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research report

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Women in Panchayat: A Study of Women Panchayat Presidents and Members in Kerala

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G.Placid

Director

CHAPTER -1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context of the Study

Local governance through panchayats has been embedded in the Indian administrative system from time immemorial. From a five member team representing the elders of the village to the present three tier structure, tremendous changes have taken place in the panchayat structure. Since independence, many Commissions have been appointed, studies conducted and recommendations made to make the panchayats more viable and responsive people's bodies. Notable among them are the Ashok Mehta Commission and the Balawant Rai Mehta Commission. This led to a realisation of the need for drafting a Bill to give Constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The Constitution had hitherto devoted not more than three to four lines to the matter of establishing village panchayats. (Article 40 of the Directive Principles of State Policy). The basis for the Bill had been the shortcomings of the panchayat like lack of regular elections, prolonged supersessions, inadequate representation of weaker sections, insufficient devolution of power, inadequate financial support and constitutional obligation on the part of state governments to empower PRIs.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (passed on the 24th of April, 1993), provided for the constitution and composition of panchayats at various levels, reservation of seats for women and weaker sections, regular elections, devolution of powers, authority and responsibilities, constitution of Finance Commission, regular audit of panchayat etc. The enactment of the 73rd amendment also necessitated the state legislature to amend their relevant Acts or bring out a new Act or Acts replacing the old Acts within one year.

Accordingly, the Kerala Panchayati Raj Act was passed on the 23rd of April, 1994. Prior to this legislation, Kerala had only Village panchayats, Municipal councils and Municipal corporations and for a short period there existed District Councils. The District Panchayats and Block panchayats are the two new creations. The new three tier system came into being in the state on the 2nd of October, 1995.

At present, Kerala has 990 gram panchayats, 152 block panchayats and 14 district panchayats. According to the 1991 census, the average population of a gram panchayat is 25,199 and the average area of the panchayat in the state is 37.83 sq.km.

One of the novel features introduced by the Act was the constitutional guarantee provided for the entry of women in the local elected bodies. This was indeed a welcome step when seen in the light of years of socio-economic subjugation of women and their invisibility in the electoral process of the country.

It is worthwhile to note here that women in Kerala, occupy a higher social status as compared to women in other parts of the country. Their position is unique as regards demographic and other status indicators like health, education, favourable sex ratio, higher life expectancy, low infant and low mortality rates etc. Despite this favourable position, women in Kerala, except for the periodic exercise of their voting rights, have remained invisible in political bodies.

The 73rd constitutional amendment and the consequent Kerala Panchayati Raj Act have opened a new chapter in the history of women. The Act has ushered in a new force, a new dimension and a new thinking into the Panchayati Raj system. Nearly half the population, which was hitherto excluded from the development process, has been given an opportunity to participate in decision making and in determining needs and programmes. The provisions of the new Act has brought recognition to the role of women for making and directing the decision making process, on a par with men. It has undoubtedly

brought a change in the composition of the panchayat administrative bodies and this is expected to make a difference in the development process.

1.2. Objective of the study

Intact, the 73rd Constitution Amendment and the consequent Kerala Panchayat Raj Act seek to bring about a transformation of the Panchayati Raj Institutions from a mere post-office or implementing agency of the government to a self-governing, autonomous and people's institution for bringing about the overall socio-economic development of the country's population, especially the downtrodden and marginalised sections. Keeping this in view, one-third reservation has provided an opportunity for women to redefine their powers through occupying positions in the panchayats, and by virtue of their positions, they can now create conditions for women, in general, to raise their status.

Based on this understanding, the present study is specifically focused on the following objectives:

- i. to understand the social, economical, political and family background of the women PRI members and its influence on them;
- ii. to analyse the issue of role conflict among the women panchayat members;
- iii. to analyse the self-rating of women elected representatives about their level of awareness, participation, accountability, transparency, self-reliance, cooperation. performance and awareness on women specific schemes;
- iv. to assess the changes in the confidence level , leadership capabilities and socio-economic status of women PRI members after gaining experience in local governance;
- v. to elicit the opinion of women representatives and gram sabha members on issue related to corruption among PRI members.
- vi. to understand the interest of women representatives in choosing schemes for women and weaker sections;
- vii. to gather the opinion of women panchayat members and the gram sabha members on rotation of reservation seats of women;
- viii. to understand the perception and rating of gram sabha members regarding the functioning of the women members in the panchayat generally and in comparison, with their male counterparts;
- ix. to assess the attitude and participation of women in gram sabha and panchayat activities in the context of women's presence in panchayat samiti and
- x. to analyse the common issues/ problems/ concerns related to the effective functioning of women PRI members and to suggest possible remedial measures to improve their performance.

1.3. Study Areas/ Aspects

To achieve the above objectives, the study was focused on identifying and analysing the following major aspects/ areas.

- i. Social, political and economic background of the elected women representatives.
- ii. The circumstances which led to the entry of women in local governance.

- iii. The nature and level of family support for women members in the initial and current period.
- iv. The initial and present support of their family members towards their work.
- v. Nature and extent of Role conflict.
- vi. Interaction of women's representatives with women's groups and their initiative to provide benefits of weaker section and women-specific schemes to women and weaker section
- vii. The level of their awareness, participation, accountability, transparency and self-reliance, confidence, cooperation, performance, etc.
- viii. The perception of the grama sabha members regarding the above aspects.
- ix. The cooperation of fellow PRI members, panchayat secretary and government officials. .
- x. Women's specific needs to function as effective PRI members etc.
- xi. Common issues/problems which adversely affect the effective functioning of women members.
- xii. The confidence level and leadership capabilities of women PRI members.
- xiii. Rotation of reservation seats of women.
- xiv. Special interest taken by women members in schemes for women and weaker sections
- xv. The nature and level of corruption among the elected representatives.
- xvi. The attitude and participation of women in gram sabha and Panchayati raj activities in the context of women's presence in the panchayat samiti.
- xvii. Changes occurred in women PRI members over the years

Among these study areas the first eleven issues were the focus of the first phase of data generation and analysis and the remaining issues were dealt in the second phase of data generation and analysis.

1.4. Methodology

A comprehensive methodology focusing on participatory methods has been adopted for the study, which makes the process a mutual learning experience rather than a mere data collection exercise. The study was completed in two phases, the first phase consisting in the period up to the presentation of the draft report before the representatives of various stakeholders at the state level consultative meeting on the 7th of July 1999 and the second phase consisting in the supplementary data generation exercise, immediately after the consultative meeting, based on the suggestions made during the consultative meeting, in order to make the study more comprehensive and the compilation and analysis of the data thus generated.

1.4.1. Sampling

Sampling for the first phase

Purposive random sampling method was applied for the selection of sample panchayats. The criteria for purposive selection have been: (a) due representation to be given to the southern, central and northern districts of Kerala. (b) atleast one block panchayat in the district to be headed by a woman (c) majority of the grama panchayats selected from the respective block panchayat to be headed by women.

Accordingly, five district panchayats- Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alappuzha, Ernakulam and Wyanad were selected for the study. Further, 12 block panchayats were selected from the above district panchayats and out of them 6 are headed by women. From the selected block panchayats, 42 gram panchayats were selected, out of which 31 grama panchayats were headed by women. For the study, 3 women PRI members (including women presidents) were selected from each gram panchayat and two women PRI members were selected from each of the 12 block panchayats and 4 district (excluding Thiruvananthapuram panchayats. A total of 158 women members were thus selected for this phase. Moreover, for each PRI member, two grama sabha members from their locality (one male and one female) were interviewed to elicit their opinion/ understanding about their panchayat members. Thus a total of 316 grama sabha members were interviewed during the first phase.

Sampling for the second phase

Here too, purposive random sampling method was applied for the selection of sample panchayats. Sample was selected from the block and gram panchayats of seven districts

- Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Ernakulam, Trissur, Wyanad, Kannur and Kasaragode.

Then the findings of the analysis and suggestions were prepared in a draft form and presented before the representatives of various stakeholders in Kerala such as the Minister for local administration, secretary to government, local administration, Panchayat Director, Chairperson of Women's Commission, MLAs, panchayat members and secretaries from the three tiers, VO leaders, media personnel, etc. at a state level consultative meeting on the 7th of July, 1999 at Thiruvananthapuram.

As stated earlier, based on the suggestions of the state level consultative meeting, a set of data were generated on issues like corruption, rotation of seats, level of confidence and change in leadership immediately after the consultative meeting. The data were further processed and analysed, a summary of it was prepared and shared with some of the selected respondents.

1.5. Part of National Study

This study is a part of a national level study on "Women in Panchayats" jointly organised by PRIA, New Delhi and NCRSOs (Network of Collaborating Regional Support Organisations). The study is conducted in a number of states including Kerala, where the PRI joint interventions (by PRIA and NCRSOs) have been going on since 1995. The overall purpose of the national study is to understand the functioning of women PRI presidents and members with regard to their entry into the local elected bodies.

The Kerala study was initiated and conducted by SAHAYI, one of the members of NCRSOs.

1.6. Time frame of the study

The study started during April 1998 with the preparation and pre-testing of schedules. The data collection process of the first phase started from the second half of May and went up to December 1998. This was followed by the compilation and analysis of the findings which was completed by the end of May 1999.

The draft findings and suggestions were presented in a state level workshop held at Hotel Pankaj, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala on the 7th of July 1999.

Further additional data was generated, processed and analysed during the month of July and a draft report was prepared at the end of August.

1.7. Limitations of the study

Following are some of the limitations of the study.

- Owing to time constraints and lack of resources we were able to cover only a sample of respondents from the elected representatives and the gram sabha members. However, we hope this will not seriously affect the validity of the findings. However we tried to cover a sizable portion of the population.
- The qualitative data are based on the personal reflections of the respondents and the observations of the research team members. Naturally these could be influenced by - personal biases.
- The study is based partly on qualitative data, dealing with the views, sentiments and conclusions of the respondents, which may lack in precision and are not available to statistical analysis and proving.
- There were limited possibilities to share the draft findings and suggestions to a larger section of PRI members and gram sabha members which restricted the possibility of eliciting more ideas and reflections from the stakeholders groups.
- The respondents of the first and second phases of the data generation processes were different and hence responses of the 1st and 2nd set of issues were limited to the respective number of respondents who participated in the process.
- It was also not possible to share the 2nd set of analysis and findings to major stakeholders prior to the publication of this report.

1.8. Structure of the report

The report contains 4 chapters. Chapter one deals with an introduction which consists of the context of the study, methodology, aspects/area of study, limitations, time frame etc. Chapter two contains an overview of women in the political process. The third chapter highlights the analysis and findings of the study. The final chapter is a summary of the suggestions and recommendations based on the findings.

