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<tr>
<td>ANM</td>
<td>Auxiliary Nurse Midwife</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASHA</td>
<td>Accredited Social Health Activist</td>
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<tr>
<td>AWC</td>
<td>Anganwadi Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>AWW</td>
<td>Anganwadi Worker</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Based Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMR</td>
<td>Elected Male Representative</td>
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<td>EWR</td>
<td>Elected Women Representative</td>
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<td>GP</td>
<td>Gram Panchayat</td>
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<td>GPRC</td>
<td>Gender and Panchayat Resource Centre</td>
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<td>ICDS</td>
<td>Integrated Child Development Services</td>
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<td>IEC</td>
<td>Information, Education and Communication</td>
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<td>MAS</td>
<td>Mahila Adhikar Samukya</td>
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<td>MJM</td>
<td>Mahila Jagruk Manch</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLA</td>
<td>Member Legislative Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>MNREGS</td>
<td>Mahatama Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme</td>
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<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Government Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>PDS</td>
<td>Public Distribution System</td>
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<tr>
<td>PESA</td>
<td>Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act</td>
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<td>PR</td>
<td>Panchayati Raj</td>
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<td>PRI</td>
<td>Panchayati Raj Institutions</td>
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<td>RD</td>
<td>Rural Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDM</td>
<td>Sub Divisional Magistrate</td>
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<td>SIRD</td>
<td>State Institute of Rural Development</td>
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<td>SHG</td>
<td>Self Help Groups</td>
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<td>SWEEP</td>
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<td>TCN</td>
<td>Two Child Norm</td>
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<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nation Population Fund</td>
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The Hunger Project derives its mandate from the 73rd Constitutional Amendment (1992) which gave formal constitutional recognition to rural local self-governance units called Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and reserved 33.3% per cent of seats for women in the three tiers of PRIs. Most recently, the Cabinet has approved to enhance this reservation to 50% in Panchayats, through the One Hundred and Tenth Amendment Bill. The mandate of The Hunger Project is strengthened by the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001) to ensure the advancement and empowerment of women in the economic, political, social and cultural spheres. The National Policy has ratified CEDAW, which India ratified in 1993, which explains the need for affirmative action for women in local democracy to ensure their inclusion and equal access to decision making (Article 7 of CEDAW). One of the goals of the National Policy points towards the de jure and de facto enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women and equal access to participation in political decision making. The XIth Five Year Plan of the Government of India (2007-2012) emphasizes on an "enabling political environment" and that "women Panchayats members are empowered to take their own decisions" through "political-skill building of women members of Panchayats".

India has primarily relied upon the method of reservation to ensure women’s presence in decision making bodies. This has increased de jure, but not necessarily de facto participation, as mentioned in the Government of India Report on Beijing PFA 10 years after, and acknowledged as a challenge in the most recent XIth Five Year Plan of the Government of India (2007-2012).

The Hunger Project’s mandate strengthens the commitments made in various national laws, policies and action plans, towards political empowerment of Elected Women Representatives in local institutions of governance (Gram Panchayats). The Hunger Project’s objectives are to increase women’s participation in local electoral processes; strengthen elected women’s leadership for increased and effective participation in Panchayats; build civil society alliances; advocate for better policies enabling women’s participation in democracy and engage with media for positive media coverage of elected women’s work.

One of the pillars of UN Women is advancing women’s political participation and good governance, to ensure that decision-making processes are participatory, responsive, equitable and inclusive. Efforts are focused through strategic entry points that can advance the status of women by catalysing wide-ranging, long-term impacts.1 Women’s political participation is a fundamental prerequisite for gender equality and genuine democracy. In South Asia, women form more than 50 per cent of the population and yet research suggests that women’s participation in decision-making processes, especially in relation to representation at the different levels of governance, is significantly lower in countries such as Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. To increase their negotiating and decision-making power, UN Women is implementing the programme titled, “Promoting Women’s Political Leadership and Governance in India and South Asia.”2

The objective of both THP and UN Women is political empowerment of elected women representatives, and hence this partnership was formed in 2010, to jointly implement the programme titled “Promoting Women’s Political Leadership and Governance in India and South Asia”. The programme aims to accelerate the process of political empowerment of women by strengthening their leadership so that they are able to move from participation to leadership roles within their elected constituencies and practice gender responsive governance and transformative leadership based on the principles of women’s human rights and social justice.

INTRODUCTION

The THP – UN Women partnership facilitated in strengthening THPs core strategies which focus on building the leadership of elected women representatives in the selected states to empower them to exercise their leadership in public office and practice good governance in their constituencies. The partnership also gave scope to initiate new interventions that would additionally support and strengthen the current strategies of THP and advance the vision and goal of UN Women towards “Promoting women’s political leadership and governance in India and South Asia”.

The core strategies that were supported under this partnership were Women’s Leadership Workshops (WLWs); Follow – up workshops; need based workshops; training of trainers (ToTs); exposure visits; Strengthening Women’s Empowerment through Electoral Processes (Sweep); Information, education and communication material (IEC); Media dialogue and workshops; and Gram Sabha mobilization and Ward Sabha mobilization. The new initiatives undertaken were formation of Jagruk Manchs; Gender and Panchayat Resource Centres (GPRCs); Developing Linkages with Legislators/Parliamentarians; Interface meetings with Local Administration.

**Strengthening Standing Committees and Advocacy and Action Research.**

This document is a program report for the one year partnership from August 2010 – June 2011. The program was implemented in five States namely Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Karnataka. The outreach was across 69 Districts, 162 Blocks and 2778 Gram Panchayats in partnership of 44 field based Partners. The reporting is against the commitments made in the proposal that was submitted to UN Women by THP in the first quarter of 2010. It summarizes the overall results of the key interventions in the five States, enumerates progress of work highlighting activities completed, captures the challenges and puts forth learning’s and recommendations. Additionally, the report also provides details on key interventions [Annex I-VII]. The report is appended with annexes that include progress of work, success indicators, case studies, outreach, information, education and communication material (IEC), media coverage and photo documentation [Annex A – F].

3. Women’s Leadership Workshop (WLW) is organized in the first and second year of the five-year election cycle. The three day residential Women’s Leadership Workshop is the foundation course for newly elected women leaders. This workshop helps women develop an understanding of social and political citizenship and the status of women in politics. The workshop helps women articulate their aspirations into visions for themselves and their communities, such that they take up issues of development, both, economic as well as social.

4. Follow-up workshops are workshops that are organized a few months (three to six months) after a WLW to address issues and practical concerns women elected representatives face vis-à-vis their participation in the Panchayat. The focus during these workshops is on sharing of experiences of successes and challenges of women as elected leaders. The workshops also enable women to form alliances with each other and learn from each others experience. In the workshops trainers respond to specific concerns raised by the women.

5. Need based workshops are thematic workshops that address concerns which are context specific. These workshops are organized after a need assessment is done of elected women representatives. They continue through the five years a woman is in public office to build her knowledge and capacities.

6. Training of Trainers (ToTs) is training of trainers of partner organizations that implement the programme in the field. The ToT is an intensive process to equip the trainers to conduct the Women’s Leadership Workshops (WLW), follow-up workshops, need based workshops and orientation workshops on federation building at the community level. Each one of these trainings is a composition of information, knowledge, conceptual clarity and skill.

7. SWEEP or Strengthening Women’s Empowerment through Electoral Processes is an extensive pre-election campaign undertaken in the fifth and final year of a state’s Gram Panchayat election cycle. SWEEP is usually rolled out six months prior to the next elections in a campaign mode – and like a campaign has well defined, specific objectives and a clearly defined time line.

8. Information, education and communication material (IEC) includes posters, pamphlets, booklets, handouts and radio programs that are developed to disseminate information on rights, entitlements and government policies. The material developed also carries forward the message of strengthening women’s leadership in Panchayats.

9. Media dialogue and workshops with journalists involves working closely with journalists to influence public policy, so that policies address needs and concerns articulated and prioritized by elected women. A key element is interface meetings [press conferences/media workshops], between elected women representatives and journalists; such interfaces dispel myths about leadership of rural women.

10. Gram Sabha mobilization campaign includes innovative localized mobilization initiatives to ensure maximum participation of people in Gram Sabha’s, so that citizens are empowered to demand and hold governments accountable for delivery of basic services.
Jagruk Manch

Jagruk Manch constitutes a group of elected and non-elected women at gram Panchayat level to support EWRs in their work and strengthen the participation of women in Panchayats as informed citizens. The larger vision is towards strengthening political participation and leadership of women as well as focusing on effective functioning and accountability of Panchayats and on ensuring social justice in Panchayats.

Elected women representatives have taken a lead in all Jagruk Manchs as mentors, facilitators and political leaders. Based on their knowledge of Panchayats and governance procedures they have channeled and directed issues raised in the Jagruk Manch related to Panchayats to the relevant line departments, and with the support and strength of the Manch sought action and solution to the problems at hand. Issues related to social justice and gender justice have been addressed with dialogue and engagement with the victims and perpetrators. Necessary action in terms of referral to the concerned authorities has also been taken in certain cases and in some; elected women have accessed experts on the issue to build the understanding of the Manch on issues related to Domestic Violence.

Overall, 315 Jagruk Manchs have been formed with participation of elected women and women citizens from 635 Gram Panchayats in the three States of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha. Jagruk Manch is referred to as Mahila Jagruk Manch in Rajasthan, Mahila Adhikar Sammukya in Odisha, Sanjha Manch in Madhya Pradesh. 5898 elected women representatives and 17053 women citizens have been participating in Jagruk Manch meetings at Gram Panchayat and cluster level across the three States.

Membership of Jagruk Manch comprises a group of elected and non-elected women at gram Panchayat level. Average membership per JagrukManch is forty members. Non-elected members are drawn from Self Help Groups (SHG); youth groups, forest rights groups; village development committees; health worker (ASHA), nurse (ANM), teachers, pre-
school attendant anganwadi worker (only in Madhya Pradesh and Odisha – in Odisha no inclusion of Anganwadi worker); GaonSathi; Gram RozgarSevak, members of Gaon Kalyan Samiti(Odisha) and women citizen leaders. Some non-negotiables of membership that have come to define Jagruk Manch are being secular in nature, non-discriminatory in practice and non-affiliation to any political party. Jagruk Manch is also seen as a platform to engage with other existing women’s Sangathans and women members of other mixed group Sangathans – thereby strengthening women’s agency and engendering governance processes.

Issues were identified and prioritized for collective action in various Jagruk Manch meetings. Some of the issues identified were monitoring the ICDS and MNREGA, greater and active participation in Gram Sabha’s, ensuring gender justice, building a collective understanding on domestic violence and ways to address it and understanding available tools of accountability like Right to Information Act (RTI). Jagruk Manch has also provided a platform for women citizens, especially the marginalized to engage and comprehend governance issues and use collective voice and action to access rights and entitlements.

The Jagruk Manch has emerged as a viable and robust platform for women citizens to understand political processes, engage with governance and policy issues and demand accountability in local institutions of self-governance. Elected women representatives, as members of Jagruk Manch have given direction and leadership to the Manch and at the same time they have found support structures to exercise their leadership. Their participation in a common platform such as Jagruk Manch, has resulted in citizens gaining confidence in them and collectively taking action for the betterment of their Panchayats. Through the platform of Jagruk Manch women citizens have also successfully rallied against gender based violence. This is particularly significant since the advocacy is through a platform that is simultaneously demanding good governance. Thus Jagruk Manchs have emerged as platforms where equal priority is given to issues of gender justice, social justice and development and governance; thereby truly engendering the development process and strengthening women’s agency.

In the meetings of Jagruk Manch women were really concerned but were unable to move ahead on the issue. Finally, EWRs participating in the Manch, based on their understanding of Panchayat procedures, recommended a meeting with the Sarpanch. They then decided to submit an application to the Gram Sevak. The application would carry the names of all the women seeking employment. Within 5-7 days of the application, all the women seeking employment obtained work in the ongoing MNREGA work in their Panchayats. A total of 3,100 days of work was obtained in the Panchayats of Pokrasar, Danu, Antiya, Netrad, Alamsar, Badvikila, Kaprau, and Navatala.

**Strengthening Women’s Empowerment through Electoral Processes (SWEEP)**

SWEEP is an extensive pre election campaign undertaken in the fifth and final year of a state’s Gram Panchayat election cycle. The THP – UN Women partnership was done during the last year of Panchayat Election Cycle of Bihar that is year 2010. Significantly, this was the second term of the 50% reservation in Bihar15 and the usual practice of rotation of reserved seats was not done for the 2011 Panchayat elections. This meant that a reserved seat for women would continue in the same Panchayat. This was the context of the Bihar elections in 2011.

SWEEP in Bihar was initially conducted across 1065 Gram Panchayats in 71 blocks of 27 districts (Arwal, Jehanabad, Bhagalpur, Gaya, Muzaffarpur, East Champaran, Munger, Kaimur, Rohtas, Madhubani, Darbhanga, Gopalganj, Jamui, Nalanda, West Champaran, Purnia and Kishanganj, Saharsa, Supaul, Madhepura, Katihar, Banka, Aurangabad, Vaishali, Patna Rural, Nawada and Saran). SWEEP reached out to approximate 21,30,000 persons. This includes both intensive and extensive campaign inputs and with the UN Women partnership, this was the first time that a campaign promoting women’s leadership in Panchayats was done at such an extensive level in Bihar. Additionally, the radio programme highlighting the message of SWEEP was broadcast across all 38 districts of Bihar, with 3.8 million households.

The campaign was conceptualized and designed keeping in mind the political and social context of Bihar. Violence, especially gender based violence, is rampant during elections and women candidates are fearful of filing their candidatures. The key objective was to promote women’s participation in the entire Panchayat election process and campaign as informed voters, polling agents, counting agents, proposers and most significantly to promote women’s leadership. The strategy adopted was of direct engagement with women at large, and specifically

15. 2006 was the first time when 50% reservation of seats for women in Panchayats were declared in Bihar.
with prospective women candidates to encourage contesting elections under reserved and non-reserved categories. The other objective and focus of the campaign was to promote an enabling environment which encourages women’s participation internally (within the family) as well as externally (community, village, Panchayat, civil society, State level). The strategy adopted was of direct outreach through mass media and communication to mobilize and sensitize the community and systematic and regular engagement with key stakeholders like the media and civil society. Support of the State Election Commission (SEC) and Panchayati Raj Department was accessed for timely information on the process of elections and seeking relevant permissions and support to conduct the SWEEP campaign in sensitive districts of Bihar.

Multiple interventions were planned so that an impactful and effective SWEEP campaign could be implemented. SWEEP was rolled out through an intensive direct outreach campaign which included simulation camps, potential women leadership workshops, village meetings, street plays and rally’s. There was direct engagement with Elected Women Representatives (EWRs), activities were planned at the community level, media was sensitized, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and various other stakeholders were mobilized for Strengthening Women’s Empowerment through Electoral Process (SWEEP). Impactful and relevant information, education and communication (IEC) material was produced and distributed in the campaign area. This included 50,000 posters, 40,000 pamphlets, 49,000 stickers and 20,000 song CDs. The media in Bihar supported the campaign. Over 200 articles were published in 13 newspapers like Prabhat Khabar, Dainik Jagran, Aaj, Rashtriya Sahara, Dainik Bhaskar, Hindustan Times, Telegraph, Qaumi Tanzeem and Hindu amongst other local newspapers and magazines.

Significantly, more than 90% of members of THP facilitated block federations (from THP’s regular intervention area) re-contested in the Panchayat elections and more than 50% percent of the women candidates won the elections. All the re-contesting candidates were members of the THP facilitated EWR federations with a membership of 900 EWRs. The EWR federations were active for the last two years in the districts of Muzaffarpur, Madhubani, Rohtas and Jehanabad. Women have contested in larger numbers from reserved as well as unreserved seats. They have also filed nominations on multiple seats. Several women have acted as proposers (1454) for women candidates. Women have also shown their presence as aware voters, polling agents (30) and counting agents (1120).

Cases of violence against women have been tracked and advocacy towards the same was carried out during the Panchayat elections 2011. The process involved networking with experts on the issue and organizations which had a large network in the State. The strategy adopted in 2011 was based on the experience of the fact finding on gender based violence undertaken during 2006 Panchayat elections. Subsequently, partnership was established with Ekal Nari Sangathan (Single Women’s Collective) and WAMA (Women’s Association for Marching Ahead). The fact finding team lead by THP identified 36 cases of violence against women of which 7 were followed up upon. They ranged from murder, sexual abuse, suicide, threats and physical abuse. Follow-up on such cases was done by informing the State Election Commission to declare such Panchayats as sensitive and ensure that elections were conducted.
in a fair manner in such Panchayats. Police protection was sought in some cases by engaging with the Superintendent of Police and District Superintendent of Police.

In the SWEEP areas, the campaign resulted in increased participation of women in the entire Panchayat elections and the community was sensitized towards their role as responsible citizens and voters in elections; and the need to support women’s participation in Panchayat elections. In large areas instead of proxy candidates on women’s reserved seats, independent women candidates stood for elections. As compared to the last term, a large number of young women stepped out to stand for elections and participate in the election process. Also, very few seats went non-contested and vacant. Basically, in the areas of SWEEP, women came out in large numbers and claim seats reserved for them.

“When I was married and came to this Panchayat, the elderly people advised me to always remain in veil and consider it as my legacy like other social norms. At that time, I had accepted it. But today, when I have been re-elected as ward member and Up-Mukhiya, the same elder people do not see anything wrong in me not being in veil; rather they respect me as a leader”, says Laxmi Devi – Up- Mukhiya (Vice President, District Muzzafarpur, Bihar). She adds, “I had contested for two posts, Panchayat member and Mukhiya. I am strictly against the dirty game of money and power in politics. I have been told by some people that had I spent money and liquor then I might have won the post of Mukhiya. But this was not acceptable.”

Developing Linkages with Parliamentarians / Legislators

Interface with Parliamentarians and Legislators in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Odisha at the district and block level was a first time intervention that received a positive response from both the Parliamentarians / Legislators and elected women. The objective was to support the elected women representatives to engage with the State, in order to demand implementation of commitments made. In Bihar, due to the SWEEP campaign underway, series of interfaces with the Parliamentarians were not organized, instead, in June 2011 a state level convention was organized for over 200 EWR’s where they interacted with the Minister of Social Welfare Parveen Amanullah. These interfaces received a positive response from both MLAs/MPs and the elected women representatives. Overall 34 legislators/parliamentarians have been met in the 5 implementing States and 1519 elected women have participated in these interfaces.

The direct interface with the Parliamentarians has provided the elected women with a platform where they can bring to the notice of MLAs & MPs the
problematic issues affecting their respective Panchayats, thus demanding good and accountable governance. The exercise has helped in strengthening the elected women’s leadership. They have become more confident, aware and sure of their own political agency. For the Parliamentarians too, this opportunity has resulted in sensitizing them to the issues and challenges in the Panchayats, especially those faced by the elected women while exercising their political roles. This process facilitated the building and nurturing of a conducive environment for implementation of policies and developmental works. Each new interaction has ensured increased mutual respect for each other’s political agency. In future, more such interfaces are required with the parliamentarians, where along with following up on various previously raised issues, the EWR’s and the Parliamentarians would continue to use the space for increased transparency and accountability at the local level.

**Gender and Panchayat Resource Centres (GPRCs)**

GPRCs were established as information and knowledge hubs in rural areas in Odisha. They were opened at block and gram Panchayat level and were publicized by word of mouth by elected women, members of the Mahila Jagruk Manch and local partners. Twenty GPRCs were opened across six districts of Gajapati, Nuapada, Dhenkanal, Angul, Khurda and Kalahandi. The response to the GPRCs has been tremendous. 740 elected women representatives, 1449 women belonging to the community and 318 men have accessed these GPRC’s. A range of information was sought at these centres such as registration at birth, Right to Education, NREGA, safety net schemes (old age and widow pension), Chief Minister’s relief fund and farm ponds. Some of the GPRCs evolved as vibrant centres, expanding their scope by running film shows, giving lectures on domestic violence, role of women in PRIs and information about Anganwadis amidst other issues. Some of the GPRCs evolved as vibrant centres, expanding their scope by running film shows, giving lectures on domestic violence, role of women in PRIs and information about Anganwadis amidst other issues.

**Building Linkages with Local Administration and Functionaries**

This was undertaken in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Odisha. Elected women representatives interacted with local bureaucracy at district and block level. Overall, 205 delegations with participation of 6173 EWR’s took place and 103 functionaries in different line departments have been met. The rationale behind these linkages was that during the course of their work, elected women representatives often face difficulties in exercising their political leadership. Sometimes there are lapses with the implementation of programs and schemes in Panchayat level and on other times, there is mutual disregard for each other’s office. In order to facilitate greater co-ordination, transparency and accountability such linkages were facilitated.

The interfaces have helped in strengthening and establishing linkages with the local government functionaries by bringing them together on a common platform. The EWR’s have used these platforms to seek information regarding Panchayats, government orders, schemes and laws from the officials. This intervention has helped in bringing the problems to the notice of the concerned authorities. It has also facilitated in knowledge building as the EWR’s then equip themselves with necessary information about governing processes and rules relating to development activities. The whole exercise has helped in deepening democracy and demanding an effective and accountable governance structures at the local level.

Some of the cross cutting issues, taken up for redressal with government functionaries in all four states have been issues related to social justice and development/governance. The issues include violence against EWRs, non-cooperation by male Panchayat colleagues and closure and shifting of alcohol shops. Issues pertaining to development/governance were on seeking information and demanding rights and entitlements pertaining to education, health & sanitation, agriculture, mid day meal, integrated child development scheme (ICDS), MNREGA (Wages) / job card and queries related to the holding of Gram Sabha.

**Strengthening Standing Committees**

Strengthening of Standing committees was under-
In order to strengthen the institution of Panchayati Raj, a need was felt to engage with standing committees. This becomes significant as each committee will now be meeting twice a month (4th and 19th each month) as a result of a new government order passed by the State government in Rajasthan in April 2011. This intervention was carried out through the medium of trainings by focusing primarily on strengthening two committees- Committee on Education and the Committee on social justice. 26 standing committee trainings have been held where 503 members attended the training for standing committee on social justice and 496 for committee on education. Most of the participants were not aware of being members of standing committees. Attending these trainings has made them aware of being part of the respective committees. Also, all the members attending these trainings have been made aware of their roles and responsibilities as members of standing committees, their functions and importance; Members have also been made aware of aspects of social justice- girl child education, pension for the members belonging to marginalized communities etc. Having undergone trainings and understanding the importance of a functional standing committee, in some Panchayats, members have started attending their respective standing committee meetings.

Advocacy and action research

Advocacy efforts on Section 40 in Madhya Pradesh, Two Child Norm in Odisha and Gram Sabha were strengthened with the support of this partnership. Consultations on Section 40 in Madhya Pradesh have resulted in a consensus across civil society groups, on repeal of Section 40 rather than its amendment. On Section 40 in Madhya Pradesh, two state level consultation and two regional consultations were held with multi stakeholders such as civil society, elected women representatives, community based organizations, lawyers, media, advocacy networks, State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD) and bureaucrats. Representation was from across 28 districts in the State. The main purpose behind holding the series of consultation was to deliberate, and consolidate on a consensus on whether to campaign for repeal of section (40) or whether to ask for amendments within the law. During the course of these consultations, awareness was created on Section (40) amongst EWR’s and different stakeholders representing diverse perspectives and groups. The main consensus that emerged from these consultations has been to ask for repeal of Section (40), as it impedes the participation of the marginalized, especially women in Panchayats. Some of the main arguments for repeal are:

- Section 40 violates the basic principle of decentralization, which is removal of an elected representative by a non-elected government functionary. The power should remain in the hands of the people, and not in the hand of a bureaucrat.
- Rise in the number of cases and its misuses especially against women and other members of 

In Odisha there is a renewed interest to adopt new strategies to address the Two Child Norm provision in the Act, especially since Panchayat elections are due in February 2012. In Rajasthan, the study on Gram Sabha highlighted various limitations in the current functioning of Gram Sabha’s, and the same were shared with the State Government.

16. Section 40 of the State Panchayat Act in Madhya Pradesh, provides for removal of an elected representative who is found to be not working in public interest, guilty of misconduct or failing to carry out the duties assigned. Sub Divisional Magistrates (SDMs) are empowered as the prescribed authority to take action under this particular Section after appropriate investigation. On the basis of reasonable evidence they may remove the elected representative from the post. Such a person is declared ineligible to contest for any post for a period of six years.

