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PRIA

research report

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Report on Pre-Election Voter's Awareness Campaign in Himachal Pradesh

Executive Summary

1. The second round of elections to the PRIs in Himachal Pradesh was held in December 2000, exactly after 5 years and before the expiry of the first term of the PRIs.
2. The elections were conducted in three phases i.e., 13, 15 and 17, December 2000 in 11 districts of Himachal Pradesh except at Lahul and Spiti, where elections to the PRIs were held in May 2001. There were two reasons for this: a) severe climatic conditions, b) the first elections to PRIs had been held in May, 2001 (after the enactment of 73rd Amendment Act and then Amendment of State PR Act. 1994). Thus the term of office of the PRIs was completed in May, 2001.
3. The Pre-Election Voter's Awareness Campaign (PEVAC) was organised by PRIA in collaboration with partner NGOs in IO districts (besides Lahul and Spiti and Kinnaur). The campaign included 1500 gram panchayats of Himachal Pradesh through intensive and extensive coverage. Extensive coverage included 40% of the gram panchayats and intensive coverage included 10% of the gram panchayats. In the intensive coverage in one block all the gram panchayats were covered by the campaign in terms of meetings with gram sabha, youth club, mahila mandals, etc. in order to mobilise citizens to actively participate in the process of panchayat elections. Distribution of posters, pamphlets, audiocassettes and video shows, kalajatha's were also done. Extensive coverage included distribution of posters, pamphlets and audio-cassettes through local organisations.
4. The PEVAC included the following phases: a) planning phase- heads-of-organisation meet, script writing and song development meet, meeting with respective NGOs at the district level, CSOs meetings to establish contact points at the ward and GP level, monitoring of the processes involved, script development and radio talks; b) material preparation phase- concept development for posters and pamphlets, script writing and layout of posters, pamphlets and audio-cassettes and their preparation; e) campaign phase- meeting with partners and CSOs, campaign at the village and GP levels by using different media.
5. The PEVAC process began in July 2000 and the actual campaign was organised at the village and GP level for 15 days, which was started by 25 November and ended on 10 December, 2000.
6. During PEVAC, the Commonwealth team comprising representatives from the South Asian countries of Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan visited the state during the campaign. Representatives of NGOs, academia, journalists (print and electronic media) and elected representatives of LSG from these four countries observed the campaign and election process. They witnessed the PEVAC activities in Kangra, Una and Sirmour. Interactions were arranged with the general public and the candidates to have a better understanding of the governance system in India. Representatives of national and local media also visited the campaign and covered it in the national and regional newspapers.
7. The report is divided into three chapters: Chapter-1 describes the process of PEVAC, Chapter-2 deals with the impact of PEVAC and Chapter-3 emphasises the lessons learnt and follow-up plans in order to strengthen PRTs in Himachal Pradesh.

Chapter- I

The Process of Pre-Election Voter's Awareness Campaign

INTRODUCTION

For the last two decades, PRIA has been working diligently towards strengthening the voice and participation of the poor and the marginalised (especially women and dalits) in democratic governance, improving their socio-economic status and bringing equity and gender justice in society. Immediately after the 73rd Amendment Act which provided Constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in 1996. PRIA with its Networking of Collaborating Regional Support Organisations (NCRSOs) initiated the process of promoting participatory development in grassroots democracy.

Strengthening the gram sabha (village assembly) through active participation of people (gram sabha members) in identifying and prioritising issues and problems, preparing a plan of action and its effective implementation, have been the main thrusts of PRIA's intervention. PRIA initiated the participatory bottom-up planning process in collaboration with gram panchayats and CSOs to create people's centred development. PRIA also initiated capacity building programmes in collaboration with government and CSOs to create awareness among the elected representatives and gram sabha members about their duties and responsibilities and developing their skills. In order to control and access information regarding programmes, schemes, finances of PRIs, notification and circulars of the state government pertaining to PRIs, PRIA established Panchayat Resource Centres (PRCs) at the block, state and national levels and also prepared and disseminated learning materials on PRIs through these centres. Besides NCRSOs, PRIA in collaboration with CSOs, PRIs and like minded individuals, actively engaged in research and policy advocacy at the state and national levels in order to influence the government at the state and centre for policy changes and their implementation.

One of the historic landmarks made by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, was ensuring participation of women and weaker sections such as Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other backward Classes (OBCs) through reservations. However, reservations cannot change the traditional patterns of socio-economic and political structures in the villages; break the culture of silence; create awareness among citizens and empower the powerless. There must be enabling environment and appropriate interventions are required to improve the self-confidence of women and weaker sections and, create forums for dialogue to enhance their participation in democratic governance.

Keeping this in mind, PRIA started the PEVAC during the PRIs elections in Himachal Pradesh in December, 1995. This campaign was the first of its kind to create awareness among the citizen's regarding their rights and responsibilities and to enable them to actively participate in the election process. However, it was felt that only a one-time campaign may not create an awareness among the citizens and bring changes in the society. It is a continues process which needs sustained intervention, Therefore, the past experiences and lessons learnt through PEVAC in 1995 and the knowledge gained from the campaign during the second round of PRIs elections in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana by PRIA and NCRSOs, paved the way for organising PEVAC in Himachal Pradesh. Keeping in view that the term of first-generation panchayats in Himachal Pradesh were supposed to be completed by January 2001, and the second round of elections to the PRIs were expected to be held in December 2000, PRIA initialed the process of PEVAC in July 2000. This was meant to be a planning phase to develop strategies in collaboration with the CSOs to be implemented before elections,

Needs

In order to enhance the participation of common citizens, especially women and weaker sections, the following needs were identified:

- Citizens need to be made aware of and informed about PRIs as institutions of local self governance;
- Citizens need to understand their rights and responsibilities to act effectively in grassroots democracy, local associations and organisations;
- Citizens need to demonstrate assertive, caring and ethical leadership;
- Citizens capacity and confidence need to be developed and encouraged to enable them to have dialogue with public institutions, officials and leaders on issues affecting their lives;
- citizen's need to show solidarity, generosity and mutual support towards fellow citizen's.

Objectives

To fulfil the above felt needs, PRIA along with its partner organisations decided to launch PEVAC in Himachal Pradesh with the following objectives:

- To enhance citizen's participation especially women and dalits in the election process, there by nominating and electing right candidates and reducing the selection of dummy candidates;
- To create an enabling environment for free and fair election;
- To involve CSOs during PEV AC in order to create awareness among the citizens, and
- To mobilise the support of CSOs to make the election process effective.

Phase I : Planning for the PEVAC:

Since a lot of uncertainty existed about the final dates of the elections, a state level meeting with the partner organisations was organised in Palampur in July 2000. This meeting focused upon PRIA's experiences with PEVAC. the strategies for PEVAC and possible areas of collaboration between the partners. The two day meeting was attended by IO organisations from six districts. The intensive and extensive strategies were well discussed and many innovative suggestions came up during the meeting.

It was decided that every organisation would give a detailed proposal of are specific campaigning activities related to PEVAC-2000. After submission of proposals, a meeting was organised at Khera and the joint action plan was finalised.

The action plan

Based on the experiences of PEVAC in Rajasthan and Haryana, the whole campaign was divided into three broad phases:

- Pre -actual campaign
- During the actual campaign
- Post-actual campaign

In this context, 'actual campaign' means a minimum 15 days campaign mode prior to elections. The Pre-actual Campaign phase focused on:

- Generating awareness about the preparation of the voters list,
- Organising meetings with the community based organisations,
- Preparation of material,
- Detailed action plan block wise,
- Distribution of materials to organisations

During the actual campaign the activities were carried out in intensive and extensive modes in the blocks allotted by organisations. It included the following activities in intensive mode:

- Distribution of posters, pamphlets, audio cassettes
- Hiring public address systems and vehicles
- Pasting of posters, pamphlets
- Organising village level meetings
- Video Shows
- Kalajatha

The Post-actual campaign focused on following activities:

- Observing the pre election proceedings
- Observing the elections proceedings
- Observing the counting proceedings
- Observing the post results declaration phase
- Evaluation of the PEVAC-2000

Phase II : Awareness regarding the voter's list

In the midst of the existing uncertainty about the dates of elections, PRIA-HP used the time for other related activities of PEVAC. A major task emerged when the declaration about the dates of registration of voters in the election list was made.