CHAPTER II

OVERVIEW OF WOMEN IN POLITICAL PROCESS AND PRESENT OPPORTUNITIES

Gender equality has always been and continues to be a theme of great debate, discussions, resolutions, constitutional guarantees etc. Despite the fact that such intellectual exercises have been in vogue for quite sometime, the issue of gender equality still remains unresolved. Gender stereotypes have been so deeply etched in the minds of people, that it is difficult for society to view a woman apart from her home and domestic chores. While it has been accepted that women supplement the family's income by taking up employment (it is worth noting that here too, there are stereotypes regarding employment for women), it has never occurred to the majority, that women should take an active part in political processes.

In a sense, this historical subordination of women (be it social, economic or political) is an outcome of asymmetry in power, where men are in a position of privileged and women of subordination. This power relation has been continuing for ages. For it has been accepted as the norm or the 'correct' social arrangement.

Years of socio-economic marginalisation have, thus driven women to the periphery of the political processes. Beyond the periodic exercise of their voting rights, women have limited participation in the electoral and political processes in our country. Though not a conscious choice, women have been driven into an apolitical frame of mind, even when they are the most affected by the political decisions of their male counterparts. It can be said that this under-representation in the political process is one of the major reasons for the backwardness of women.

The highlights of a study by the Inter Parliamentary Union shows that policy making has for long been a male preserve. In the Indian Lok Sabha, the representation of women varies between 3.4 percent (in the sixth Lok Sabha) and 8.1 percent (in the eighth Lok Sabha). In the first Lok Sabha, there were only 22 women out of 499 members. The sixth Lok Sabha had the lowest number of women parliamentarians-19 out of the total of 544 (3.4 percent). The highest number of women members was found in the eighth Lok Sabha- 44 in a house of 544. This did not form even 10 percent of the total strength. The present dissolved Lok Sabha has a representation of only 7.4 percent.

In the Rajya Sabha, the representation of women was somewhere between 5.8 and 11.8 percent. The percentages hovered around 10, atleast five times between 1952 and 1993. The present strength of women members in the Kerala State Legislative Assembly is only 13, which constitutes a mere 9 percent, out of a total number of 140 members.

The available statistics on women's participation in the electoral process in the local bodies show the following features:

The number of women elected, at the national level, to the grama panchayats is 9,88, 106 which is 35.92 percent of the total number of elected representatives in these bodies. At the taluk level, the national figure is 59,688 which comes to 40.14 percent and at the zilla panchayat level the total number is 6, 106 which is 39.37 percent of the total number of elected representatives. In Kerala, the number of elected women members at the three levels Gram, Block and District panchayats is: 3,954 (37 percent), 564 (36.46 percent) and 105 (35 percent) respectively.

For women, this absence of/ limited power has meant the lack of access to, and control over, resources. Their powerlessness is expressed in male violence against women, sexual exploitation, discrimination against the girl child and a very acute situation of social vulnerability. Moreover, the personal contribution of women to the family has remained invisible and unrecognized, such that a substantial portion of women's work is excluded from national income accounting.

The accessibility and control over resources will not only ensure women adequate opportunity to use the resource, but also provide discretionary power to define or determine the use of that resource.

The need of the hour is, therefore, empowerment of women, so that their voices could be heard and accepted where policy decisions having an important bearing on their lives are taken. Moreover empowerment gives women" the capacity to influence decision making process, planning, implementation and evaluation by integrating them into the political system. This implies political participation which includes the right to vote, contest, campaign, party membership and representation in political offices at all levels and effectively influencing decisions, thereby leading to political empowerment. Reservation is one of the instruments of political empowerment as it guarantees representation".

I Nobel laureate Prof Amartya Sen sees empowerment of women as the vehicle for facilitating J the process of decentralisation. He defines the four pillars of decentralisation as information; autonomy and incentives; competition; and empowerment of women. Citing the example of Bangladesh, where the rate of population growth has shown a marked decline, he said that enhancing the decision making powers of women in rural areas and the preference given to women for loans at the micro-level had hastened the process of decentralisation as well as development.

There is thus an increasing realisation of the fact that the process of development will be incomplete without the active participation of women, who constitute half the population.

The Herculean task before us is to ensure that women are equal partners in the social, cultural, economic and political life of the nation.

Present opportunities

The 73rd Amendment and the consequent State Acts which guarantees 33 percent reservation for women in local bodies, was, thus a welcome step in this direction. The reasons for providing representation are based on several assumptions." These include:

- Shared-perception-of justice, deprivation-and oppression
- Shared experience of marginalisation vis-a-vis the power structure
- Collective empowerment through representation and democratic process will give them voice, feeling of solidarity and democratise politics;
- With regular elections and constitutionally mandated panchayats. permutations will change and issue oriented groupings or interest groups will emerge;
- Affirmative action will build a critical mass of local leadership from such groups, who will be active participants in the strategic decision making process".

The Constitutional Amendment Act has, thus, given women the constitutional rights to deliberate, debate and make decisions in the process of planning, policy formulation and execution of development programmes. It has further provided an opportunity to tap the creativity and ability of

women and give a feminine perspective to the whole process. Now that they form a third of the elected bodies, it is expected that their voice will be heard in the hitherto male - dominated bodies, so that it greatly contributes to the process of "articulating a shared vision of sustainable human development". The relevance of such a shared vision is aptly explained by UNDP in its concept of gender mainstreaming. UNDP defines gender mainstreaming as "taking account of gender equality concerns in all policy, programme, administrative and financial activities, and in organisational procedures, thereby contributing to organisational transformation. Specifically gender mainstreaming implies bringing the outcome of 'gendered' socio-economic and policy analysis into all decision making process. Gender mainstreaming does not mean only having an equal number of men and women in the organisation or supporting programmes exclusively for women, although it includes these aspects. Gender mainstreaming is not a process, which begins and ends with women. It implies including women, but does not imply excluding men."

The present scenario therefore, offers greater opportunities to the womenfolk to take part in the nation - wide decision making process in general and taking decisions for their own destiny and survival at the grassroot level in particular. This has also widened the scope and possibility of women empowerment and thereby creation of new society with a new perspective providing equal opportunities and gender justice for women in the society.

CHAPTER-III

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

3.1. Socio Economic Background of the Respondents

The socio economic conditions such as education, health marital status, size of family, occupation, income, community/ caste, etc. and family background have a critical influence in the political life of a woman.

It was seen from the study that one-third (33.5 percent) of the total sample of 158 members were between the age group of 23 to 35 years. Such persons had young children, which shows that, much of their time was demanded by familial duties. Similarly, 44.3 percent were in the age group of 36 to 45 years. Only 22.2 percent of the total sample were above the age of 46 years (table 1).

It is worth noting here that 13 percent of the respondents had children below 5 years of age. Considering the fact that 82 percent of the respondents lived in nuclear families, a pertinent-question that emerges is, regarding the care of these young children, whose mothers are busy with their panchayat work. Similarly another 26.5 percent had children in the age-group of 6 to 10 years. It reveals that the vast majority (77.8 percent) of the women members are in the age group of 23 to 45 years and are overburdened with their family affairs, including looking after the young children. This is a major factor, which influences the functioning and effectiveness of women panchayat members. Those above 46 years had grown up children who could look after themselves and could lend a supportive hand to their mothers. The emerging issue here is the possible conflict between familial and social roles and responsibilities.

It is evident from the data that all of the sample respondents except just a few (3 percent) have minimum high school education. The proportion of members having high school education is 46.2 percent, which is followed by graduates and post graduates (26.6 percent) and undergraduates (24.1 percent) (table 2). This indicates that the respondents have the basic capacity to read/ understand the Panchayati Raj Act, rules and regulations and related aspects. Since the level of education is the basic requirement for acquiring knowledge and skill there is a positive indication for the possibilities of the development of leadership and management qualities of the women PRI members which will lead to active participation of women representatives in the local governance mechanism and subsequent improvement in the system.

The details of the marital status of sample respondents show that 93 percent of them are married and almost all of them are living with husband and children. Very few (4.4 percent) of them were widows/ separated (table 3). This provides both an opportunity for getting family support (especially from husband) for PRI related activities and a challenge because of heavy family obligations.

The data, further revealed that, among the respondents, 82.2 percent lived in nuclear families. Of the remaining, 10.8 percent lived in joint families and 7 percent lived in extended families. The data also showed that almost all of them (nuclear family) are the domestic heads and are burdened with heavy domestic affairs in addition to PRI work.

Vast majority (79.7 percent) of the respondents were housewives and the remaining (20 percent) were employed. Of the total 32 employed people, 22 were teachers. A few of the employed were practising advocates and one was a Homeo doctor (table 4). There was a general trend among the political parties to choose teachers and other employed women as their candidates since they already had some identity and reputation among the local people. But the professional involvement of employees was an additional burden to their dual role as domestic head and PRI member.

The educational and employment status of the women's guardian was also looked into. According to available data almost all the respondents (86.1 percent) stated that their husbands are the heads of the family. In the remaining cases father (8.2 percent), brother/ others are holding the position. The level of education of 89 percent of the male guardians was high school or above. Of the total male guardians, 51 percent were engaged in the service sector, 23 percent in the agricultural sector, 12 percent in the business sector and 8 percent were employed as casual labourers. This shows that the husbands of the women members were educated and employed. This was another conducive environment which relieved the women to a certain extent from the burden of winning their daily bread.

Another finding of the study is that the majority of the respondent's family come under middle income group ranging from Rs.60,000 to Rs.2 lakhs per year. However the income of 15.2 percent is actually low, and bordering on poverty line when we consider that a portion of their annual income is from panchayat allowance.

3.2. Political Background and Entry into Politics

Of the sample, 60.1 percent had family members/close relatives involved in political parties/ organisations (table 5). Of these 17.7 percent had association with former panchayat institutions. Moreover, some of the women PRI members had previous political exposure.

The circumstances, which led to the entry of women in politics, is another aspect considered in the study. The data revealed that only 10 percent of the respondents were self-motivated to contest the panchayat election. A sizeable proportion (51 percent) were influenced by the political parties, they were associated with/ belonged to. Dialogues and discussions with the respondents confirmed the empirical data about the association of their husbands/ other family members/ relatives with political parties. These people, found it easy to get party nomination in the panchayat election. There were also a few instances where women contested, only to retain the seats held by their husbands in the panchayats over the years.

Among those, who had family members associated with politics (95 nos.) more than half (50.5 per cent) were influenced solely by political parties in their decision to contest election. For another 16.8 percent, the main decision influencers were their husbands. As regards the forces influencing the decision of women contestants, political parties stand first. Husbands come next, either solely or in combination with political parties. Only 5 percent of the members with political associations, took their own decision. The remaining were influenced by either NGOs or male relatives or a combination of husband and self or political party and self.

The above facts highlighted that the linkages of family members/ close relatives with political associations and PR Is was a major factor, which motivated majority of politically associated women members to contest the elections. Whereas, though political parties influence was moderate in case of members who had no political association, 17.5 percent took their own decision in contesting the election. The NGO influence is also higher in this case (14.3 percent). These are some of the encouraging features.