17. As per State Panchayat Act of Odisha, persons having more than two children after April 1995, shall not be eligible to contest Panchayat elections. The Two Child norm is currently prevalent in states of Odisha, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. In Odisha, it was introduced in 1993 and since 1997 Panchayat elections, the norm became effective.
the marginalised communities.

- Provisions in the existing Constitutional mechanisms as well as laws can help address the same issue (to prevent misconduct, gross negligence and enquiry). Hence, there is no need for Section [40]. For example: MP already has no confidence motion as a provision to remove an elected official and the provision of right to recall.

- Strengthening of other provisions within MP Panchayati Raj Act to address issues of corruption and non-compliance to democratic norms. It acts as a major impediment for elected women in exercising their political leadership.

On Two Child Norm in Odisha, series of consultations were held in 2011 to revisit and revive the campaign for removal of the Two Child Norm. Over 50 participants from civil society, partner organizations, elected women representatives who were victims of TCN, EWR federations, National Alliance of Women’s Organization (NAWO), UNFPA, human rights activists, social researchers and the media participated in the consultations. The objective of these consultations was to devise a strategy to build up the TCN campaign again so that yet another opportunity is not lost for a large number of potential candidates, especially women from impoverished backgrounds and marginalized communities, to contest Panchayat elections in February 2012. A stocktaking and SWOT analysis of past advocacy initiatives was done to understand and plan the future campaign strategy. Subsequently, a consolidated strategy evolved out of these consultations to take forward the advocacy initiative. Some actions implemented were engaging on the issue by elected women’s federations and members of the Jagruk Manch with statutory bodies like the Human Rights Commission, SC/ST Commission, Child Rights Commission and Women’s Commission; facilitating federation leaders to visit and present memorandums in the Odia language, to MLAs, MPs, bureaucrats and other stake holders; the Khurda EWR federation submitted memorandums to 66 MLAs prior to the monsoon session of the legislative assembly in Odisha; memorandums also submitted to the Director and Secretary of Odisha State Panchayati Raj department asking for the removal of TCN. These actions have generated a debate around the issue, helped in consolidating voice under one platform and helped in mobilizing constituencies to demand for its removal from the Odisha State Panchayati Raj act by the State.

In Rajasthan a Gram Sabha study was commissioned by THP. It was undertaken by the organization Unnati, and has been carried out in 48 Gram Panchayats of THP’s working area in the State covering 11 districts and 14 blocks. 3 gram Panchayats were chosen in each block. In the 3 districts of Alwar, Tonk

A woman representative sharing her thoughts at a workshop.
The activities and interventions planned by The Hunger Project during Phase I of the partnership were mostly successfully completed. The progress of work against each intervention has been tracked. The details are provided in Annex A: Progress of Work.

The program was implemented in the 5 States of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha and Karnataka across 69 Districts, 162 Blocks and 2778 Gram Panchayats in partnership of 44 field based Partners. The program intervention areas included the priority districts of UN Women; Tonk, Dungarpur, Alwar (Rajasthan), Dhenkanal, Gajapati (Odisha), Mysore, Kolar (Karnataka); Nalanda (Bihar) and Jhabua (Madhya Pradesh). Sehore (Madhya Pradesh) and Supaul (Bihar) are not THP’s operational area but priority districts of UN Women and hence Phase I was utilized to identify suitable local partners with satisfactory work experience in the field and necessary legal documents. The programme will be implemented in these two districts in phase II. However, Supaul was covered under SWEEP through the radio program that was broadcasted.

However, under a few budget heads work has not been completed. These include ‘Conference Participation on CEDAW, Orientation on Women’s Human Rights, WLW Posters and Compendium of Case Studies’. The reasons for delay have been several such as non-availability of suitable staff, suitable conference for participation, etc. and often beyond the control of THP.

Also there has been no utilization under the budget head ‘Training of Trainers in NIRD’. This has been due to the fact that there has been no request made so far.

Under the budget head ‘Linkages with Parliamentarians’ the utilization has been low in Karnataka primarily because of non committance by MLAs/ MPs in the wake of the governmental crisis in the state.

Also late receipt of funds from UN Women and subsequent delay in opening of INR accounts in THP state offices have led to less utilization of funds under several budget heads. This is because many of the committed interventions had to be funded by THP’s own funds so as to maintain & sustain the planned schedule in the field.

Some highlights were the implementation of a successful and impactful SWEEP in Bihar; formation of Jagruk Manchs in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha; completion of Women’s leadership workshops (WLWs) and follow up workshops in Karnataka; capacity building of Standing Committees in Rajasthan; building linkages with legislators and parliamentarians in Rajasthan, Karnataka, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar; media interface in all five program States; interface meetings with local administration across program States and advocacy initiatives on specific issues.
The interventions in Phase I of the THP UN Women-partnership were implemented in the five States of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha and Karnataka. Some challenges related to the implementation of the program are common to all the States, while others are related to the distinctive context of the State and still others are intervention specific.

The feudal and patriarchal milieu of all the States continue to pose one of the biggest impediments to elected women exercising their leadership effectively. Caste dynamics still determine allegiance and support to elected leaders in Panchayats. Caste based discriminatory practices in Panchayats result in denial of dignity and self-respect of elected women from marginalized groups. Against this backdrop, mobilizing elected women leaders to attend the trainings and take action in the Panchayats remains a challenge. In the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh, elected women have to seek permission from former local landlords (“dausaab”) who are still considered de facto “rulers and leaders” in those areas. In Rajasthan, feudal landlords and traditional centres of power, hold complete sway over the time and mobility of elected women representatives from marginalized groups like SC and ST, since they work as farm labour on their fields. In some cases, the feudal landlords have put up their farm labour as proxy candidates in reserved categories. In Rajasthan, the practise of veiling is a big deterrent for elected women to exercise their leadership. Being public office holders, it limits their mobility and interaction with citizens in public spaces. This practice of veiling is particularly wide spread in western Rajasthan. Such challenges are met by the local Partners by engaging with the feudal landlords. Intensive mobilization efforts are undertaken by local Partners to convince the elected women to attend programmes and meetings.

In all States, family support is lacking, especially for residential trainings and travel outside the village and Panchayat. Considerable time and resources are spent to convince the elected women and their families before they consent to attend the trainings. Families view the trainings suspiciously and often male Panchayat members and male family members do not support them. THP has sought to address this problem by holding block level meetings for elected women and their families / communities. These meetings help to create awareness about the objective of the trainings and help create an enabling environment for EWRs to work as aware and informed leaders.

Another challenge is the severe backlash that elected women representatives have to face when they start carrying out their duties and responsibilities. As women assert themselves in the previously male-dominated public domain, they face rising hostility, discrimination and gender based violence. They are increasingly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, and become victims of insensitive bureaucracy, of policemen, local mafia, landlords and criminals, of civil society and sometimes of their own families. Every success and achievement of the EWR has been tempered with a hostile response that has been swift and harsh.

While the 110th Amendment will ensure 50% reservation in Panchayats for women, the States need to fully comprehend and address the barriers to elected women’s participation in Panchayats. Only when the barriers are acknowledged and addressed, will reservation for women transform to full participation by women in local governance. Towards that, then States need to re-look at some of its policies that are anti-women and anti-poor and directly pose a threat for elected women to realize their full capabilities as a public office holder. The existence of a non-cooperative and a gender insensitive local bureaucracy results in creating a very intimidating and harsh environment for elected women to function. It has been observed that the local bureaucracy and officials put a premium on literacy, background and class affiliations which further inhibit women from marginalized groups to engage with confidence with the Panchayati Raj Institution.

In specific districts across the five States, there are increased vulnerabilities, related to natural disasters, Maoist insurgency, seasonal migration, communal violence, drought and political instability amidst others. Some examples of these are floods in Bihar, cyclones in Odisha, Maoist insurgency in Odisha and Bihar, intra State migration due push factors such as poverty, drought, debt and lack of work in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh and the continuing infighting amidst the ruling political party leading to political instability in Karnataka. In such cases planned interventions have got affected. THP has addressed such challenges through adjustment of program dates across quarters after consultation with local partners.

Challenges of specific interventions are highlighted in detail in the intervention specific reporting in Annex I – VII. Briefly, the Jagruk Manch was a new intervention and hence the challenge was to ensure that the objectives are clearly defined and there is...
The Hunger Project

Learning’s and Recommendations

The phase I of the THP UN Women partnership focused on strengthening some of the core strategies of THP and introducing some new interventions. The core strategies of THP have been built and adapted to State specific contexts over the years, yet every year new learning’s emerge due to the rapidly changing socio-economic and political environment of States. The new interventions introduced in Phase I have resulted in a rich body of work and the outcomes achieved have further enriched THPs understanding of the political context of elected women and women citizens as they navigate the local institutions of democracy and governance. The learning’s from specific interventions is articulated in the Annex. This section will include a summary of the learning’s based on the overall interventions in Phase I of the THP UN Women partnership and recommendations for the State.

Need to move beyond affirmative action-from reservation to participation

In Karnataka and Odisha, during Phase I of the partnership (August 2010 – June 2011) reservation was still at 33% while in the States of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, 2010 was the first year of 50% reservation for women. In Bihar 50% reservation for women in Panchayats was declared in 2006. This enhancement in reservation has resulted in a remarkable increase in the number of rural women holding public office. Most recently, the cabinet has passed the 50 percent reservation for women in Panchayats, thereby bringing about 110th amendment to the Constitution of India\textsuperscript{20}. Therefore, both the 73rd and 110th constitutional amendments have addressed the issue of lack of space, opportunity and visibility of women in local institutions of governance, through affirmative action. Given the socio-cultural context of rural India where women’s role is restricted to the reproductive and informal sector and they are largely trapped within the confines of a patriarchal and feudal structure – both the amendments provide the much needed platform for women to articulate their

19. Satisfactory Consolidated Balance Sheet and Audited Accounts along with Auditor’s Report for the last 3 years; copies of last 3 years Income Tax Returns Acknowledgements; copy of Exemption under Section 80-G of the Income Tax Act.

20. The Amendment Bill, which was introduced in LokSabha on November 24, 2009, will incorporate one change suggested by the Standing Committee on Rural Development that the word “rural” be added before the word “population” wherever it occurs in the draft legislation. The intention behind adding “rural” before “population” is to reflect appropriate demographic representation of categories of population for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for whom reservation is made.
Besides, promoting enabling work environments for elected women, the government needs to invest in capacity building of elected women representatives. Given the lack of exposure to public life, low levels of literacy and the increasing responsibilities of panchayat representatives, regular capacity building is important. Currently, the responsibility of training newly elected representatives in the State is with the SIRDs. It is recommended that the entire capacity building portfolio of SIRDs is overhauled to accommodate the learning needs of elected women. The training modules need to be reviewed so that they are not limited to providing information on government schemes, but include concepts of leadership, gender dynamics and roles, planning and management, which are essential for elected women to step out as effective and efficient leaders. At present, capacity building initiatives by the State are limited to one time training in the first year of their tenure. It is advisable that exclusive batches of elected women be trained, instead of mixed group trainings so that focused attention can be given to elected women and the learning environment is non-intimidating. Further, participatory, adult learning techniques need to be adopted in training elected representatives, since most of them are non-literate and semi-literate.

With 50% reservation for women in Panchayats and based on the experience of elections in Bihar in 2011, a large number of women are exercising their right to participate in Panchayat elections as voters and candidates. However, the prevalent feudal and patriarchal socio-cultural milieu of States hinders the full participation of women in Panchayat elections as equal citizens. In Bihar, there have been reported incidences of murder, sexual assault, intimidation and threats. It is recommended that the State Election Commission (SEC), form a “Women’s Cell” to address such cases during the elections. It is also recommended that the election officers deputed across the State during elections are sensitized towards incidences of gender based violence during elections and are equipped with adequate knowledge and skills to address such incidences appropriately and with responsibility.

**Appropriate Honorarium for Elected Representatives**

Affirmative action ensured women’s participation in Panchayats; however, affirmative action was a result of enlightened political leadership and not as a result of mass based social movements that advocated for changing and challenging traditional power structures. Therefore, affirmative action/reservation has not guaranteed economic independence, mobility and freedom from patriarchal norms and practices for rural women to participate in PRIs or engage and interact with citizens in their constituency. The lack...
of provision of an appropriate honorarium and the delays in its disbursal, bring disrespect to the public office itself and to the person elected to that office. Increasingly, various schemes and plans of the government are being routed through Panchayats, thereby putting more demands on the time of elected representatives, to monitor and implement the schemes. Towards this elected representatives have to attend several Panchayat meetings, conduct and participate in the Gram Sabha, visit block and district offices to access and monitor schemes, mobilize the community, identify beneficiaries and ensure social and gender justice within their jurisdiction. All these activities are time consuming and lack of reasonable remuneration leads to distraction, interest in other monetarily rewarding activities, short cuts and other corrupt practices. In order that the elected representatives, especially women from marginalized communities, are able to action the above tasks, it calls for increase in marginal productivity on their part. This necessitates an appropriate increase in the wage rate (in this case the honorarium) which should be commensurate with her duties and responsibilities.

Review and repeal of policies that impinge on women’s political participation in PRLs

The State needs to review some of its policies, so that policies that impinge on women’s political participation in PRLs and policies that are anti-women and anti-poor are repealed (Annex VII). The Two Child Norm stands out amongst these. The norm undermines women and men’s effective participation in the local governance. The norm is coercive in nature impinging on basic Human Rights principles. It challenges the basis of democracy, where both men and women and members of marginalized communities, through the prevalence of this discriminatory norm, are not able to exercise their political right to stand for elections and effectively participate in the same. Further, the norm violates the reproductive rights of an individual. Currently, it is prevalent in states of Odisha, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. In Bihar too, the State Government needs to explicitly express its non-intention of introducing the Two Child Norm in Panchayats and remove the norm at the Municipal level.

Section 40 in Madhya Pradesh also needs to be repealed. Experiences of elected women have shown that the Section is largely misused to undermine women’s and especially women from SC/ST communities’ participation in PRLs. Most importantly the section goes against the basic spirit of decentralization and impinges on functioning of effective local governance; wherein the power to remove an elected representative is vested with the bureaucracy in spite of other democratic provisions already prevalent (example: no confidence motion). This provision in the Madhya Pradesh State Panchayati Raj Act has only impeded in the full participation of women in governance.

In Bihar, the State Election Commission (SEC) has sent a recommendation to the State government for indirect elections for various posts in the Panchayat Elections of 2016[1]. The SEC has requested for an amendment in the State Act, to include a provision for direct elections of Panchayat members, ward members, block level members and Zilla Parishad members and indirect elections of President/ Mukhiya of Gram Panchayat, Sarpanch (NiyayaPanchayat). Indirect elections have serious implications. From the experience of Gram Panchayat elections in Karnataka in 2010, where indirect elections are the norm, and from the experience of several States, where Zilla Parishad Chairpersons are elected indirectly; numerous factors impinge on the rights of the marginalized, especially women to participate freely in an indirect Panchayat election. Horse trading, coercion and threats are the norm from the experience of Karnataka. Indirect elections result in intense lobbying for the post of Mukhiya/ President amongst all ward members; and caste and class groups organize themselves to put up their candidates. There is significant political party interference also, with each party backing candidates in the run up to the indirect elections. Therefore, there is a need to engage with the State government to not implement the recommendations of the SEC.

Accountability of the State to Deliver Good Governance

The experience of multiple interventions like Jagruk Manch, interface with functionaries and line departments, interface with Parliamentarians and Legislators, SWEEP and advocacy initiatives brought to the forefront the pressing need for demanding accountability from the State to deliver good governance to its citizens, especially the marginalized and vulnerable. In the context of this report and based on the experiences from the field, the definitions of good governance within which the learning’s and recommendations are articulated are as follows:

- It is "...an enabling environment conducive to the enjoyment of human rights" and "prompting growth and sustainable human development." By linking good governance to sustainable human development, emphasizing principles such as accountability, participation and the enjoyment of human rights, the resolution stands as an implicit endorsement of the rights-based approach to development. “ The Com-
21”Seedhe Nahin ChuneJaaye Mukhiyava Sarpanch” PrabhatKhabar, Patna, May 19 2011
mission on Human Rights - Resolution 2000/64.

- It is “… among other things participatory, transparent and accountable. It is also effective and equitable. And it promotes the rule of Law.” – UNDP.

- It “… encompasses the role of public authorities in establishing the environment in which economic operators function and in determining the distribution of benefits as well as the relationship between the ruler and the ruled.” – OECD (www.oecd.org/dac/)

- It is “… epitomized by predictable, open and enlightened policy making; an bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos; an executive arm of government accountable for its actions; and a strong civil society participating in public affairs; and all behaving under the rule of law.” – World Bank 1994: Governance: The World Bank’s Experience. Good governance has 8 major characteristics. It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making.

Role of PRI Functionaries and Bureaucracy

The experience of the numerous interfaces of elected women with local administration and functionaries was an enriching experience for the elected women. The interfaces have helped in strengthening and establishing linkages with the local government functionaries by bringing them together on a common platform. Elected women representatives have used these platforms to seek information regarding Panchayats, government orders, schemes and laws from the officials. This intervention has helped in bringing the problems to the notice of the concerned authorities.

However, towards State accountability to deliver good governance and strengthen PRIs, it should be the prerogative of the administration to reach out to elected women representatives. Interfaces and interactions should be institutionalized by the government. The interfaces should be held throughout the state between elected representatives and the district and block administration on pre-determined days, and should be followed up on systematically.

Interfaces between government and citizens are already in practice in some States. In Rajasthan, the government, in a bid to bring the administration closer to people, initiated Prashasan GaonKe Sang” 22 These are one day camps held at the gram panchayat level where the block level administration is present in order to facilitate all work pertaining to the block level. These camps have been attended in large numbers by both elected representatives and others and brought about increased coordination between the two tiers of Panchayats. In Odisha, “grievance day” is held at the Block level on a weekly basis. Such practices should be treated as best practices and replicated in other States. Other recommendations are to hold quarterly or monthly Block level “shivirs” / camps on flagship schemes of the government.

The experience of the Gender Panchayat Resource Centre (GPRC) in Odisha, highlighted limitations in the government responsiveness to citizen needs. Most of the rural populations, especially women, have no access to vital information relating to their rights, entitlements or Panchayats. Information from the Blocks reaches the Gram Panchayats very late, and in most cases is not made accessible to citizens. Important documents for pension and other entitlements are not available in remote Gram Panchayats. While the GPRCs have been opened to address the gaps in the system, in the long run the State should introduce mechanisms and systems that reach out to the citizens.

To summarize, schemes and policies of the government need to be made accessible to citizens. As envisioned in the Constitution, the state and its local functionaries/administration need to become more representatives, more proactive and responsive, more accountable and more proximate to its people; to realize the true spirit of the 73rd amendment.

Implementation of schemes and monitoring and control

The experience of the Jagruk Manch has shown the pre-occupation of elected women and women citizens of Gram Panchayats in highlighting the lacunae in accessing government schemes and poor implementation of the same. Considerable time is spent by elected representatives and citizens in exposing administrative malfunctions and lack of monitoring of various schemes.

Increasing vulnerabilities of the impoverished and marginalized people need serious attention. The state government will launch the PrashasanGaonKe Sang campaign from Wednesday, promising on-the-spot solution to administrative problems affecting the daily lives of rural populace. The government will also create awareness on its various public welfare schemes and carry out a survey of disabled people during the campaign, which will last till December 31. For the next two months, senior officials of 18 government departments will camp at every village panchayat headquarters six days a week, listening to individual grievances of the local people and offering them instant remedies. Ministers, parliamentarians, legislators and local public representatives would be present at these camps, mediating between the administration and the common man.”
marginalized in rural areas due to rapid inflation and rising food prices, has resulted in a large number of people having to depend on the outlays by the government. These include rations through the Public Distribution System, food for children through the Mid-Day Meal scheme and food supplements through Anganwadi centres amongst others. Besides, work and wages through MNREGA is of prime importance, since for some households, especially women headed households, and livelihood options through MNREGA are the only means for survival. The Jagruk Manchs have repeatedly pointed out the gaps in monitoring and inherent pilferages.

Tighter control and strict monitoring is required by the State, so that the obligation of the State towards good governance is delivered in rural areas.

**Strengthening PRLs - Gram Sabha and PESA**

The institution of Gram Sabha is the foundation of the Panchayati Raj System. The Constitution’s 73rd amendment has made the Gram Sabha, as the most effective and participatory tool for social mobilization. It provides a platform for every voice of the village to be heard, and to be involved in local decision making process. However, in the current scenario the Gram Sabha is one of the weakest institutions within the Panchayati Raj System. It is not held on time, nor are citizens informed about the dates in the stipulated period, as per the State Acts, quorums are not met, minutes are not recorded, neither is there follow up on proposals submitted and suggestions made, women’s participation is low, steps are not made to increase their participation and the agenda is largely decided by the government.

In Rajasthan a study on Gram Sabha’s highlighted various limitations in the current functioning of Gram Sabha’s. Some key recommendations included – delimitation of Panchayats for better governance, video recording of Gram Sabha’s, availability of gender and caste disaggregated data in Gram Sabha records to get right information regarding fulfilment of the norms of quorum, reports on progress on past proposals submitted in Gram Sabha’s, an enabling environment for women to participate in Gram Sabha’s and separate budgetary provisions to spread awareness amongst citizens for whose benefit it exists on PESA amongst citizens. Therefore, specific recommendations are to be made to increase participation of women in the Gram Sabha by ensuring the quorum has a minimum of 20 percent participation of women.

In Odisha, the Palli Sabha (Ward Sabha) is held regularly. However, the Gram Sabha is not. Besides ensuring that Gram Sabha is held as per the provisions in the State Act, other recommendations are to review and revise the current Gram Sabha quorums of 1/10th of the population which is unrealistic and is hardly ever completed. Quorum should be a minimum of 100 participants. To ensure women’s participation in the quorum, the present reservation of 33.3% for women in the quorum should be continued. Video Recording of Gram Sabhas is also recommended to mitigate chances of attendance being forged and to be able to determine the actual attendance and nature of discussions.

In the context of Gram Sabha, PESA (Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas) needs to be implemented as per the norms. PESA is a comprehensive and powerful law that empowers Gram Sabha of the Scheduled Areas towards protecting interests of tribal and addressing special needs of the geographical areas that they reside in. This Act enables the Gram Sabha members to address issues at local level, settle disputes in accordance with local tribal customs and traditions, and decentralize control and management of natural community resources. The tribal populations in the States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Odisha will directly benefit if PESA is rightfully implemented. Interestingly in Jagruk Manch meetings held in the Vth schedule areas in Rajasthan (Sirohi and Dungarpur), Madhya Pradesh (Jhabua and Dindori) and Odisha (Gajapati and Kalahandi), women were completely unaware of PESA’s provisions and its ramifications. There was limited awareness amongst the Panchayat functionaries also and hence information on PESA was not forthcoming. Additionally, sufficient rules for enacting PESA have not been made nor have changes in all existing state acts been made which come in contradiction of PESA. Therefore, specific recommendations for implementation of PESA are to raise awareness on PESA amongst citizens for whose benefit it has been enacted, capacity building of tribal communities and officials implementing the Act, prep-
To facilitate elected women and women’s engagement with PRIs it is recommended that “Mahila Gram Sabha’s” be held prior to every Gram Sabha25. Experiences from the State of Maharashtra can be considered towards the same. This is also based on the overwhelming response the Jagruk Manchs have received across Gram Panchayats. While Jagruk Manchs are informal spaces that are promoting women’s engagement with local governance, steps need to be taken to formalize such engagements, and hence the recommendation of “Mahila Gram Sabha’s”. As a first step perhaps the same can be piloted in the priority districts of UN Women by DPOs – who work very closely with the district administration and State, and whose primary responsibility is conducting Gram Sabha’s.

The Phase I (August 2010 to June 2011) of The Hunger Project – UN Women partnership titled “Promoting Women’s Political Leadership and Governance in India and South Asia” was based on mutually agreed upon programme interventions.