Villagers were made aware of the voters list in Kangra district with two objectives in mind:

1. Raising the awareness among the rural population about getting themselves registered in the voter's list.
2. To find out the reasons why the names of the voters get omitted from the list.

This awareness generation was carried out with help of the support organisations (see table).

S. No_	Name of Organisation	Area of Operation
1	PRIA-HP	Bhawarna Block, Kanara
2	SSP	Rait Block, Kansra
3	PARAS	Nasrota Bazwan Block, Kanzra
4	ASHA	Bainath Block, Kanera
5	New HOPE	Lambazaon Block, Kanzra

The distributed material included the magnified version of the advertisement of the State Election Officer, Himachal Pradesh containing the details of the procedures and dates of the preparation of the voters list, the filing of objections and finalisation of the list. This material was pasted in front of Panchayat Ghars, village chowks and distributed in the meetings of the Mahila Mandals and Self Help Groups in the areas of intervention.

The findings that emerged from the process are:

1. The votes were being prepared through a house to house survey in some of the villages. In such villages, the reports of missing names were very few.
2. In other cases, the votes were prepared by sitting in the houses of few persons. In such villages the number of the omitted candidate's names reported were very high.
3. Certain resident persons who had voted in all previous elections found their names missing from the list. The reason could be negligence of the persons making the list rather than any personal or political issues.

4. There were problems while filing of complaints.

5. The date for entry into the voters list was fixed as 1st January 2000, while the elections were held in December 2000. As a result, many youth were left out and voiced their concerns.

Considerable confusion prevailed over the reservation of seats for the women. Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. The Other Backward classes reservation was added to the list after the announcement of the dates of elections. Thus very few persons were aware about the status of the reservation in all the three tiers.

This proved to be an effective activity as it established the organisation's rapport in the panchayats and paved the way for PEVAC.

Phase III: Meetings with the CBOs regarding PEV AC

Meetings were organised with the CBOs especially the Mahila Mandals, Yuvak Mandals and Self Help Groups to gain their support. Six meetings were held with the Mahila Mandals in different parts of the Bhawarna Block. Kangra. The response was encouraging with over 60 Mahila Mandals participating in the meetings and showing a positive response to the PEV AC. The meetings focused around activities of PRIA and other supporting organisations, the PEVAC-1995 and the proposed PEV AC-2000. A video show was organised in each meeting. The video 'Gaon Nahin Kinhi Paanch Ka' was widely accepted among the participants of the meetings. This led to decision to telecast the video to a wider audience through cable television network. The cable television reached over 300 households in Bhawama and surrounding panchayats of Bhawarna Block. Kangra. The video was telecast twice on the cable network of Bhawama. The response from the public was positive and so another video film 'Sanshodhan' was telecast on the network.

A meeting of the nodal youth clubs from 13 blocks of Kangra district was organised at Nehru Yuvak Kendra Centre in Dhramsala, These clubs were informed about the PEVAC and its objectives and the planned activities. It was proposed that these clubs undertake the activities on a larger scale in their respective blocks. Some of the prepared material was distributed to these nodal clubs.

Phase IV: Awareness generation

The support of the administration was essential for the successful implementation of the programme. For this, regular visits were made to the offices of Block and District Panchayat Officers. The office of Additional District Collector was informed about the proposed PEVAC. The district administration of Kangra helped to provide data and answer questions related to the voter's list and reservation of seats. These regular visits were important for the smooth functioning of campaign.

The dates of elections were announced in November 2000. The schedule of election was as given below. The elections were to be held in three phases all through the state excluding the district of Lahaul & Spiti.

It was proposed that maximum awareness be created about the concept of PEV AC and its activities. Accordingly, a small ten minutes talk was organised on the All India Radio, Dhramsala. It was broadcast in the 'Trigarth ki Awaaz', a regional programme on the rural Jives on Trigata region. The talk focused on the role of NGOs in promoting Panchayati Raj.

Phase V: Preparation of the materials

Emphasis was laid on the preparation of the material right from the start. A meeting of the organisations was called in Mandi on 8th August to decide upon the contents of the material.

The following materials were decided on to create an effect on the public:

- Posters
- Pamphlets

- Audio Cassettes
- Street Plays

Although media such as the radio can reach the masses, the effect is short lived.

It was decided that only one poster would be printed depicting the participation of gram sabha members in panchayat. Three kind of pamphlets would be printed - one on the ideal candidate, second on the powers, duties and rights of Gram Sabha and the third on the election procedures. It was also decided that the pamphlet on Gram Sabha would be yellow in colour, the one on ideal candidate pink in colour and the election procedures pamphlet in green colour. Based on the level of campaign, one lakh copies of each pamphlet were printed. Printing would be done in the state to facilitate their distribution. The content of the pamphlets was decided in the one-day workshop held for this purpose. Amidst the existing uncertainty about the dates of elections, the printing of pamphlets was delayed that also affected the distribution of material in some places. The pamphlets were to be distributed in sets of three. They were to be pasted on the walls, shops, schools buildings, polling stations, panchayat ghars, public places.

The poster was designed in Delhi and printed in one colour. The layout depicted a village of Himachal panchayat ghar with a woman leading the meeting. The poster was to be printed in Delhi for which the responsibility was taken by PRIA-HP. A total of 20,000 copies of the poster were printed for mass circulation. These posters were to be pasted on the walls, roads, bus stands, panchayat bhawans, public places, trees, shops, schools and outside the polling stations.

The responsibility for preparing the audiocassettes was given to two organisations with experience in the field. The cassette would have songs in Hindi and the local language. The songs would focus on the basic objective of campaign and would be prepared locally. The songs were selected from the existing collection as well as local poets were used for writing the songs. Emphasis was laid on giving equal representation to female voices in the songs. The copies of the cassette were prepared in Delhi. A total of 100 cassettes were prepared for limited circulation.

The use of the radio seemed ideal to achieve mass coverage. The All India Radio Station of Dharamsala was contacted for details. With their guidance, a 40 seconds jingle was prepared on the main objectives of PEVAC. Popular local artists in the region helped to prepare it. The AIR Station of Dharamsala was chosen as it covered the districts of Kangra, Hamirpur, Mandi, Lna and parts of Chamba. Booking was done for a total of ten days with slots at 7.30 a.m. and in evening at 6.30 p.m. as these timings seemed most popular in the rural areas.

Phase VI: Detailed action plan- block wise

After series of discussions with the partner NGOs, it was decided that the intensive coverage would be done in a block by one NGO along with help of other civil society organisations. For this a vehicle with public address system would be hired. This vehicle would carry the material as well as the persons. The vehicle would play the audio cassette on the route and also at a central place for some time to gain attention. The persons would then get down and distribute and paste the materials. They would also address the public on the objective of PEVAC and the content of the material. In this way, the vehicle would stop at public places like schools, bus stands, shops, grounds etc. in five to six panchayats per day. Thus the NGO would be able to cover the whole of block in ten days. The details of the interventions in the blocks made by the organisations are presented in the following table:

S.No.	District	Block	Intensive GPs	Extensive GPs	Organisation/ Individuals
1	Solan	Solan		30	Naveen Arora
2	Mandi	-Gohar -Sadar -Rewalsar		30 10 20	Nehru Yuvak Mandal (NYM) NYM Serve India
3	Hamimur	-Hamirnur		45	Yumdha
4	Bilaspur	-Ghumarwin		10	NehruYuvak Manda!
5	Una	-Una -Amb -Gagret -Ban an"	50	170	Energy Environmen t Group
6	Shimla	- Thio2		44	Ywndha
7	Kangra	-Kangra -Nagrota Suriyan • Indoura -Fatehpur -Paragpur -Dehra -Sulah -Nagrota Bagwan -Rait	58 52 51 SS	48 45 43 73 60	UTHAN NYK. NYK NYK NYK NYK New HOPE PARAS SSP
8	Sirmour	-Nahan	30	188	YUMDHA
9	Kutlu	- Banjar • Kullu		30 61	World Vision Auxiliary for I Church's Social Action
10	Chamba	- Bhatiyat -Bhannour		30 28	SSP
		TOTAL	296	965	
			G. TOTAL	1261	

Phase VI: Distribution of materials

The distribution of the material was carried out in collaboration with the organisations. Some of them came IO collect the material while in some far off places, the material was distributed through a special person hired for this activity. The timely delivery of the materials to the organisations was ensured. Moreover, these materials were also distributed to the Commonwealth delegation. During the delegation's visit posters were also distributed by HP-PRC (PRIA) separately, in those villages and gram panchayats, where meetings were organised. These materials were also given to the teashops and restaurants to distribute to the public.

