG group members)	10 (include BDOs, Gram Sevak/ chairpersons of PS)	11 (include BDOs, Gram Sevak/ community leaders)
5. Focus Group Discussion	4 (2 with community men & 2 with community women)	4 (2 with community men & 2 with community women)	4 (2 with community men & 2 with community women)

ANNEXURE 2

The GP members' attitudes to gender were assessed by presenting them with statements and asking whether they agree, partially agree or disagree with the statements.

Further, as a comprehensive measure of gender attitudes, a Gender Equitable Scale was developed whereby individual scores of members on the scale placed them in one of three categories reflecting their level of support for gender equality: low, moderate and high.

The Gender Attitude Scale consisted of 17 items, with a Cronbach alpha value of 0.76. All the statements were made unidirectional and responses were scored as 0 = agree, 1 = partially agree and 2 = disagree. Based on their response, the mean score of each individual on these 17 items was computed. The range of score is 1-3. For the gender equity index, we have recoded
1 to 1.66 = Low (1);
1.67 to 2.33 = Moderate (2);
2.34 to 3 = High (3).

Specific statements were asked to GP members to assess their attitudes to public roles and panchayats and towards gender roles and violence.		
Attitudes related to public role and panchayats	Male	Female
Men make better leaders than women.		
Elected women representatives should rely on elected men representatives for all important decisions.		
Men are more capable of taking decisions regarding budgets and administration than women.		
Men make better <i>Pradhans/Sarpanches</i> than women.		
Men are better than women as BDOs.		
It is important to raise women's issues in the Gram Sabha.		
Women need more training and capacity building than men to perform optimally at gram panchayats.		
Attitudes towards gender roles and violence		
A women's life purpose is fulfilled if she gives birth to a son.		
A women's most important role is to take care of her home and cook for her family.		
It is okay for a man to beat his wife if she refuses to serve him hot food.		
A man should have the final say in decisions in the home.		
A bride should bring sufficient dowry to her husband's house in order to maintain marital harmony.		
An occasional slap by the husband does not amount to domestic violence.		
There are times when a woman deserves to be beaten.		
Family problems should not be discussed outside the home.		
A woman should tolerate violence from her husband/in-laws in order to keep her family together.		
If a man mistreats his wife, others within and outside the family should intervene.		
Wife can be denied money if all her needs are taken care of.		
If a man beats his wife under the influence of alcohol he should be forgiven.		
Wife beating by a husband is not a bad behaviour.		

List of 17 statements used for creating Gender Equitable Scale

1.	Men make better leaders than women.
2.	EWRs should rely on EMRs for all important decisions.
3.	Men are more capable of taking decisions regarding budgets and administration than women.
4.	Women need more training and capacity building than men to perform optimally at Gram Panchayats.
5.	Men make better Pradhans/Sarpanch than women.
6.	Men are better than women as BDOs.
7.	A woman's life purpose is fulfilled if she gives birth to a son.
8.	A woman's most important role is to take care of her home and cook for her family.
9.	It is okay for a man to beat his wife if she refuses to serve him hot food.
10.	Rights for women mean that men lose out.
11.	A man should have the final say in decisions in the home.
12.	A bride should bring sufficient dowry to her husband's house in order to maintain marital harmony.
13.	An occasional slap by husband does not amount to domestic violence.
14.	Family problems should not be discussed outside the home.
15.	A woman should tolerate violence from her husband/in-laws in order to keep her family together.
16.	Wife can be denied money if all her needs are taken care of.
17.	If a man beats his wife under the influence of alcohol, he should be forgiven.

ANNEXURE 3

Table 1: Per cent distribution of GP members across districts who report raising the issue of domestic violence in GP meetings by select factors						
	MYSORE		ALWAR		GAJAPATI	
	Proportion of GP members who report that they raise DV issues					
AGE (Years)						
	Female*	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
≤29	20.2	8.3	31.1	15.6	19.2	15.8
30-39	12.3	4.1	28.2	22.0	16.4	22.1
40-49	22.8	10.5	24.8	22.2	20.7	24.7
50+	8.3	11.9	26.3	19.5	20.4	30.1
EDUCATION LEVEL						
	Female	Male	Female	Male*	Female*	Male
No education	13.1	2.7#	24.4	28.2	15.9	18.8
Primary (1-5)	18.7	9.8	26.2	20.7	20.1	25.5
Middle (6-8)	12.3	9.9	39.0	23.5	13.0	20.0
High school & above (9+)	23.2	8.7	38.5	14.9	35.5	32.0
MOTIVATION FOR ENTRY						
	Female*	Male	Female*	Male*	Female*	Male
Self	14.7	9.5	35.4	17.0	15.2	18.7
Only others	23.6	4.3	12.9	14.5	8.4	21.9
Self and others	13.8	6.6	34.0	25.3	27.2	28.4
Whether GP considers DV as an important issue						
	Female*	Male*	Female*	Male*	Female*	Male*
No	5.4	8.6	3.0	4.1	13.6	13.0
Yes	27.7	26.1	27.6	27.0	65.2	55.9
ATTITUDE: It is important to raise DV issue in GS meetings						
	Female*	Male	Female*	Male*	Female	Male*
Agree	18.2	8.7	33.2	25.9	18.5	24.5
Partially agree	3.2#	3.6#	7.7	9.9	13.9	5.9#
Disagree	8.9	8.2	5.7#	0 #	22.7	33.3
ATTITUDE: A woman should tolerate violence from her husband/in-laws to keep her family together						
	Female*	Male	Female*	Male*	Female*	Male
Agree	15.4	10.2	34.2	16.5	13.2	26.0
Partially agree	13.8	5.7	28.5	28.8	33.6	21.8
Disagree	18.0	8.3	19.6	19.5	13.8	22.4
ATTITUDE: If a man mistreats his wife, others within and outside the family should intervene						
	Female	Male	Female*	Male*	Female	Male
Agree	15.8	7.2	35.1	27.5	20.1	24.4
Partially agree	9.1	9.4	25.5	13.5	13.5	14.8
Disagree	18.1	9.6	16.6	11.2	18.4	28.6
GENDER ATTITUDE SCALE						
	Female	Male	Female	Male*	Female	Male
Low	19.2	11.4	31.3	15.8	13.6	25.7
Moderate	18.0	7.8	26.1	25.3	21.3	22.9
High	13.5	7.9	22.1	12.5	10.9	35.7

#. Cell frequency less than 5.