Through the partnership and support extended by UN Women, THP was able to implement new interventions which were based on THP’s ongoing strategies and which contributed in further enhancing elected women’s leadership in Gram Panchayats. In the last eleven months, new insights have emerged from the implementation of these new interventions. They include the innovation of the Jagruk Manch, which for the first time under the leadership of elected women representatives mobilized other women citizens in Gram Panchayats to engage with governance processes and demand accountability. The formation of 315 Jagruk Manchs in three States with a participation of approximately 23,000 members is a reminder that rural women, given an opportunity, and with adequate facilitation and under the leadership of EWRs, can organize themselves successfully and engage with local governance. The interface with 34 Legislators and Parliamentarians in all five States is another innovation that highlighted the need for dialogue between elected representatives across political tiers. The immediate outcome was the acknowledgement and respect for each other’s political identity, roles and responsibilities. In these fora, they were able to exchange experiences and elected women were able to voice their concerns and table their demands to legislators, who were then asked to seek accountability from local bureaucracy. Other specific issues like sex-selective abortion in Rajasthan and malnutrition of children in Madhya Pradesh were brought to the notice of legislators by elected women. SWEEP across 27 districts in Bihar clearly showcased the need for extensive and aggressive campaigns to promote women’s participation in Panchayat elections and to engage with various Stakeholders to build an enabling environment. The pilot training of members of Standing Committees in Rajasthan brought to light its non-functionality and the need to strengthen them. Interface with local bureaucracy proved very beneficial for the elected women as they were able to build working relations with block and district officials. However, these interfaces continue to highlight the need for sensitization of the bureaucracy to align with elected women representative and respond to the needs of the citizens at the local level. Advocacy interventions resulted in highlighting policies which impede women’s leadership in Gram panchayats. In the second year of the partnership, THP will engage with the government for reforms of the various policies that have been highlighted by the elected women in their advocacy campaigns.

Based on the above learning’s and accomplishments, future interventions have been planned and proposed for Phase II of the partnership. In the Phase II of the partnership, all Phase I innovations and some of the other interventions are planned to be continued. This will successfully address the emerging gaps and ensure continuity in the programme. Further, the experience of building and strengthening women’s leadership in Phase I and Phase II, over a span of 29 months from August 2010 – December 2012, will enrich THP and UN Women’s knowledge on women’s political leadership in grassroots democracy and governance.

25. Mahila Gram Sabha’s are held in Maharashtra
Background

The Hunger Project has strengthened and built the leadership of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) since 2001. Subsequently, EWRs have organized themselves into federations and have engaged with governance processes at Panchayat, block, district and State level. As part of their mandate and roles and responsibilities, EWRs and EWR federations have also engaged with citizens of the Gram Panchayats, especially women. This has been particularly significant in increased support by women to EWRs in implementing their responsibilities, especially on advocating for the rights of women in Panchayats and addressing violence against women. However, such support by women citizens has been sporadic and mostly limited to addressing issues of social justice. The larger role and engagement by women with the process of governance and a political understanding has been limited. As a result the agency of women supporting EWRs in their work was limited and hence support structures for EWRs at the Panchayat level needed to be built and strengthened; along with providing a platform for women citizens to engage with Panchayat related issues and build their understanding of politics, rights roles, responsibilities and duties of elected representatives and local bureaucracy. Further, there was an additional need felt of ensuring that marginalized voices amongst women are heard. It was against this background that the inception of the “Jagruk Manch” took place in August 2010.

The objectives of the Jagruk Manch are as follows:

- To build a support structure for elected women representatives so that they can exercise their leadership effectively.
- To engage women citizens in Gram Panchayats with issues of governance and build their political understanding of rights, roles, responsibilities and duties of citizens, elected representatives, local bureaucracy and the State.
- To provide a common platform for elected women and women citizens in Gram Panchayats to advocate for good governance and accountability in their Panchayats; and ensure that their Panchayats are sensitive to issues of social justice and gender justice.
- The process of formation of Jagruk Manch was initiated across three States of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha, with initial dialogues with partner organizations. Based on the context of each State, a clear strategy on initiating Jagruk Manch’s was devised. Regular meetings were conducted at the Panchayat and cluster level to introduce, build and strengthen Jagruk Manch. Some of the issues on which clarity was sought were on objectives, vision, membership, structure, scope and functionality of Jagruk Manch. Membership criteria included participation of only women citizens, especially the marginalized and elected women representatives. Identification of members of Jagruk Manch was to be initiated by the elected women representatives in the Panchayat, since the larger aim was to build a support structure for elected women representatives. It was decided that the Structure of the Jagruk Manch would be informal; with formation of committees and rotational and shared leadership.

Summary of Results

Overall 315 Jagruk Manchs have been formed with participation of elected women and women citizens from 635 Gram Panchayats in the three States of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha. Jagruk Manch is referred to as Mahila Jagruk Manch in Rajasthan, Mahila Adhikar Sammukya in Odisha, Sanjha Manch in Madhya Pradesh. 5898 elected women representatives and 17053 women citizens have been participating in Jagruk Manch meetings at gram panchayat and cluster level across the three States.

Elected women representatives have taken a lead in all Jagruk Manchs as mentors, facilitators and political leaders. Based on their knowledge of Panchayats and governance procedures they have channeled and directed issues raised in the Jagruk Manch related to Panchayats to the relevant line departments, and with the support, strength and collective of the Manch sought action and solution to the problem at hand. Issues related to social justice and gender justice have been addressed with dialogue and engagement with the victims and perpetrators.

1 In district Udaipur of Rajasthan the concept of ‘Jagruk Manchs’ had been introduced in year 2005. The membership was mixed – men and women citizens of Gram Panchayats; and the objective was seeking and demanding accountability of their elected representatives in Gram Panchayats. They had a chequered history; hence caution and clarity was necessary to re-introduce them but with a more focused and defined objective and most importantly with an all women membership comprising elected representatives and non-elected women citizens.

2 Mahila Jagruk Manch formed at cluster level in Odisha. One cluster constitutes 4-5 Gram Panchayats. In Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh Mahila Jagruk Manch formed at Gram Panchayat level.
necessary action in terms of referral to the concerned authorities has also been taken in certain cases and in some, elected women have accessed experts on the issue to build the understanding of the Manch on issues related to Domestic Violence.

Membership of Jagruk Manch comprises a group of elected and non-elected women at gram Panchayat level. Average membership per Jagruk Manch is forty members. Non-elected members are drawn from Self Help Groups (SHG); youth groups, forest rights groups; village development committees; health worker (ASHA), nurse (ANM), teachers, preschool attendant anganwadi worker [only in Madhya Pradesh and Odisha – in Odisha no inclusion of Anganwadi worker]; Gaon Sathi; Gram Rozgar Sevak, women watershed members, members of Gaon Kalyan Samiti (Odisha) and women citizen leaders. Some non-negotiables of membership that have come to define Jagruk Manch are being secular in nature, non-discriminatory in practice and non-affiliation to any political party. Jagruk Manch is also seen as a platform to engage with other existing women’s Sangathans and women members of other mixed group Sangathans – thereby strengthening women’s agency and engendering governance processes.

Issues have been identified and prioritized for collective action in various Jagruk Manch meetings. Some of the issues identified are monitoring the ICDS and MNREGA, greater and active participation in Garm Sabha’s, ensuring gender justice, building a collective understanding on domestic violence and ways to address it and understanding available tools of accountability like Right to Information Act (RTI). Jagruk Manch has also provided a platform for women citizens, especially the marginalized to engage and comprehend governance issues and use collective voice and action to access rights and entitlements.

In Rajasthan, members have focused on addressing issues of drinking water, sanitation, MNREGA, education and Panchayat Bhavan. Successful engagement with officials and advocacy has resulted in obtaining 3100 days of work under MNREGA in the Panchayats of Pokrasar, Danu. Dhok, Antiya, Netrad, Alamsar, Bavadikala, Kaprau, and Navatala in Chotan block of Barmer district (Rajasthan Case Study I). Additionally, successful monitoring of services (ICDS, Mid Day Meal in schools) has been undertaken; members have managed to regularize Panchayat meetings, get alcohol shops removed from their Panchayats and advocate for rightful and timely implementation of social welfare schemes such as widow pension (Rajasthan Case Study IV). Jagruk Manch is also gaining recognition as a platform that can be accessed by individual citizens, particularly women citizens facing violence. Women citizens attending Jagruk Manch meetings have been sensitized to demanding good governance and accountability and hence some have started attending Garm Sabhas.

In Odisha two issues were prioritized by the Jagruk Manch. These issues focused on the rights of women...
and children. They were that of monitoring the ICDS [Anganwadi centres] for proper functioning, and to inform members about the PWDS Act (Protection of Women from Domestic Violence) and raise awareness against domestic violence. Besides the prioritized issues, Jagruk Manch in Odisha have engaged with issues of alcohol, especially related to unlicensed liquor shops, non-payment of wages under MNREGA and non-cooperation by local government officials. At the State level Jagruk Manch, members initiated a post card campaign demanding repeal of the Two Child Norm in the State Panchayat Act. As part of the advocacy members met with their local Assembly and Parliament representatives and tabled their petitions. However, the real impact of the collective action and “voice” by Jagruk Manch members in Odisha was demonstrated while monitoring the ICDS scheme in their respective areas, and through action taken on the hitherto soft and “invisible” issue of violence against women. In the case of ICDS monitoring and fact finding have highlighted issues of irregularity and corruption at centres and action has been taken (annex C: case study 6). In another case members have advocated for opening up anganwadi centers for the Dalit community based on the issue being brought up at a meeting of the Jagruk Manch by a Dalit community member (annex C: case study 5). Members have demanded inspection visits by the BDO and CDPO for proper monitoring of MDM and ICDS programs and formation of a local committee to check corruption in these flagship schemes. Jagruk Manch meetings have also been spaces where members have learned about the roles and functions of the ICDS centres; with this knowledge members can highlight issues and irregularities more responsibly. Members of Jagruk Manch have broken their silence on domestic violence as a result many members have highlighted various cases of torture and abuse. Through this platform they have also been able to understand the existence of the Domestic Violence Act and its use. In Rajasthan the Jagruk Manch was formed at Gram Panchayat level with follow up meetings at Block level. In Odisha they were formed at cluster level (4-5 Gram Panchayats); preparatory meetings were held at the Block level.

In Madhya Pradesh the Jagruk Manch has provided a much needed platform for the marginalized women in Gram Panchayats. This common platform for women at large has resulted in identifying issues that affect women as a whole, especially sanitation related issues and advocacy against alcohol. Through regular Manch meetings members have gained an understanding of issues of public welfare and community interests. Action has been taken on encroachment on government land earmarked for projects in interests of the community such as construction of school building, community centre, angandwadi and health centres. Members have advocated for rightful implementation of MNREGA; issue of land entitlements under the Forest Rights Act for tribal communities; demanded accountability of angandwadi workers; monitored ICDS centers and the mid day meal scheme implementation. Members have used this platform to strategize on collectively preparing the agenda that needs to be tabled in the Gram Sabha. This has resulted in increased participation of women in Gram Sabhas.

In conclusion the Jagruk Manch has emerged as a viable and robust platform for women citizens to understand political processes, engage with governance and policy issues and demand accountability in local institutions of self-governance. Elected women representatives, as members of Jagruk Manch have found support structures to exercise their leadership. Their participation in a common platform such as Jagruk Manch, has resulted in citizens gaining confidence in them and collectively taking action for the betterment of their Panchayats. Through the platform of Jagruk Manch women citizens have also successfully rallied against gender based violence. This is particularly significant since the advocacy is through a platform that is simultaneously demanding good governance. Thus Jagruk Manchs have emerged as platforms where equal priority is given to issues of gender justice, social justice and development and governance; thereby truly engendering the development process.

Progress of Work

In all the three States the formation of the Jagruk Manch was welcomed. In Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh the Jagruk Manch was formed at Gram Panchayat level with follow up meetings at Block level. In Odisha they were formed at cluster level (4-5 Gram Panchayats); preparatory meetings were held at the Block level.

In Rajasthan in 10 districts and 13 blocks, 130 Jagruk Manch were formed in 130 Gram Panchayats. 390 Jagruk Manch meetings were finalized (3 meetings per 10 Gram Panchayats in 13 blocks) and 384 have been completed. At the block level, 26 block level meetings were planned and 26 have been completed.

In Madhya Pardesh in 10 districts and 10 blocks, 125 Jagruk Manch were formed in 125 Gram Panchayats. 221 meetings out of 250 meetings were completed (2 meetings per 125 Gram Panchayats). At the block level, 20 block level meetings were planned and 18

3. The overall Blocks at the time of roll out were only 13. In the initial plan there were 14 blocks, but one was dropped, due to gaps in quality of program.
4. Partnership with one Partner was discontinued due to lack of quality in programs, and weak internal financial controls. Meetings of Sajha Manch were not conducted in their working area, hence the disparity in numbers of meetings.

The Hunger Project 24
have been completed.

In Odisha in 6 districts and 15 blocks, 60 Jagruk Manch were formed at cluster level covering 380 Gram Panchayats. 180 meetings planned and 180 completed. At the block level, 15 block level meetings were planned and 15 have been completed. Overall all commitments towards formation and operationalizing of Jagruk Manch across the States of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha have been met.

Other Issues

There is clarity on the role and functions of Jagruk Manch. Members are keen that Jagruk Manch continues to grow into a strong platform for elected women representatives and women in Panchayats. In Rajasthan there is a plan to focus on strengthening the link of Jagruk Manch to Gram Sabhas in the coming year. In Odisha owing to the reasonable success of the Jagruk Manch there has been a demand from members to increase the frequency of the meetings; hold monthly meetings instead of quarterly as in the present. Members have also expressed an interest in formation of Panchayat wise Manchs instead of cluster and members are keen on the Manch playing an active role during the pre-election campaign.

Challenges and Risk Mitigation

Formation of the Jagruk Manch is an innovative intervention, especially in Odisha and Madhya Pradesh. In Rajasthan too, in its new avatar, the Jagruk Manch has emerged as a forceful platform. With new interventions there are numerous challenges and road blocks that emerge along the way. Adequate steps have been taken to mitigate the challenges, especially since the platforms have been successful in meeting their objectives and they have a lot of scope in furthering women’s rights and good governance.

In Odisha a major challenge faced during the formation and working of the Jagruk Manch, was regarding its membership. Since the Jagruk Manch gained great publicity and acceptance in its respective areas, it was that all women would want to be part of it. However, since monitoring the ICDS was marked as a priority activity that meant monitoring the activities of the anganwadi workers, who were women citizens of Gram Panchayats. Hence, it would not have been possible for a section of the Jagruk Manch to monitor the actions of another without threatening the platform itself. So after discussions with elected women representatives and after some preliminary experiences of engaging with anganwadi workers, it was decided to not include anganwadi workers from the membership. Moreover, since they were government employees, they would have been reluctant in advocating for policy change. Extending the same argument, it was also decided to keep out school teachers and other women government employees from the Jagruk Manch. Continuity of the Jagruk Manch in lieu of the Gram Panchayat elections in coming months is being seen as a challenge. However, the Jagruk Manch clusters will be used to identify potential women leaders for the next elections and they will spread the message of Strengthening Women’s Empowerment through Electoral Processes (SWEEP).

In Rajasthan, the prior experience of Jagruk Manch in Udaipur district was still fresh in the collective memory of implementing partners and citizens (men and women), especially elected representatives. In 2005 the then Jagruk Manch had demanded accountability of its elected representatives; as a result a very hostile environment had emerged with a division amongst the electorate and the political leaders. Against this background the Jagruk Manschs were introduced with caution. Exclusive and common women membership of elected women and women citizens was highlighted and objectives were shared publicly. The modus operandi was based on dialogue and engagement to mitigate hostile backlash. In Rajasthan, mobilization has had to be more intensive in some places, since women non-elected members expect an allowance to attend the meetings; like elected representatives receive during a Panchayat meeting. This has been addressed successfully, by highlighting the non-governmental nature of such platforms and their potential scope.

In Madhya Pradesh the Jagruk Manch were formed against the prevalent feudal and patriarchal background. As a result caste and power dynamics amongst elected women representatives, Self Help Group Presidents and members of other dominating groups posed a significant threat to the objectives and functionality of the Jagruk Manch. Dominant caste and class groups were in some places determined to take leadership of Jagruk Manschs and steer them towards meeting individual priorities. In such a scenario, dialogue was initiated to un-pack the objectives of the Manch, role of members and especially elected representatives. It was explained that since elected women representatives are public office holders and their legitimacy rests in a democratic process and the Constitution of India, it would be appropriate if they take the lead in the Manch. To evade a power struggle and hierarchy related issues amongst the women from varying backgrounds and avoid domination of a single caste or class or group it was decided to appoint a ‘rotational managing committee’. Further to strengthen the group common

5. Partnership with one Partner discontinued and the other could not be conducted within the time period by the Partner, therefore two block level meetings could not be held.
issues affecting the community and women were prioritized for action. These included restrictions on mobility, sanitation, education, health and domestic violence. Open dialogue with the community was done on an ongoing basis to alleviate a hostile response from dominant caste and class groups and tackle misconceptions about role of Jagruk Manch. Other challenges related to continued membership, ownership of the Manch by members, political affiliations of members influencing agendas and non-cooperation of officials remain. For all these challenges to be addressed continuous mobilization, dialogue and engagement is necessary. The Jagruk Manch platform is only 10 months old and despite the challenges it has emerged as a noteworthy innovation with numerous achievements to its credit.

Environmental Concern

In Odisha increasing incidents of Maoist violence incidents across all areas has hampered some of our activities while implementing the program. In addition, unpredictable weather conditions, as well as people’s continuing dependence on age-old traditions and customs has resulted in considerable loss of time in the field.

In Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan push factors related to drought and poverty result in migration in some areas. This hampers continuity of meetings and participation of a critical mass in Manch meetings.

Learning’s and Recommendations

The Jagruk Manch was an innovation in Phase I, to engage on issues of governance with elected women and women citizens in Gram Panchayats on a common platform. While the platform of Jagruk Manch is only 10 months old, various learning’s have emerged as it evolved and progressed in the States of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha.

Building strong support structures for elected women representatives and elected women exercising their leadership

The platform of Jagruk Manch has emerged as one of the strongest support structures for elected women representatives. Through engaging with other women citizens elected representatives have been successful in advocating for rights and entitlements for citizens of Gram Panchayats. The platform has generated an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of an elected representative amongst women citizens. This has resulted in a realistic expectation of the elected representative. It has also channelled ways for possible collaboration on various issues.

The knowledge and awareness of elected women on Panchayats procedures and rules has enabled them to lead the Jagruk Manchs successfully and seek recourse on various issues tabled in the Manch. The Jagruk Manch has been a platform for them to both exercise and showcase their leadership.

Enhanced engagement of women with PRIs, including Gram Sabha:

The experience of facilitating Jagruk Manchs in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha has brought to light the critical need to engage with non-elected women to strengthen their participation in political processes and governance. Despite the presence of over 50% women present in Panchayats as elected members and other support structures, including mobilizing of women by community based organizations to form thrift groups and organizing them around issues of gender justice, the engagement of women with the institution of Panchayats remains weak. Various factors contribute to this non-engagement like patriarchal values and customs, lack of self-confidence in women to articulate their concerns in public spaces dominated by men, intimidation based on limited technical knowledge on issues, low literacy, existence of parallel structures in Panchayats, non-emphasis by certain community based organizations to engage with Panchayats, and lack of understanding of their roles and rights as citizens of a Gram Panchayat.

Jagruk Manchs have addressed this gap effectively. Through discussions in Jagruk Manch meetings, women citizens from all caste, class and religious backgrounds have come forward to articulate their issues and are assert their rights. Elected women representatives have been able to address some of their knowledge gaps and together they have successfully advocated for good governance and demanded entitlements. Based on the experience of attending Jagruk manch meetings and from the support and encouragement they receive from elected women, women citizens have started attending Gram Sabha’s. This is particularly evident in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. Specifically in Madhya
Pradesh, members of Jagruk Manch met prior to the Gram Sabha to prepare themselves to participate effectively in the Gram Sabha.

**Women Demanding Accountability and Good Governance**

With growing inflation and rising food prices a large number of people have come to depend on the outlays by the government. These include rations through the Public Distribution System, food for children through the Mid-Day Meal scheme and food supplements through Anganwadi centres amongst others. Besides, work and wages through MNREGA is of prime importance, since for some households, especially women headed households, livelihood options through MNREGA are the only means of livelihood. Against this backdrop women have used the platform of Jagruk Manch to monitor and demand accountability of the local bureaucracy and functionaries in implementing the various schemes. In Madhya Pradesh, members have demanded schemes by government to address the issue of acute malnutrition in their communities. Also, because of common membership women citizens have accessed these platforms to enhance their knowledge on safety net schemes through interaction with elected women.

**Highlighting issues of gender and social justice in Panchayats:**

While the 73rd Constitutional amendment clearly lists social justice within the gambit of Panchayats, in practise gender and social justice issues are rarely discussed in Panchayats and raised in Gram Sabhas. The platform of Jagruk Manch has emerged as one in which such issues can be discussed openly and recourse sought through the Gram Panchayats and functionaries at the Block and District level. This especially, since the State has specific responsibility in supporting the rightful implementation of the Domestic Violence Act through appointing Protection Officers. It is a known evidence based fact that when women hold public office and women engage with systems of governance as informed citizens, they invariably bring to the forefront human rights and women’s rights issues – and the platform of Jagruk Manch at the Panchayat level has facilitated and accelerated this for rural women.

Overall, based on the learning’s, it is recommended that this intervention be continued in the coming years. Certain outcomes have pointed to larger recommendations for the State. These have been outlined in the consolidated report.
Introduction

SWEEP or Strengthening Women’s Empowerment through Electoral Processes is an extensive pre-election campaign undertaken in the fifth and final year of a state’s Gram Panchayat election cycle. SWEEP is usually rolled out six months prior to the next elections in a campaign mode – and like a campaign, SWEEP has well defined and specific objectives and a clearly defined time line. SWEEP is aimed to increase women’s participation in the electoral processes both as aware voters and informed candidates/candidates. SWEEP not only advocates the rights of a voter or a contestant, it also looks into the need to support marginalized candidates and women contesting from non-reserved seats. Existing elected women’s federations actively participate in the SWEEP campaign encouraging other women to engage in the election process by sharing their experiences as women holding public office and as watchdogs to ensure violence free elections. Overall the aim of the SWEEP campaign is to increase the visibility of women in the entire electoral process as voters, citizens, candidates and electoral officers/agents.

The objective of SWEEP has been to encourage women to contest from every seat, even beyond reservation. The agenda of a pre-election campaign is: put a spotlight on the issue of women’s participation and leadership during Panchayat elections. This is done by ensuring that opportunities are created such that there is a marked:

- Increase in the participation of women as ‘aware’ voters
- Increase in the participation of women as candidates
- Redefinition of the concept of leadership; leading to the identification of a ‘good’ leader (for both voters and candidates)
- Promotion of an enabling environment which encourages women’s participation internally (within the family) as well as externally (community, village, Panchayat, civil society, State-level)
- Increase in THP’s own understanding of women’s political participation in the context of caste/power relations/party politics, as a learning which can be used as a base for designing future program strategies and engaging with multiple stakeholders, especially the State Election Commission.

SWEEP in Bihar: The THP – UN Women partnership was done during the last year of Panchayat Election Cycle of Bihar that is year 2010. Significantly, this was the second term of the 50% reservation in Bihar\(^1\) and the usual practice of rotation of reserved seats was not done for the 2011 Panchayat elections. This meant that a reserved seat for women would continue in the same Panchayat. This was the context of the Bihar elections in 2011. The non-rotation of seats was welcomed by elected women in Panchayats, since they could re-contest from their seats again. There was a brief moment when the State Government was reflecting on conducting Panchayat elections along party lines; however on the intervention of the State Election Commission this was stalled. The Bihar Panchayat elections were held in April-May 2011 in 10 phases.

SWEEP in Bihar was initially conducted across 1000 Gram Panchayats in 47 blocks of 17 districts (Arwal, Jehanabad, Bhagalpur, Gaya, Muzaffarpur, East Champaran, Munger, Kaimur, Rohtas, Madhubani, Darbhanga, Gopalganj, Jamui, Nalanda, West Champaran, Purnia and Kishanganj). Thereafter, at the request of civil society organizations and government it was expanded to additional 24 blocks and another 10 districts (Saharsa, Supaul, Madhepura, Katihar, Banka, Aurangabad, Vaishali, Patna Rural, Nawada and Saran). In the expanded districts, the message of SWEEP was carried forward through distribution of IEC material, street plays and radio programme.

Overall, outreach of SWEEP in Bihar was in 1065 Gram Panchayats, 71 blocks and 27 districts. SWEEP reached out to approximate 21,30,000 persons. This includes both intensive and extensive campaign inputs and with the UN Women partnership, this was the first time that a campaign promoting women’s leadership in Panchayats was done at such an extensive level in Bihar.