The data also revealed that in case of the women members who did not have any political association the influence of political parties in their decision to contest the election was very similar (50.8 percent) to that of members having political association. But it is interesting to note that another 17.5 percent took their own decision to contest the election and the influence of husband and others were very less.

Previous political experience/ participation in panchayat samiti was another factor which had a positive effect on the women's decision to contest. As mentioned earlier some respondents were members of the previous panchayat samithis, some were active in politics even during their college days and many others were involved in party activities and social welfare activities in their communities. One member

had been a University Syndicate member and a member of former District Council in Kerala. Such members were motivated and were happy to have contested the election.

3.3. Feeling When Elected

Another aspect that has come out from the interview is the difference in the women's emotional response to their winning the election process. While half the respondents (50 percent) found it exciting, for the others it was not that much exciting. The members who were happy and excited to have been elected, were those, who had previous experience in party and community affairs. This might have boosted the confidence of some of these members. Some members were happy that the party considered them for the post when the reservations were announced. Women members who belonged to the SC community were particularly happy, as they got an opportunity to represent their community which has been always excluded from positions of political power.

While the members who had previous experience felt elated, those who lacked experience were afraid and apprehensive, when they were elected to office. They had contested only because of the severe compulsion of their respective party and husband. The response of one member when she heard that she was elected was: "I started crying bitterly when I came to know the election results. I was really afraid, as I had never worked or talked in public."

Another member said "I was in a great state of tension when I heard that I was elected. The tension and anxiety only aggravated when they elected me as President. While compelling me to contest the elections, the party workers had told me that there was not much work to be done in the panchayat and I need to go to the panchayat office only once in a while. I feel afraid to talk in public."

Many others responded that they had never gone out of their home. They did not know how to mingle with the people and were diffident about facing the people.

3.4. Nature of Family Support

An encouraging feature was that, by and large, the women representatives had the support of the family members. The data indicates that 99 per cent of the respondents had the support of their families. Further, 96 per cent of the respondents said that their family helped them in the electioneering work and 33 per cent received financial help, moral support and help in electioneering.

Moreover, in the initial stages of their PRI functioning, the women members received help from the family for different activities like understanding the Act, organising gram panchayat/ gram sabha (GP/ GS) meeting, interaction with fellow PRI-members, interaction with villagers, interaction with government officials, taking PRI-related decisions, implementing those decisions or a combination of the above, in various degrees.

It was seen that 5 percent of the total respondents availed help from their family members solely for understanding the Act. Nineteen percent used help from family members in mobilising the members and organising GP/GS meetings/ interacting with villagers. officials/ taking PRI related decisions/ implementing them as well as help in understanding the Act.

In combination with other types of support, 12 percent relied on their family for implementing these decisions and 15 percent acquired help for both taking and implementing PRI - related decisions, which shows that, in the initial stages, the women were in the periphery of the decision making process/ over dependent in discharging their role and functions.

Total dependency of the members was seen in 11 per cent of the cases as they needed help in all the above aspects. At the time of collecting data for the study (3 years after they came to power) 77 per cent of the respondents said that they still received support from their families in PRI activities. The proportion of members who relied on the family members for PRI activities in general decreased from 11 percent to 7 percent over the three years. This is an encouraging trend, as it indicates a positive change in the capacity of women to understand and take decision. However, according to available data the dependency on the family for both taking and implementing decisions has increased from 15 to 26 percent. This is somewhat puzzling. A possible explanation is that the issue of taking and implementing decisions did not come to the fore in earlier days as this was not so challenging. As time went on and more programmes were introduced through people's campaign etc. the responsibilities of the members increased on the one hand and on the other complex situations demanding quick decision - making and implementation.

It is true that family has a profound influence on the political life, especially, of a woman. However, the question which emerges in this context is the areas to which this support needs to be/ need not be extended. While family support is a critical criterion for women in politics, it should best be confined to giving moral support and in some cases some form of physical support like accompanying when they need their support.

3.5. The Issue of Role Conflict

In the area of discharging the duties as women PRI -members, their family surroundings/ atmosphere play an important role. However, women's role at home and outside home are not complementary and because of this non-complimentary character of roles, expectations give rise to role conflict. Conflict arises because of the pull and push forces that play continuously, while women are discharging duties at home and in the panchayat. If. expectations either at home or outside home increase, women have to work with additional efforts, to fulfill extra functions within the fixed time.

The data revealed that 59.5 percent of the respondents experience severe role conflict. While 9.5 percent responded that their PRI work has been suffering because of family responsibilities, 44.9 percent said that their family has been suffering because of PRI work and 3.8 percent said that they are experiencing self-suffering because of the demands of their PRI work and household-responsibilities (table 6). This is a major consideration to be taken into account when analysing the performance I effectiveness of the women members.

Further, it was found that women in the age group of 36 to 45 occupy the first place as regards role conflict (61.4 percent) which is followed by women under the age of 35 (52.8 percent) and women above 46 (51. 7 percent).

The 36 to 45 age group experienced maximum role conflict, because women in this age group have more work load including children's care, house keeping and of course PRI work. The new Act has entrusted the panchayats with a number of developmental functions in addition to the conventional functions they had been performing. Moreover, the People's Campaign for the Ninth Plan demanded that the local self-governments take up the new challenge of development planning. Thus, unlike in former days, the panchayats are now buzzing with activities. Routine administrative work, attending panchayat meetings, convening gram sabhas, identifying beneficiaries, preparing projects and implementing them, pressures from the higher levels and from the community consume a lot of time, energy and attention of the members. There are numerous cases where the panchayat presidents start work in their office very early in the morning and return home very late at night. Similar is the case of committed PRI members.

Whatever be the challenges at her work place, a woman is still expected to fulfill her duties at home - a factor which appears to allow no compromise. Overburdened with work, women members find very little time to spend with their family, with the result that their family has been suffering and women undergo

self-suffering. It has also affected their children's education. Even the members who enjoy their panchayat work and political life are crushed by the above factor.

In such cases, the women failed to get satisfaction either from home or from their panchayat work. This created tension within them, as they felt torn between two loyalties (family and PRI work). The intense role conflict as a result of clash between woman's two equally important roles, each requiring much time and serious commitment, has created in them a sense-of guilt.

The qualitative data further shows that the situation is severe in the case of women PRI members simultaneously playing multiple roles, such as teachers, house-wife and PRI members/ presidents. Majority of these employed have given only third priority to PRI activities. A major question/ concern which arises in this context is the ability and time of such members to-contribute-effectively in all the above areas.

3.7. Effects/ Changes - Assessment/ Rating by PRI members and Gram Sabha members

The effects/ changes occurred over the years on being a number of the grassroot governance mechanism is worth noting. The following analysis is based on the self-assessment/ rating by the women members and the gram sabha members.

3.7.1. Changes in Status - In Family

Change in the family status of women after becoming panchayat members, was another issue addressed by the study. While majority (77.6 percent) said that there has been a change in their status, 22.4 percent of the respondents were of the view that women's status in the family has not changed (table 7). Of those who admitted their family status has changed, 90.9 percent said the change was positive, while a few maintained that it was negative, which means that these women lost even the previous status they enjoyed before becoming a member. The reasons adduced for this negative implication include unpleasant situations created by discontented elements, the prejudices against women mixing with all sorts of people in their panchayat work etc.

3.7.2. Changes In Status - In Society

With regard to the question of changes in the social status of women panchayat members, almost all of them (95.5 percent) stated that their social status has improved. Only a negligible section (4.5 percent) answered in the negative (table 8).

A variety of reasons were mentioned by the respondents for this improved social status. Nearly 45 percent said that the women representatives gained new popular recognition, - evident in the high respect given to them in government offices, police stations and by people approaching them with various needs and requests etc. Their effective performance (20.8 percent) and constructive approach (12.1 percent) were the other major reasons cited by the members for their improved social status in society. Nearly 9 percent of the respondents attributed it to their official status as panchayat members. Other reasons cited by them include transparency and accountability of the women members, their interest in solving people's problems and mobilising benefits for the needy, their honest and impartial dealings etc.

The reasons for no improvement in social status have been identified as hostility of discontented people, who started abusing and harassing the members because they did not receive benefits, previous high status as teachers etc.

3.1.3. Changes in Economic Status

Change in their economic status after being elected into the Panchayat Samiti was another issue looked into by the study. Only 37.2 percent admitted that their economic status has improved (table 8). They took pride in becoming an earning member of the family by receiving honorarium and allowances from the panchayat. A larger portion (62.8 percent) stated that their economic status has deteriorated. They gave several reasons for it, such as:

- Increase in expenses for travel or for sundry needs of the family.
- Giving monetary help to the poor.
- They are invited practically to all marriage and other social functions in the locality and they have to follow the general custom of presenting gifts.
- When the work load is high, particularly during the planning and implementation stages of projects, the members are forced to go to the panchayat even on Sundays, thus increasing additional expenses.
- In case of certain political parties, the members have to make regular contributions to the party fund.

A few even mentioned that their honorarium and allowances are insufficient even for meeting their travel expenses.

3.7.4. Level of Awareness

Awareness of the women members on Panchayati Raj Act, rules and regulations, roles, functions, resources, government schemes, needs of community, procedures, government structures etc. was another area of study. The women were asked to rate their awareness in two ways - one, with-reference to their male counterparts and the other with themselves without any comparison. Moreover, the gram sabha members were also asked to rate their understanding on the level of awareness of their elected representatives.

i. Self-rating

The data indicated that in their own rating the level of awareness was high/very high only for 8.2 percent of the women members. Forty three percent of the respondents rated their awareness level as average/ moderate, 42 percent said it was low and 7 percent said it was very low (table 9). While only 49 percent rated their awareness as low/very low, when asked to compare the same with men 56 percent rated their awareness level as low (table 10). It shows that nearly half the respondents (49 percent) were more or less ignorant of the vital issues such as roles, responsibilities, community needs, rules and regulations, government schemes, etc. pertaining to their day-to-day functioning. Normally this can have its adverse effects to discharge their duties and their participation at the panchayat level. It is interesting to note that in case of women presidents, one-third rated their awareness as low/ very low. This is a matter of serious concern since the presidents are supposed to lead the other members and manage the panchayat administration and if they are not aware, one cannot expect good results.

Those members who rated their level of awareness to be low/very low cited several reasons for this condition such as their new entry into the panchayat system, lack of pre• preparation before contesting the election and lack of intensive awareness programmes even after their entry, lack of enough time and interest to read and understand the available materials, non-availability /non-accessibility of reading materials/informations. lack of sufficient exposures etc. To them everything was a new experience.