The details of delivery of materials to the organisations are given in the table below:

Name of Organisation	Posters	Pink Pamphlet	Yellow Pamphlet	Green Pamphlet	Audio Cassette
SSP. Rau	2100	10,000	10,000	10,000	6
PARAS, Nazrota	2100	10,000	10,000	10,000	6
Uthan, Kanzra	2200	10,000	10,000	10,000	6
New HOPE, Sulah & Chamba	3200	15,000	21,000	21,000	6
Nehru Yuvak Mandal	1000	10,000	10,000	10,000	6
Serve India	500	8000	8000	8000	5
Naveen Arora, SOLAN	1000	4000	4000	4000	2
YUMDHA. SIRMOUR	1500	10,000	10,000	10,000	0
YUMDHA, Hamimur	2000	6000	6000	6000	5
EEG, Una	2000	10,000	10,000	10,000	5
Youth Clubs	1000	6000	0	0	0
ASHA	200				0
Delegation team	100	500	500	500	
HP-PRC (PRIA)	900				13
STOCK	200	0	0	1	40
	20,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100

*It was kept at PRIA for distribution to NCRSOs and any other agencies based on demand.

Phase VI: Actual Campaign

A typical day in the campaign mode consisted of following activities:

- Preparation of material for distribution and pasting
- Preparation of schedule and panchayats to be covered
- Preparation of vehicle
- Carrying out the campaign
- Day's feedback

The day started at around 9:00 a.m. and activities continued upto 6:30 p.m. The organisations duly subscribed to the code of conduct of the election norms.

The actual campaign activities were undertaken by the respective organisations in intensive and extensive modes. The posters were pasted on walls of shops, bus stands, trees, panchayat ghars, schools, houses, water tanks etc. These were distributed freely at the public places. The posters were also thrown freely enroot so that people might collect them. The same technique was followed for the pamphlets. The content on the pamphlet was read and appreciated by many villagers. Some candidates even took these pamphlets from organisations and distributed them. School teachers also demanded such material. Demands were made at the local office for supply of pamphlets, especially the pamphlet on the 'ideal candidate'. Candidates were found using these pamphlets for promoting themselves as ideal candidates. The shopkeepers asked for pamphlets for distribution from their shops. Materials were also distributed at places where women collected for agriculture activities in fields, cleaning clothes at a khad, well, bawadi (traditional form for storage of natural water).

These pamphlets were also distributed in the areas like primary health centres, in the buses and local colleges. Tile season of weddings overlapped with the elections period and in Chamba, the wedding gatherings were used for material dissemination. The 10th of December was also day of the Pulse

Polio Immunization Campaign. This opportunity was also used and pamphlets were given to the health workers who were campaigning about 'pulse polio' for distribution. These pamphlets were distributed by health workers on the 10th December also.

The village level meetings were organised mainly with support from Manila Mandals and youth clubs in order to mobilise gram sabha members for the meetings. Generally an area like the community centre or house of somebody was selected as the venue of such meetings. The materials were distributed and their views were sought on the three types of pamphlets and their content. These meetings were of a short duration (1-2 hrs) and one to two meetings were organised in a day. The queries of the women related to the reservation of seats for women and their participation in seats of open category came up. The problems regarding political intervention during the reservation of seats also came up. In these meetings, the case studies of women leaders in the panchayats were discussed. At some meetings, the video 'Gaon nahin Kinhi Paanch Ka' was shown to motivate people to elect the right candidate. The women and girls undergoing training at the stitching and tailoring centres were also told about the PEVAC and its objectives and given dissemination material. During these meetings, attention was paid to the Dalit and tribal communities. They had been specially invited to these meetings and provided with campaign materials and were motivated to actively participate in the election process.

Visit by the Commonwealth Team

A team of representatives from the South Asian countries of Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan visited the state during the campaign. The South Asian learning experience programme was sponsored by Commonwealth Foundation and organised by PRIA in order to create greater awareness among citizens and enhance their participation in the election to local bodies for strengthening local self-governance. The team witnessed the PEVAC activities in Kangra, Una and Sirmour from 5-8 December, 2000. Interactions were arranged with the general public to give them a better understanding of the governance system in India. Representatives of the national media also visited the campaign and it was covered in national and regional newspapers.

The objectives of this programme were:

- To build a perspective on decentralisation and devolution in the South Asian context;
- To experience citizen's participation in strengthening local self-governance;
- To prepare a country specific future action plan to promote learning into action.

Krishna Devi - Contested election on her own

Krishna Devi of Upper Basal Gram Panchayat from Una district, filed her nomination as a member of Zila Parishad. Earlier she had been a ward member and then became Pradhan, therefore she had 10 years of political experience working in PRIs. She has also been associated with Mahila Mandals for a long time. She is very much aware about her duties and responsibilities as an elected member. Replying to the question-why she was contesting the election for the third time she said that though reservations are made for women in the PRIs, however, there is lack of awareness among the women regarding this provision and PRIs as a whole. Therefore, women who have political experiences in PRIs should contest elections, so that they could facilitate other women to come forward and fight elections. This has indeed been observed. Few women members (from the nearby panchayats of Krishna Devi) who contested the PRIs elections, were largely influenced by Krishna Devi. In her block, she is recognised as one of the most efficient Pradhans in terms of exercising her power and responsibilities. Even without the family support financially and absence of her husband who is away on work to Bihar, she was able to contest the election.

During the election, she mobilised support from other women members of her panchayat and did door-to-door campaigning. The reasons being that as a contestant for the zila parishad, she had to cover 8-10 gram panchayats, for which she doesn't have the money to spend on a vehicle. Moreover, door to door campaigning has a positive impact on voters, especially if conducted by women. EEG a NGO working for women's empowerment in Una district provided her a lot of moral

rapport and guidance during the campaign. EEG also provided support to other women! members and a few Mahila Manda! members to contest the PRis election. Finally she was elected a member of Zilla Parishad. ,

Are women aware about their responsibilities as voters?

The Commonwealth delegation visited one of the gram panchayats in Una district called Dbamandri, to see the PEVAC and women's participation and awareness regarding their responsibilities as voters. The meeting was started at 11.30 am. There were about 70 women members and 20 male members from the dalit section were present on that occasion. The meeting was jointly facilitated by EEG and PRJA. A lady from the delegation, working with the national media in Sri Lanka, asked the women present, regarding the qualities of good candidate. In response, most of the women replied that a candidate should be imandar (honest), which is the most important criteria for them. Secondly, she/he should listen to the grievances and concerns of the gram sabha members, especially women and dalits. Most of them were of the opinion that they would vote for the candidate who would prohibit alcohol from the panchayat because this was the most significant reason for women's oppression and exploitation within and outside family,"

Regarding their rights and responsibilities as gram sabha members, most women were only aware of the practical aspects like gram sabha and gram panchayat meetings and related happenings. A majority accepted the fact that women's participation is less in these meetings because usually the male members of the family attend these programmes. However, in future with the provision of women's reservation, women would come forward and participate in the process. They also said that women were found to be more effective elected members than men because they listened to the problems properly especially in case of other women. In terms of accountability, transparency and prohibition. they are better as compared to their male counterparts.