The campaign was designed keeping the context of Bihar in mind. Multiple interventions were planned so that an impactful and effective SWEEP campaign could be implemented. The key objective was to promote women’s participation in the entire Panchayat election process and campaign as informed voters, polling agents, counting agents, proposers and most significantly to promote women’s leadership. The strategy adopted was of direct engagement with women at large, and specifically with prospective women candidates to encourage contesting elections under reserved and non-reserved categories. The other objective and focus of the campaign was to promote an enabling environment which encourages

\(^1\) 2006 was the first time when 50% reservation of seats for women in Panchayats were declared in Bihar
women’s participation internally (within the family) as well as externally (community, village, Panchayat, civil society, State-level). The strategy adopted was of direct outreach through mass media and communication to mobilize and sensitize the community and systematic and regular engagement with key stakeholders like the media and civil society. Support of the State Election Commission (SEC) and Panchayati Raj Department was accessed for timely information on the process of elections and seeking relevant permissions and support to conduct the SWEEP campaign in sensitive districts of Bihar.

Summary of Results

In the SWEEP areas, the campaign resulted in increased participation of women in the entire Panchayat elections and the community was sensitized towards their role as responsible citizens and voters in elections; and the need to support women’s participation in Panchayat elections. In large areas instead of proxy candidates on women’s reserved seats, independent women candidates stood for elections. As compared to the last term, a large number of young women stepped out to stand for elections and participate in the election process. Also, very few seats went non-contested and vacant. Basically, in the areas of SWEEP, women came out in large numbers and claim seats reserved for them.

Scope and Impact of SWEEP

- Awareness on Panchayati Raj and elections was generated in the community in several areas where citizens had lost faith in the system. Citizens voted and filed nominations especially women for the 1st time since 2001 in some Gram Panchayats in the districts of Jamui and Gaya where SWEEP was conducted.

- In tribal districts of Jamui and West Champaran, it was standard practice for Scheduled Caste candidates to file nominations on seats reserved for Scheduled Tribe; because of SWEEP in these areas, for the first time candidates from Scheduled Tribes have contested due to increased awareness through the resource center and awareness programs through street plays, rallies and direct engagement.

- More than 50% percent of women candidates have won from THP’s regular intervention area where elected women’s federations had been active for the last two years, with a membership of 900 EWRs. These districts include Muzaffarpur, Madhubani, Rohtas and Jehanabad.

- Women have contested in larger numbers from reserved as well as unreserved seats. They have also filed nominations on multiple seats.

- Several women have acted as proposers (1454)

2. Case study of Sugra Soren from Jamui - attached

Interventions, Outreach and Impact

- 81 participants in two Training of Trainers (ToT). Ten partner organizations were oriented to conduct SWEEP in the first ToT and in the second, women leaders and community mobilizers were trained.

- 14767 men & women trained through 45 simulation camps. 250 potential women leaders identified during camps to attend potential leadership workshops.

- 1928 women trained through 47 potential leadership workshops

- 7670 women & men access 16 SWEEP resource centres

3. Simulation Camp was the first and most important field intervention to introduce SWEEP, and create an enabling environment for women to participate in Panchayat elections. A main objective of the simulation camp was to identify potential women leaders and address cynicism and myths related to women’s leadership. These camps were organized at Haat market (village markets), during fairs, and near block offices. The camps were organized between 10:00am to 06:00 pm. The camps were also organized on holidays so that maximum participation could happen. IEC materials were exhibited in camps so that participants understand the various aspects of the campaign and gain clarity on issues. Information on Panchayats, elections, women’s leadership, reservation, election process, voting, nomination and electoral was requested at the camps.

4. Potential leadership workshops were conducted at the block level. Women leaders were identified at Simulation Camps. The objective of the workshops was to orient women about the electoral process and promote women’s leadership. The workshops were conducted in a participatory manner. The participants were shown a documentary highlighting the significance of women’s leadership, the opportunity of reservation and the potential scope for engaging with governance processes to bring rights and entitlements to citizens in their Gram Panchayats. The participants were a mix of new potential leaders as well as the previous elected representatives. The response was tremendous to the potential leadership workshops and no participant was sent back. Resources were stretched to manage the overwhelming numbers.

5 Resource centres were opened at the district level. The objective was to reach out and sensitize the community towards women’s leadership. Information on election rules and procedures was made available at the centres. IEC material developed for SWEEP was
• 30,000 men & women attended 1,034 village meetings and 6869 men & women attended 429 street plays over a period of four months in 20 districts.

• 517 padyatras taken out in 47 blocks. 25,850 displayed at the centres reinforcing messages regarding women’s leadership. Citizens were encouraged to call in at the resource centre to seek clarity on issues related to elections. A telephone number was displayed at all centres. Complaints related to violation of code of conduct, wrongful rejection of application forms, and various other concerns were reported at the Centre which were referred to and conveyed to government and concerned departments.

6 Village meetings were conducted after potential leadership workshops. Their main objective was to engage with citizens on panchayat elections, and their role as responsible and aware voters. Open discussions were initiated. Meetings were conducted in the evenings or late afternoon. A documentary named ‘gaon nahi kinhi paanch ka’ or the ‘village is not only of 5 people’ was shown to create an environment and initiate the discussion. Potential women leaders who had undergone training used these meetings to announce their candidature and inform citizens of their vision for their Panchayats. This direct interaction with potential candidates and citizens generated a lot of enthusiasm amongst the community.

7. Street plays were planned to reach out to a large section of rural and non-literate electorate. Street plays emerged as the strongest and most impactful communication tools. Through role plays, distribution of pamphlets, songs and a Q & A at the end of each street play various messages related to panchayat elections were conveyed. Women were encouraged to cast their vote independently and fearlessly, stand as candidates and get involved in the election process as nominators, polling and counting agents.

8. Padyatras or foot rally was taken out at the village level by women. Participants included potential women leaders, community leaders, members of SHG groups, youth girls, and other women. The women wore the ‘bandi’ or vest with a message regarding SWEEP and went from village to village advocating the key messages of SWEEP. Women addressed the community during the march. At the final stage, the padyatras were converted into meetings (sabha). Potential candidates addressed the citizens in these meetings and informed them about their commitment towards development of their respective panchayat.

Information, Education and Communication material (IEC)

• Outreach of radio programme to all 38 districts of Bihar: 3.8 million households

• A set of five posters, pamphlets, stickers, wall paintings, songs and radio programs were developed to spread messages related to women’s participation in elections.

Enabling Environment and Engagement with Multiple Stakeholders

• Cases of violence against women have been tracked and advocacy towards the same was carried out during the Panchayat elections 2011. This was done in partnership with Ekal Nari Sangathan (Single Women’s Collective) and WAMA (Women’s Association for Marching Ahead). 36 cases of violence against women were identified and 7 were followed up upon. They ranged from murder, sexual abuse, suicide, threats and physical abuse. Follow-up on such cases was done by informing the State Election Commission to declare such Panchayats as sensitive and ensure that elections were conducted in a fair manner in such Panchayats as sensitive and ensure that elections were conducted in a fair manner in such Panchayats.
Police protection was sought in some cases by engaging with the Superintendent of Police and District Superintendent of Police.

Cases of violence against women during Panchayat elections of 2006 and 2011 were published in 13 newspapers like Prabhat Khabar, Dainik Jagran, Aaj, Rashtriya Sahara, Dainik Bhaskar, Hindustan Times, Telegraph, Qaumi Tanzeem and Hindu amongst other local newspapers and magazines.

State Election Commission and Panchayati Raj Department have supported the campaign and acted as an important stakeholder in strengthening women’s leadership and making the Panchayats effective.
PROGRESS OF WORK

The campaign was conducted in 71 blocks and 27 districts

The campaign was conducted systematically with a clear roll out strategy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Planned</th>
<th>Completed</th>
<th>Reason for Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening pressure group for advocacy against TCN</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop linkages with parliamentarians with EWRs</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning meeting with partners to introduce UNIFEM program</td>
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<td>Completed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning meeting with CBOs</td>
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<td>Completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review meetings</td>
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<td>Completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWEEP ToT</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulation Camps</td>
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<td>Completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential Leadership Workshops</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>2 workshops were done in Nalanda district which was added later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface meeting</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>Completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC Materials - Posters</td>
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<td>50000</td>
<td>Completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC - Pamphlets</td>
<td>20000</td>
<td>40000</td>
<td>In order to cover such a large area through various interventions, extra pamphlets were printed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC – Stickers</td>
<td>45000</td>
<td>49000</td>
<td>To reach all the Panchayats, extra stickers were printed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC – wall painting</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>2331</td>
<td>Budget was utilized to write maximum number of messages by Partner organizations, including Nalanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC – T-shirt</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2000 bandi</td>
<td>T-shirts were converted in to bandi, which was easily accepted by the EWRs and used during the padyatras by them and the staffs of partner organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC - CD</td>
<td>20000</td>
<td>20000</td>
<td>15000 CDs for Songs and 5000 CDs of radio program were made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production and broadcast of radio program, &amp; SWEEP songs</td>
<td>4 episodes, 10 songs</td>
<td>4 episodes,10 songs</td>
<td>Completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village meetings</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1034</td>
<td>Meetings conducted in 47 blocks including 2 of Nalanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rallies/Padyatra</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>Padyatras conducted in 47 blocks including 2 of Nalanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Plays</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>Difference due to unfavorable weather, notification of elections, code of conduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Centres</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Nalanda was included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact Finding and Advocay</td>
<td>Not limited</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media workshop at district level</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Nalanda was included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State level media workshop</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication, Reports</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other Issues

In Supaul the key intervention was the radio programme broadcast. A direct campaign was not conducted there, since Partners recommended and identified, did not have mandatory legal papers and documents.

Challenges and Risk Mitigation

There have been few challenges that were encountered during implementation of SWEEP:

- Selection of partner organizations was a difficult task during the campaign. Finding Partners in Bihar with complete legal documents is always a challenge. This was overcome by looking at a large pool of partners and then selecting them based on ability to conduct the campaign and having requisite papers.

- Misconception regarding Code of Conduct among local administration created hurdles at various occasions. However, they were overcome by being in constant touch with State Election Commission.

- Due to rapid increase in cases of violence during elections, it was difficult to track all such cases in limited time. Overall, 36 cases of violence against women were identified. They ranged from murder, sexual abuse, suicide, threats and physical abuse. Follow-up on such cases was done by informing the State Election Commission to declare such Panchayats as sensitive and ensure that elections were conducted in a fair manner in such Panchayats. Police protection was sought in some cases by engaging with the Superintendent of Police and District Superintendent of Police.

- Some women faced difficulty in accessing information from resource center due to its existence at district level; resource centres would have been more accessible if opened at block/Panchayat level. Due to block-wise elections, the schedule of street play was revised from time to time. Unfavorable weather and code of conduct resulted in lesser number of plays than planned.

- The views and voice of the elected women representatives in the panel discussion of radio program was removed, in order to avoid the violation of code of conduct.

- Distribution of alcohol and money during elections resulted in losses for some women especially women from marginalized sections. In some incidences women candidates who had used an anti-alcohol stance in their campaign lost the election due to non-support from the community (Tilothu Block, District Rohtas).

Learning’s and Recommendations

Based on the experiences of SWEEP in Bihar, following are some learning’s and recommendations:

Two Child Norm

Due to the existence of the Two Child Norm for elected representatives in the Municipalities [Nagar Parishad, Nagar Panchayat, Municipal Corporation], during the Panchayat elections in Bihar in 2011, the issue came up yet again. While the Two Child Norm has not been introduced in the Panchayats, yet during the elections there was an attempt to discourage and mislead candidates, especially women from marginalized communities, regarding the possibility of its introduction in the future, and thereby a possible disqualification on this ground. It was used as a tool to discourage and intimidate candidates. There were also rumours regarding its introduction in the Panchayat elections of 2011. Such misleading information and rumours were quelled during the campaign in the SWEEP areas, however, uncertainty and confusion prevailed from time to time. Therefore, it is imperative that the State Government explicitly expresses its non-intention of introducing the Two Child Norm in Panchayats and remove the norm at the Municipal level. As stated in the policy brief, the two-child norm is anti-poor, anti-women, anti-dalit/adivasi and anti-youth. It is against the National Population Policy 2000 which proposed a target free approach. Recently due to the provision of section 18 [Disqualification] of Bihar Municipal Act 2007, three Ward Counselors of Bodhgaya and Patna have been dismissed. Among the three ward counselors, Rehana Khatoon of Phulwari Sharif (Patna) belongs to a religious minority community; Kanti Devi and Arun Ravidas of Bodhgaya belong to Mahadalit Community. This particular incident has created uncertainty amongst the elected representatives in Nagar Panchayats and increased the possibility of implementation of the norm in Gram Panchayats. (see attached press clippings)

Control on Expenditure by Candidates During Panchayat Elections:

9. Councillor son wish costs seat” The Telegraph, Monday, 25 July 2011

10. Do se adhik bacche aur gayi parshad sadasyata” Dainik Jagran, Patna , Saturday 12 February 2011
According to the Panchayat election guidelines issued by the State Election Commission in Bihar, there are limits set for expenditure during elections. A Mukhiya/President of a Panchayat can spend up to Rs. 25,000/- during elections while a Ward member can spend up to Rs. 10,000/-11. However, there was a clear violation of this limit. During elections, some Panchayat President candidates have spent between Rs. 3 Lakhs to 15 Lakhs. Candidates have distributed cash and alcohol and paid for marriage party bills. This has been validated by media reports11. In many cases this was brought to the notice of the local election officer, but in most cases there was no action taken to check the same. Based on the experience of SWEEP in Bihar and anticipating similar future trends, it is necessary that the State Election Commission devise strategies to check the excessive expenditure during Elections. It is recommended that a vigilance committee, constituting government and civil society be formed during the elections to address such practices and effective monitoring of elections be done by the SEC to ensure compliance with Panchayat election norms.

Enabling Environment for Women Candidates in Panchayat Elections:

- The Panchayat elections in Bihar in 2011 were conducted in 10 phases. This was done to mitigate the expected violence during elections, which in the past has been rampant. While this strategy was largely successful, specific incidences of gender-based violence during elections need to be recognized, acknowledged and addressed more systematically. With 50% reservation for women in Panchayats in Bihar, a large number of women are exercising their right to participate in Panchayat elections as voters and candidates. However, the prevalent feudal and patriarchal socio-cultural milieu of Bihar, hinders the full participation of women in Panchayat elections as equal citizens. There have been reported incidences of murder, sexual assault, intimidation and threats. It is recommended that the State Election Commission (SEC), form a “Women’s Cell” to address such cases during the elections. It is also recommended that the election officers deputed across the State during elections are sensitized towards incidences of gender-based violence during elections and are equipped with adequate knowledge and skills to address such incidences appropriately and with responsibility.

Advocacy Against Proposed Indirect Elections at Panchayat Level by State Election Commission in Panchayat Elections of 2016

The State Election Commission (SEC) has sent a recommendation to the State government for indirect elections for various posts in the Panchayat Elections of 201612. This was done in May 2011. The SEC has requested for an amendment in the State Act, to include a provision for direct elections of panchayat members, ward members, block level members and zilla parishad members and indirect elections of President/Mukhiya of Gram Panchayat, Sarpanch (Nyaya Panchayat). The recommendations are based on two key arguments. The first argument is that less time will be required to conduct elections. And the second argument is that there will be “enthusiasm” amidst the electorate to contest for the direct seats, since they all can stake a claim for the top post in their respective tiers. The basis of the second argument is the experience of the Panchayat elections of 2011, in which a large number of seats for Ward members in Gram Panchayats went vacant13. Indirect elections have serious implications. From the experience of Gram Panchayat elections in Karnataka in 2010, where indirect elections are the norm, and from the experience of several States, where Zilla Parishad Chairpersons are elected indirectly, numerous factors impinge on the rights of the marginalized, especially women to participate freely in an indirect Panchayat election. Horse trading, coercion and threats are the norm from the experience of Karnataka. Indirect elections result in intense lobbying for the post of Mukhiya/President amongst all ward members; and caste and class groups organize themselves to put up their candidates. There is significant political party interference also, with each party backing candidates in the run up to the indirect elections. Therefore, engagement with the State government to not implement the recommendations of the SEC is necessary.

Need to Raise Awareness on Reservations During Elections

Based on the experience of Panchayat elections in Bihar across 27 districts in 2011, it was appalling to come to face to face with the levels of misinformation and ignorance amongst a large section of the electorate. In some areas citizens are yet to comprehend the full implications of a “reserved” seat and who can contest under a reserved category. As mentioned in the challenges, there were areas in which for years the ST seat was being contested by an SC candidate. Similarly, myths related to non-reserved seats for women being “reserved” seats for men were rampant. Against this reality then, there is a need for the State government and SEC to launch an aggressive “voter awareness campaign” in the State during Panchayat elections, which reaches out to all citizens in the State, including the non-literate across all districts, especially backward districts in east Bihar (Purnia, Kishenganj), districts in south Bihar (Jamui) and West Champaran. Information regarding the elections should not be limited to “information advertisements” in newspapers.

11. Buying their way into voters choice” Hindustan Times, Patna, Wednesday, 18 May 2011
13. This is claimed by the State Election Commission.
Background

With the objective to support the elected women representatives to engage with state, in order to demand implementation of commitments made - a significant intervention to develop Linkages with Parliamentarians / Legislators was made. This intervention was carried out in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Karnataka and Rajasthan and Bihar receiving positive response from both MLA’s and the elected women representatives.

The series of interface with the parliamentarians has provided a platform for elected women to raise different advocacy issues, local and at the policy level, directly with their MLA. For eg: Memorandums, advocating for removal of the draconian Two Child Norm have been submitted and handed over to the parliamentarians in states of Odisha and Rajasthan, respectively. Local issues related to PDS, water, ICDS, schools, hospitals, bus facility to remote area, road etc have also been taken up during these interfaces.

These interfaces have resulted in sensitizing Parliamentarians to the issues and challenges faced by elected women and have also provided them with an opportunity to interface with the women leaders at the grassroots. The elected women too, get a platform to table their issues and at the same time, follow it up with their respective parliamentarian.

The intervention seeks to promote transparency and accountability in the area of local governance. It helps in facilitating local democracy that is effective and people oriented, by providing a space for interaction which is based on mutual respect for each other’s political agency.

Summary of Results

The interaction of Parliamentarians with elected women representatives has been a new and a first of its’ kind experience for most. With the objectives of creating a space for elected women representatives to address issues raised by them through these interactions and to share their experiences and constraints with the legislators, the program was successful in generating great enthusiasm and vigour in elected women representatives.

In Odisha, the interfaces were organized at District level, whereas in Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and 1.In Bihar, due the SWEEP campaign underway, series of interfaces with the Parliamentarians were not organized, instead, in June 2011 a state level convention was organized for EWR’s were they interacted with the Minister of Social Welfare Ms. Parveen Amanullah.

Rajasthan, they were organized at the block level. Through the planning process, meetings were held to prepare agenda, understand role and scope of MLA. In each of the interfaces, minimum of 30 - 40 elected women representatives have participated. EWRs shared about the improper distribution in PDS supplies, harassment by local Anganwadi workers, and irregularity of services at local Anganwadi centres. Some other issues like late payment in Indira Awas Yojana, unavailability of cooked food facility for indoor patients in local hospitals in spite of the government’s rule to that effect, improper member selection in Gaon Kalyan Samity1, late payment in MGNREGA works, etc were shared by participants. At the policy level, the interfaces have greatly helped in advocating for the removal of the Two Child norm in Odisha. For example: In all of the areas, the EWR’s voiced their concern over the continuance of this norm. The EWR federation in all areas presented a memorandum to the legislators to repeal the draconian norm.

In Karnataka, the various issues taken up at the interfaces have been irregularities and misappropriation under the MNREGA/ problems faced in proper implementation of Gram Sabhas, problems pertaining to the 30 month President term in the Panchayat have been taken up with the MLA’s with the submission of petitions on the same. The EWR’s also shared how at present the allocated funds of the government to the Gram Panchayat (GP), is not enough to bring the comprehensive development in GP’s. They demanded that the grants released by the state and Central government for various programme and schemes should be directly release to the GP. The issue of raising the monthly honorarium of elected representatives was brought up. Non-payment of monthly honorariums to Panchayat members by the GP Secretary as well as Panchayat Development Officer (PDO) was raised. They demanded that honorariums be paid on time and it should be directly remitted into the bank accounts of the elected representatives. EWR’s also raised the issue of rightful implementation of safety net schemes such as old age and widow pension, public distribution system, Bhagyalakshmi scheme, Ashraya Scheme/ Basava Indira Ava’s Yojana,

In Madhya Pradesh, one of the local issues taken up by elected women representatives was that of issuing patta (land entitlements) under forest rights act 2. The implementation framework of National Rural Health Mission provides for the orientation of all community level leaders and formation of a Village Health and Sanitation Committee. Village Health and Sanitation Committee is named as Gaon Kalyan Samiti in Odisha. It comprises of representatives from the village and is envisaged as a facilitating body for all village level development programmes.
in 10 Panchayats and ensuring that entitlement of forest dwellers reach intended beneficiaries.

In Rajasthan, the main issues that had been discussed in the interfaces were regarding the two child norm, declining sex ratio and demand for stricter implementation of the PCPNDT act, irregularities under the MNREGA, problems faced in proper implementation of Gram Sabhas along with this and other local issues pertaining to each Panchayat have been raised by EWRs. These include issues related to water, ICDS, schools, hospitals and to have some of them met through MLA funds. Through the submission of petitions and memorandums, an attempt has been made to submit each of these in writing to enable follow up.

In Bihar, a state level convention (Samellan) of EWR’s was held in which 200 EWRs from seven districts participated. The main objective of the convention was to build linkages with important stakeholders and to share their concerns about the issues affecting the exercising of their political rights. Minister of Social Welfare, Ms. Parveen Amanullah, was the Chief guest at the Samellan. The elected women representatives interacted with the minister and other stakeholders and put forward a charter of demand before the government asking for drafting proper guideline for conduction of Gram Sabha, regular capacity building of EWRs, strengthening the role of women representatives, provision of respectful honorarium, implementation of gender policy, providing legal sanction to Ward Sabha and ensuring 20% women’s participation in Gram Sabha. The Minister promised the EWRs full support in ensuring social justice, social welfare, implementation of Schemes and upholding the sanctity of the institution of Panchayats. The convention provided a platform for the newly elected women representatives to voice their collective identity as leaders of tomorrow, working to bring about an enabling environment for women to participate in the effective functioning of local governance.

Media persons in all areas covered the program extensively and have successfully brought the issue into the notice of the public.

Progress Of Work
The number of interfaces with Parliamentarians in Madhya Pradesh (Block Level) is four, in Karnataka (Block Level) is eight, in Odisha (District Level) is six and in Rajasthan (Block Level) eleven were conducted. In total 29 interfaces with Parliamentarians/legislators have been conducted in all four states.

The number of Parliamentarians participating in these interfaces has been: In Madhya Pradesh 4, in Karnataka 9 MLA’s, in Odisha 9, in Rajasthan 11 MLA’s have participated and in Bihar one – the Minister of Social Welfare. In total, 34 MLA’s have participated in the interfaces held in all five states.

The number of EWR’s who have attended these interfaces have been 124 in Madhya Pradesh, 462 in Karnataka, 333 in Odisha, 400 in Rajasthan and 200 in Bihar. In total, 1519 is the number of EWR’s who have attended these interfaces in all four states.

Challenges and Risk Mitigation

- With regard to policy level issues, the responses have been evasive and non-committal. Most MLAs have either not commented or responded by saying that they would forward/discuss the matter further
- There was a general lack of awareness in regards to an MLA’s roles and responsibilities, its functioning etc. This was addressed in the planning meeting, by helping and preparing the elected women representatives become more aware of not only MLA’s roles and responsibilities, but even their own responsibilities as a political representative.
- Last minute changes and cancellations of the interface by the MLA due to changes in his/her schedule.

Learning’s and Recommendations:

Based on the intervention ‘Building linkages with the Parliamentarians/legislators’, which, under the THP – UN Women partnership, was carried out in the states of MP, Karnataka, Odisha, Rajasthan and Bihar the following learning’s and recommendation’s has emerged:

The intervention, carried out for the first time has received a positive response from both- MLA and the elected women. It has provided the elected women another avenue, to assert their identity as political leaders by taking up local issues, making demands, engaging in debates affecting local governance in their respective areas, thereby enhancing their political participation.

The interface with the parliamentarians has also provided a platform for elected women to raise different advocacy issues, local and at the policy level directly with their MLA. For eg: Memorandums, advocating for removal of the draconian Two Child Norm have been submitted and handed over to the parliamentarians in states of Odisha and Rajasthan, respectively. The bigger issues that do not get addressed at the Panchayat level, had a chance to get redressed when brought to notice of the Parliamentarians.