This lack of experience forced the women members to rely on the political party, other PRI members, or the secretary for the day-to-day functioning. This ultimately led to their dependency/over dependency on others. Many members have said that they would like to attend orientation I training programmes, to increase their knowledge and skills.

Dialogues with these members revealed that they had initially made an effort to read the Act and understand their roles, functions etc. Such members, through experience, attending classes, and discussions with fellow PRI-members, have gained some knowledge regarding the Act, their roles, functions etc. Some members said that they try to read any Panchayati Rat- related books that they come across. Still they feel that they have a lot more to learn. Those who continued their profession (for instance teachers) did not find time to attend training classes and hence their awareness level in PRI related aspects were low. These members have expressed the need for training, so that they could perform better.

Only 8.2 percent have responded that their awareness level was high/very high. Qualitative data show that such persons had either family members who were active in politics to help them understand the Act, or had acquired through attending training programmes or had previous experience in political life I panchayat related activities.

ii. Rating by Gram Sabha members

The responses of the grama sabha members too revealed that the awareness level of the female members was unsatisfactory. While 35 percent rated the awareness level of male members as high, only 13 percent rated the awareness level of female members as high. Similarly, while only 9 percent rated the awareness of male members as low, 43 percent rated the awareness of female members as low/ very low (table 11).

3. 7.5. Level of Participation

Another issue addressed by the study was the extent of participation of women members in terms of initiative in raising issues in panchayat, setting agenda, facilitating community participation, decision making, implementing decisions etc.

i. Self-rating

The data revealed that in their own rating the level of participation was high in around 28 percent cases and was only moderate for 39.9 percent of the respondents. Another 29 percent responded that their level of participation was low and yet another 2.5 percent rated it as very low (table 12). This shows that in their own rating majority of women have participated in the PRI decision making process and activities in a moderate and low level. Similar trend was also observed in the case of women presidents. The presence of about one-third women members and 28 percent of the presidents with low participation is to be taken very seriously.

The qualitative data established that those members who had performed well had taken the initiative to understand the needs and problems of their ward, available resources of the panchayat and present the same in the panchayat meetings. They also said that they get involved in setting the agenda for meetings and also in decision making. They have tried to ensure people's participation in all the developmental activities of panchayats by motivating them and by cooperating with them. In short, such women representatives have maintained a good rapport and relationship with people, fellow PRI members and panchayat staff.

The level of women's participation vis-a-vis men's participation was also rated by the women PRI members. Nearly half the respondents (49 percent) have said that their participation is on a par with

men and 22 percent said it is better than men (table 13). Twenty nine percent said their participation, compared to men, is poor. The qualitative data showed that the last group lacked self-confidence to mingle with the people. They were ignorant regarding the assessment of needs and setting of agenda for the meeting. They merely followed the decision of the political party they belonged to and the panchayat samiti.

Many women members have said that they could associate and mingle closely with the womenfolk of the village. They could understand their problems better and the womenfolk could discuss even their family problems with them.

ii. Rating by Gram Sabha Members

The ratings of the gram sabha members revealed certain interesting aspects regarding the participation of male and female PRI members. While one-fourth of the gram sabha members (25 percent) rated the participation of female members to be low or very low, another one-third (33.2 percent) rated it to be very high or high. Nearly 42 percent rated the participation to be 'moderate'. On the other hand, majority of the gram sabha members rated the participation of male members to be moderate (70 percent). Few rated the participation to be low/very low and high or very high when compared to the participation of female members (table 14). There is a slight variation in the self-perception of women and the rating of the people in regard to women's participation.

iii. Awareness vis-a-vis Participation

The data indicate that there is a definite link between the levels of awareness and participation. It is seen that where the awareness level of the elected members was high, their level of participation was high or very high (83.3 percent). Where the awareness level of the elected member was moderate, their level of participation is either moderate (37 percent) or low (18 percent). Similarly when the awareness level is low, their participation is either moderate (52 percent) or low (42 percent) respectively. Where the awareness level was very low, the participation also was low/very low.

3. 7. 6. Level of Accountability

The accountability of the members in terms of providing information to the gram sabha members regarding the major activities of the panchayat, the projects that are available, initiative in taking decisions etc. was another issue addressed by the study. Following are the responses of the elected members and the gram sabha members on this issue.

i. Self-rating

Nearly half the respondents (49 percent) rated their accountability as moderate. While nearly one-third members rated their accountability as low and very low. only 20 percent rated it as good (table 15).

However, more than half the respondents (55 percent) rated their accountability as same when compared to male members. While 18 percent said it was higher, 27 percent said it was low when compared to men (table 16).

In the case of women presidents, too this trend was very visible. Twenty seven percent of the women presidents rated their accountability as low, while only 17.5 percent rated it as good. This is to be taken very seriously as they are the persons in the structure who are responsible to ensure accountability of local self-government institutions.

ii. Rating by Gram Sabha Members

One of the important assessments by the Gram Sabha members about the level of accountability between men and women PRI members was that women members are more accountable than men members. They rated that the level of accountability of 30.6 percent women are high as against 9.5 percent in case of men (table 17).

3.7.7. Level of Transparency

Transparency here refers to maintaining records/ documentation and ensuring accessibility of information to the public regarding financial matters, programmes/activities, roles and responsibilities of various actors, functioning of various institutions etc.

i. Self-rating

The analysis showed that majority of the respondents (60 percent) rated their level of transparency to be moderate, another 24 percent rated it as low/ very low and the remaining 16 percent rated it as high (table 18).

Sixty six percent of the members rated their level of transparency to be the same as compared to men. While 19 percent rated their levels of transparency to be higher, 15 percent rated it to be low as compared to male members (table 19).

Coming to the women presidents, the data indicated that almost one-third rated their transparency level as low. When clubbing this with awareness level and accountability, we have a very strong case for action to improve the performance of the women presidents.

ii. Rating by Gram Sabha members

The Gram Sabha members rated the level of transparency of male members much below that of female members. While 26 percent said that female transparency was as high only 6 percent rated male transparency as high and when it came to the rating of very low transparency the figures were 15 percent for males and 2 percent for females (see table 20).

3.7.8. Level of Self Reliance

The self-reliance of women members in terms of knowledge base, decision making, handling accounting procedures, identifying projects, meeting officials/bureaucrats to obtain sanction for projects, identifying resources to increase the income of the panchayat etc. was another area of enquiry. The results of the ratings are given below:

i. Self-rating

The data indicated that more than half the respondents (56.3 percent) rated their self reliance as low and another 13.3 percent rated it as very low. This shows that 69.6 percent of the respondents were severely lacking in self-reliance. For another 17 percent, the level of self. reliance was only moderate; (table 21). Nearly 71 percent of the respondents rated their self-reliance as low when compared to men. While 23 percent rated it as same, only 6 percent rated it as higher than men (table 22).

Considering the level of self-reliance of women presidents, though it was more or less the same of all category (67.5 percent), it is a serious issue to be considered. It was observed during the study that in several women headed panchayats the major decisions were taken/ initiated by male members (either vice president or senior member) on behalf of presidents. This is because the women president had

entrusted her authority to the male dominant member and her role was limited only to signing letters/documents. This was actually the leading factor for increasing dependency and low self-reliance. Since the quality impact and effectiveness of the development programmes of the panchayat mainly depends on the capacity of the presidents to take impartial decisions, timely actions, implementation etc. the higher level of self-reliance of the presidents is a minimum requirement.

There seems to be a correlation between their level of awareness and self-reliance. Out of the 12 members who rated their awareness as high, all rated their self-reliance as high/very high. Where the awareness level was low, the level of self-reliance was rated as low/ very low (85 percent). All the members who rated their awareness as very low rated their self-reliance also as very low.

The following confession of one member is very illustrative "My awareness level in this field is very poor. Only recently, I developed the courage to talk to my fellow members freely. But still I am not able to discuss the problems and issues with the people. Nor am I able to discuss matters in the panchayat meetings. Because I am not sure whether I am saying or doing the right things, I often keep quiet".

ii. Rating by Gram Sabha Members

The observation of the gram sabha members tallies with the self-rating of the women members. While 59 percent of the total grama sabha members responded that the self reliance of the female members was low I very low respectively, only 8 percent rated the self-reliance of male members as low and none rated it as very low. Only 11 percent rated the self-reliance of female members to be good as against 38 percent who rated the self-reliance of male members to be good (table 23).

3. 7.9. Level of Co-operation

To function effectively, the PRI members (be they men or women) require varying degrees of cooperation, from other various quarters like fellow PRI members, panchayat Secretary and government officials. This was another issue addressed in the study.

The levels of co-operation extended by male PRI members and female PRI members are more or less the same. The ratings showed that there was moderate co-operation from female (62 percent) and male members (59 percent). The ratings as high and low are even closer (table 24).

Coming to the cooperation of panchayat secretaries, there are variations. While one-third rated their co-operation as high I very high, one-fourth rated it to be low I very low, the remaining rated it as moderate (table 25).

As regards cooperation of male government officials versus female government officials, the ratings for both high and moderate cooperation is more or less the same. But when it comes to low cooperation, female government officials have shown high rating (25.3 percent against 13.9 percent) (table 26).

3.7.10. Awareness of women -specific schemes

The data, showed that more than half the respondents (59 percent) were aware of only DWCRA scheme out of a total number of 12 women specific schemes. Of the remaining, 23 percent were aware of two schemes and 8 percent were aware of three schemes. Ten percent had no idea about any of these schemes even after three years of their experience in holding the position. It revealed that women PRI members are yet to be aware of most of the women specific schemes that are available.

The entry of women in political process paved the way for ensuring accessibility of information, particularly on government schemes and programmes. Considering their accessibility to the people in

their constituency, especially women, the women PRI members can inform and motivate the local women to avail the benefits of various schemes and programmes. This necessitates the women PRI members to be fully aware of the women specific schemes available in each year.

Easy accessibility of information is a pre-requisite for the empowerment of women. The hitherto lack | absence of accessibility of correct, relevant and timely information to target groups was one of the major reasons for the failure of many governmental programmes. In many cases the target groups are ignorant of the benefits available as no one informed them about these on time. Hence, the unawareness of the PRI members regarding the above schemes should be treated as a serious concern.

3.8. Reflections on Corruption at the Grassroot

The nature and extent of corruption was one of the issues focused in this study. The following is an outcome of the analysis of the responses of the PRI members as well as gram sabha members:

i. Responses of PR/ members

The data showed that a vast majority (78.8 percent) are of the view that corruption in general has come down, of whom nearly one-third said that corruption has significantly decreased and the remaining responded that it decreased. Only 15.4 percent women members think that corruption in panchayat has increased and among them one-third stated that the increase has been of a high order. Just a handful (5.8 percent) think there has been no change in this matter (table 27).

ii. Responses of Gram Sabha Members

The percentage of the grama sabha members who believe that corruption has come down was 56.1 and among them nearly one-fifth think it has come down to a large extent Those who think corruption has gone up are 30.4 percent, of whom half felt it has considerably increased.