The delegation enquired whether the women wanted to learn English. Most of the women asserted that they didn't feel it was necessary to learn English. as it was not their local or national language. They did them need it in their day-to-day lives or even when they became the elected representatives. However, they agreed that for the younger generation it was indeed necessary to learn English as it was now a school requirement. Most of the women also said that due to their involvement with the Mahila Mandals, they had become aware of their duties and responsibilities and the support provided by EEG had helped them to come forward and participate in the PRis. However, it would take time for the women to actively participate in planning and decision making process of PRIs.

A woman Pradhan can understand better the problems of fellow women

In response to the query that would the village or panchayat benefit if a woman became the Pradhan, a girl studying at the senior secondary school (+2 level) stated, "I am not aware about the politics of panchayats, but this much I can claim that with a woman as a Pradhan, she could understand the difficulties of women better," Men were also of the opinion that with women as Pradhans in panchayat, solving social issues like women exploitation, harassment; prohibition, conflicts among women, education, problems of drinking water etc. would be given due importance,

Women for Prohibition.

One of the most significant issues raised by women during the campaign was prohibition. The meeting organised by PARAS (a NGO working in Nagrota Bagwan of Kangra district) on 6 December 2000, with 40 women participants, stated that one of the main issues within their panchayat was the problem of alcohol. They said that in spite of the reservation, most of the women were not interested in contesting the election due to the problems of alcohol. The anti-social elements create hurdles for women Pradhans in the panchayat bhawan by consuming alcohol. The woman Pradhan was not able to go to the panchayat alone either in the afternoon or evening. due to this problem. They also said that even the school children had started the intake of alcohol due to the bad influence of these elements. They expressed their concern that the 'theka' (liquor shop) should be closed down in the panchayat. They would only vote for the candidate who could assure the closure of the 'theka' within their panchayat, otherwise they would boycott the election.

Is the male Pradhan aware of his rights?

The awareness campaign organised by EEG on 8, December 2000 at Bhadsali gram panchayat in Una district was attended by the Commonwealth delegation to observe women's participation as candidates and voters in the election process. At the meeting, one of the media representatives from India asked the women if they had observed any change since last five years due to women's reservation? A middle-aged women stood-up and replied very assertively that we (women) are sitting in from of yqu (delegates from outside) and along with the males of our panchayats (who are either relatives or seniors) and moreover most of the women are raising issues and answering your questions. Secondly, they are sitting without veils, is it not a change for a start?

The delegation also asked whether the women would like to contest panchayat elections in the year 2005, if it is de-reserved. The reaction from the crowd was that if the woman Pradhan does good work, certainly, they would vote for her in the 2005 PRis elections. Most of the women contestants opined that reservation does pave the way for women's participation in local self governance, but the efforts would continue without reservation and when women would contest from un-reserved seats.

The lime has come for women to rule from grassroots to the Centre. Another question asked was whether women (those who were the contestants) were aware of their duties and responsibilities. One of the female contestants promptly replied that ask the present Pradhan, whether he is aware of his duties and responsibilities as Pradhan, in spite of being at the post since last five years. When the same question was asked of the Pradhan, he was silent and after sometime replied negatively. The woman then said that if a person holding the post for last five years is not aware of his responsibility, then how would you expect a woman who is contesting for the first time to know the same. They would learn, in due course of time.

Chapter- 2

The Impact of Pre-Election Voter's Awareness Campaign

Impact of PEVAC - 2000

A study was carried out by PRIA-Himachal Pradesh (HP.) and its partners. to find out the impact of PEVAC in HP.

Methodology

The study was carried out using different participatory methods and methodologies such as observation, group discussion, interviews and taking opinions of various individuals. The information collected for the study was collected through a questionnaire based on the experience of partners and in collaboration with PRIA-NRC. The gram sabha members, community based organisations and elected representatives of PRIs were interviewed to know the process and impact of PEVAC. The case studies cited in chapters-I and 2 were also gathered during and after PEVAC.

Sample Size

The sample size for the present study included male and female voters (gram sabha members) and elected representatives. The focus of the PEVAC was women and dalits, therefore most of the respondents were female and belonged to the dalit community. The respondents were selected based on random stratified sampling. The sample size for the impact study was 190.

S.N.	Categories	Sample size	General .Male	General Female	Dalits Male	Dalits Female
1	Voters	100	18	42	14	26
2	Elected Representatives	90	24	36	12	18
3	Total	190	42	78	26	44

S. No	Total	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage
1	190	68	36	122	64

The study was conducted both in intervened areas (where PRIA and partners organised the PEVAC) as well as non-intervened areas (where they didn't organise the PEVAC), to do a comparative analysis and to find the impact of the interventions.

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S.No.	Categories of individuals	Intervened Area	Non-intervened Area
1	Voters	64	36
2	Elected Representatives	66	24
3.	Total	130	60

Data Collection

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire, developed in Hindi. In most of the cases, the respondents were interviewed by the investigators but in some cases, the respondents filled the questionnaire themselves. This happened only in cases where the respondents were educated and

aware of their duties and responsibilities as voters. Some respondents had a difficulty in understanding Hindi, therefore, investigators translated the questionnaire into pahari dialects. especially for women and dalit sections. The data was coded and preliminary findings were shared with the respondents (in tw cases) to cross-examine the authenticity and validity of the data. Based on their reactions, necessary changes were made and finally the report on impact study was prepared.

Impact of PEV AC

Voting percentage in the PRIs election -1995

Voting Percentage in the year 1995

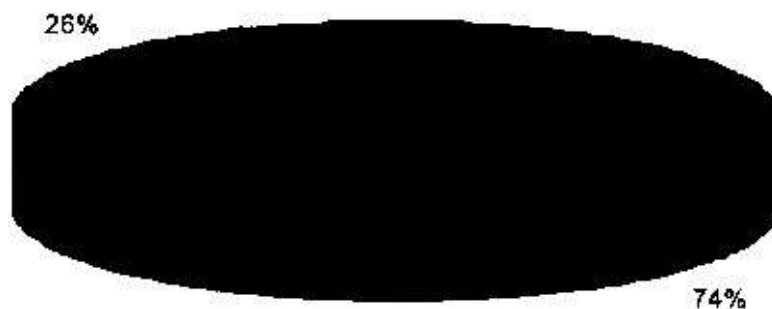


Figure-1

Figure-1 shows that 74% of the respondents voted for the PRIs elections, where as 26% of them did not vote in 1995. Some explained that they were not eligible to vote as they were of minor age. A few were not in the panchayat when the election was held.

Voting percentage in the PRIs election - 2000 and voter's reactions

Voting percentage in the year 2000

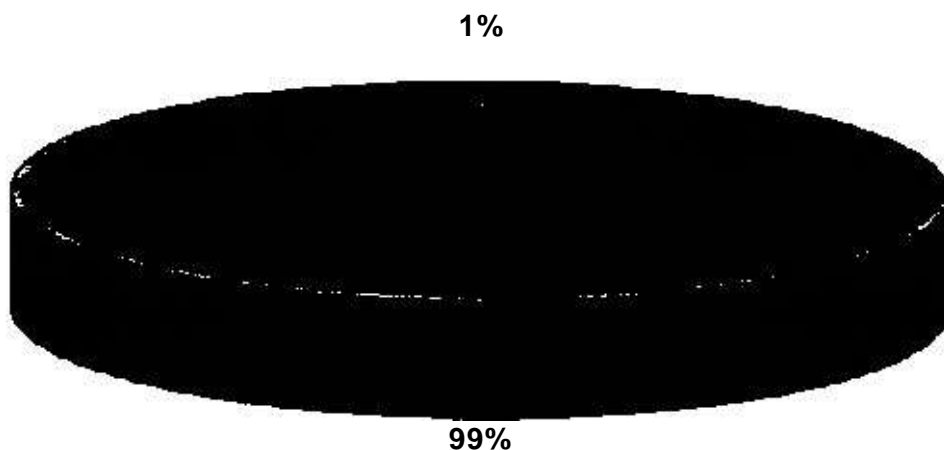


Figure-2

Figure 2 shows that 99% of the respondents voted during the PRIs election 2000. The main reason being that people arc becoming aware of their duties and responsibilities as voters. Their vote decides the fate of their panchayat and the development can occur only when they select good candidates.