The interfaces have resulted in sensitizing Parliamentarians to the issues and challenges faced by elected women and have also provided them with an opportunity to interface with the women leaders at the grassroots. The elected women too, get a platform to table their issues and at the same time, follow it up with their respective parliamentarian. Most importantly, one of the biggest learning’s that has emerged from this intervention has been that it has facilitated an understanding and mutual respect for each other’s political agency.

This intervention should not be seen as a one-time intervention. In the first year of this partnership, a ground has been built to facilitate this engagement further. There have been issues (both local and at a policy level) that have been raised in these direct interfaces that would require the needful follow up. A momentum and an environment has been created to have these dialogues at regular intervals, hence for this intervention to be truly be effective, it needs to take place regularly.

3. In Mysore, interface was held at district level
Background

Under the THP - UN Women partnership, the opening up of Gender and Panchayat resource centres has been a new intervention in the state of Odisha. The main objective behind this intervention has been to provide relevant information regarding different aspects to the functioning of Panchayats and issues relating to local governance. These resource centres are accessible to EWRs and also to other women. The Gender and Panchayat Resource Centres have started functioning at the block level in 6 districts of Dhenkanal, Gajapati, Angul, Khurda, Nuapada, and Kalahandi.

Summary of Results

The Gender and Panchayat Resource Centres (GPRCs) in all blocks have opened, either once or twice in location as per the convenience of Mahila Adhikar Samukhya (MAS) members in accessing it. The local EWR federation appoints other EWRs staying close by to manage these centres. Along with a signage, prominently displaying the GPRC, posters on various themes like women’s leadership, health, Gram Sabha/Pallisabha, RTI and NREGA, are displayed at the GPRC. Important forms pertaining to the Panchayat and booklets on various themes have been stocked in public interest. The information sought by visitors pertained mainly to documentation for old Age and widow pensions, Anganwadi services, filing complaints to BDO for delay in payment of Midday meals dues, help in building linkages of SHGs to SGSY Scheme and applications under RTI for delay in NREGA payments, etc. Information regarding various Government schemes, guideline copies of Gaon Kalyan Samities and NREGA and leaflets detailing the services available at Anganwadi centres is also provided in these centres.

A register has also been maintained detailing the dates of functioning, number of EWRs/others visiting it, kinds of forms bought by visitors and the amount collected from the sale. Some of the information disseminated and the service sought by women and EWRs include:

- Application process to Block Panchayat Officer for Old Age Pension and procedure for appointment of an Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) worker
- Application to Block Development Officer (BDO)

with regards to the late payment of Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme, to groups that prepare the food for MDM.

RTI filing process for the late payment towards Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) and MNREGA related work.

Process of filing FIR in police stations.

Some of the services provided through these centres pertain to providing pension forms, RTI forms, drafting of letters to BDO and School Inspectors, Guideline copies of Gaon Kalyan Samities, and leaflets on Anganwadi services, etc. It has been seen that the message of GPRC has spread among the women, and the number of visitors to these centres is increasing gradually. Through the medium of GPRC’s, many MAS members have also been informed about the increase in reservation for women to 50% in the coming Panchayat election, which has raised hope amongst them.

Progress of Work

As planned, 20 GPRC’s were opened in all 6 districts. In total, 740 EWR’s, 1449 women belonging to the community and 318 men have accessed these GPRC’s.

Challenges and Risk Mitigation

The Space for running these centres have posed a challenge in some areas. As per local facilities, centres have been opened at either the Panchayat offices, or even blocks.

Learning’s and Recommendations

Most of the rural population, especially women, have no access to vital information relating to their rights, entitlements or Panchayats. Information from the Blocks reaches the GPs very late and even then not all information is shared with EWRs. Due to lack of facilities like adequate space in terms of room, cupboards or shelves, photocopiers, etc, important documents like RTI forms, pension and other entitlement forms, are not available in remote GPs, like tribal dominated GPs.

Hence to address this need the Gender and Panchayat Resource Centres at block level, to enable people to avail of necessary information, forms, documents and other assistance. GPRCs served as an important tool towards raising peoples’ awareness and acces
sibility to their rights. An added impact was that male representatives and others coming to these centres enquired about women related issues and rights depicted on posters and leaflets at GPRCs, giving an opportunity to facilitators to inform and sensitize them. These centres were opened 4-5 times during a month depending on the local peoples’ necessity, and were managed by local members of the EWR Federation, with support from partners’ field staff.

Looking at the relevance and need for such centres, it is recommended that these centres be opened at GP level, and preferably made functional throughout the year. That the government has an equal or greater responsibility in informing people is beyond doubt; hence pressure on local level authorities to share relevant information and extend timely assistance needs to be maintained through interfaces, regular visits and use of RTI by Panchayat citizens.
Background

During the course of their work elected women representatives often face difficulties in exercising their political leadership. Sometimes there are lapses with the implementation of programs and schemes in Panchayat level and on other times, there is mutual disregard for each other’s office – Panchayat functionaries and EWRs. In order to facilitate greater co-ordination, transparency and accountability, a series of interfaces with the local administration was organized in Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha and Rajasthan. These interfaces have helped in strengthening and establishing linkages with the local government functionaries by bringing them together on a common platform. The EWR’s have used these platforms to seek information regarding Panchayats, government orders, schemes and laws from the officials. This intervention has helped in bringing the problems to the notice of the concerned authorities. It has also facilitated in knowledge building as the EWR’s then equip themselves with necessary information about governing processes and rules relating to development activities. The whole exercise has helped in deepening democracy and demanding an effective and accountable governance structures at the local level.

Summary of Results

This new intervention has helped in building an understanding of the EWR’s by making them more aware and informed about the functioning of departments and roles and responsibilities of officials in various line departments. Keeping in mind the political and administrative set up of a particular state, the interfaces were carried out at various levels of the administrative set up.

Some of the cross cutting issues, taken up for redress with government functionaries in all four states have been issues related to social justice and development/governance. The issues include violence against EWRs, harassment at Panchayat level, closure and shifting of alcohol shops and non-cooperation by male Panchayat representative amongst others. Issues pertaining to development/ governance include entitlements related to schemes for education, health & sanitation, agriculture, Mid Day Meal, Integrated Child Development scheme (ICDS), MNREGA (Wages) / Job, Facilities and holding of regular Gram Sabha.

In Rajasthan, at the Gram Panchayat level, most EWRs have access to the Block office. However, communication and access at the level of the district is limited. Hence, the intervention was planned to establish linkage between EWRs and the district administration. EWRs from each block were taken to the district administration for an interface. The various departments met through the interface were Women & Child Development Department, Food and Supply department, Agriculture Department, Medical Department, Education Department and Excise Department. The various Officials met during the interface include District Collector, Chief Executive Officer, Zilla Parishad, Additional Chief Executive Officer Zilla Parishad, District Supply Officer, Superintendent of Police (SP) Chief Medical & Health Officer and Block Development Officer.

In Madhya Pradesh, open dialogues were held between elected women representatives, other members of Jagruk Manch1 and officials. Here the issue of growing malnutrition have been taken up with the concerned department officials and hence EWRs were keen that food security related schemes are rightfully implemented. The various departments and officials met during these interfaces have been education officer, Panchayat inspector, sanitation supervisor, Chief Executive Officer of Panchayat, Chief engineer, Block Medical Officer, women and child development and agriculture assistant officers and Rural Health mission managers.

In Karnataka, in some blocks, participation of ex-EWRs has provided guidance and motivation to EWRs. Through this intervention, the collective strength of EWR’s is showcased at the block level. In 11 Blocks EWR’s filed a petition to Executive Officer (EO) at Block level to regularise Panchayat meetings, payment of monthly honorariums and sitting fees and formation of standing committees in the gram Panchayat. As a result in Koratagere, Gowribidanur and in Periapatna Block, the executive officer has passed a notification to the Secretaries to regularise the meetings and also to form the Standing committees. The interfaces have helped the EWR’s to gain knowledge and information on departmental programmes, schemes, laws and also other aspects to Panchayati Raj Institutions. The various officials met at the block level were Executive Officer of Taluk, Manager of Taluk administration, Assistant Director/Field Officer (Horticulture Department and Agricultural Department), Food Inspector/ Food Shirastedar, Revenue Inspector, Ombudsmen/ Taluk coordinator of MNREGA, District Heath Officer/ 1. Known as Sajha Manch in MP.
In Odisha, EWRs in five districts went on an exposure visit to their local Block offices and met each and every employee of the block to learn about the functioning of these offices, the roles and responsibilities of the various functionaries and administrative rules and procedures. The Block Development Officer or the Assistant Block Development officer explained in detail about the number of posts, the responsibilities of different functionaries such as Gram Panchayat officer (GPO), Welfare Extension Officer (WEO), Child Development Programme Officer (CDPO) etc. They also explained the number and status of various schemes that are running in the block. Apart from this they also learnt about the number of Anganwadi workers working under the CDPO, and their duties. This intervention has helped in establishing a mechanism whereby the process of governance becomes more and more accessible and accountable to its people. For example, because of the interface held, the Social Extension Officer in Nuapada has given a schedule for every Gram Panchayat to enlist actual beneficiaries under the various pension schemes. The interfaces have also been used as a platform to share the EWR’s concern and opposition to the continuance of the two-child norm clause in the Orissa State Panchayat Act.

To further build an enabling environment for EWRs and to promote gender equity, block level interface meetings with Elected Male Representatives (EMRs), designed as training sessions on EWRs’ right to share in decision making and problems faced while discharging their duties in the Panchayats, were held across all areas. In these meetings, both women and men Panchayat representatives discussed about the main problems which EWR’s faced, and why it is important for both to work collectively. For future both the groups, have decided that they would work jointly on the following issues—to promote unity amongst all members in Panchayat, raise voice against indiscriminate opening of country liquor shops in Panchayat meetings, Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha and to undertake joint monitoring of the status of ICDS in their respective areas. Male representatives will also take responsibility for increasing attendance of EWRs in Panchayat meetings and will give an equal chance to EWRs to speak during meetings.

**Progress of Work**

The Interface Meeting with the administration has strengthened the EWR’s linkages with the government officials. In the three states of Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Odisha, the interfaces have
mainly taken place at the block level. In Rajasthan, the interface was held at district level.

In Odisha, with respect to Interface meetings with Block officials, as planned 15 such interfaces took place across 15 blocks in all the six districts of THP’s working area. In total, 331 EWR’s participated in the interfaces held, with participation of 61 officials. In the interface meetings with EMR’s, as planned 20 meetings were completed in all 6 districts, with participation of 399 EWR’s and 357 EMR’s.

In Rajasthan, the interface with District Administration has taken place in 5 blocks, with the participation of over 250 EWRs in it. As planned earlier, all the meetings at the block level(14 blocks) have been held.

In Karnataka, out of the 183 meetings planned, 169 Interface meetings with officials at Block level have been completed, with participation of 5322 EWR’s.

In Madhya Pradesh, out of 20 interfaces planned at the block level, 16 interfaces have been held, with participation of 265 EWR’s in the same.

Overall, in all four states, most of the commitments made towards the planned activities have been met in regards to Building Linkages with Local Administration and Functionaries.

Other Issues

The interface with district administration has strengthened the rapport between District Administration and Partner organisations. The local partner’s links with the block administration is determined by the cooperation extended by officials. Such forward linkages at the Partner level facilitate interlink ages with EWRs and officials during the course of their work.

Challenges and Risk Mitigation

The most significant challenge has been the non-cooperation from the Officials in some of the Blocks. Officials at times can be insensitive and non-cooperative towards the issues put forth by EWRs. There is also lack of knowledge among the officials about PRI’s. This was addressed by facilitating sessions on structure of offices and jurisdiction of different schemes and related departments. There is a need to have a sustained and continuous engagement with the functionaries as that would help create an enabling environment based on mutual cooperation and understanding to help promote good and effective governance at the local level.
Learning’s and Recommendations

The interface, in different states had been organized at different levels of government. The intervention has been received positively, by both sides, elected women and by the local functionary/ administration. It has not only helped the local functionary to be more aware of the issues arising from the ground, but also has led to bringing in more accountability and transparency in their functioning. For EWR’s, the interface with local administration, functionaries has made them more aware of the technical aspects of local governance, the various schemes and its benefits one is entitled to.

The Interface meetings with Elected Male Representatives in Odisha, has helped in bringing the two groups of Panchayat representatives together on a common platform to understand each other’s perspective. The interface has helped in building an environment of mutual trust and understanding that would facilitate both sides to collectively address issues concerning their Panchayats.

The interventions have greatly helped in facilitating local democracy that is effective and responsive. A linkage is built between the two sides that facilitates in building an enabling environment for the elected women representatives to work effectively, with the co-operation of local administration. Therefore, to strengthen the linkage further, constant engagement between the two is important.

However, it is recommended that there is a need for the administration to make itself more accessible to citizens, particularly women. The administration also needs to strengthen its own monitoring and control regarding implementation of schemes and put adequate mechanisms for and checks and balances in place to check gaps in service delivery. These forms of interactions if institutionalized by the government, and are held throughout the state between elected representatives and the district administration could prove useful in making the administration more accessible.
Background

All elected members in Gram Panchayats are members of standing committees. Active standing committees can play an important role in effective functioning of Panchayats. However, the ground reality is that most standing committees are not active and functional. In most cases, members are not aware of which committee they belong to. In effect, in most Panchayats, standing committees are ineffective and mostly on paper.

In order to strengthen the institution of Panchayati Raj, a need was felt to engage with standing committees. This becomes significant as each committee in Rajasthan will now meet twice a month (4th and 19th each month) as a result of a new government order passed by the State government in Rajasthan. Under THP – UN Women partnership, this intervention was carried out through the medium of trainings by focusing primarily on strengthening two committees- Committee on Education and the Committee on Social Justice.

Summary of Results

Most of the participants were not aware of being members of standing committees. Attending these trainings has made them aware of being part of the respective committees. Also, all the members attending these trainings have been made aware of their roles and responsibilities as members of standing committees, their functions and importance; Members have also been made aware of aspects of social justice - girl child education, pension for the members belonging to marginalised communities etc.

Having undergone trainings and understanding the importance of a functional standing committees, in some Panchayats, members have started attending their respective standing committee meetings.

Progress of Work

In total, in 13 blocks, 26 standing committee trainings have been held where 503 members attended the training for standing committee on social justice and 496 for committee on education.

Challenges and Risk Mitigation

- Contacting standing committee members has been a challenge. Even obtaining lists of members has been difficult since these committees are by and large inactive and members are not aware as to which committee they are a part of.
- Mobilisation of standing committee members has been difficult.
- Follow up with members attending standing committee trainings is also a challenge since it also includes male representatives, whose follow up is not usually undertaken.

Learning’s and Recommendations

In order to strengthen standing committees in the state, the government has passed an order for standing committee meetings to be held on a monthly basis since April 2011. However, the reality is that these meetings are still not taking place as required. Meetings are taking place erratically - with elected members having little knowledge of their membership in these committees or their roles and responsibilities as members of these committees.

- There is also need for capacity building of elected members specifically on standing committees, particularly ward members as their duration of training by the state (SIRD) is limited to one day.

- Additionally, there needs to be wide spread dissemination of the new rule mandating monthly meetings of standing committees.

THP in Rajasthan has started an engaging with standing committees in the first year of the partnership. However, owing to the fact that standing committee meetings are not taking place as required, the outcome expected of these trainings is limited. Thus, there is a need to engage with the government to ensure that Government Orders passed on Standing Committees are implemented. There is also a need to continue with efforts on strengthening Standing Committees, since the government is trying to revive them and it is necessary that EWRs participate in them with adequate knowledge about the role of Standing Committees.
The Hunger Project

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SDM) and bureaucracy to remove an elected representative if found guilty of gross negligence of duties and misconduct. In course of work with elected women representatives, THP has found that this section has been regularly misused against them. Often, the elected women leaders are unable to perform their duties and develop their constituencies due to the registered cases. Most importantly the section goes against the basic spirit of decentralization and impinges on functioning of effective local governance as the power to remove an elected representative is vested with the bureaucracy. This is in addition to other democratic provisions already prevalent for monitoring the functioning of the representatives (example: no confidence motion, right to recall, etc.). This provision in the Madhya Pradesh State Panchayati Raj Act has only impeded the full participation of women in governance as was captured in the study conducted by THP in 2008.

The Two Child Norm

2 is a practice that undermines women and men’s effective participation in local governance. The norm is coercive in nature impinging on basic Human Rights principle. It challenges the basis of democracy, where men, women and

Background

The various advocacy initiatives undertaken as part of this THP – UN women partnership are based on the experiences and demands emanating from the elected women representatives. Since Panchayati Raj is a state specific subject, it becomes imperative to base the advocacy in the socio – political context of a particular state. For example: the issue of the Two Child Norm in Bihar and Odisha, would have different connotations, specific to the state’s political and social context. However, the overall impact of the norm on the elected women representatives stays the same i.e. it impinges on women’s reproductive and political rights.

The advocacy initiatives that have been identified are primarily related to the policies that hamper elected women from exercising their leadership effectively. To garner support for necessary reforms, the approach has been to include multiple stakeholders representing different perspectives, build a consensus and continuously engaging with the state for the same.

Section (40) in Madhya Pradesh State Panchayat Raj Act1 gives power to the Sub Divisional Magistrate

1. Section 40 of the State Panchayat Act in Madhya Pradesh, provides for removal of an elected representative who is found to be not working in public interest, guilty of misconduct or failing to carry out the duties assigned. Sub Divisional Magistrates (SDMs) are empowered as the prescribed authority to take action under this particular Section after appropriate investigation. On the basis of reasonable evidence they may remove the elected representative from the post. Such a person is declared ineligible to contest for any post for a period of six years.

2. The two child norm, as formulated for aspirants to elected posts in panchayats (i) a person having more than two children/more than two living children after a specified date is not eligible for entry or continuance in panchayats and (ii) Having more than two children does not attract disqualification on the date of coming into effect of the law introducing this disqualification or up to the end of one year there of if an additional child is born thereafter.

ANNEX VII: ADVOCACY
marginalized communities, through the prevalence of this discriminatory norm, are not able to exercise their political right to stand for elections and effectively participate in the same. Further, it also violates the reproductive rights of an individual. Currently, it is prevalent in states of Odisha, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. In Odisha, it was introduced in 1993 and it came into effect in 1997 Panchayat elections.

Chapter 4, Clause 25 (1-v) of the Odisha Gram Panchayat Act, 1964 Panchayati Raj Act states ‘the disqualification of an elected or nominated as Sarpanch or any other member of Gram Panchayat constituted under this if he/she has more than two children’. The Two Child Norm was first implemented at Zilla Parishad level on November 1993 and later at Panchayat and Samity level on April 1994. The 1997 Panchayat elections was the first election to be held after the enforcement of this norm.

The campaign to demand for the removal of the Two Child Norm in Odisha was initiated in 2005, however due to various circumstances the campaign could only gain limited momentum. Since the next Panchayati Raj elections are scheduled for February 2012, the need for a broad based, informed and structured campaign spearheaded by a multi-sectoral alliance that can prevail upon policy makers to withdraw the clause before the elections was realized. Hence in this Phase I of the UN Women funded partnership, a strategy was adopted to form a network amongst THP’s partner organizations, representatives of EWR Federations, EWRs affected by this clause, multi lateral organizations like UNFPA, media, and other stakeholders. The main objectives behind the consultations amongst the networks partners were to revive the campaign on the Two Child norm, and to collectively deliberate and strategize on future advocacy initiatives to demand for its removal.

The Constitution’s 73rd amendment has made the Gram Sabha, the most effective and participatory tool for social mobilisation. It provides a platform for every voice of the village to be heard, and to be involved in local decision making processes. Strengthening people’s participation especially women’s, becomes an important prerequisite to make Panchayats accountable and responsive to its people; it also helps in promoting an enabling environment for women to participate in the functioning of local governance. The Gram Sabha or village assembly has been envisaged as the foundation of the Panchayati Raj system. In reality, Gram Sabhas takes place at different times in different Panchayats and most often, the information about Gram Sabhas is not sent in time nor widely disseminated resulting in poor attendance by its citizens.

Under THP – UN Women partnership (August 2010 to June 2011) in Rajasthan, an advocacy initiative was undertaken to promote Gram Sabha mobilisation with the aim of strengthening women’s participation in the same. Greater participation of women in Gram Sabha’s helps in improving the quality and effectiveness in decision making. To further strengthen the argument on the importance and relevance of holding regular Gram Sabha meetings a study has been conducted on its functioning, identifying the reasons and the gaps. This study has been undertaken by Unnati (NGO based in Rajasthan), and has been carried out in 48 Gram Panchayats of THP’s working area in the state. This covers a total of 11 districts and 14 blocks. 3 gram panchayats were chosen in each block. In the 3 districts of Alwar, Tonk and Dungarpur, the number of gram panchayats studied was 5 each.

Advocacy efforts on Section 40 in Madhya Pradesh, Two Child Norm in Odisha and Gram Sabha were strengthened with the support of this partnership. Consultations on Section 40 in Madhya Pradesh have resulted in a consensus across civil society groups, on the need for repealing of Section 40 rather than its amendment. In Odisha there is a renewed interest to adopt new strategies to address the Two Child Norm provision in the Act, especially since Panchayat elections are due in February 2012. To arrive at a better understanding of how Gram Sabhas were functioning in Rajasthan and to identify gaps and make recommendations towards making it more effective, Unnati, an NGO based in Jodhpur, Rajasthan was commissioned.

Summary of Results

Advocacy against section (40): Madhya Pradesh

Two state level consultation and two regional consultations were held with multi stakeholders comprising of members of civil society, EWRs, CBOs, lawyers, media, other networks, SIRD, former lawyers, media, other networks, SIRD, former partners.

3. Provided that the disqualification under clause (v) shall not apply to any person on the date of commencement of the Odisha Gram Panchayat [Amendment] Act, 1994 or as the case maybe, within a period of one year of such commencement, unless he begets an additional child after the said period of one year

4. A 2-year gap, owing to the Kandhamal riots (in Dec, 2008), and lack of support to such initiatives because of the global meltdown (in 2009-10) hampered members’ participation

5. The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 in part IX consisting of 16 Articles and the Eleventh Schedule to the Constitution envisages the Gram Sabha as the foundation of the Panchayat Raj System

6 First regional consultation was held in Indore(March 23rd,2011) and the second regional consultation was held in Jabalpur(April 29th, 2011) For further details, please refer to the minutes shared earlier
bureaucrats etc. These consultations covered approximately 28 districts. The main purpose behind the consultations was to develop a consensus on repeal of section (40) vs. its amendment within the law. The consultations generated awareness on section (40) amongst different stakeholders representing diverse perspectives and groups. It has helped in evolving a concrete advocacy strategy which will be put into action in the Phase II of this partnership. The strategy will be to demand for the repeal of Section (40) from MP Panchayati Raj act.

Some of the main arguments put forth for repeal

- It violates the basic principle of decentralization i.e. removal of an elected representative by a non-elected government functionary. The power should remain in the hands of the people, and not in the hands of a bureaucrat.
- Rise in the number of cases and its misuses especially against women and other members of the marginalised communities.
- Existing Constitutional mechanisms as well as laws can help prevent misconduct and gross negligence. Section (40) is yet another provision having the same objective. For example: MP already has no confidence motion as a provision to remove an elected official.
- Strengthening of other provisions within MP Panchayati Raj Act to address issues of corruption and non-compliance to democratic norms
- It acts a major impediment for EWR’s in exercising their political leadership.

To carry the advocacy initiative forward, more data/statistics from the ground will be collected to strengthen our arguments for demanding its repeal. A status report on the impact of Section (40) will be developed in the Phase II of this partnership. Thereafter campaign will continue to engage with the state for its removal. Through the media and dissemination of other IEC material awareness will be generated and sustained on the campaign.

Advocacy for Removal of The Two Child Norm in Odisha

Under the THP – UN Women partnership, the first consultation meeting was organized on April 26th, 2011 at the Hotel Forest Park, Bhubaneswar. Around 31 participants, including leaders of EWR Federations, members of partner NGO’s of THP, members of the national office and the state office of THP were also present. The main objective was to collectively deliberate on a sustained plan of action to influence policy makers. Representatives of UNFPA also attended and presented the adverse impacts of the norm on health of the population. A plan of action was formulated which included the following:

- It was decided to gather information on the number of Panchayat representatives (male or female) affected directly and others, like children, spouses etc. who were affected indirectly; number of EWRs who have had abortions/given children up for adoption; case studies of the affected (EWRs & EMR)
- It was also decided that the federation leaders and members of the Jagruk Manch in Odisha would raise the issue of TCN in their respective Palli and Gram Sabhas.
- The participants at the consultation expressed the need for making the campaign more broad based and inclusive by including different interest group representing marginalised groups, health rights groups, women organizations etc. More efforts would be undertaken to achieve the same.