This leaves us with the impression that overall corruption has come down in the panchayats after the introduction of the new system. This impression is based on the feelings and views of the elected women members and the gram sabha members consulted.

It is interesting to compare the responses of elected members and gram sabha members on the issue of corruption. While only 15.4 percent of elected members saw an increase in corruption, 30.4 percent of gram sabha members noticed that the level of corruption has increased.

iii. Reasons for Increase in Corruption - Response of PR/ Members

Many reasons were given by the elected members for the increase in corruption. The high rate of increase in the flow of funds to the panchayats was seen as the main reason for the increase in corruption by majority of the respondents. With the devolution of power, an array of people (members, politicians, conveners etc.) have to be satisfied, for getting things done. This was yet another reason for the rise in corruption. It was highlighted that the quantum of corruption was high in the case of public activities like construction of roads, bridges etc. Another set of respondents referred to the over politicisation of panchayat affairs as responsible for the increase in corruption. Other reasons included: the united and powerful ruling coalitions, pressure on spending the funds in a short time etc. Most of the members highlighted that non-corrupted members will be alienated from the team which they belong to, irrespective of whether they are bureaucrats or people's representatives.

iv. Reasons for increase in Corruption - Response of Gram Sabha Members

Similar were the responses of the gram sabha members regarding the reasons for the increase in corruption. One-third of the members (33.7 percent) were of the view that with the devolution of large amount of funds to the panchayat, there has also been a decentralisation of corruption leading to its increase. One-fifths of the members (19.6 percent) said that, in the present context a large number of functionaries have to be satisfied, to get things done. This also led to increase in corruption. Over politicisation - leading to the members functioning according to the whims and fancies of political parties, was another reason stated by 14.1 percent of the respondents. Other reasons highlighted were, the helplessness of people, the feeling that those who are corrupt can go scot free after committing corruption, absence of fear of being caught etc.

v. Reasons for Decrease in Corruption - Response of PRI Members

Majority (60.9 percent) of the elected members attributed the decrease in corruption to the fact that people being the main stakeholders in the present system, there is little or no room for any corrupt practices. Another reason is the increase in the presence of women in the new system. The fear of being questioned in the gram sabha and demand for transparency - were yet other reasons stated by the elected members for the decrease in corruption. Other reasons include: women being honest in their work, avoidance of middle men, service mindedness etc.

vi. Reasons for decrease in Corruption - Response of Gram Sabha Members

The responses of gram sabha members are more or less similar. More than one-third (35.9 percent) of the members were of the view that the questioning by the people in the gram sabha is the major reason for the decrease in corruption. The fact that people themselves do the work through beneficiary committees was yet another reason highlighted by the respondents. While 11.8 percent do not know the reason for the decrease in corruption, 5.9 percent have attributed this to the present people's campaign and 4.7 percent to the presence of women in positions of power. Other reasons given were: greater awareness of people, increased participation of women, constant touch of the people with the panchayat, situations of corruption reduced etc.

vii. Response for 'No Change' in Corruption - Response of Elected Members and Gram Sabha Members

A small proportion (5.8 percent) of the elected members and the gram sabha members (6.6 percent) said that there is no change in the level of corruption in the present system as compared to the former. They pointed out that, like in the former days, the public work activities of the panchayat are still carried out solely by the contractors, even though the responsibility lies with the beneficiaries committee. There are instances where the beneficiaries committee conveners and panchayat members stand party to corrupt practices. Moreover, the details of the public work carried out like the length of road, the amount and type of raw materials used, transportation charge, labour charge etc. are seldom displayed on the panchayat news board. The selection of beneficiaries is also greatly influenced by political interests and PRI members with little participation of the people.

viii. Corruption among Men and Women PR/ Members

A comparison in the matter of corruption between men and women PRI members will be very interesting and educative. Hence this point was probed among the two groups: elected women members and the gram sabha members.

An overwhelming majority of elected women panchayat members (84.6 percent) were of the view that men members are more corrupt. The proportion of gram sabha members who shared the same view is

75.6. Around 14 percent elected women representatives and around 16 percent of the gram sabha members were of the opinion that men and women are equal in the matter of corruption (table 28).

In the view of the elected women and gram sabha members, corruption among women is mainly in the form of partiality I nepotism shown in the selection of beneficiaries and conniving over financial irregularities of a minor nature. But in the case of men, corruption is mainly in the form of collection of commissions, bribes, financial malpractices. They systematically and 'profitably' interfere in the selection of beneficiaries, choosing of convenors, identification of contractors etc., tamper with the quality of articles. misuse one's position and power in favour of their political party etc.

ix. Reasons for Women's Corruption - Their Own Responses

The majority of the elected women members (44.9 percent) said that there is no corruption among women. as women are by nature afraid of committing corruption! Moreover they are new to the field and had little understanding on various aspects related to corruption. Women are also more sympathetic towards others and therefore are more honest. However, 12.8 percent of the elected members stated that there are some corruption among women because of the lack of ability of women to take independent decisions and the consequent dependence on political parties and others. Desire for social and economic benefits (11.5 percent) and personal interests (5.1 percent) were the other reasons cited by the members. Ten percent said that they did not know the reason for corruption among women.

x. Reasons for Women's Corruption - Response of Gram Sabha Members

Nearly one-fifths (19.8 percent) of the grama sabha members found vested interests as the reason for corruption among women. While 9.9. percent attributed the corruption among women to political party influence, 7.6 percent attributed it to the influence of husband/ relatives and others. People taking advantage of the lack of awareness I ignorance of the - women members was the reason given by 9.2 percent of the respondents. Nearly 5 percent said that women just get a portion of the siphoned money and an equal number (4.9 percent) said that they cooperate with corrupt people for the fear of losing their seat. Seven percent said that women are not courageous enough and only men are capable of indulging in corruption. Some (13.9 percent) of the respondents said they did not know the reason for women's corruption.

xi. Reasons for Corruption' Among Men - Responses of Elected Women Members

Political interests and greed for money was the reason stated by more than one-fourth (28.2 percent) of the women members as the reason for corruption among men. Eleven percent said that men have the confidence gained through previous corrupt practices and 6.4 percent said that male members have the confidence that the party will always come to their rescue. Other reasons included bad example of other corrupt men. who escaped punishment, boldness that they can manage even if caught etc. Fifteen percent did not know the reason for corruption among men.

xii. Reasons for Corruption Among Men - Response of Gram Sabha Members

Desire for political and economic benefits was the reason given by more than one-fifth (21.1 percent) of the grama sabha members for corruption among male members. This was followed by reasons like, the thought that there is no one to question them and can face any consequence (15.8 percent) and committing corruption to maintain their present status and position (12.5 percent). Other reasons stated by the grama sabha members included, absence of a strict punitive mechanism, strong hold on the party and the belief that they will be protected at any cost, experience in handling difficult situations, used to committing corruption etc. A fair number (18.2 percent) did not know the reasons for corruption.

xiii. Suggestions for Removing Corruption

A variety of interesting responses were given by both elected members and grama sabha members for removing corruption among male and female members.

xiv. Suggestions for women PR/ Members - Their Own Responses

Absence of proper orientation/ understanding is seen as one of the major concern of corruption. Among the respondents, 19 percent said that women PRI members should be given proper orientation. One-tenth (9.6 percent) were of the view that women should be developed as responsible citizens and another 9.6 percent said that political interference should be stopped. Some (11.5 percent) did not have any opinion on the matter. Other suggestions given were, need for a monitoring mechanism, electing the right candidates, strict legal action, strong opposition, increasing existing compensation package, conducting lightning inspection. cooperation of the officials in enforcing the law etc.

xv. Suggestions for women PRJ Members - Response of Gram Sabhs Members

Conscientisation/ awareness of both the general public and PRI members was the suggestion given by 13.9 percent of the grama sabha members. This was followed by responses like, women members need to enhance their knowledge and skills (11.6 percent), people should be given an opportunity to remove corrupt members from office (10.6 percent), members should develop as responsible citizens (9.6 percent) and ending of over-politicisation (6.6 percent). Other suggestions included avoiding interference of husband and relatives, encouraging selfless service, attaining self reliance, promoting unity and cooperation among women members which will help reduce the pressure from various quarters to indulge in corruption, etc.

xvi. Suggestions for male PRI Members - Responses of Elected Women Members

One-fourth of the elected members (25.6 percent) suggested that there should be a provision to recall the corrupt member and initiate legal actions. People should be more alert (14.7 percent), put an end to over politicisation (9.6 percent), conscientisation / education of members (8.9 percent), developing oneself into responsible citizens (8.9 percent) and the need for a monitoring mechanism (6.4 percent) were other suggestions given by them. There were also suggestions like enhancing compensation package, strengthening gram sabhas, imposing fines on the guilty, promoting social commitment, cultivating effective opposition parties etc.

xvii. Suggestions for male PR/ Members - Responses of Gram Sabha Members

In the opinion of the gram sabha members (13.5 percent), the grama sabha should be given powers to recall corrupt members. Nearly one-fifth (18.2 percent) suggested disqualification of the member and initiating legal actions to recover the loss. There were also suggestions like the ending of overpoliticization (12.2 percent) and conducting awareness generation programmes (11.6 percent). Other suggestions given by the gram sabha members include, electing decent people, and those who are not political party fanatics, giving nice thrashing in public, giving training to work selflessly for the good of the people etc.

3.9. The Issue of Rotation of Women Reservation Seats

i. Responses of Elected Women Representatives

The opinion of the elected women about the rotation of reservation seats was another important area of the study. The majority (66.7 percent) felt that the present system is an appropriate one (table 29). Several reasons were highlighted by the respondents in this regard, such as:

- The rotation gives opportunity to more and more women to enter politics;
- This will give an opportunity to women to learn different things from many people;
- It provides opportunities to various panchayats to benefit from the presence of women's leadership and their positive contributions;
- When the existing seats rotate, the women members of the same constituency will be motivated to contest in the same place even though it is an unreserved place;
- Generally men are more powerful to take advantage of the resource allocation which leads to more fund allocation to their constituencies compared to women members, thereby there is a possibility of more development activities in the constituencies represented by men members.
- Women prefer schemes of individual benefits, while men tend to take up other schemes like infrastructural development, so it is more useful to have a man member after a woman member.