Secondly, most of the women opinioned that reservation provided an opportunity for women to come into the political arena and take part in the affairs of the PRIs. Moreover, experiences of last five years had proved that women elected representatives were equally capable of exercising their powers as male counterparts; this was the opinion of Puspa Devi, a candidate for Pradhan in Rait Gram Panchayat of Kangra district,

Subedar Prakash Singh of Rait Gram Panchayat reported that during the panchayat elections people were more active than during Assembly and Parliament elections because gram panchayat and gram sabha are considered a direct democracy where every citizen has the right to decide on the development of his/he village or gram panchayat. The voting percentage has increased during 2000 election as over the years people have realised the importance of gram panchayat.

As per Harekrishan Muniri, Executive Director of a NGO called Samaj Seva Parishad, which organised PEVAC in Rait and Bharmour Block of Kangra and Chamba districts respectively, observed that the attitude of the voters had changed, they franchised their vote according to their conscience; not on the basis of bribe, alcohol or any pressure or threats. Some of the voters also opinioned that even if they took bribes from the candidates, they voted for the right candidates.

Male and female candidates who contested for the post of Pradhan

Average number of male and female Candidate who contested for the post of Pradhan in year 2000

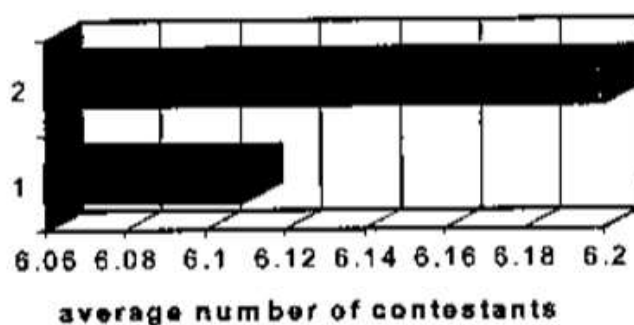


Figure - 3

1 = Female candidates contesting for post of pradhans

2 = Male candidates contesting for post of pradhans

The figure - 3 shows that on an average 6 candidates contested for the post of Pradhan in PRIs election- 2000. The male contestants (6.2) contested were slightly above than the female contestants (6.1) for the post of pradhan, during this election. As per the opinion of the respondents, the post of the Pradhan is one of the most important portfolios in PRIs. As per the opinion of the male candidates, whatever powers (administrative, judicial or financial) are given to the PRIs, most of the powers are vested with gram panchayat, i.e. with Pradhan. Therefore, most of the candidates are interested in contesting for the post of Pradhan. As per opinion of Chatur Ram, a voter, Gad gram panchayat, Kangra district, if anybody wants to be an elected representative within PRIs, first of all she/he would opt for the post of Pradhan rather than any other post, because 'Pradhan has political powers and social respect and she/he has a lot of influence in the decision making and development of gram panchayat.

Awareness among the voters regarding number of votes cast during PRIs election- 2000

Awareness among voters regarding number of votes they cast in the PRI Elections-2000

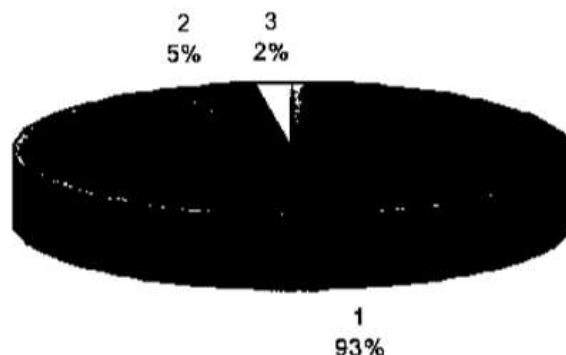


Figure- 4

1 stands for 5 votes
 2 stands for 4 votes
 3 stands for 1 vote

Each legend indicates the number of votes cast by voters during PRI elections 2000.

From the diagram, it shows that 93% of the respondents were aware of the number of votes they franchised during PRI elections- 2000. As per the mandatory provision, every voter had to put five votes, that included ward member, up-Pradhan, Pradhan, member panchayat samiti and zila parishad. However, 7% of them were not aware of the procedure.

In many cases the voters expressed their concern over the systems and procedures of voting. Every voter got 5 ballot papers with five different colours for five posts (ward member, up-Pradhan, Pradhan, member panchayat samiti and zila parishad)'. Then they were asked, (after casting their vote in each ballot paper) to put all these ballot papers in all different boxes (one for the different posts of gram panchayat, i.e. for Pradhan, Up-Pradhan and ward members; another one for member of panchayat samiti and zila parishad). Therefore many of them got confused and complained that the polling personnel did not explain the procedures well. Moreover, as, they were not allowed to talk to others inside the polling booths, they did not ask other voters present in the booth. Voters also said that even the symbols and colours used for different candidates were similar and confusing. This was mainly in the case of non literate and old people.

Voters also expressed concerns that in some booths no proper lighting arrangements had been made. Some polling stations were very dark.

In a majority of the polling stations, women polling personnels were present. On an average, it has been observed that 40% of the polling personnel were female, which helped the women to vote effectively. Many women voters expressed their satisfaction and said that the provision of employing more women personnel was very helpful.

Criteria for casting votes

Criteria for casting votes for the post of Pradhan

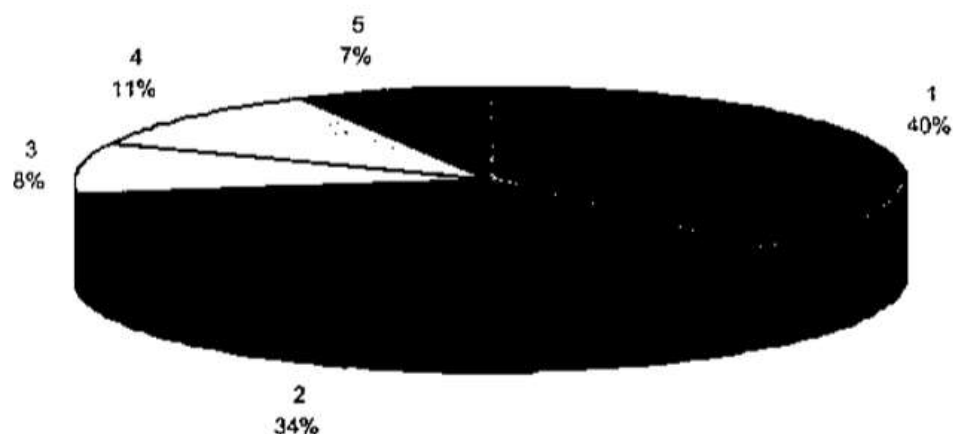


Figure- 5

- 1 = Educated
- 2 = Determination for the development of the panchayat
- 3 = Based on political factors
- 4 = Based on caste factors
- 5 = Either relative or friend
- 6 = others (listens to everybody, good character, behaves well with everybody)

Figure- 5 reveals that 74% of the respondents voted for the Pradhan, who was educated and determined to develop the panchayat. As per the opinion of most of the respondents, education is one of the significant criteria because Pradhan has to deal with administrative, financial and judicial matters, for which she/he needs to understand the rules and procedures. Moreover, understanding Panchayati Raj Act and Rules needs education. Pradhan also has to deal with government officials for which education and experience are important. Over the last five years, most of the Pradhans had been misguided or misinformed by the panchayat secretary either due to lack of education or experience. Therefore, most voters felt that it is indeed necessary to have a minimum education for every candidate to become the Pradhan.

However, factors like party politics and caste played a pre-dominant role in Panchayat elections. Data revealed that 14% of the respondents did vote on the basis of the above mentioned factors. Several candidates campaigned on the basis of caste factors and asked the voters to vote on caste lines. For example, in Upper Khera gram panchayat of Sulah block, a candidate who belonged to Choudhury Caste, contested the election for the post of Pradhan and got 214 votes out of 224 Choudhury votes. The candidates admitted that they had organised a meeting and invited people who belonged to the same caste.