Keeping the above objective in mind, a second consultation was organized on the 6th of June, 2011, at Bhubaneshwar. The meeting was attended by 23 participants comprising of representatives from THP, six Partner NGOs, the National Alliance of Women’s Organization, Centre for World Solidarity, Human rights activists, social researchers and the media. The agenda consisted of sharing a presentation on the Two-child norm detailing the adverse effects it has on women, children and other marginalized groups and also the advocacy initiatives undertaken by various organizations for repealing it. The outcome of the consultation was the decision to draw up a systematic campaign plan stretching till the election month. The stakeholders answered three questions in order to arrive at a concrete plan of action:

- What worked in the strategies adopted till now?
- What did not work?
- What should be the strategies in context of TCN in Odisha, keeping in mind urgency because of the upcoming assembly session and Panchayat elections?

In the discussions that followed, there was a collective acknowledgment of the fact that there was not enough research, data, or documentation that would help substantiate arguments to demand for removal of this norm. The stakeholders concluded that verified data needs to be collected and that there was a scope for further outreach and networking by involving more groups into this campaign.

In regards to engagement with the State on this issue, the following steps have been taken:

Facilitating federation leaders in Odisha to visit
and present memorandums (in Odia) to all MLAs, MPs, bureaucrats and other stake holders

• Share information and sensitize statutory bodies, like Human Rights Commission, SC/ST Commission, Child Rights Commission, Women’s Commission, etc. through interface meetings with affected EWRs/others.

• Undertaken the programme intervention ‘Building linkages with MLA’s/ legislators, THP has undertaken a series of interactions where the elected women representatives have had a direct interface with their respective MLA/MP. Between May and June 2011, members of EWR federations of 6 districts of THP’S working area in Odisha have interfaced with MLAs and MPs and presented memorandums against the Two Child Norm7.

Both the consultations have helped in bringing together a consolidated action plan and strategies to take the campaign forward. It also helped in creating awareness on the issue amongst the media, MLA’s, elected women representatives and other stakeholders. It has generated a debate around the issue, helped in consolidating all voices under one platform and helped in mobilising constituencies to demand for its removal from the Odisha State Panchayati Raj Act.

Gram Sabha Mobilisation

In Rajasthan, the fourth round of Panchayat elections concluded in February 2010. However, like the previous term, the participation of people, especially women continues to be minimum even in this term. Hence, a study was undertaken to understand the reasons for irregular Gram Sabhas meetings held across the state.

Study on Gram Sabha

The study looked at analyzing the Gram Sabhas that took place in the first year of the new election term. From April 2010 to March 2011, for the purpose of this study, both primary and secondary data was collected on the Gram Sabhas that have been held. For the purpose of the study the following methodology was used:

Collection of Primary Data:

• Interviews were conducted with a set of 7 stakeholders in each Panchayat: Sarpanch, 2 ward panchs (male, female), Panchayat Secretary, 1 government functionary (who is required to be present during gram sabhas, and 1 woman citizen of the Panchayat who has attended a Gram Sabha

• Two group discussions were carried out in each Panchayat: male and female citizens

7 For further details: refer to Annex III – Building Linkage with the Parliamentarians

Collection of Secondary Data

• Gram Sabha Proceedings
• Notice of the Gram Sabha
• Action taken report (if available)

Some of the key findings / observations that have emerged from the draft study has been:

• In the first year of the new term, Gram Sabhas are taking place at least four times a year. While the act mentions that two Gram Sabhas per year have to take place, the rule has now been modified mandating four per year. In all the Gram Panchayats studied, a minimum of four Gram Sabhas have taken place.

• A new rule mandating the opening of the Panchayat office for four days in a week has come into effect since April 2011. This has also had a negative effect on people’s participation in Gram Sabhas as many citizens are getting their work done in the Panchayat office on these days.

• Citizens are not being informed about scheduled Gram Sabha meetings as per the guidelines. According to rules, the notice from the Block to GPs should be sent a month in advance, while the notice from to the gram panchayat to the citizens should be given 15 days in advance. In more than 50% Gram Panchayats studies, the guidelines at both levels are not being followed.

• Women’s participation in Gram Sabhas has been low in the new term as well. In the study, it was found that in 51% Gram Sabhas held, only 11 to 51 women have attended these Gram Sabhas.

• Discussions in Gram Sabha continue to be centered around the agenda set by the government. Discussions pertaining to issues of social justice, if any, have not been reflected in the Gram Sabha proceedings.

• Records of the Gram Sabha meetings currently maintained do not reflect the caste and gender disaggregated data of the attendees. Consequently, although the rules state that the quorum should include SC/ST populations in proportion to the population and that 50% of the quorum should be women, it is difficult to decipher the actual attendance from the records currently maintained.

• Records of Ward Sabhas were not available.

A dissemination workshop was held to share the study in Jaipur on 27th June 2011. The participants included Deputy secretary, Department of Panchayati Raj, Advisor to the RD&PR Minister, IGPRS (SIRD Rajasthan), MKSS, PRIA, Action Aid etc. The key findings and observations of the study were shared dur-
ing this meeting. Some of the comments and suggestions of the participants are shared below:

- Provision of free transport in government buses on days when Gram Sabhas are being held to elicit maximum participation
- Guided proposals: Adding a clause making it mandatory for one third of the proposals passed to be for women’s development
- Dovetailing of funds: Utilization of untied funds under BRGF, NRHM etc to meet budgetary requirements of Gram Sabhas.

Gram Sabha mobilization though Ward members, facilitators under Sakshar Bharat Mission and mobilization of SHG are important links to strengthen Gram Sabhas.

Progress Of Work

Under this partnership, the commitments made with regard to advocacy in different states have all been undertaken and completed. They were advocacy against section (40) in MP, advocacy for the removal of The Two Child Norm in Odisha and Gram Sabha mobilization in Rajasthan.

In Madhya Pradesh, two state level consultations and two regional level consultations undertaken under this partnership has helped in evolving a concrete advocacy strategy to be put into action to demand for the repeal of Section (40) from Madhya Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act.

In Odisha, as planned, two state level consultations, one held in April 2011 and one held in June 2011 have been completed. A consolidated strategy has evolved out of these consultations that would help take this advocacy initiative forward.

In Rajasthan, one sharing meeting on the study has taken place. Several suggestions made by the participants during the sharing meeting, will be collated, incorporated and taken up for discussion in the future.

Challenges and Risk Mitigation

Advocacy against Section (40) in Madhya Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act

- There is still general lack of awareness among many civil society groups regarding the manifestation of Section (40). THP has designed and developed information booklets for generating more awareness and action on this issue.

Advocacy for the removal of The Two Child Norm, Odisha:

- Ruling party as well as many opposition members, bureaucracy and the general public still believe this to be the best method for population control.
- Engagement with the media needs to be continued

Gram Sabha Mobilisation: Rajasthan

The study has detailed several challenges in proper functioning of Gram Sabha. They are as follows:

- Information about Gram Sabhas is not sent in time nor widely disseminated for people to attend Gram Sabhas
- Another challenge is that village women are not aware of the importance of the Gram Sabha and do not know that they have the right to participate in these meetings. The gender bias and the barriers against women participating in village affairs still continue, with men taking most decisions.

These challenges will be addressed through long term sustained interventions and empowerment of women in public and political spaces.

Other Issues

In Odisha, Two Child norm may be put on a back burner by the state government in the monsoon session of the State Assembly because of currently raging issues such as forcible land acquisition by POSCO, Vedanta and coal & mining scams.

Learning’s and Recommendations:

The main learning’s and recommendations that have emerged from the various advocacy initiatives un-
undertaken so far are:

**Hostility by Government Functionaries/Administration:**

One of the most important learning is that government functionaries need to believe and support the advocacy initiative for reforms to take place. The state bureaucracy is mostly hostile to the advocacy initiative and tends to view it with suspicion. Many support it at a personal level but not officially. The strategy adopted has been to educate and sensitize the bureaucracy to the pitfalls of the policy and the subsequent challenges faced by the elected representatives. There needs to be more clarity and transparency in the relationship of the Panchayats and the state administration so that there is no ambiguity regarding its roles and responsibility. Bureaucracy needs to be responsive, accountable and more proximate to the people; only then can democracy at grass root level be effective.

**Lack of adequate response by the State:**

The state governments are not very forthcoming and clear in their stand on any particular policy issue. In the case of Two Child Norm, it was introduced at the municipal level in Bihar during the 2007 elections. Though, the Bihar state government has submitted a memorandum to the Ministry of Panchayati Raj at the Centre against the introduction of the two child norm in the state, it has till date not removed the norm from the Municipal level. Such ambiguity has resulted in elected representatives fearful of its implementation in the PRIs.

In Karnataka, the focus on Panchayati Raj and local governance has been subsumed by the political instability in the state. There has been gross neglect in addressing issues which hamper women’s effective political participation in PRIs.

Overall, women’s participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions has enabled women to articulate their interests, however, the main goal of all advocacy initiatives, is too translate these interests of EWR’s into relevant policy outcomes and to do so, a continued and sustained engagement with the state, and its local administrative set up needs to be maintained.

**Recommendations**

Though the 73rd Amendment has provided an opportunity for women to participate in public affairs, there needs to be much work done for proper implementation of policy and procedures. Several reforms are also required to be undertaken in different policies in different states if women’s participation and leadership is to be effective. In the last twenty years since the constitutional amendment it has been evident that the best means to bring reforms is the constituency of elected women representatives themselves. In the last eleven months several advocacy initiatives have been undertaken by the elected women representatives both individually and collectively as federation members. These initiatives will be taken forward and concretized in the coming phase of the partnership.
SECTION B
PROGRAM TRACKING, MONITORING AND OUTREACH
# ANNEX A: PROGRESS OF WORK IN MADHYA PRADESH, KARNATAKA, RAJASTHAN, ODISHA AND BIHAR

## MADHYA PRADESH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Planned number</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Details/ Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MahilaJagrukManch Meetings (Gram Panchayat level)</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>1057 EWR and 6896 community women participated. Partnership with NGO NavrachnaSamajSeviSansthan was discontinued due to lack of quality in programs, and weak internal financial controls. Meetings of JagrukManch were not conducted in their working area, hence the disparity in number of meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JagrukManch Meetings (Block Level)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>381 EWR and 436 community women participated. Partnership with NGO NavrachnaSamajSeviSansthan was discontinued, hence program could not be conducted in their blocks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface with Government functionaries (at block level)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16(^1)</td>
<td>265 EWR and 348 community women participated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training of Panchayat Secretaries</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8(^2)</td>
<td>15 EWR and 241 Panchayat Secretaries participated in the training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface with the Parliamentarians (at block level)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>124 EWR and 48 community women participated. Prior to the interface, 19 cluster level and 7 block level meetings were held to prepare agenda, understand the role and responsibilities of MLA. Only 4 interfaces could be done since MLAs could not give time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy against section (40) MP Panchayati Raj Act</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 consultations [two state and two regional]</td>
<td>Advocacy against section (40) MP Panchayati Raj Act 4. 4 consultations [two state and two regional] Series of regional consultation were held with multi stakeholders such as civil society, EWRs, CBOs, lawyers, media, other networks, SIRD and former bureaucrats with participation from 28 districts. In the state level consultation held in June, the Panchayat Secretary (Panchayat &amp; Rural Development) delivered the key note address.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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1. Partnership in Umaria district was discontinued after initiating the program, due to gaps in program implementation.
2. Partnership in Umaria district was discontinued after initiating the program, due to gaps in program implementation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Planned number</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Details/ Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Leadership Workshop (WLW)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>This was held in 48 taluks. In total 1724 elected women representatives have participated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow up workshops</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>Participation of 4002 elected women representatives. Two follow up workshop could not held in the Gundlupetetaluk of Chamarajnagar District and ChincholiTa-</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>luk of Gulbarga District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface Meeting at Block level</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>This is because work started much later due to non-availability of suitable partner in Kolar District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Linkages MLAs</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Participation of around 460 elected women representatives. Only 8 interfaces could be done since MLAs could not give time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity Building of Partners on RTI/PRI/MNREGA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Field staff members have participated. This was organized in Chikkamagalore by an organization called Vikasana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training of Trainers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>WLW ToT module is printed in Kannada.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners Meeting</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Main purpose is to evaluate the programmes and to get the progress report of the partners and to plan for the future activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Planned number</td>
<td>Total Number</td>
<td>Details/ Notes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jagruk Manch Meetings: (GP level)</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>JagrukManch’s have been formed in 130 gram Panchayats. In some Panchayats the planned meetings could not be held.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jagruk Manch Meetings: (Block level)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Approximately 460 elected women representatives and 3250 non-elected representatives have participated in these meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EWR meetings at the block level</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Networking meetings of EWRs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training of standing committees</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Including trainings conducted for social justice committees and the committee on education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface with District administration</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>All completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface with Parliamentarians</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>All completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training of Trainers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>This TOT was planned to build a sound understanding of the new work being undertaken, acquire the information and training skills needed to run the program effectively. This four day training was held in Jaipur with participation of 28 members from partners in the state. Training was conducted by THP training team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure Trip</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>The exposure visit was for two days where on the first day, the EWR’s had an interaction with Rural development and Panchayati Raj minister, Mr Bharat Singh followed by a visit to the state Legislative assembly, to the printing press of Dainik Bhaskar and Doordarshan studio. On day two, the EWR’s participated in a rally against the declining sex ratio in the state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gram Sabha mobilization &amp; Study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gram Sabha Mobilization is an ongoing effort. The draft study is prepared by UNNATI. Sharing meeting of the study took place in Jaipur attended by representatives from the government and civil society members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Planned number</td>
<td>Total Number</td>
<td>Details/ Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Meeting to Introduce Program</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15 members of staff/ partners participated in the meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahila Jagruk Manch (Preparation meeting at block level)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>599 EWR’s participated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahila Jagruk Manchs (Cluster level meeting)</td>
<td>180 workshops</td>
<td>180 workshops</td>
<td>1662 EWR’s and 4900 community women participated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface with Elected male representatives</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>399 EWR’s and 357 Elected male representatives participated in the interfaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training of Gram Panchayat functionaries</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>92 EWR’s and 229 executive officers/ secretaries participated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface with block officials</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>336 EWR’s, 76 community women and 61 officials participated in the interface.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term review (Mahila Jagruk Manch)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>524 EWR’s and 149 community women participated in the review meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender and Panchayat Resource Centres</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>740 EWR’s, 1449 community women and 318 men accessed the GPRC’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity Building of Partners</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21 participants of six THP partner organisations from 6 districts participated in this workshop. Mr. Jimuta Prasad Mishra, an Independent Consultant on Documentation was the resource person for this workshop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Linkages MPs/ MLAs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>333 EWR’s, 18 community women and 9 MLA’s participated in the interfaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy against Two Child Norm</td>
<td>2 consultation</td>
<td>2 consultation</td>
<td>The two consultations helped in evolving a concrete plan of action to advocate for the removal of two child norm. The renewed effort to evolve a campaign strategy has been done against the backdrop of the upcoming Panchayat elections in Odisha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Planned number</td>
<td>Total Number</td>
<td>Details/ Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening pressure group for advocacy against TCN</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 meeting was merged with the convention of EWRs to develop linkages with parliamentarians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop linkages with parliamentarians with EWRs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>All Completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning meeting with partners to introduce UNIFEM program</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>All Completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning meeting with CBOs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>All Completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review meetings</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>All Completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulation Camps</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>All Completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential Leadership Workshops</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>The 2 additional workshops were done in Nalanda district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface meeting</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>All Completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC Materials - Posters</td>
<td>50000</td>
<td>50000</td>
<td>All Completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC - Pamphlets</td>
<td>20000</td>
<td>40000</td>
<td>All Completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC - Stickers</td>
<td>45000</td>
<td>49000</td>
<td>All Completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC – wall painting</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>2331</td>
<td>Budget was stretched to write maximum number of messages by Partner organizations, including in Nalanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC – T-shirt</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2000 bandi</td>
<td>T-shirts were converted in to bandi, so that it could be worn by EWRs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC - CD</td>
<td>20000</td>
<td>20000</td>
<td>15000 CDs for Songs and 5000 CDs of radio program was made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production and broadcast of radio program, &amp; SWEEP songs</td>
<td>4 episodes 10 songs</td>
<td>4 episodes, 10 songs</td>
<td>All Completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village meetings</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1034</td>
<td>Meetings conducted in 47 blocks including 2 of Nalanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rallies/Padyatra</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>Padyatras conducted in 47 blocks including 2 of Nalanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Plays</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Planned number</td>
<td>Total Number</td>
<td>Details/ Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Centers</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Including Nalanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact Finding and Advocacy</td>
<td>No limit</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media workshop at district level</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Including Nalanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State level media workshop</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>All Completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication, Reports</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>All Completed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## ANNEX B: SUCCESS INDICATORS

### MAHILA JAGRUK MANCH: RAJASTHAN, MP AND ODISHA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.NO.</th>
<th>Success Indicator</th>
<th>Rajasthan</th>
<th>Madhya Pradesh</th>
<th>Odisha</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Number of JagrukManches formed at Gram Panchayat level/cluster level</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Number of EWRs participating in Mahila Jagruk Manches.</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>1064</td>
<td>4374</td>
<td>5898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Number of non-elected women participating in JagrukManches.</td>
<td>3250</td>
<td>7682</td>
<td>6121</td>
<td>17053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Number of networks/groups participating in JagrukManches.</td>
<td>Self Help Groups (SHG); youth groups, partner initiated forest rights groups; partner initiated village development committees; health worker (ASHA), nurse (ANM), teachers, pre-school attendant angadwadi worker (only in Madhya Pradesh and Odisha – in Odisha no inclusion of Angadwadi worker); GaonSathi; Gram RozgarSevak, women watershed members, members of GaonKalyan Samiti(ODisha); women citizen leaders.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Development / governance related issues tabled in Jagruk Manches and action taken</td>
<td>Drinking water (Rajasthan); infrastructure (roads, panchayatbhavan, transportation); irregularities in Mid day meal; monitoring of angadwadi centres and mid-day meals in schools; advocacy towards rightful functioning of angadwadi centres; PDS, irregularities in BPL lists; irregularities in MNREGA; transfer of panchayat secretary; forest rights for tribals; monitoring and redress of irregularity in functioning of GaonKalyanSamity (Odisha); organizing and preparation of agenda for Gram Sabha; participation of EWRs in panchayat meetings; potential leaders identified to contest for next Panchayat elections (Odisha).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Social justice/ gender justice related issues tabled in Jagruk Manches and action taken.</td>
<td>Shifting of alcohol shops; girl child education; violence against women, especially domestic violence; employment opportunities for women; child marriage.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Issues followed upon at the Panchayat/Block/District level.</td>
<td>Non-issue of land titles under Forest Rights Act; removal of liquor shops; functioning of un-licensed liquor shops; encroachment on Panchayat land; delay and non-payment of wages under NREGA; post card campaign and signature campaign undertaken towards repeal of the Two Child Norm in Odisha – petitions sent to State government; advocacy with legislators; advocacy towards appointment of block level protection officer to address cases of domestic violence as mandated by the Domestic Violence Act;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Mahila Jagruk Manch formed at cluster level in Odisha. One cluster constitutes 4-5 Gram Panchayats. In Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh MahilaJagruck Manch formed at Gram Panchayat level.
2. In Odisha Mahila Jagruk Manch formed at cluster level. Overall coverage in Odisha 380 Gram Panchayats.
### Sweep: Bihar

#### Federation Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reserved</th>
<th>Unreserved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mukhiya Ward Member</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected Candidates</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defeated Candidates</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Potential Leadership Workshop

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reserved</th>
<th>Unreserved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mukhiya Ward Member</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected Candidates</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defeated Candidates</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### General Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reserved</th>
<th>Unreserved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mukhiya Ward Member</td>
<td>4532</td>
<td>897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected Candidates</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defeated Candidates</td>
<td>4196</td>
<td>853</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Nominations Rejected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nominations Withdrawn</th>
<th>Women Counting Agent</th>
<th>Women Polling Agent</th>
<th>Women Proposers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>196*</td>
<td>143(^3)</td>
<td>1120</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1454</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Other Sweep Indicators

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Media Articles</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Districts by IEC</td>
<td>26 districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blocks by IEC</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Districts through Radio Program</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people accessing information resource centre</td>
<td>7668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of VAW cases identified</td>
<td>36 identified; 5 followed up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

3. The number of rejected nominations is of the women candidates who were neither a part of federation or potential leadership workshop. The same is the case with nominations withdrawn.
## GENDER AND PANCHAYAT RESOURCE CENTRES (ODISHA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SNO.</th>
<th>Success Indicator</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Number of Gender and Panchayat Resource Centres Opened</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Number of People accessing Gender and Panchayat resource centres</td>
<td>2507 (including EWR’s + men+ women)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Categories of queries requested at Gender and Panchayat resource centres</td>
<td>Pension forms, RTI forms, drafting of letters to BDO, BPO and School Inspectors, Guideline copies of GaonKalyan Samities, information on Anganwadi services, documentation for old age and widow pensions, information relating to various Government schemes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## BUILDING LINKAGES BETWEEN PARLIAMENTARIANS/ LEGISLATORS (RAJASTHAN, KARNATAKA, ODISHA AND MADHYA PRADESH)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Success Indicator</th>
<th>Madhya Pradesh</th>
<th>Karnataka</th>
<th>Odisha</th>
<th>Rajasthan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Number of MLA’s met in each state</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Number of petitions on specific issues</td>
<td>4^1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>80-100^5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Number of issues on themes of social / gender justice and development / governance</td>
<td>7 issues on social/gender justice and 9 issues of governance</td>
<td>Issues related to PDS, water, ICDS, schools, hospitals, bus facility to remote area, road; declining sex ratio and demand for stricter implementation of the PCPNDT act, irregularities in MNREGA, toilets for EWRs at panchayat offices, problems faced in proper implementation and participation of women in Gram sabhas; removal of the two child norm (Odisha); removal of section 40 (M.P); increasing honorarium and timely disbursement (MP and Karnataka)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. In M.P and Karnataka for each interface one consolidated petition which includes key 5-6 key issues identified by Elected Women representatives for their respective group/area has been presented.