A significant section of the elected women (27.6 percent) were of the view that the rotation of reservation seats is not desirable. They narrated several reasons. Among the respondents of this category, nearly one-third said that it takes one term (5 years) for a woman to learn the rules, procedures, intricacies, clarity on the issues and problems of the locality, and get experience for effective interventions; all this experience goes waste if she does not get a chance to contest in the same ward at least for one more term. One-fourth of the respondents felt that if rotation is practiced, the continuity of the schemes and programmes they started will be disturbed/ stopped. Yet another one-fourth of the respondents said that more opportunities are necessary for ensuring sustainable impacts. Other reasons included: since men's priorities are different, they will not be interested in following up and completing the initiatives of women, women are more conscientious about the utilisation of funds, so it is advantageous to have women members consecutively for more than one term.

ii. Responses of Gram Sabha Members

The majority of gram sabha members (66.9 percent) felt that the present system of rotation of seats is an appropriate system. Among them more than one-third said that rotation of seats gives opportunities to more and more women to enter politics, hence it is needed. The need for change was reflected in the responses of one-fourth of the respondents, of whom some said that it will provide an opportunity for a change in every ward and few others highlighted that it will provide opportunities for other wards to understand the benefits of having women representatives in the panchayat administration. In addition to these, more women will get benefits, men are in general more effective in delivering goods, so a change is welcome, it will provide an opportunity for solving the problems of women in general etc., are the other opinions of the respondents.

Among the remaining gram sabha members 31.4 percent were not in favour of the present system of rotation and 1.3 percent did not feel the need for such a system. The reasons highlighted by them included: women should be given more opportunities to show effective performance, compared to men, women members are able to understand the problems of women better, and hence they should be retained in the same ward for a longer period. Some felt that still more seats should be reserved for women. On the other hand, 6 percent were for providing larger representation to men, as, they said, women have various inhibitions like visiting police stations etc., to get things done. Other reasons cited by them included: since it takes some time for women to learn and get experience for effective interventions, work undertaken will be left incomplete etc.

With regard to the question of extending the term of present rotation of seats, one-third of the elected women members (32.7 percent) suggested that change is required in the present provision of rotation, that is, extending the term from one to two terms (five to ten years) (table 30). Several were emphatic

that the women member should be provided opportunity to contest in the same ward by retaining the reservation seat for more than one term. Some of them even argued that the same ward must be maintained for a minimum of 3 terms.

The majority (58.9 percent) of the respondents (total elected members) were of the view that the present rotation system is anti-woman, because those women who have developed their leadership abilities through hard work during 5 years are denied the opportunity to serve in the same field and to make effective use of their abilities in subsequent years. This is a waste and goes against the interests of women. Another section (35.9 percent) of the respondents, maintained that the present rotation system in no way hinders the effective use of leadership abilities of women members. A small section of (5.1 percent) members have no opinion on this (table 31).

3.10. Change in Leadership

Changes in the leadership of the elected women members during the past three and a half years was also looked into. Majority of women PRI members (89.7 percent) think that their leadership has increased over the years, which consist of significant (39.7 percent) and moderate improvement (50 percent). A few respondents (10.3 percent) felt that there has been no change in leadership (table 32). The change factor in leadership performance is a good indicator of the quality of involvement. That the majority feel there has been improvement in this matter speaks well of the fraternity of women panchayat members.

3.11. Level of Self-Confidence

A comparison of the level of self-confidence in the beginning of their career and at present revealed that, they (40.4 percent) were quite confident already from the beginning, of effectively discharging all the responsibilities related to their new position and the remaining (53.8 percent) said they lacked this confidence at the beginning (table 33). This group of respondents were really afraid of the challenges that lay ahead, especially in the area of facing the people in the gram sabha. Some used to get upset by the remarks of the grama sabha members, who failed to get any benefits. The remaining few (5.8 percent) said that they had some amount of confidence as they took up the new responsibilities.

With regard to their present level of confidence, the vast majority (82.7 percent) said they have gained the necessary confidence. Only 5.8 percent felt that their confidence level has not improved even after these experiences. The reasons for no change were, lack of adequate formal education, lack of training, lack of opportunities for acting independently (much of the work was being done by others, such as the DRPs, task force members, retired people, other samiti members), lack of adequate co-operation from the officials, other members and functionaries like the President, the Secretary. Quite a few (11.5 percent) responded that there has been some improvement, but not adequate.

3.12. Changes brought about in the Women Community

Another issue focused in the study was the nature and extent of changes that occurred in the community of women in the panchayats in the areas of the women's perception, attitude, participation etc. as a result of the entry of women into the Panchayat administration system. The response of an overwhelming majority indicate that there have been visible changes among women in one or more of the areas mentioned. Among such changes the most important regards participation. While one third (32.1 percent) of the respondents (table

34) have mentioned this as the main area of change the responses of a few (14.7 percent) emphasize the approach of women and quite a large number of (24.4 percent) respondents felt that very important change has occurred both in attitude and participation. The women who have noticed change in their perception is 8.3 percent. It is obvious that consistent change in behaviour (participation) presupposes change in perception first and then in attitude.

But since it is easier to notice behavioral changes, higher number of people have mentioned participation as the most prominent element of change.

Further, it was found that higher participation among women was evident in their presence and active involvement in the processes of gram sabhas (tables 35, 36 and 37). They are also active in the matter of forming groups. Many women have expressed their wish to contest in the coming panchayat elections - an unmistakable indication of a greater interest among women in panchayat. The comparison is between the old panchayat and the new panchayat.

In any case it is very encouraging to note that in the eyes of a large number of elected women members, the entry of women into the administrative set up of the new Panchayati raj has led to positive changes among women. This was after all one of the main objectives of the new Panchayati raj.

3.13. Sensitivity towards Schemes for Women and Weaker Sections

When women were given greater participation through reservation, one of the expectation was that this welcome shift in gender structure would improve the lot of women and the weaker sections, since women generally have a soft corner for the suffering and the marginalised. Hence another issue considered in this study has been the sensitivity of women members towards the issues and schemes of the weaker sections.

i. Response of Elected Women Members

Majority of the women elected members (69.9 percent) said that they have been showing preferences for taking up and, implementing schemes for the benefit of the weaker sections, women and children (table 38). The remaining admitted that they have not shown any such preferences. A number of explanations have been given by the women members as reasons for their special interest in the schemes for weaker sections. Among them, the majority stated that being themselves women, they are in a position to understand women's problems better. Another significant portion felt it was their duty to work for the uplift of the weaker sections, particularly women. Compassion for the suffering, women being more serious about implementing the schemes, government directive that priority should be given to schemes for the weaker sections, were the other reasons given by the remaining respondents.

The nature of such schemes implemented by them during the past three and a half years was also looked into. The responses show that two types of schemes have been implemented by them. One was the plan schemes, such as: SHGs, tailoring units, weaving units, women's projects, copra and coir making, DWCRA, pension, Co-operative societies, individual benefits, and the other was own initiatives, such as: training I exposure visit for women, self-employment activities.

It is to be noted that the first category (plan schemes) are routine items made compulsory by the system, demanding I allowing very little initiative on the side of women, while the second category (own initiatives) are entirely the work of women. The figures show that only a very few schemes in this sector have been implemented and hence women may not be credited with extra sensitivity for the weaker sections, although they seem to claim so.

ii. Responses of Gram Sabha Members

As regards the question of preferences shown by women PRI members in schemes benefiting to women and weaker sections, the majority of the grama sabha members (70.6 percent) said they were not aware of any such preference shown/ initiative taken by the women members. Only 29 percent said they were aware of such a preference among the women members. Among such initiatives noticed by the gram sabha members are items such as: Individual benefit schemes, formation of women's groups, training, SHGs.

The overall conclusion that emerges from these findings is that women's sensitivity to the development and welfare of the weaker sections (including women) is rather low.

3.14. Level of Performance

A notable fact cited by the respondents was about their level of performance. Fifty eight percent of the respondents said that they would not have performed better, if they were men. This shows that, inspite of the role conflict and the apparent gender based difficulties, these women still feel, that they can perform in the same way or better than men in the future. It is also an indication that women are capable of acting on the "strength of being a woman and not despite being a woman".

3.15. Interest in Contesting Again

Considering their lack/non-experience in the past, lack of opportunities and general apathy towards politics, it was but natural that reservation became the major factor which compelled women to contest the election. Seventy three percent of the respondents said that they would not have contested the election, if there had been no reservation. However, it is interesting to note here, that 16 percent of the respondents contested in unreserved seats. This proportion of women daring to contest in unreserved seats though small, is still a positive tendency which needs to be encouraged.

The responses of the women members, (after 3 years of political experience) regarding their interest to contest again. reveals the functional difficulties of their past years.

More than half the respondents (56 percent) said that they were interested in contesting the elections again, the others expressed their disinterest. Qualitative data revealed that an inter-play of the following factors were responsible for the declining interest of the respondents.

- One major factor was the dis-interest of their family members. This was mainly the result of the role conflict faced by the woman member, who was unable to do justice to her dual responsibility of PRI work and domestic affairs. Owing to the heavy work at the field/ office, she finds very little time to spend with her family.
- One factor which dissuades women from continuing as PRI members is financial constraint caused by increasing travel and other PRI related expenses. To fulfil her PRI obligations, the member has to travel widely. However, there is no provision for meeting the travel expenses. In several instances she had to meet some incidental expenses like the food and travel expenses of even the people who accompanied her. The meagre allowance they get is too inadequate. This is all the more severe in the case of women members whose husbands were unemployed or retired.
- The loss of individual earnings was another reason. This was highlighted by those members who were engaged in some income earning occupations like cattle keeping hen/ duck rearing etc. and who due to pressure of work could not attend to their occupation. Those in government service had to either resign or take leave for working as full time panchayat members.
- Yet another reason stated by some members was their pressure of work and pressure from the public. The people in general have over expectations regarding the benefits available from the panchayat which has resulted through the propaganda related to People's Planning I Campaign programme. The members, on the other hand, can work only according to the guidelines provided. This created tension between the members and the local people; especially the presidents became the target of people's wrath. This was a de-motivating factor for many, as they did not want to face such unpleasant situations.

- One of the major issues given by majority of the respondents was the undesirable interference of the politicians in their decision making and implementing functions. Though they silently accepted this interference in the initial period, it became a demotivating factor in the subsequent period.

However there were members who took up the challenge and said that they would contest the elections, once they have equipped themselves with the necessary knowledge and skills required of a member. This is a positive trend that should be encouraged.

While some others have responded that they would contest the elections only if the party compelled them, there were others who said that they would surely contest, if they are given the opportunity. One person remarked: "now that I have started understanding various things, I am interested in contesting the next elections". Some others were all in praise for the People's Planning/ Campaign programme, as they felt that, through it, they could do something useful for the people. Hence they were interested to contest again.