*: Significant at 5.

Table 2: Per cent distribution of GP members across districts who report they will contest again by select factors						
	MYSORE		GAJAPATI		ALWAR	
	Proportion of GP members reporting that they will contest again					
AGE (years)						
	Female	Male*	Female	Male*	Female	Male*
≤29	50.5	75.0	55.2	32.4	55.6	77.1
30-39	48.3	77.2	51.0	61.3	45.9	72.7
40-49	46.2	67.1	46.7	64.2	52.5	74.2
50+	42.2	56.1	52.4	56.7	41.6	59.1
EDUCATION (completed years of schooling)						
	Female	Male*	Female*	Male	Female	Male
No education	42.4	54.5	45.2	57.1	44.9	64.2
Primary (1-5)	53.2	59.7	49.3	62.9	48.8	62.5
Middle (6-8)	43.5	67.9	69.4	53.4	58.3	63.4
High school and above (9+)	55.2	76.5	62.1	59.6	48.6	76.2
MOTIVATION (for entry)						
	Female	Male	Female*	Male*	Female*	Male*
Self motivated	52.0	69.7	50.7	55.2	61.4	71.7
Motivated by others	40.0	57.9	42.0	51.9	36.3	46.6
Self +others	46.9	70.5	57.9	64.8	49.2	74.3
NATURE OF FAMILY INVOLVEMENT						
	Female	Male	Female	Male*	Female*	Male*
No involvement	47.0	68.0	50.5	61.1	37.8	73.0
Negative	45.6	63.6	49.3	54.5	41.2	55.3
Supportive	49.0	80.8	52.6	17.6	61.1	63.8
RECEIVE SUPPORT FROM SPOUSE FOR HOUSEWORK						
	Female*	Male	Female	Male*	Female*	Male
No	44.5	72.6	49.1	44.6	54.9	70.7
Yes	56.3	66.0	51.3	62.5	40.3	64.4

*Significant at $P \leq .05$

ENDNOTES

- i. Maxine Molyneux, "Mobilisation without Emancipation? Women's Interests, the State and Revolution in Nicaragua," *Feminist Studies*, No. 11 (1985): 227-54.
- ii. K. Gill, A. Warner, E. Weiss and G. Rao Gupta. "From Beneficiaries to Change Agents: The Rise of Women's Leadership in International Development," *SAIS Review*, Vol. XXIX no. 2 (Summer-Fall 2009): 23-38.
- iii. D. Sharma and R. M. Sudarshan, "Towards a Politics of Collective Empowerment: Learning from Hill Women in Rural Uttarakhand, India," *IDS Bulletin*, 41:5 (2010):43-51; M. Mukhopadhyay, *Decentralisation and Gender Equity in South Asia* (Ottawa: IDRC 2005).
- iv. The term Sarpanch refers to the elected chairperson or head of the Gram Panchayats. There is different terminology used in different states of India, such as Pradhan or Gram Panchayat President. This report uses the term sarpanch for all districts.
- v. M. Mukhopadhyay, *Decentralisation and Gender Equity in South Asia* (Ottawa: IDRC 2005).
- vi. N.G. Jayal, "Engendering Local Democracy: The Impact of Quotas for Women in India's Panchayats," *Democratization*, 13:1, (2006): 15-35.
- vii. Nirmala Buch, "Women's Experience in New Panchayats: The Emerging Leadership of Rural Women," *Occasional Papers*, 35, CWDS, 1999; Institute of Social Studies Trust, "Women in Leadership Positions: A Scoping Paper," India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, July 2005.
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- x. Maxine Molyneux, "Mobilisation without Emancipation? Women's Interests, the State and Revolution in Nicaragua," *Feminist Studies*, No. 11 (1985): 227-54.
- xi. N.G. Jayal, "Engendering Local Democracy: The Impact of Quotas for Women in India's Panchayats," *Democratization*, 13:1, (2006): 15-35.
- xii. Nirmala Buch, "Women's Experience in New Panchayats: The Emerging Leadership of Rural Women," *Occasional Papers*, 35, CWDS, 1999.
- xiii. The definition of Domestic Violence used in the study is as per the definition in the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) 2005.
- xiv. (NHFS-3, 2005-06).
- xv. ICRW-UN Women, "Local Governance for Gender Equality. A Study in select districts of India", 2012.
- xvi. The responses given by members were combined to form exclusive categories of self motivation; motivation by others or a combination of both. **Self motivated only** had respondents who responded to one or more of the following options: *I wanted to work for the community; I am interested to work for development of my area. Motivated by others* included: **Village people forced me, family wanted me to contest, village elders asked me;** and **Self + Others** as a multiple response with options of either of the above two categories.
- xvii. Indira Awas Yojana is a flagship programme of the government aimed at providing housing for the rural poor, operational since 1985. It helps in construction of dwelling units by members of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes, freed bonded labourers and also non-SC/ST rural poor below the poverty line by providing them with grant-in-aid. Allotment of dwelling units is in the name of the female member of the beneficiary household or alternatively in joint names of both husband and wife.

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