It was observed that upper caste people supported and campaigned for certain lower castes especially those who were in the upper strata among the lower castes. These sections face no problems in visiting the houses of upper castes and were also offered food by them. For example, a caste like Dhiman's, that is economically very strong and well educated, is socially accepted by upper castes and allowed to visit their houses. Therefore, the upper caste campaigned for them and voted for those candidates. But lower castes like Julah, Dumna and Chamar are considered untouchables. They are

not allowed to enter into the houses of upper castes. A person from the upper caste said that "if a person from the lower castes is get elected than we won't allow him to enter our house. Even if he comes to our house for any reason, we won't offer him a chair, if we offer him tea or water than he has to wash his glass. Due to this factor we don't want a person from lower castes lo gel elected."

Awareness among the voters regarding PEVAC- 2000

Awareness among the voters regarding PEVAC-2000

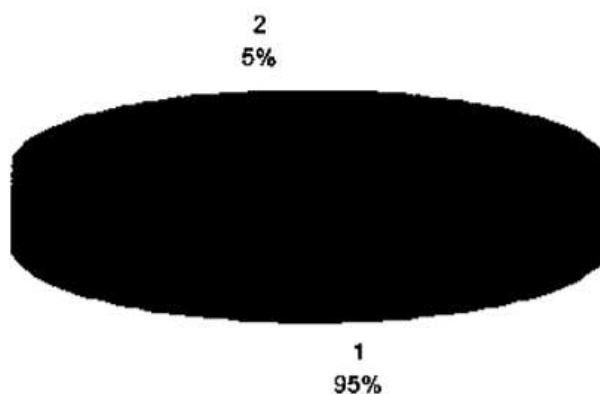


Figure- 6

Key

- 1= Aware about PEVAC
- 2 = Unaware about PEVAC

Data reveals that 95% of the respondents in the intervened areas were aware of the PEVAC. They had either participated in the meetings, or small and large group discussions or had seen the posters and pamphlets, The reasons for such a high response was that most of the NGOs involved in the campaign had been working in those areas for a long period and were locally based. Therefore they had a good rapport with the people in those particular block/s. Moreover, these NGOs had also mobilised the support of youth clubs and Mahila Mandals, self-help groups and the association of Ex-Servicemen for the campaign. For example, in Serathana gram panchayat. Nagrota Bagwan block in Kangra District, the New Young Blood Club was involved with PARAS (partner NGO involved in PEVAC) in organising campaigns in their own and near by panchayats. Similarly, Association of Ex-Servicemen in Una district helped EEG during PEVAC. Even in non-intervened areas, 28% of the respondents were aware or the campaign organised by PRIA and its partners either through relatives, friends, school children or government officials working at the gram panchayat level or by seeing posters and pamphlets on the walls.

Source of information regarding PEVAC

Source of information regarding PEVAC-2000

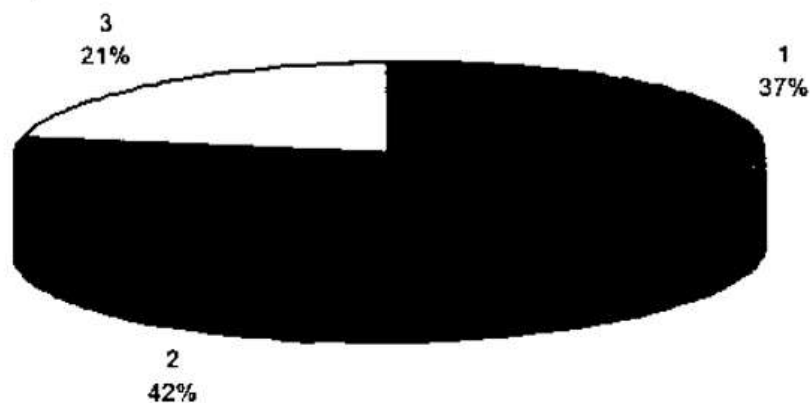


Figure- 7

Key:

1 = Seeing the poster

2 = Seeing the pamphlets

3 = Seeing other programmes organised in the village such as small/large group meetings, campaigning through van, public announcement and kala jatha

Figure • 7 shows that 37% of the respondents got information regarding PEVAC through posters, 42% seeing the pamphlets and 21% by way of meetings, public announcement, kala jatha etc.

Women appreciated the theme and content of the posters

The poster used during the campaign organised by EEG in Dhamandri gram panchayat of Una district was well appreciated by most of the women. They felt that the theme, illustrations and the content of most of the posters addressed the concerns of women. They also emphasised that one of the posters which described "hamari panchaya: and hamari bhagedari" (our panchayat, our participation), issues like planning, education, prohibition, water and other issues were highlighted along with the problems of the community would help the voters especially women to choose the right candidates. While other posters gave clear messages on women's participation and leadership in PRIs through illustrations.

Pamphlets helped voters become aware of their duties and responsibilities

The pamphlets used during the PEV AC were well appreciated by the voters and the messages were well received. People attending the campaign in Serathana and Dahdhamb gram panchayat organised by PARAS and SSP, liked the pamphlets very much. As per the opinion of residents of Serathana panchayat, the yellow colour pamphlet which elaborated about gram sabha was the most appropriate. The pamphlet was very useful and helped create an awareness among the GS members regarding gram sabha. It would also help in the future as reference material during GS meetings.

The feedback received from the participants in Dahdhamb gram panchayat was that the pink colour pamphlet that described the qualities of a good candidate was very effective. They were of the opinion that the pamphlet would guide the voters in determining and developing their own criteria to select good candidates. It would help them to identify and make a comparative analysis between good vis-a-vis bad candidates, and they could cast their votes accordingly. They also asked for more pamphlets to paste in front of their houses and other important places in the panchayat. This pamphlet also enabled them to pose questions to the candidates - what they could do for their panchayat. They also mentioned that had they received the pamphlets earlier, they could have distributed it to other panchayats as well.

Candidates asked for the pamphlets

As per the opinion of New HOPE, in Sulah Block where PEVAC had been organised, most of the candidates asked for pamphlets especially on gram sabha and qualities of right candidates. Some of the candidates also distributed these pamphlets personally to the voters on the basis of the indicators given in the pamphlet for right candidates they requested the voters to cast their votes for Mohan Lal, a candidate for the post of Pradhan. Mohan Lal stated, "I have used the pamphlet as a guideline myself and for the voters, and I requested the voters in my panchayat, to judge my character based on the indicators given in the pamphlet and accordingly give their vote."

Did PEVAC help in identifying right candidates?

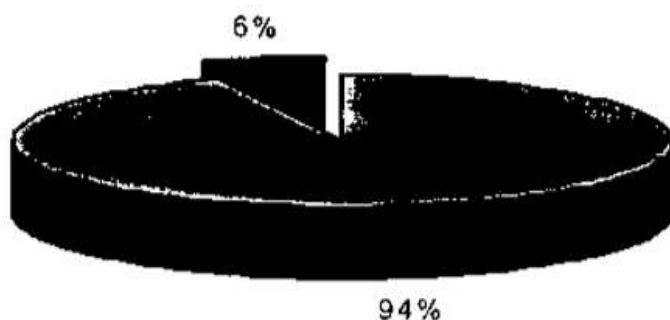


Figure- 8

Key:
94% = yes
6% = No

Figure- 8 indicates 94% of the respondents said that PEV AC helped them in identifying the right candidates. As per the opinion of the respondents PEV AC was well organised because messages were communicated through various mediums like kala jatha, small and large group meetings, posters

and pamphlets. People got the messages through various channels and also clarified their doubts by attending the meetings and posing questions to the campaign team. At the end of the meeting, materials were also distributed to the people. Those who were not able to attend the meeting, received the messages through posters and pamphlets. Even in the non-intervened areas, people said that though we were not able to see the programme or attend the meeting but the messages received through pamphlets and posters were very helpful.