3.16. Other Observations and Findings

- A factor, which affects the daily work of the women members, was their travel and the lack of transportation facilities. This is severe in hilly areas like Wayanad and Idukki. In addition, the meagre allowance they get from the panchayat is too inadequate to meet their travel expenses. They have often to depend on their husbands/ family members to meet travel expenses. Those members who belong to the low income group found extreme difficulty to find the resource.
- Even though governmental and non-governmental agencies have organised some training programmes for women members, they have not been able to make use of the facilities due to various reasons like lack of time, distance, the feeling that the training will be of no use etc. But in the case of the women presidents, many said they are making good use of these services.
- Whenever the women members got acquainted and experienced with the new system, there was a remarkable change in their knowledge and attitude, which ultimately increased their leadership and identity.
- But in the case of a few, their panchayat work experience has not led to any significant. change. Not only that, they are waiting for the day to be freed from their PRI responsibilities.
- Many women members expressed that they were not able to use their capabilities and improve their work due to undesirable political interferences.
- In general the women are of the opinion that the main factor which prevents them from taking and implementing independent decision is over politicisation.
- Also the interference from husband/ father/ brother etc. have been pointed out as obstacles to their independent action. In the early days father/ husband/ brother have participated in panchayat activities as proxies of the women members. Many have said that this tendency is coming down.
- The study also revealed that the retired and elderly women are getting more time thereby active and they get better recognition from the public.
- Several respondents said that the people do not have a positive and co-operative mentality towards the panchayat members, in particular women members. As a result they do not get cooperation and support from the public, even though they do very hard and sincere work. This is affecting the confidence and commitment of the members.

- It was pointed out that the lack of preparation and non-conducive environment for developing their knowledge and skills has seriously hindered their effective functioning.
- Another finding was the conflict arising between women members and people on account of the lack of clarity on the powers and roles of the members.

3.17. Suggestions for Better Performance

As mentioned elsewhere, one-third reservation provided an Opportunity to a large number of women to participate in the political process. Dis-regarding the circumstances that led to their entry in political process, the experience of the past three years made the women members realise their inadequacies with respect to their functional and administrative skills. Based on the experiences, all the members expressed the need for intensive training/ orientation to equip them with necessary skills and knowledge to discharge their duties in an effective and efficient way.

The data further showed that while 63 percent of the members expressed their need for training in self-development alone, 27 percent opted for a combination of training in self-development along with the need for financial powers and government support. Those who expressed this need wanted training in such specific areas like understanding the panchayat Act and rules, project preparation, improving skills in leadership, accounting, communication, public speaking, micro-planning, preparation of minutes, panchayat administration, local resource mobilisation, women's role in panchayat and community development.

CHAPTER IV

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

- To become real 'participants' in the panchayat administrative bodies, evincing high levels of performance, women need to develop their confidence to face the challenges of the system and prepare themselves to enter the political arena without undue influence of external factors. This calls for training/ awareness programmes which will provide for such pre-preparation to women before the elections. The task of providing such time - bound programmes can be taken up by the government, political parties, organisations working towards bringing about social change, voluntary organisations and such other agencies.
- Though the aim of reservation is to create opportunities of participation in governance for women, in view of the principle of ensuring social justice to women, women entering the area of governance has to be looked upon as an instance of basic social change. Such a perception should be created and cultivated by women in general and political parties in particular. For this, awareness workshops, seminars, discussions etc. should be conducted by governmental/ non- governmental agencies.
- If the panchayats are to function as self governing and people centred organisations, it is necessary that those in power are able to take and implement unbiased decisions. The influence of the family members in the decision making and implementing processes should therefore be seen as a matter of serious concern. The family members should be educated in these matters and favourable circumstances need to be created for the effective functioning of the PRI members. This calls for the need for a joint education programme. Non-governmental organisations can make effective contributions in this area. In order to achieve better results, this education programme can be linked with the existing continuing education/ adult education programme. Favourable policy decisions should, therefore, be taken by the government in this regard.
- It is but natural that intense role conflict arises when there is a clash between two equally important roles, each requiring much time and serious commitment. Equipping the individual to handle the dual roles to overcome the circumstances which lead to conflict, not only helps reduce the intensity of the conflict, but also helps them fulfil the various roles in a time bound manner. Individual and group counselling and gender sensitisation programmes will be helpful in this regard. Voluntary organisations can play a decisive role in this area.
- Role conflict appears to be severe in the case of women who are employed, as they have to play three roles - employee, house-wife and panchayat member/ president. It is seen that lack of time prevents such members from active participation in panchayat affairs. Where the women find it difficult to handle their official duties and panchayat affairs simultaneously, they should either voluntarily keep away from the next elections or concerned parties should encourage them to do so. This should be taken seriously by those who are employed and also by the political parties.
- Women who have less responsibilities at home, older women, those who receive moral support from their families, and those who enter the local bodies on their own initiative and have equipped themselves with the necessary knowledge and skills, are able to perform better and devote more time for panchayat activities. People in general and the political parties in particular should therefore make concerted effort to identify and encourage such women to contest the next election. At the same time efforts should be made also to ensure the representation of the younger generation.
- There is clear indication that the social status of women PRI members (in their family and society) has improved. This is really an effect of women becoming part of the political/ administrative system. So more and more women should be encouraged to take part in the political process, thus improving their

social status. Political parties and citizens groups should take necessary steps to educate I motivate I promote women in this direction.

- Since it is evident from the study that the economic status of most of the women members has worsened/declined due to several factors, such as traveling expenses, contingency expenses etc., incentives should be provided to the panchayat members, on actual basis. Moreover, compulsory collections by the political parties/other agencies in the name of donations from the panchayat members should be stopped. This will also help reduce the corrupt practices among members.
- Time - bound awareness programmes regarding panchayat Act, rules, development programmes, roles and responsibilities of members etc. should be conducted at the gram/ block/ district panchayat levels. Appropriate training programmes to increase the capabilities of members to perform their roles and responsibilities effectively, should also be conducted. The government should take the initiative to conduct a joint programme on the above aspects with the cooperation and participation of PRIs and voluntary organisations.
- It is a matter of serious concern that the level of accountability and transparency of the women PRI members is either moderate/ low. In this regard government should take timely steps to provide training programmes and general guidelines to improve the awareness and skills of members, effect changes in their attitudes and bring about favourable policy changes. Voluntary civil society organisations should take special interest and initiative to conduct such programmes. Moreover such training programmes should be provided after each election and within six month's time.
- A Human resources development project which aims at improving the productivity of members and thereby improving their performance. and increasing the awareness and skills of the grama sabha members to ensure their participation in the local administration process should be initiated and implemented by the government. Special emphasis should be given to the development of women PRI members in this project.
- Panchayats and various departments, individually or jointly should organise and conduct general educational programmes for greater cooperation and fellowship among panchayat members, between panchayat members and officials and members of the general public.
- Human resources development and community education should be a part of the panchayat's development programme/ project. A separate fund for such programme should be earmarked in the budget and atleast 5 percent of the plan fund allocated to the panchayats should be set apart for the above purpose. In addition, the panchayats should also create funds for such programmes.
- The government and political parties should take the responsibility of creating a conducive environment, in which, panchayat members, especially women panchayat members, are able to take and implement independent, unbiased and fair decisions. Political parties. in particular, should make sure that undue political interferences do not hinder the smooth functioning of the above processes.
- A lot of time, opportunities and creative energies of women are lost in the initial years due to lack of self-confidence. It affects their participation/ involvement in development activities. To obviate this, concerted efforts should be made by the government and civil society groups to identify the right candidates, build their awareness, develop their leadership and communication skills and thereby their self-confidence and thus prepare them for the work ahead.
- Proper strategies should be adopted both by voluntary organisations and political parties to identify potential women candidates in advance and proper intensive orientation, which will help develop good cadre groups of women in the PRI, should be given prior to election. This will not only improve their capacity to effectively face the challenges faced immediately, after assuming office as PRI member I president, but also increase their self-confidence and leadership abilities.

- Even though majority of the respondents in one voice spoke of a decline in corruption in general, some have expressed concern about the trend of increase in corruption among a section of the members. This was mainly due to inefficiency/non-existence of proper mechanisms for tackling the incidence of corruption. As -an effective remedy for this alarming trend, it may be useful to constitute a panchayat vigilance body/cell, consisting of the representatives of various committees and groups, with the function of monitoring and reporting any development that smacks of corruption.
- Majority of the members are concerned that those who do not indulge in corruption get isolated from their peers and this demoralises and demotivates them from taking an honest and courageous stand for implementing programmes for the betterment of the community. To keep up their morale and retain their motivation for honest practices and commitment, it will be worthwhile if the government and the local administration departments constituted a system of giving award at the panchayat, district and state levels to those who top the list of members noted for honesty. Awards should be given to men and women separately.
- It is encouraging to note the level of corruption among women is considerably low when compared to their male counterparts. Women generally tend to shy away from corrupt practices. This positive gender propensity can be creatively exploited by providing extra encouragement to women's leadership in the panchayats which will work as an antidote to corruption. Hence emphasise has to be given to systematic leadership training for women representatives. By equipping themselves with adequate knowledge and functional skills, women members will be able to reduce their dependence on others (mainly men) and free themselves from the clutches of political parties. The overall result of this empowerment of women will be more transparent/ corruption free panchayat administration.
- Strict legal measures should be enforced in the government to check and stop corruption especially in public work activities.
- Political parties should take stern action. such as legal proceedings, against, corrupt members, by refusing tickets in the succeeding elections, cancellation of party membership etc.
- Proper education and awareness should be given to the people to be more vigilant regarding corruption and not do anything that might encourage corrupt practices.
- Gram sabhas should be more transparent and accountable, and the level and practices of corruption should be included in the agenda of grama sabha discussions.
- Rotation of seats is a proper arrangement. But concern has been expressed by several on the development of women's leadership and its future utilisation. Political parties should come forward to make the best use of the leadership of experienced women for the benefit of the community, by extending to them further opportunities to contest in the succeeding elections, even in unreserved seats. The NGOs and other citizen groups should also develop a mechanism for making use of such experienced women leaders.
- To promote pro-poor sensitivity and update their informations on available schemes for women and weaker sections, it may be useful to conduct special orientations for women elected members.
- It is advisable to organise periodic sharing sessions at the regional and state levels for the women members in order to promote mutual support and strengthening. Interface workshops may be organised at regional and state levels for creating greater trust and cooperation between the genders.
- A moderate compensation package should be offered to PRI members to motivate them and make use of their maximum effort and commitment.