5. In Rajasthan, from each Panchayat individually, elected women representatives have submitted 80 to 100 petitions.
## BUILDING LINKAGES WITH LOCAL ADMINISTRATION: RAJASTHAN, MADHYA PRADESH, ODISHA, KARNATAKA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Success indicator</th>
<th>Rajasthan</th>
<th>Madhya Pradesh</th>
<th>Odisha</th>
<th>Karnataka</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Number of delegations taken to local administration</td>
<td>5 with participation of 250 EWRs</td>
<td>16 with participation of 265 EWRs</td>
<td>15 with participation of 336 EWRs</td>
<td>169 with participation of 5322 EWRs</td>
<td>205; 6173 EWRs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Number of functionaries in different line departments met</td>
<td>8 officials(^a) across various departments(^2) at District level</td>
<td>9 officials(^a) at Block level</td>
<td>61 officials(^a) at Block level</td>
<td>25 officials(^a) across various departments at Block level</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Number of issues development/governance raised and discussed</td>
<td>Rajasthan: Education, Health &amp; Sanitation, Agriculture, Mid Day Meal, ICDS, MNREGA (Wages) / Job, Facilities, Gram Sabha, Fortnightly Meeting MP: release of funds under the various social security schemes, Encroachment on government land Odisha: Late payments under MGNREGA and MDM dues to the concerned SHG, faulty beneficiary selection under old age and widow pensions, supply of less quantities of rice under the ICDS scheme. Karnataka: MNREGA (the expenditure statement), job cards, gram sabha resolution copy, list of standing committee members, sanitation programme funds received and the work undertaken in the panchayat, increase in honorariums.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Number of issues on themes of Social/gender justice raised and discussed</td>
<td>In all states the issue of violence against women, In Rajasthan violence against EWRs, violence at panchayat level, removal or closure of alcohol shops; non-cooperation by male colleagues; in Odisha, provision of a space and refreshment room for EWRs at the Block Office, and a separate toilet for women in each panchayat premises. In Karnataka, issues concerning domestic violence, appointment of a protection officer in each Taluk (according to the Domestic Violence Act) girl child education, child marriage.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Number of petitions submitted on specific issues.</td>
<td>There is no specific number of petitions that have come about as many a times, the EWR’s have raised the issues verbally in front of local functionary. This was primarily done to raise awareness of the local functionary on the issues that are of concern for them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

6. Rajasthan at District level: District Collector; Chief Executive Officer, Zilla Parishad; Additional Chief Executive Officer Zilla Parishad; District Supply Officer; Superintendent of Police SP ; Chief Medical & Health Officer; Block Development Officer.
7. Rajasthan: Women and Child Development Department; Food and Supply department; Agriculture Department; Medical Department; Education Department and Excise Department
8. Madhya Pradesh at Block level: Education officer; Panchayat inspector; sanitation supervisor; CEO of Panchayat; Chief engineer; Block Medical Officer; women and child development and agriculture assistant offers; Rural Health mission manager.
9. Karnataka at Block level: Executive Officer of Taluk, Manager of Taluk administration, Assistant Director/Field Officer (Horticulture Department and Agricultural Department), Food Inspector/ Food Shirastedar, Revenue Inspector, Ombudsman/ Taluk coordinator of MNREGA, District Heath Officer/ Senior Health Officer (Heath Department), Tahashildar/Deputy Tahashildar (Taluk Panchayat), CDPO/ACDPO/Supervisor – Women and Child Welfare Department, Panchayat Extension Officer (PEO), Chief Executive Officer of District, Lawyer – Protection Officer – DV Act, District Collector, Social welfare & Backward Caste Department – Director, POO, Village Accountant, Police Circle Inspector, Engineer – ZP – related MNREGA, Watershed Department – Official.
10. Karnataka: Women & Child Development Department, Food and Supply department, Agriculture Department, Department Horticulture, Health Department, District Hospitals, and Excise Department, Block Office.
### ADVOCACY

**Action research on Gram Sabha**

**Gram Sabha Mobilisation in Rajasthan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SNO.</th>
<th>Success Indicator</th>
<th>Output</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Number of Gram Sabha held</td>
<td>Minimum of Two Gram Sabha meetings, (as mandated under Rajasthan Panchayati Raj act) have been held in THP working areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Number of Persons participating in Gram Sabhas</td>
<td>Tracking of Gram Sabha’s and participation in it has been a major challenge, with limited success.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Advocacy against section (40) MP Panchayati Raj act**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SNO.</th>
<th>Success Indicator</th>
<th>Output</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Creation of Civil society Network</td>
<td>Formation of two committees at the regional level. By holding a series of consultations at both state and district level, a network of civil society members has been created, representing different interest groups, perspectives, thinking that has helped in making the consultative process truly broad based and inclusive. This helps in strengthening the campaign by consolidating and including voices from different backgrounds etc. been formed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Awareness of Section (40) created amongst multiple stakeholders</td>
<td>Approximately 80 The consultations have helped in generating significant amount of debate and urgency that is needed to address this issue. In the meantime, it has also created awareness around different aspects of section (40). An outreach to around 80 multiple stakeholders like elected women representatives, lawyers, SIRD officials, media and bureaucrats has taken place, thereby facilitating awareness on the issue, as the sharing of experiences from the ground has helped them to understand the detrimental effects this section has on women to exercise their political leadership effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Awareness of section 40 created amongst government functionaries</td>
<td>One state level consultation has been held to make them more aware of the issues involved and why is the removal of the section important for the functioning of effective local governance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Developing and consolidating consensus on repeal or amendment of Section (40) in MP PRI Act</td>
<td>In order to gain and understand the different perspectives regarding section 40, three consultations have been held (one state and two regional) that have helped in developing and consolidating consensus on whether to campaign for repeal or to ask for repeal. The final consensus that has emerged is to ask for a <strong>repeal of the section</strong>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Advocacy for removal of the Two Child Norm (Odisha)

### Advocacy against section (40) MP Panchayati Raj act

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SNO.</th>
<th>Success Indicator</th>
<th>Output</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Creation of Civil society Network</td>
<td>By holding a two consultations at state level, a network of civil society members has been created, representing different interest groups, perspectives, thinking that has helped in making the consultative process truly broad based and inclusive. In the second consultation- members from NAWO (the National Alliance of Women’s Organization), Centre for World Solidarity, Human rights activists, social researchers and the media expressed their solidarity with the campaign.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reviving the campaign on the Two child norm in Odisha for repealing the same</td>
<td>Two state level consultations have been held to facilitate the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Awareness on the two child norm created amongst government functionaries</td>
<td>The Elected Women Representatives visited 66 MLA’s, state Election Commission, State commission for Women, State Human rights commission- and submitted their memorandums asking for the repeal of the norm. As one of the advocacy initiatives undertaken, the elected women representatives have met MLA’s, government functionaries and sensitized them, and also helped in raising their awareness regarding the different aspects to the norm and why is it important for this draconian norm to be removed from the state Panchayati Raj act.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### SUCCESS INDICATOR: STRENGTHENING STANDING COMMITTEES/ PANCHAYAT FUNCTIONARIES

#### STRENGTHENING STANDING COMMITTEES: RAJASTHAN

Number of people attending the standing committee trainings and made aware about their roles and responsibilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SNO.</th>
<th>Success Indicator</th>
<th>Education Committee</th>
<th>Social Justice Committee</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Number of people attending the standing committee trainings and made aware about their roles and responsibilities</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### INTERFACE WITH PANCHAYAT FUNCTIONARIES

Number of Panchayat functionaries interacted with and trained and sensitised towards working collaboratively with elected women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SNO.</th>
<th>Success Indicator</th>
<th>Madhya Pradesh¹¹ (Training of Panchayat secretaries)</th>
<th>Odisha¹² (Training of executive officers/ secretaries)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Number of Panchayat functionaries interacted with and retained and sensitised towards working collaboratively with elected women.</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹¹ In MP 8 trainings were conducted.
¹² In Odisha 15 trainings were conducted.
ANNEX C: CASE STUDIES

EXPERIENCES FROM JAGRUK MANCH’S: Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan

Mahila Jagruk Manch: Rajasthan

1. Mahila Jagruk Manch members demanding work for women under MNREGA.

In Chotan block of Barmer district, when meetings of Mahila Jagruk Manch took place, the biggest issue emerging in majority of the Gram Panchayats was the need for work in MNREGA. Despite repeated attempts, a number of women had not been able to obtain work. The work that was being undertaken by Panchayats under MNREGA, by and large, required technical skills which were not labour intensive in nature. Also, in several instances, full wages were not being paid.

In the meetings of Jagruk Manch women were really concerned but were unable to move ahead on the issue. Finally, EWRs participating in the Manch, based on their understanding of Panchayat procedures, recommended a meeting with the Sarpanch. They then decided to submit an application to the Gram Sevak. The application would carry the names of all the women seeking employment. The issue was also discussed with the Sarpanch. Within 5-7 days of the application, all the women seeking employment obtained work in the ongoing MNREGA work in their Panchayats. A total of 3100 days of work was obtained in the Panchayats of Pokrasar, Danu, Antiya, Netrad, Alamsar, Bavdikala, Kaprau, and Navatala.

2. Mahila Jagruk Manch members raising collective voice against proxy representation.

In Kyariya Gram Panchayat of Abu Road block in Sirohi District, during a discussion in the Mahila Jagruk Manch meeting, the issue of male family members accompanying EWRs in Panchayat meetings came up. In this meeting, it was decided by the group of EWRs & women to serve a notice to Babli Bai, Ward Panch from the same Panchayat - the only EWR whose husband was participating in Panchayat meetings on her behalf. Members of the Mahila Jagruk Manch also discussed the matter with her husband who refused to oblige. In the next notice, Sarpanch Santosh Bai refused to allow Babli Bai’s husband to participate in the meeting. Since then, Babli Bai herself attends and participates in the meetings. Though her husband still accompanies her, he waits outside and does not participate in the meetings.

3. Mahila Jagruk Manch members advocating for regular functioning of Panchayats, Anganwadi Centres and regular supply of drinking water.

Sansardesar Gram Panchayat in Lunkaransar block of Bikaner is situated 130 km from the Panchayat Samiti headquarters. The Panchayat is located close to a canal and the area is conducive to high crop production.

When the meetings of Mahila Jagruk Manch took place, the members tabled the fact that drinking water is scarce despite being close to the canal. They also complained about the dysfunctional Panchayat office which is rarely open. The male Sarpanch lives in Bikaner and only goes to the Panchayat once in a while to attend to personal work. The register for Panchayat meetings is sent to the homes of the Panchayat members and members sign the register for 3-4 meetings at a time. Elected women are not given any importance in the Panchayat’s work. Education and health facilities exist more on paper than in reality in this Panchayat.

To address these issues, members of the group, led by the Ward Members, first met the Sarpanch and discussed the same. Next the group ensured that the Panchayat office is opened regularly and put pressure for Panchayat meetings to take place regularly. The members also started monitoring the ICDS centre. From time to time they also met concerned officials to address other issues. As a result, Panchayat meetings have started taking place on a regular basis. EWRs actively participate in these meetings. The ICDS centre in the Panchayat is functioning well. To solve the problem of drinking water, a plan is underway to work in collaboration with Public Health and engineering department (PHED) to get drinking water to the Panchayat.

4. Mahila Jagruk Manch members raising collective voice against harassment of an Anganwadi worker and opening of alcohol shop in Panchayat.

In Lunol Gram Panchayat of Reodar Block of Sirohi district, Mahila Jagruk Manch members discussed several problems during the meeting. The Anganwadi centre in the Panchayat was being operated from the school compound. The Anganwadi worker, in this situation was being harassed by the school teacher who kept the keys to the school. She would be called at various times at different places to get the keys. Additionally, women also objected to the
alcohol shop that was located in the Panchayat. It was also noticed that a number of widowed women in the Panchayat were not getting the pensions they were eligible for.

In the next meeting, Mahila Jagruk Manch members summoned the teacher who kept the keys to the school and issued a warning against harassing the Anganwadi worker. In the same meeting, the Panchayat secretary was called to the meeting and was told to take action regarding the removal of the alcohol shop from the Panchayat. Also, work was initiated to link widowed women to pension.

As a result of the action taken, the Anganwadi worker is now being able to function well. The alcohol shop has been shifted from the Panchayat and ten women whose forms were filled have started receiving their pension.

**Mahila Adhikar Samukhya (MAS): Odisha**

5. **Mahila Adhikar Samukhya members advocating for opening up of an Anganwadi Centre for the marginalised.**

In a MAS (Mahila Adhikar Samukhya) meeting in Angul, Rina Gochhayat, a MAS member, shared that since their area is populated entirely by the dalit community, the local Anganwadi worker does not mobilize their children to go to the centre, nor do those few children who go to the centre on their own, are cared for properly. The matter raised great consternation among the rest of the members who then sent a team to visit and enquire into the issue.

However, it turned out that though there is an Anganwadi centre in ward 4 of Kandsar GP, which is a dalit hamlet, the said centre is situated on the other side of the National Highway which is quite busy and poses great hazards for children to cross it alone. Moreover, it was also difficult for the individual worker to get all the children of the hamlet to the centre single-handedly. So she requested the mothers to volunteer to bring their children to the centre. Thereafter, members also decided to give a memorandum to the Collector for another Anganwadi centre for the said hamlet, since education is a basic right, and the number of inhabitants is more than 200 thereby meeting the requirements to have an Anganwadi Centre of their own.

6. **Mahila Adhikar Samukhya members raising collective voice against irregularity in grains received in Anganwadi Centres.**

In another MAS meeting, Sukanti Barik, a Self Help Group member and Anupama Dehuri, Ward Member, shared that their local Anganwadi worker has complained that the rice bags contain only 47/48 kg of rice per packet instead of 50 kg, as is the norm, making it difficult to distribute the full amount. The facilitators had informed them that this was not confined to Anganwadi centres alone but even in Mid Day Meal Scheme and Public Distribution Scheme. Self Help Groups in charge of dealership also suffer the same problems. So members should inform the Collector/concerned Government officials about this, but preferably through MAS, so that pressure can be exerted to rectify matters early. In keeping with this, members have written to the CDPO and Collector, that henceforward all supplies should be given in Kilograms, and not in sacks, or other traditional measures like ‘Ada’, ‘Maan’ etc.

7. **Mahila Adhikar Samukhya members successfully address the issue of Domestic Violence.**

Sarju Sahoo, a 45 year old woman in Sarkana GP, Balianta, was regularly tortured physically and mentally by her drunkard husband. When the matter was brought to notice of the MAS members by the concerned ward member, a team of EWRs and other MAS members visited her and heard her complaint. They went to her husband to make him aware about the Domestic Violence Act and the consequences of violating it. Seeing such a big support group for his wife, he readily apologised in writing and assured not to torture her in future.

It has been observed that domestic violence cases were not discussed in MAS meetings earlier, due to a sense of embarrassment and fear of reprisal; however, members have now resolved not to tolerate any violence against women in their areas and will raise a voice through MAS.

8. **Mahila Adhikar Samukhya members initiate a fact finding on harassment and exploitation faced by women and children working in brick kilns.**

In October, 2010 a MAS meeting was conducted at Balianta, Khurda, where a ward member, Ruma Sahoo of Bihangpur Panchayat discussed ways to stop violation of rights of women and children working at the brick kilns. Since most of them are migrants, they face a lot of problems due to harassment by the owners and other locals. Compelled to keep quiet due to fear of losing their sole means of livelihood, this further compounds their suffering and harassment. Along with the mothers their children also lose their childhood, and are forced to bear the same suffering as their parents. Women workers do not get their due wages and also not on time. Members were deeply concerned about this and a resolution was passed that a survey will be conducted to track the number of women and children are engaged in the brick line industry and chalk out strategies to rescue the children from such drudgery, and ensure women workers of their rightful wages.

**Sajha Manch: Madhya Pradesh**
Sanjha Manch members demand improvement in the mid-day meal and attendance in school.

The primary school of Sarsud Panchayat in Harda District had the dubious distinction of being a defaulter 2 years in a row for failing to attract a large number of students wanting to go to school. This was despite the mid-day meal which was introduced earlier in the school. In its meeting, the Sanjha Manch of Sarsud identified student dropout rates as a major concern and decided to get these children back to school. The parents of these children complained about the poor quality of the mid-day meal. Based on their complaints, Manch members got together and formed a smaller group to supervise the cooking and check quality of the food served. Members of the small group were informed of the rules and norms of mid-day meals. Elected women representatives shared with other members information booklets on mid-day meal schemes. During one of these visits, Asha Bai, also Sarpanch of Sarsud found that the self help group entrusted to cook and serve the children was using low quality cooking material and not using green vegetables in the menu. The Self Help Group (SHG) members tried to mislead the Jagruk Manch members and when warned to mend its ways and even threatened them. However Sanjha Manch led by Asha Bai were clear on their stand and informed the SHG about the government guidelines regarding the preparation of mid-day meal, and also the steps that the Panchayat or a group such as theirs can take if these were not followed. They gave the SHG group an ultimatum of 2 days to start following the norms or else, they said – “we shall complain to the block education office and Janpad Panchayat with samples of your food, and our Sarpanch will recommend the commissioning of another SHG to undertake the assignment.” This made an impact on the erring SHG and they have promised to amend their ways. The quality of food served improved from the next day. They have even started to follow the prescribed menu for cooking. However, Sanjha Manch members know that things can slide back unless they continue regular monitoring. Members now take turns in to visit and check the food and other aspects of mid day meal. Since then, 22 out of 43 students have started coming to school regularly. Encouraged by the successful initiative in collective action, Sanjha Manch members have decided to improve the functioning of Anganwadi center’s as well.

Sanjha Manch members initiate action to remove illegal encroachment on Panchayat land.

In Panchayat Parwa of Harda district of Madhya Pradesh, Sanjha Manch has managed what previous Panchayat bodies failed to do. It was instrumental in removal of encroachment on Panchayat land designated for performing last rites of the dead. For years residents were forced to cremate the deceased in an isolated patch of land or in the neighbouring Panchayat. In the first Gram Sabha after the Sanjha Manch was formed, the issue of not having such a designated land in Parwa was raised by Sanjha Manch members. All gram sabha members present supported this cause. Sarpanch of the Panchayat, Sangeeta Naik had already discussed this in the Panchayat meeting in which all members had unanimously passed a resolution. The idea of raising it in the Gram Sabha was to discuss this in a larger group and designate a land for it. The only available land was under the illegal possession of one Haribhajan, a powerful person in the Panchayat. Several Gram Sabha members were scared of talking to the encroacher and advised the Sarpanch to look for another land. However, since the decision had already been taken and a gram sabha resolution was passed with majority of votes, Sangeeta decided to go ahead. Her fellow Manch members assured her of their support in this campaign. According to a pre-planned strategy, at first, an official notice was given to Haribhajan from the Panchayat and he was asked to remove his things from the land within a stipulated time period. When he failed to do so, a complaint was lodged in the offices of Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) and Janpad Panchayat. Haribhajan lodged a false police complaint against Sangeeta accusing her of trying to usurp his ‘ancestral land’. He also issued threats to people supporting her. Around the same time, a young child died in the village and his family members took his dead body to the land designated for burial. Haribhajan scared the bereaved family. When the family, after performing last rites of the child elsewhere, came and informed the Sarpanch about this, all Sanjha Manch members, and some community members signed on a letter informing the collector about this incident. Sunita, a Sanjha Manch member, says “we were tired of waiting. Block administration was not taking any steps. We hoped that with this letter the district administration will finally wake up and take action.” Sunita was right. Under instructions from the Collector, all encroachments were removed in the presence of SDM and the police. On protesting against the Collector’s dictat, Haribhajan was jailed for 7 days. The community at large was both amazed and happy at this big victory of the Sanjha Manch. For the members, it was a time to celebrate their collective strength and congratulate each other for sticking together in this intense and difficult battle.

Sanjha Manch members address corruption by post master thereby ensuring transparency and accountability.

In Gram Panchayat Sendhpa, Up Sarpanch Munni-raja worked tirelessly to get together other EWRs and women to come together as a group (Sanjha Manch). She faced stiff resistance from the male Sarpanch who didn’t show any respect to the EWRs in Panchayat meetings. The Sarpanch didn’t allow active participation of EWRs in decision making processes, and instead advised them to send their male family members. However, Munni-raja who has been trained in the women leadership and follow up work-
shops, mobilized other EWRs to come regularly to the meetings. Issues of social security and women’s problems were seldom discussed in the Panchayat meetings. When Sanjha Manch formation processes were going on in the Panchayat, Munni raja and other EWRs saw this opportunity to form a support base of women from among the gram sabha members.

In the first meeting, many Sanjha Manch members raised the issue of irregularities in payment of pension to old women and widows. Sanjha Manch members listened to the testimonies of 7 such women out of 27 who alleged that the postmaster deducted Rs. 400 each from the beneficiary’s in name of ‘service money’ given to Gram Panchayat and Janpad Panchayat. Munni raja informed all members and the beneficiaries that no such rule exists. Sanjha Manch members expressed surprise that the Sarpanch was unaware of such large scale corruption. They unanimously decided to summon the Sarpanch and hear his stand in public space. The Sarpanch claimed that the deductions were happening without his knowledge and it was an individual act of corruption by the postmaster. The members present, led by Munni raja, were not convinced and asked the Sarpanch to give a written statement. The twenty seven victims recorded their statement and handed it over to Sanjha Manch members. The Manch gave all the statements to the Collector, and recommended strong action against the erring post master.

When the postmaster came to know of this that very night, he individually went to all 27 households, sought forgiveness, returned the money, and promised never to commit such acts again. Next day the group met again and decided to close the matter and not make any further complaints keeping in mind that the postmaster’s family might be in a vulnerable position if dismissed from the service. In their words - “A message has already gone to the money hungry officials and people’s representatives that such acts would not be tolerated by the women of Sendhipa”. By initiating actions as a collective group, Sanjha Manch members have gradually started becoming more aware and confident to address issues concerning their respective Panchayats.

12. **Sanjha Manch ensures accessibility of services to the members belonging to the marginalised communities**

Lakhakhera Panchayat of Katni district had schools, health centers and even a community hall. However, accesses to all of these were limited to upper caste members of the Panchayat. The Panchayat was clearly demarcated in its boundaries not just by caste based settlements but also in mobility of all dwellers to access the services. The highest dropout and never enrolled rates of children in the Panchayat, were of children belonging to schedule caste and tribes. Similarly in the anganwadi centers small children and pregnant/ lactating women did not come regularly to avail the services. No attempts were made to integrate the members of the marginalized communities in the mainstream society. Sarpanch Tulsa Bai took the first step towards addressing this, by identifying 44 cases for social security pension.

85% of the members of the Sanjha Manch of Lakhakhera belong to marginalized communities. Sarpanch of Lakhakhera and a Sanjha Manch member, Tulsa Bai, discussed these issues in the first meeting of the Sanjha Manch. She had already ensured that women from all categories attended and participated in Gram Sabha meetings. She had got roads constructed and ensured electrification in the neglected settlements. That brought her the confidence and support of Sanjha Manch members and other people of her Panchayat. The Manch members also started visiting hamlets and motivated mothers to send their children to schools and anganwadi, and implored women to visit the anganwadi for getting their nutritional supplements. Many of these Manch members, who had shied away earlier, started accessing these services. The community emulated them and soon there was a sizeable increase in the number of beneficiaries. Member Shanti said – “Till we started going to these centers, and sending our children, how others would go? So we did, and soon it was time for others to follow.”

In Lakhakhera one of the major problems identified by everyone was pending wages of labourers under MGNREGA. Over six months wages were not paid to the labourers. This problem was brought to the notice of Tulsa Bai. Since this affected both men and women, and it was also related to Panchayat, Tulsa Bai discussed the issue with other members of the Panchayat, including EWRs. They jointly decided to take up the issue with the block officials. At the block office, the group found that the officers concerned were not willing to discuss this issue. The delegation was advised by other office bearers of neighbouring Panchayats to pay a bribe to expedite the process. Tulsa Bai refused to take this path, and instead went back with her group to Lakhakhera and held a discussion with the labourers whose wages were pending. They together signed a joint letter addressed to the district officer urging him to process the payments immediately. Tulsa Bai went with 8 Sanjha Manch members to meet the officer and give him the signed letter. The group informed the officer about the ordeals faced by families of many poor labourers deprived of their rightful wages. The officer asked for the papers related to this from his office, and examined the same. Satisfied that the labourers and Tulsa Bai had not done anything irregular, and the cause of delay was a minor technical glitch, he immediately ordered release of the payments. He also congratulated the delegation for bringing the case to his notice this case.

13. **Sarpanch leads a campaign against Domestic**
 Violence with the support of Sanjha Manch members

Shyama Bai, Sarpanch of Posta Panchayat of Siddhi district has been elected amidst all odds. With Shyama Bai’s dynamic and action oriented leadership other women were already motivated to work together with her and other EWRs present. In Posta Panchayat, patriarchy is deeply rooted with men restricting women’s presence in public space. It has been challenging for Shyama Bai to get women to attend and participate in Gram Sabha meetings. In Sanjha Manch meetings held, many women have raised the issue of violence being used against them in their respective homes to restrict their mobility. Shyama Bai and others convened a meeting of Sanjha Manch. In the meeting many women shared stories of violence perpetrated by drunken men and their daily wages under MGNREGA being taken away.

The Sanjha Manch members decided to take up the issue of Domestic Violence and initiate action to address the same. A group of 20 women got together and went on a door to door campaign and engaged with the perpetrators of violence to mend their ways. A signature campaign was also undertaken where 62 per cent of women in the Panchayat signed in support of ending the violence being perpetrated. Due to this initiative, there has been a significant drop in domestic violence with no visible case being reported in the past two months.

Shyama Bai intends to keep the issue alive through regular meetings of this group, membership of which has swelled to 27 now. Shyama Bai says - “I could not have got into homes of wife and mother beaters, if members of my group [Sanjha Manch] had not been with me. I am a Sarpanch, I can get orders issued, but, to enforce them, I need support like this.”

INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDIES OF ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES ODISHA.

14. Raj Laxmi Rout: A leader in action Raj Laxmi Rout, ward member, Panchayat- Kalyanpur, Block- Bhubaneswar, District- Khurda

During 2007 elections, people of Ward No. 13 of Kalyanpur Gram Panchayat selected Rajalaxmi Rout as their representative. She was 42 years old and had studied till Class 12. No one was there to contest against her. Before this election, her husband Sri Rankanidhi Rout had held the post of ward member for the past 10 years. He was an uncontested candidate. Similarly, Rajalaxmi was also an uncontested candidate.