Medium through which messages were received

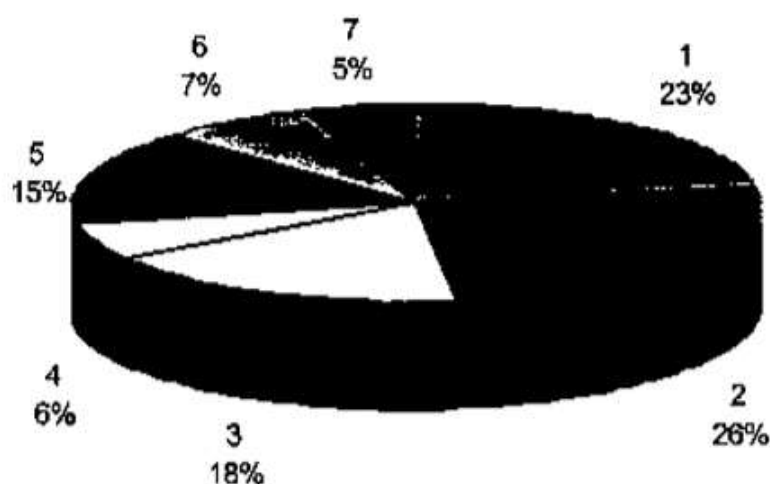


Figure- 9

Kev:

- 1= Posters
- 2 = Pamphlets
- 3 = Group meetings
- 4 = Nukad Natak
- 5 = Public announcement. microphones, songs from audio-cassettes
- 6 = Radio programme
- 7 = Others (friends/relatives from other panchayats)

Data shows that 61% of the respondents received messages through posters (23%), pamphlets (26%) and group meetings (18%). Whereas 15% got to know through public announcements, through microphones, and songs from audio-cassettes. 7% of the respondents heard the jingles (45 seconds duration) broadcasted by AIR, Dharamsala, When questions were asked regarding means to improve the PEV AC, the following answers were given by the respondents:

- 1 = Nukkad natak in local dialects
- 2 = Long duration radio programme like serials, folk songs, talks, debates and group discussions on PRIs
- 3 = Campaigns for a longer period
- 4 = Giving messages by playing audio-cassettes
- 5 = Distribute pamphlets through newspapers

Is it necessary to organise PEVAC?

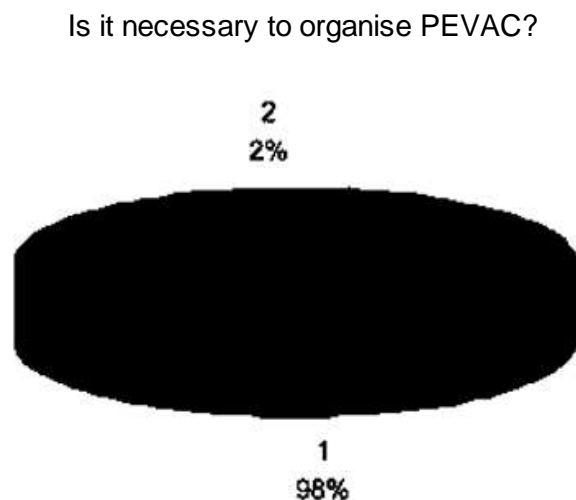


Figure- 10

Key:

11 =Yes

2=No

Figure - 10 shows that 98% of the respondents said that it is indeed necessary to have PEVAC. Most of the respondents opined that people are not aware about their duties and responsibilities as voters as well as gram sabha members. Therefore PEVAC helped them to understand both and also made them aware of role and functions of gram sabha and how gram sabha can make the gram panchayat accountable and transparent. Mangat Ram a, voter Arnbadi Gram Panchayat of Rait Block in Kangra district, said that PEVAC not only created an awareness among the people as voters but also made them realise the importance of gram sahha and people's participation thereof.

Another voter Premi Devi, from Lahar gram panchayat in Sulah Block of Kangra, said that most of the women and weaker sections were less educated and unaware of their rights. moreover they could not read and write, either due to lack of time or proper education. Therefore in such a situation, meetings and discussions and audio-visual aids like posters, cassettes, radio programmes communicate clear messages within a short period. She also said that listening was more effective than reading. According to Ninnala Devi, Dhamandri Gram Panchayat of Una district, "Earlier we thought that women can contest PRIs election from those seats, which are reserved for women, in the open seat they cannot fight against men, but due to PEVAC, most of the women in our gram panchayat became aware of the fact that women can also contest from the general seats."

Participation of women and weaker sections in PRIs election

Participation of women and weaker sections in PRIs Election

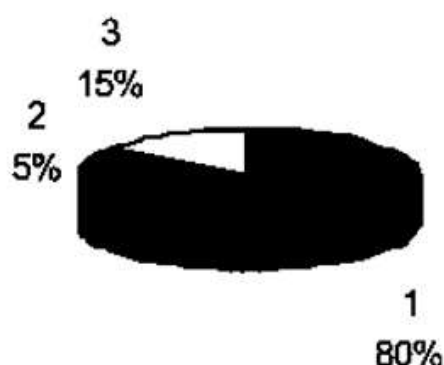


Figure- 11

Key:

1 = Yes

2 = No

3 = Can't say

Figure-11 reveals that 80% of the respondents had the opinion that women and weaker sections participation increased in 2000 election as compared to 1995 PRIs election. One of the significant reasons was reservation for these sections. Experience of the last five years revealed that most of the women elected representatives, especially Pradhans actively participated in the PRIs. In many cases women Pradhans made exemplary efforts and proved themselves to be effective leaders. Therefore other women members were influenced by those elected representatives. It was also found that there was hardly any case of 'Pradhan pati' who dominated the functioning of panchayats in place of his female counterpart,

Women Pradhans often got the support of their husbands in the initial stages, but after some time they tried to shoulder responsibility of their duties and responsibilities. If data is analysed of women filing nominations for the post of Pradhan, it is evident that on an average 6 persons contested elections. This shows that women's participation has increased. It has been observed that during the campaign and elections, women's participation was very high. Most of the women did their own campaigning e.g. Krishna Devi, who contested as a member of Zila Parishad from Una district and Pushpa Devi, candidate for Pradhan.

In Rait gram panchayat of Rait Block of Kangra district, it was observed that on the election day, all the women contestants for the post of Pradhan were present, influencing and motivating people even at the last moment. Women were seen standing in the queues for hours to cast their votes in every booth. Their percentage as compared to men was very high. A large number of women came in the afternoon to vote after finishing their domestic work. Many women were seen rushing to the polling booths to vote even at closing time.

New HOPE stated that, women's participation in the Khera gram panchayat was very high as compared to the men. They were seen standing in queues from the beginning and the voting had taken place in very peaceful manner. There was a conducive environment for women voters. There was no incidence of violence or booth capturing at the polling stations. PARAS. reported that in Tang gram panchayat of Nagroa Bagwan block, almost all women cast their vote. 12 women contested for the post of Pradhan and all the candidates were present on the occasion.

In general, it has been found that women's participation and attendance in the polling stations was higher than the men. The explanation being most of the men worked outside or were on election duty or were daily wage labourers; therefore mostly women had come for the voting.

Many women candidates expressed their concerns about the procedure of voting. They said that it was very difficult for women, especially illiterates or less educated, to cast their vote. As the number of candidates for various posts were very high and accordingly the symbols and names numerous, illiterate women often got confused and made errors. Pushpa Devi and Saraswati Devi, candidates for Pradhan from Rait gram panchayat (Kangra) said that women faced difficulties because they were given 3 ballot papers at the same time to vote for Pradhan, Lp-Pradhan and ward members.

Around 10% of the women candidates contested for the post of Pradhan from the general constituencies. Among these women contestants, most of them had been Pradhans earlier and due to the rotation of seats as per the reservation policy of the government, their seat got de-reserved and those women ex-pradhans filed their nominations again from the unreserved seats. Some of the women members, who had earlier been ward members also tried to contest for the post of Pradhans and other posts in PS and Zila Parishad. Some of them won the elections against men because of their good track records as Pradhans in last five years. Some women candidates contested against men from the general seat for the first time. This was the case in 3% of the intervened areas. These women were either members of Mahila Mandals or SHGs or motivated by NGOs or CSOs. A large percentage of women who contested for the first time in PRis election were mostly from Mahila Mandals.