One girl named Gita of this ward got married and after four months of her marriage her in-laws started torturing her for more dowry. Villagers informed Rajalaxmi about the matter. Immediately Rajalaxmi shared the same with Sarpanch Smt Nirmala Behera. The matter was so serious that Gita’s in-laws wanted their son to divorce her. Rajalaxmi called a meeting without any delay where the Sarpanch of the in-laws’ village, other important persons, her father-in-law, brother-in-law and some other relatives along with Gita’s maternal family members were present. When asked the reasons for divorce, Gita’s in-laws could not provide any reason. After an hour long discussion they realized their mistake and agreed to take Gita home. Rajalaxmi also warned them of the consequences they would have to face if Gita faces harm or problems in future. Now Gita is living happily with her in-laws. Rajalaxmi said, “I feel proud that at last justice was done to Gita”.

This is not her only success. She has worked to provide widow pension, old age pension and pension for physically challenged people at their door step. She met the BDO to inform about the defunct tube well, got it repaired providing relief to the people from the scarcity of drinking water. Rajalaxmi participates in every community activity of the village. On the anniversary function of the local temple, she takes a lead role to honour important persons of her Gram Panchayat.

15. Kesirekha, an EWR demanding transparency and accountability in the working of the Anganwadi Centre

Kesirekha, Panchayat member, Panchayat- Dhauli, Block- Bhubaneswar, District- Khurda

The Anganwadi worker in Dhauli Gram Panchayat in Bhubaneswar was misappropriating the rations meant for children and pregnant women but none in the village opposed her act. The local EWR, Kesirekha pleaded the matter before some people of political influence but they did not pay any heed. She had no way but to mobilize other women and villagers, but the work was not easy as the community did not listen to her for a long period. It took her nearly a year to be able to counsel and mobilize enough women and other common villagers to join her and protest against these misdeeds and submit a representation to the Child Development Program Officer (CDPO). They also sought answer as to why moist-eaten rice and dal was distributed to pregnant women and young children. When informed by the Supply Officer that good quality rice and dal were supplied, the group of villagers raided the house of the Anganwadi Worker (AWW) to find nearly 22 bags of provisions, originally meant for children, at her home. Initially even the CDPO tried to cover up the fault of the AWW, since the ‘image’ of her department was at stake. But she was eventually forced to summon the AWW and give a strong reprimand in front of everyone, and was warned that strong action will be taken if this recurs.
RAJASTHAN


When 26 year old Deepa was elected as the Up Sarpanch, she found it difficult to function in the male dominated Panchayat system. The male Panchayat members dominated the meetings, resisted the participation of women, and with other elected women, Deepa too was expected to sit at the back during Panchayat meetings. Those EWRs who did try and participate were discouraged when false cases were filed against them.

Deepa found her lost confidence when she participated in The Hunger Project’s capacity building program and decided that she would not allow these hurdles to come in her way of being an effective leader. With the support of other women in her Panchayat, Deepa started voicing her opinion on various issues.

During the process of hiring water tankers for the Panchayat, Deepa noticed that transparency had not been maintained and standard procedures had not been followed. Tankers were being procured at a higher rate of Rs 300/- per tanker and the process was opened to all. Deepa opposed this and had the earlier tenders dismissed. A new process was initiated in the Panchayat where 18 tenders were filed and tankers were procured by the Panchayat at a lower rate of Rs 100/-, thereby saving Rs 72,000/- of the Panchayat on the whole.

Deepa’s next initiative was to address the issue of encroachment of Panchayat land by certain families in the Panchayat. This proved to be a major challenge as not only did her supporters in the Panchayat not back her, she had to face opposition from various quarters. A false case was filed in her name; and she received threats of violence against herself and her family. However, this did not deter Deepa, who went to seek help from the police and other administrative officials.

Deepa has had work sanctioned for a 2000 feet drain and had a 600 meter pipeline installed for water in the Panchayat. She has also met the district collector to terminate the services of the Panchayat secretary as she had not found his work to be satisfactory.

The problems faced by women in her Panchayat remains a major concern for Deepa. She is working to raise awareness of the issue of domestic violence by making women aware of the law against it. She has also raised the issue of violence being faced by elected women representatives with the district administration. At another level, she is trying to link women with the various pensions and schemes they are eligible to receive. She also motivates elected women to participate in Panchayat meetings and attend Gram Sabhas.

BIHAR (SWEEP CAMPAIGN): EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN CANDIDATES


“I had never thought of contesting election in my whole life. But, in order to make the existing system better, we have to initiate the change process ourselves”, says Anandita Sharma, the Sarpanch (President of Gram Kachahari – Nyaya Panchayat) of Patsanda Panchayat. In her words, “I have always challenged the norms of society which violates the freedom of a human being, especially a woman.”

People have often asked me that in the present scenario, when people are rushing towards the post of Mukhiya of Panchayat Samiti, why have I chosen the post of Sarpanch? For me, answering this question was quite easy. I believed that justice was more important than money. It was important to stand for the rights of people rather than being in the race of money/corruption.

I have a great concern for my society and hence, have volunteered in several organizations for the betterment of people. I feel a sense of satisfaction when I resolve a dispute or problem of the people. But, I had never thought of being a leader. Having an image of social worker and an advocate of women’s rights, I got to join the ‘Training of Trainers’ workshop organized by The Hunger Project the aim of which was to prepare a cadre of women community leaders to promote women leadership during Panchayat elections 2011. After returning from the ‘ToT’, I thought that I shall also come forward as a leader along with encouraging other women to participate in electoral process. I was feeling a sense of responsibility to do something for the welfare of people and could contribute in preserving their rights and providing them strength to stand against injustice. I deeply realized that I should not limit myself in inspiring others but rather be an inspiration for them.

Keeping these feelings in my heart, I filed the nomination for the post of Sarpanch from unreserved seat. There were a total of 4 opponents for this post, but I emerged victorious. I campaigned myself without any assistance from my husband or family relatives. During my campaign also, I challenged the gender norms of society. I had been allotted a picture of motorcycle as my election symbol. I used to ride a motorcycle in my younger days and therefore found it a great opportunity to fulfill my wish again. I campaigned across each and every village by riding...
the motorcycle. This gave me an identity of an independent and brave lady. I conveyed my message and agenda of contesting the election very clearly among the community.

I informed that I would not distribute money for receiving their votes. One who grows the crop of distribution of money; s/he cuts the crop of rights of public after getting elected. So, I would not distribute money, rather would spread love and would reap its benefits in the form of development of Panchayat.

Now, since, I am elected, I will serve the society without any sort of greed and corruption. I will work towards ensuring social justice and preserving the rights of everyone especially women, children, and marginalized sections of society, I am committed to being a strong woman leader and raising my voice against the factors which create corruption in society.

18. Laxmi Devi, Up Mukhiya, Panchayat- West Ramnath Dhamauli, Block- Kanti, District- Muzaffarpur. Stood for elections in April 2011 and won from a reserved seat (SC)

“When I was married in this Panchayat, the elderly people advised me to always remain in veil and consider it as my legacy like other social norms. At that time, I had also accepted it. But today, when I have been re-elected as ward member and Up-Mukhiya, the same elderly people do not see anything wrong in me not being in veil; rather they respect me as a leader.”

To establish her political identity was not at all easy for young Laxmi Devi. Her decision to step out and work out of home led to family conflicts. She had been mentally pressurized in various forms. Even then, she could not be distracted. She worked for increasing women’s participation in Gram Sabha. She has strongly objected when women were not allowed to participate in Gram Sabha on the basis of their relationship in the community. Laxmi Devi used to visit each and every house and gathered women to participate in Gram Sabha.

Laxmi Devi is the most active member of the federation of Elected Women Representatives. She has a very important role in every decision making process of the federation. When the Panchayat secretary indulged in arbitrary distribution of birth certificates in every Panchayat of Kanti block, Laxmi Devi was the one to take the lead role in putting pressure on the secretary and block office with the help of federation.

Laxmi Devi is committed towards working against corruption. She has helped people to seek justice by highlighting the malfunctioning in distribution of flood relief materials and Indira AwasYojana. During her previous tenure, she has worked on the issues of women’s health, girl’s education, child marriage, child labour, etc. She had been continuously working with ASHA worker and ANM in order to provide the benefit of health services to each and every individual. She has created awareness about reproductive rights among women and community and has mobilized women for institutional delivery. She has enrolled the children of her ward in Aanganwadi Centres, improved the services of Aanganwadi, and ensured the monthly meeting of mother’s committee. She has been regularly raising her voice against domestic violence. She has not only provided strength to the victims of domestic violence with her support but also ensured them legal protection.

During the SWEEP campaign, Laxmi Devi played a very commendable role. She moved across villages and encouraged women of her Panchayat and nearby areas to contest the elections. She made people understand about importance of women’s leadership and its impact on the development of the villages. In addition, Laxmi Devi has also worked for creating voter’s awareness. She mobilized people about the importance of the vote and the loss of selling it with for greed, money, or alcohol.

She says, “I had contested for two posts, Panchayat member and Mukhiya. I am strictly against the dirty game of money and power in politics. I have been told by some people that had I spent money and liquor then I might have won the post of Mukhiya. But this was not acceptable to me. As a result, I lost the seat of Mukhiya. But I am happy that I have won as a Panchayat member. My work has been valued, and today I have been elected as Up - Mukhiya from the pool of ward members.”


One who has always questioned me about my work, debated over for 5 years, and has provided a positive direction to the development of Panchayat, is Parvati Devi”, said the male Mukhiya of Serukahi Panchayat during an interface between community and potential women leaders before Panchayat elections 2011. This is the identity that Parvati Devi has carved for herself – that of a strong woman leader.

This is the second term of Parvati Devi. She says, “When I won the Panchayat election in 2006, I, like the other Panchayat members, used to feel that I did not have either any right or any power. I used to wonder if I would meet the expectations of the people? Would I be able to stand up for the rights of people? But when I participated in the various training programs and activities of The Hunger Project, a feeling of confidence and information was generated within me. I then understood the role of Panchayat member in Panchayati Raj and started conducting ward
sabhas in my constituency.

Generally, the provision of ward sabha has neither any constitutional importance nor it has been mentioned anywhere in the Act. Despite this, regular conduction of ward sabha by Parvati Devi has been an inspirational factor for other Panchayat members. Parvati Devi used to first conduct the ward-sabha and then used to make the Mukhiya conduct the Gram Sabha by putting pressure on him. In the beginning, the Mukhiya also resisted, but when he realized that this was leading to the development of Panchayat, he started working together with Parvati Devi. During the tenure of 2006, Serukahi Panchayat was awarded as 'Nirmal Gram'. The Mukhiya, Sudarshan Mishra, also acknowledges that the regular sanitation programmes and efforts of Parvati Devi in creating awareness among the community have made it possible.

Parvati Devi has not only worked for strengthening Panchayati Raj but has also understood the concept of development of Panchayat. Like her last tenure, she is committed towards violence free lives of women in her new term. She has worked with greater proximity with Gram Kachahari to ensure justice to the women who were victims of domestic violence. Re-enrolling the drop-out girls was her biggest achievement. Along with mobilizing the parents of drop-out girls for resending them to school, Parvati Devi started sharing information related with women from Angawadis and health centres.

During the election of 2011, there were three candidates against Parvati Devi, but she won with a margin of 92 votes. The reason is her commitment towards serving the people. She now keeps more care of people and collects information about the latest development schemes of Panchayats so that she can help the needy. Due to her knowledge and awareness, the Mukhiya often invites her for taking suggestions. She proudly says, “Not only Mukhiya, but also Sarpanch of the Nyaya Panchayat and Panchayat officer take suggestions from me whenever required.”

20. Podharia Devi, Panchayat member, Panchayat- Indrapuri, Block – Tilothu, District- Rohtas. Stood for elections in April 2011 and won from a reserved seat.

In 2006, when 50 per cent reservation of women was ensured in Bihar, a villager of Jangara Tola commented and said, “Now, the buffalo feeders will run the Panchayats?” Listening to this, a woman turned around and replied, “We will do what you have never thought of. Just give us a chance.” From then onwards till now, Podharia Devi has never stopped. She has been efficiently working towards building sewers, providing job cards, jobs, and complete wages to labourers along with other important development works. Living in a damaged hut, Podharia Devi has provided Indira Awas and social security pensions to the needy.

Podharia Devi has not only understood the concept of social and human development beyond the physical structure of development but also implemented it in her work. She has started discussing the issues of reproductive rights of women in the community. In addition to the reproductive health of women, she has continuously focused on the education of children and youth, alcoholism, and domestic violence.

Podharia Devi participated in 2010 SWEEP campaign with great enthusiasm. She encouraged several women along with the incumbent Mukhiya to contest for the post of Mukhiya and Panchayat Member. She created awareness about the quality of a good leader and the importance and power of votes. Podharia Devi also convinced the federation members and their families who did not want to contest the elections and were under pressure. She helped them to file nomination. She made an alliance with SHG members in order to bring women forward as agents at different stages of electoral process. She also used to take people to the resource centres for getting information about the electoral processes.

She played a very active role during the Panchayat elections 2011. Whenever, she got any news of disturbance or malpractices, she immediately informed the same to the Block Development Officer and the Returning Officers. The local administration also appreciates the activeness of Podharia Devi during the elections.

Due to the increasing popularity and conscientiousness of Podharia Devi, people encouraged her to contest for the post of Mukhiya; but she was not ready. She says, “I am not the suitable candidate for a responsible post like Mukhiya. I want to work together with Mukhiya and help her/him in the development of Panchayat. Whoever is suitable for this post shall come forward. Panchayat Member is also a very important part of Gram Panchayat and I am ready to play it. We all women representatives shall work together. Then only we can make changes.”

She says, “When I filed my nomination for Panchayat Member for the second term, some people in the community said that they were willing to remove the previous Mukhiya and Panchayat Members. This meant that they did not want me to win for the second time. But, I got the support of people and got reelected.”

21. Sugra Soren, Contestant for the post of Mukhiya, Panchayat – Chai, Block- Jhajha, District- Jamui. Stood for elections in April 2011 and lost from an unreserved seat.

For 35 years I did not know what development of Panchayat meant, what the role of citizens in the
development of Panchayats could be? The women of our Panchayat, especially of Santhal Tola used to suffer from water crisis, lack of electricity; but, we did not know whom to approach for this? How can we improve the services in our Panchayats? But, just a few months before the Panchayat elections 2011, I heard from someone about a campaign which promoted women’s leadership and appeal to women to participate in the electoral process. I came in contact with the SWEEP campaign of The Hunger Project.

Like other Santhal families, I have some land and am able to produce few crops for our daily use. Life is very difficult here. The livelihood of people depends on forests, but since the Santhals have no more access to the forest and its products, life has become harder. My area being at the border of Bihar and Jharkhand has always been alienated from the main stream. One can easily figure out the level of poverty in my area.

In Chai Panchayat we did not know when the elections were held and who used to win. People did not participate in Panchayat elections in the last decade. In such circumstances, the decision of contesting for the post of Mukhiya during Panchayat Elections 2011 was not an easy task. Along with me, for the first time, male candidates also filed nominations in large numbers.

I was the only female candidate from my Panchayat contesting against 17 male candidates for the post of Mukhiya. The women in my area had never thought that they could also contest from the unreserved seats, which were considered as male-seats. It was only when the awareness campaign (SWEEP) was carried out by The Hunger Project that I came to know that women can also contest from unreserved seats. Before coming in contact with THP, I had never realized, worried, or cared about my political rights. But when I got associated with the campaign which was encouraging women and community to promote women’s leadership, I filed the nomination for the post of Mukhiya. I know that poverty is rampant in my constituency and until and unless the services are improved and implemented rightfully, people will be deprived of their rights. With such a powerful and responsible position as Mukhiya, I would be able to take concrete steps against deforestation, child marriage, and alcoholism and can improve the facility of drinking water. I would work towards the welfare of the community.

With such a hope, I travelled from one village to another and visited each and every individual, and asked them to support me in the election. I would campaign during the day time but could not manage to travel at night as this area is Naxal-affected area. I did not spend enough money during campaign as compared to the other candidates. I also did not tempt people with liquor and money. I was hopeful that people would understand me and my intention and support me with their precious votes.

Though I lost the seat, I managed to get 276 votes. To me these votes were a symbol of my success and identity. I managed to establish an identity of a woman leader. I have created history even though I have lost the election. I am hopeful of getting elected in the next election. I know that some people have sold their precious votes with liquor and money, but, I am not worried. I have started my journey of leadership and will continue to work as an aware citizen.

A leader is not one who acts only after being in power and position, but one who always make people feel that they are powerful and can change the situation and condition of the position holders. I will keep working towards creating awareness among the community against alcoholism and child marriage with the help of SHGs, women federations, and beedi labourers. I’ll also inform people about the schemes of Panchayats and keep working towards the overall development of Panchayat, inspire people about strong leadership and raise awareness against the social evils.

**KARNATAKA**

22. *Ensuring Proper Functioning of the Community Health Centre Vrundha, Panchayat member, Panchayat – Meramanalu, Block – Bantwala, District – Dakshina Kannada*

Vrundha has already made her presence felt in a predominately male dominated society, through her exemplary work in getting the rural health system to function effectively. She has played a major role in plugging loopholes in the functioning of a Community Health Centre in Vamadapadavu. The issue’s prior to Vrundha’s intervention was quite different, which came to her attention during the follow up meeting wherein the villagers complained of the abysmal condition of the community health centre at their village.

The villagers complained about Dr. Durga Prasad who was posted at the centre who was using his official residence for private practise. The patients coming to the centre were asked by Dr. Durga Prasad to consult him at his official residence, where in a consultation fee was charged for medical treatment. Also the staff of the Community Health Centre had started to demand money from women who had gone to the centre for delivery. Vrundha with other EWR’s raised their objection against the functioning of Dr. Durga Prasad and the staff of Community Health Centre. A complaint was filed with the District Health Officer and Chief Executive Officer of the District. The complaint filed by Ms. Vrundha had resulted in an enquiry by the Taluk Health officer. As the doctor, was politically influential he used arm twist-
ing tactics against Vrunda and the other EWR’s who had rallied with her. Vrunda and other EWR’s was pressurised to withdraw the complaint to which they didn’t succumb. The complaint led to doctor giving up his private practise in his official residence.

Vrunda is very actively involved in various Panchayat programmes and has been a role model for the other elected women representatives.

23. Leadership In Action: Preventing Corruption and demanding transparency in MNREGA and helping stop Quarrying in Gedelehalli Village

Sunitha, Panchayat member, Panchayat- Hire-nallur, Block- Kadur, District- Chikkamangalore.

Sunitha has been elected into the Gram Panchayat for the second time. During the pre-election campaign she was very involved in encouraging women to meaningfully participate in the Panchayat elections.

As an Elected Woman Representative, Sunitha has always tried to bring in transparency in her Panchyats operation. Recently she asked the Grama Panchayat secretary to divulge details about the MNREGA implementation. But he refused to give the details; she filed a complaint against him with the Executive Officer of the taluk. Sunitha exercised right to information and gathered information on the plan of activity, actual expenditure and the work undertaken under MNREGA. Details of massive corruption in tune of Rs.30 lakhs was unearthed by Sunitha. She mustered courage to file a complaint against her own Gram Panchayat with the Chief Secretary and with the Member of Legislative Council Mr. Suresh Kumar who is also the State Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs in Karnataka. The complaint of Sunitha has resulted in a notification from the CEO of the respective District to conduct an enquiry.

In other instance, Sunitha supported the struggle of Gedelehalli villagers fight against quarrying in their village. Villagers complained that unprecedented quarrying had resulted in damage of areca nut and coconut plantations in the area. Sunitha was instrumental in filing a petition and a complaint to the Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Mr. S. Suresh Kumar at his office in Bangalore.

In the complaint they stated that stone quarrying had led to cracks in their homes around, owing to the blasts undertaken to extract stones. Minister Mr. Suresh Kumar had promised Sunitha and the villagers of taking due action. On his official visit to the District HQ the villagers with EWR’s protested under Sunitha’s leadership and submitted a memorandum to Mr. Suresh Kumar, requesting action to stop stone quarrying.

Mr. Suresh Kumar, who is also the Minister in-charge of Chikmagalur District, during his visit to the town, accompanied by Viswanath, MLA, and Panchayat members, informed that he would hold a meeting of officials of the Mines and Geology Department, the Deputy Commissioner of Chikmagalur District and the local MLA and ensure that quarrying is stopped in the village.

24. Case study of Renuka, ward member and President of SUGRAMA Renuka, Ward member, Panchayat- Namagondlu, Block- Gowribidannur, District- Chikkaballapur.

Renuka the president of SUGRAMA, Grama Panchayat Elected Women Members Federation in Karnataka has been elected to power twice; it’s her second term in office. She is highly motivated to work for the rights of women and girl child. Renuka has been capacitated by the WLW (Women’s Leadership Workshop) held by The Hunger Project.

In her Grama Panchayat area one of the Panchayat member’s daughters was kidnapped by a boy from the neighbourhood. Renuka immediately helped the girl’s mother to file complaint in the rural police Station. EWR’s under the leadership of Renuka ensured the matter was bought to the attention of the District Collector (Deputy Magistrate) of Chikka-ballapur District. Though the issue was flagged off at different quarters, the police had not taken steps to trace the missing girl. Renuka with other EWR’s filed a complaint with the State Women’s Commission in Bangalore. Women’s commission ordered the police to take action and asked for the report on the action taken in the particular case. Police were able to trace the girl in the neighbouring District of Andhra Pradesh in Mandanpalli immediately. When investigated girl alleged that boy had forcefully abducted her and used force to marry her. This incident had resulted in trauma and instilled fear in the girl which was tackled with professional counselling. Incident had also resulted in girl missing out on the annual exam and would have resulted in girl discontinuing her education. Renuka took note of the issue and convinced girl and her mother to continue her education.

25. Success of EWR’s to combat the dowry harassment case in the Arikere Grama Panchayat area.

In Arikere Gram Panchayat of Srirangapatna Block of Mandya District; EWR’s collectively supported women who had become a victim of dowry harassment. The issue was highlighted by the victim in a Gram Sabha meeting and also was brought to the attention of Gram Panchayat members. Sangeetha (name changed to not reveal the identity) was motivated by EWR’s to file a formal complaint against her husband at the local police station. Victim’s husband had constantly harassed her to bring more dowries from her family. As the victim was pregnant, she had
to go to her parent’s home for delivery.

During the course of time victims husband’s family had shifted their house and had not communicated to Sangeetha or her family members. With the support of SADHNA (Women’s Helpline) about the harassment faced by her. Police identified the victim’s husband and had taken him into custody.

As she was very keen on rebuilding the relationship with her husband, she wanted to compromise and continue normal marital life. EWR’s had taken in writing that Sangeetha’s husband would not harass her in future and also warned him of dire legal consequences. EWR’s instilled confidence and courage into Sangeetha to combat violence and harassment in future.

26. Collective action demanding accountability and good governance

On 25th Jan 2011, fifteen EWR’s from eight Panchayats got together at the Block level office of Kortagere Taluk and filed a petition to Executive Officer of the Taluk and informed him that, the Gram Panchayats were not functioning effectively. EWR’s pressured the official to send a notification to all the Panchayats to form the standing committees at the Panchayat level. As a result of the initiative taken by the EWR’s, the executive officer has instructed the Panchayat secretaries and Panchayat Development Officer’s to abide by the rules framed under the PRI act. This has led to formation of standing committees and also has paved way for smooth functioning of the Gram Panchayat.

On 9th of May EWR’s collective got together (about hundred EWR’s and fifty male elected representatives) as a pressure group and advocated for official copies of monthly resolution to be handed over to them. EWR’s also pressed upon the officials to pay the monthly honorarium and sitting fees regularly.

EWR’s also took up the issue of housing scheme namely Gudisalu Yojana and Basava Indria Awas Yojana, where in the local MLA’s have a say in identification of beneficiaries through a lottery method. The EWR’s condemned the housing policy of the State as it had diluted the role of Panchayats in identifying beneficiaries for the above said housing schemes. To demonstrate collective discontent, a protest was held under the leadership of Ms. Nirmala from Kyamenahalli Grama Panchyat of Kortagere Taluk. Protest was followed by a memorandum being submitted to the Tahasildar and Block Executive officer.
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ANNEX E: IEC Material

Posters for Simulation Camp (Bihar)
Posters for Simulation Camp (Bihar)
Posters for Simulation Camp (Bihar)
पंचायत चुनाव की सूची

पंचायत चुनाव 2011 में चुनावी प्रक्रिया द्वारा महिला सशक्तीकरण अभियान (SWEEP)

आयोजक: बिहार सेवा समिति, रेडक्रॉस रोड, मुजबानी
Posters for SWEEP (Bihar)