Did the incidence of violence reduce due to PEVAC

Did incidence of violence reduce due to PEVAC?

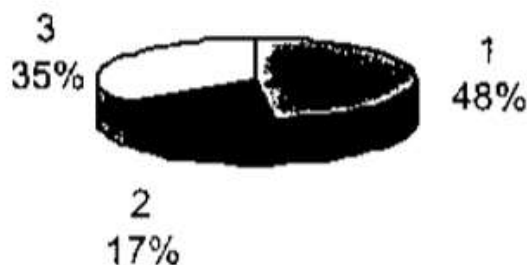


Figure-12

Key:

1= Yes

2 = No

3 = Can't say

Figure- 12 reveals that 48% of the respondents agreed that violence in the PRis election has been reduced due to PEV AC, whereas 17% of them said that violence has been reduced but not due to PEVAC but because of state government initiatives. 35% of the respondents were not able to answer the question. The State Election Commission had taken proper initiatives to make the election free and fair. In sensitive booths, extra police personnel were deployed to avoid any violence during election. For example, at Nerti gram panchayat, in Kangra district which is considered a sensitive polling station, the Superintendent of Police himself was present on the polling day. Moreover the respondents said that continuous effort by the NGOs and CBOs also helped in reducing the violence in their areas. They also said that the posters and pamphlets used in PEV AC also helped the voters to think about wrong and right. Facts and figures, either through newspapers or from primary (present study) or secondary (government data) sources also reveal that the election was held in a smooth manner.

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Has the use of Alcohol has been reduced due to PEVAC

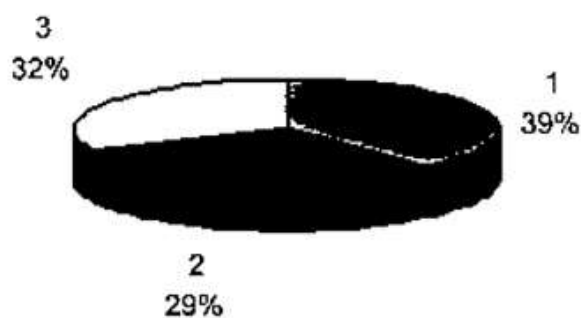


Figure- 13

Key:

1= Yes

2=No

3 = Can't say

figure -13 shows that 39% of the respondents said that during election, consumption of alcohol had been reduced. There was a mixed reaction to this. The reasons could be due to government's election rule that all the liquor shops would be closed during election time or due to the initiatives taken by i.,;GQs through PEV AC. However, 29% of the respondents said that there was hardly any change in alcohol consumption in spite of government's rule and ~GOs initiatives. Even if the shops were closed black marketing of alcohol increased al the election lime. Some candidates stored alcohol and distributed it during their campaigning.

In some places like Bharmour, Sirmour, especially in tribal areas people said that alcohol consumption was their custom and a pan of their tradition. It was irrelevant for them whether it was election period or any festival. Most of the respondents accepted the fact that most of the people consume alcohol in Himachal Pradesh as a matter of habit and it was difficult to stop the habit. They also clarified that there was no incidence of violence during or on the date of election due to alcohol consumption. Many respondents felt that as long as the election was peaceful. it did not matter whether alcohol was consumed or DOI.

Did people vote for the right candidates due to PEVAC?

Did people vote for the right candidates due to PEVAC?

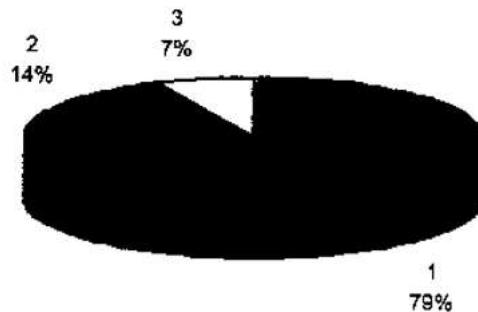


Figure- 14

Key:

1 =Yes

2 =No

3 = Can't Say

Figure-14 shows that 79% of the respondents agreed that they did vote for the right candidates due to PEVAC, whereas 14% of them did not agree. The meetings, group discussions, sharing of ideas and views which were supplemented with posters and pamphlets helped in creating awareness among the people. It was very helpful for the women and weaker sections, because these meetings and materials were focused on them. The campaign team also made extra efforts in mobilising women and weaker sections' participation in the election. The campaign created an enabling environment for the people to think and discuss their rights and responsibilities. The message given through PEVAC also spread across the panchayats. Not only the voters but also the candidates were asked for resource materials and support from the NGOs and CBOs involved in the campaign.

Did the voting percentage increase due to PEVAC?

Did the voting percentage increase due to PEVAC?

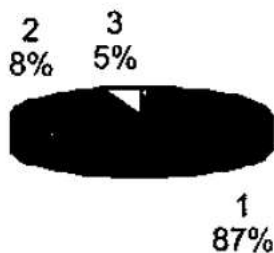


Figure- 15

1 = Yes

2 = No

3 = Can't say

A majority of the respondents (87%) said that the voting percentage increased due to PEVAC and also due to the initiatives taken by the state government. People were more actively involved in this election. Women and weaker sections participation had also increased sharply as compared to the last election. This is due to the fact that women were getting aware of the reservation given to them to become

elected representatives in PRIs. In the first elections after 73rd Amendment Act, women and weaker sections were less aware of the reservation. During the first elections this type of campaign had been limited to very few areas. Over a period of five years, women got an exposure through the fellow women representatives. The government as well as NGOs also played a crucial role in training the elected representatives. Through meetings, seminars, sammelans, not only the elected representatives but also the gram sabha members became aware of their duties and responsibilities. Therefore in, this round people actively participated in the election, as a result voting percentage had increased as compared to last PRIs election.

On the basis of the impact study and observations, it can be said that the PEVAC was able to achieve its desired objective to a large extent.

Ways Forward

Based on the impact study and the secondary sources (government data, PRIs election analysis in the newspapers), it was found that almost 87% of the elected representatives in all the three tiers were elected for the first time without any political experiences. Most of the experienced elected representatives had lost the elections. Therefore most of the newly elected representatives opined that they should be trained immediately to develop their skills and competencies to become effective leaders. They also said that there is a need for exposure visits with training, so that they could also see and analyse practical aspects in relation to PRIs. Most of them felt that mere training on Acts and Rules is not sufficient, there is a need for training on leadership which would develop their confidence to effectively discharge their duties and responsibilities. They also said that training should be supplemented with teaching and learning materials in a simple language. To create solidarity among the elected representatives to raise their voice on various issues related to PRIs, a forum could be formed at the state level, which could influence the government on policies and practices related to PRIs.

Follow-up

Based on the reactions received from elected representatives, follow-up action has been prepared by HP-PRC (PRIA) in collaboration with the partner NGOs in Himachal Pradesh that includes the following:

- Immediately after election, it was decided that there is a need to launch one day orientation of all the elected representatives or gram panchayat called the as Panchayat Pratinidhi Jagrukta Abhiyan (PRJA) to orient them regarding PRIs as institutions of local self governance
- Roles and responsibilities of elected representatives
- Micro planning as a basis for preparing the development plan with people's participation with special emphasis on women and weaker sections
- Helping elected representatives to build a forum for negotiations with government, MPs and MLAs to mobilise resources based on micro plans
- Need to prepare learning materials for the elected representatives in a simple language
- Need to involve CSOs and individuals to effectively implement the strategy for PRJA
- Collaborate with the state government to impart training throughout the state in collaboration with the existing and new partners
- Organise exposure visits for elected representatives, for practical learning
- Collaborate with the state government to prepare audio-visual materials for the elected representatives
- Share the findings of PRJA with various government officials for up-scaling
- Release the Status Report on PRIs since last five years to influence the state government on issues of local self governance for policy changes.

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