Table 1
Age-wise Break-up of PRI Members

| Age Group | No. of members | Percent |
|-------------------|----------------|---------|
| Between 23 and 35 | 53 | 33.5 |
| Between 36 and 45 | 70 | 44.3 |
| Between 46 and 50 | 18 | 11.4 |
| Between 51 and 56 | 17 | 10.8 |
| Total | 158 | 100 |

Source: Saheyi survey, first stage

Table 2
PRI Members and Educational Qualification I.

| Education | No. of Members | Percentage |
|-------------------|----------------|------------|
| Neo-Literate | 1 | 0.6 |
| Primary | 1 | 0.6 |
| Middle | 3 | 1.9 |
| High School | 73 | 46.2 |
| Intermediate | 38 | 24.1 |
| Graduate or above | 42 | 26.6 |
| Total | 158 | 100.0 |

Source: Sahayi survey, first stage

Table 3

| Marital Status | No. of Members | Percentage |
|----------------|----------------|------------|
| Unmarried | 11 | 7.0 |
| Married | 140 | 88.6 |
| Divorced | 3 | 1.9 |
| Separated | 4 | 2.5 |
| Total | 158 | 100.0 |

Source: Sahayi survey, first stage

Table 4
PRI Members and their Main Occupation

| Main Occupation | No. of members | Percentage |
|-----------------|----------------|------------|
| Agriculture | 1 | 0.6 |
| Business | 1 | 0.6 |
| Teachers | 22 | 13.9 |
| Advocates | 3 | 1.9 |
| Homeo Doctor | 1 | 0.6 |
| Others | 4 | 2.5 |
| House-wife | 126 | 79.7 |
| Total | 158 | 100.0 |

Source: Sahayi survey, first stage

Table 5

| Nature of association/ Decision influencer | Self | Political Party | BGO | Husband | Self Husband & Others | Total |
|---|----------|-----------------|---------|----------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Having political association | 5 (5.3) | 48(50.5) | 6(6.3) | 16(16.8) | 20(21.05) | 95(60.1) |
| No political association | 11(17.5) | 32 (50.8) | 9(14.3) | 6 (9.5) | 5 (7.9) | 63(39.9) |
| Total | 16(10.1) | 80(50.7) | 15(9.5) | 22(13.9) | 25(15.8) | 158 (100.0) |

Source: Sahayi survey. first stage

Table 6

| Type of role conflict | No. of members | Percentage |
|---|----------------|------------|
| PRI work suffering because of family responsibilities | 15 | 9.5 |
| Family suffering because of PRI work | 71 | 44.9 |
| Self-Suffering | 6 | 3.8 |
| PRI work suffering and family suffering | 1 | 0.6 |
| Family suffering and self suffering | 1 | 0.6 |
| No role conflict | 64 | 40.5 |
| Total | 158 | 100.0 |

Source: Sahayi survey, first stage

Table 7

Status of family and Nature of Change

| Nature if Change | Number of Response |
|------------------|--------------------|
| Improved | 110 (70.5) |
| Deteriorated | 11 (7.10) |
| No Change | 35 (22.4) |
| Total | 156 (100.0) |

Source: Sahayi survey, second stage

Table 8

| Change in Status | Social status (No. of responses) | Economic Status (No. of responses) |
|------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Yes | 149 (95.6) | 58 (37.2) |
| No | 7 (4.5) | 98 (62.8) |
| Total | 156 (100.0) | 156 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey, second stage

Table 9

| Level of Awareness | President only | All members |
|--------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Very High | 0 | 1 (0.6) |
| High | 3 (7.5) | 12 (7.6) |
| Moderate | 24 (60.0) | 68 (43.0) |
| Low | 13 (30.0) | 66 (41.8) |
| Very Low | 1 (2.5) | 11 (7.0) |
| Total | 40 (100.0) | 158 (100.0) |

Note. Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey, first stage

Table 10

| Awareness compared to member | No. of members | Percentage |
|------------------------------|----------------|------------|
| High | 3 | 1.9 |
| Same | 67 | 42.4 |
| Low | 88 | 55.7 |
| Total | 158 | 100.0 |

Source: Sahayi survey, first stage

Table 11

Rating by Gram Sabha Members on Awareness of Female and Male Elected Members

| Level of Awareness | Female members' Awareness (No. of responses) | Male member's Awareness (No. of responses) |
|--------------------|---|---|
| Very high | 2 (0.6) | 6 (1.9) |
| High | 42 (13.3) | 109 (34.5) |
| Moderate | 135 (42.7) | 173 (54.7) |
| Low | 115 (36.4) | 28 (8.9) |
| Very Low | 22 (7.0) | 0 |
| Total | 316 (100.0) | 316 (100.0) |

Note Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey, first stage

Table 12

| Level of participation | Presidents only (No. of responses) | All members (No. of responses) |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Very high | 0 | 1 (0.6) |
| High | 13 (32.5) | 44 (27.8) |
| Moderate | 16 (40.0) | 63 (39.9) |
| Low | 11 (27.5) | 46 (29.1) |
| Very Low | 0 | 4 (2.5) |
| Total | 40 (100.0) | 158 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey. first stage

Table 13

| Participation compared to male members | No. of responses | Percentage |
|--|------------------|------------|
| High | 35 | 22.2 |
| Same | 77 | 48.7 |
| Low | 46 | 29.1 |
| Total | 158 | 100.0 |

Source: Sahayi survey. first stage

Table 14
Rating by Gram Sabha Members on Participation of Female and Male Elected Members

| Level of Participation | Female members' participation (No. of responses) | Male members' participation (No. of responses) |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Very high | 1 (0.3) | 5 (1.6) |
| High | 104 (32.9) | 65 (20.6) |
| Moderate | 132 (41.8) | 222 (70.3) |
| Low | 64 (20.3) | 23 (7.3) |
| Very Low | 15 (4.7) | 1 (0.3) |
| Total | 316 (100.0) | 316 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey. first stage

Table 15
Self-Rating on Accountability

| Level of Accountability | Presidents only (No. of responses) | All members (No. of responses) |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| High | 7 (17.5) | 31 (19.6) |
| Moderate | 22 (55.0) | 78 (49.4) |
| Low | 11 (27.5) | 45 (28.5) |
| Very Low | 0 | 4 (2.5) |
| Total | 40 (100.0) | 158 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey. first stage

Table 16
Female Accountability Vs Male Accountability

| Accountability, compared to male members | No. of responses | Percentage |
|--|------------------|------------|
| High | 28 | 17.7 |
| Same | 87 | 55.1 |
| Low | 43 | 27.2 |
| Total | 158 | 100.0 |

Source: Sahayi survey, first stage

Table.17

| Level of Accountability | Female members' Accountability (No. of responses) | Male members' Accountability (No. of responses) |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Very high | 3 (0.9) | 0 |
| High | 94 (29.7) | 30 (9.5) |
| Moderate | 144 (45.6) | 230 (72.8) |
| Low | 65 (20.6) | 56 (17.7) |
| Very Low | 10 (3.2) | 0 |
| Total | 316 (100.0) | 316 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey. first stage

Table 18
Self Rating on Transparency

| Level of Transparency | Presidents only (No. of responses) | All members (No. of responses) |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Very High | 0 | 0 |
| High | 6 (15.0) | 25 (15.8) |
| Moderate | 21 (52.5) | 95 (60.1) |
| Low | 13 (32.5) | 33 (20.9) |
| Very Low | 0 | 5 (3.2) |
| Total | 40 (100.0) | 158 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey. first stage

Table 19

Female Transparency Vs Male Transparency

| Transparency rating compared to male members | No. of responses | Percentage |
|--|------------------|------------|
| High | 30 | 19.0 |
| Same | 104 | 65.8 |
| Low | 24 | 15.2 |
| Total | 158 | 100.0 |

Source: Sahayi survey. first stage

Table 20
Rating by Gram Sabha Members on

| Level of Transparency | Female members' Transparency (No. of responses) | Male members' Transparency (No. of responses) |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| Very high | 2 (0.6) | 0 |
| High | 82 (25.9) | 19 (6.0) |
| Moderate | 167 (52.8) | 191 (60.4) |
| Low | 60 (19.0) | 60 (19.0) |
| Very low | 5 (1.6) | 46 (14.6) |
| Total | 316 (100.0) | 316 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey, first stage

Table 21
Self-Rating on Self Reliance

| Level of Self-reliance | Presidents only (No. of responses) | All members (No. of responses) |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Very high | 0 | 2 (1.3) |
| High | 4 (10.0) | 19 (12.0) |
| Moderate | 9 (22.5) | 27 (17.1) |
| Low | 24 (60.0) | 89 (56.3) |
| Very Low | 3 (7.5) | 21 (13.3) |
| Total | 40 (100.0) | 158 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey, first stage

Table 24
Cooperation of Female and Male PRI Members to Elected Women Members

| Level of Co-operation | Female members' cooperation (No. of responses) | Male members' cooperation (No. of responses) |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| High | 33 (20.9) | 33 (20.9) |
| Moderate | 98 (62.0) | 93 (58.9) |
| Low | 27 (17.1) | 26 (16.5) |
| Very Low | 0 | 6 (3.8) |
| Total | 158 (100.0) | 158 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey, first stage

Table 25
Cooperation of Panchayat Secretary to Elected Women PRI Members

| Cooperation of panchayat secretary | No. of responses | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Very high | 1 | 0.6 |
| High | 52 | 32.9 |
| Moderate | 64 | 40.5 |
| Low | 34 | 21.5 |
| Very Low | 7 | 4.4 |
| Total | 158 | 100.0 |

Source: Sahayi survey, first stage

Table 26
Co-operation of Female and Male Government Official to Elected Women PRI Members

| Level of Co-operation | Co-operation of Female govt. officials | Co-operation of Male govt. officials |
|-----------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| High | 21 (13.3) | 23 (14.6) |
| Moderate | 97 (61.4) | 113 (71.5) |
| Low | 39 (24.7) | 22 (13.9) |
| Very low | 1 (0.6) | 0 |
| Total | 158 (100.0) | 158 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey, first stage

Table 27
Level of Corruption

| Level of Corruption | Elected members' response | Gram Sabha members' response |
|---------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Increased very much | 8 (5.1) | 46 (15.2) |
| Increased some what | 16 (10.3) | 46 (15.2) |
| Decreased some what | 85 (54.5) | 139 (45.9) |
| Decreased very much | 38 (24.3) | 31 (10.2) |
| No Change | 9 (5.8) | 20 (6.6) |
| Does not know | 0 | 21 (6.9) |
| Total | 156 (100.0) | 303 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey, second stage

Table 28
Person Corrupted

| Person Corrupted | Elected members' response | Gram Sabha members' response |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Men elected representatives | 132 (84.6) | 229 (75.6) |
| Women elected representatives | 0 | 5 (1.6) |
| Both men and women | 21 (13.5) | 48 (15.8) |
| Does not know | 3 (1.9) | 21 (6.9) |
| Total | 156 (100.0) | 303 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey, second stage

Table 29
Rotation of Reservation Seats

| Rotation of Seats | Elected members' response | Gram Sabha members' response |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Desirable arrangement | 104 (66.7) | 203 (66.9) |
| Undesirable arrangement | 43 (27.6) | 95 (31.4) |
| No opinion | 4 (2.6) | 0 |
| Does not know about the arrangement | 5 (3.2) | 1 (0.3) |
| No need for such an arrangement | 0 | 4 (1.3) |
| Total | 156 (100.0) | 303 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey, second stage

Table 30
Chance Required from Present Rotation System

| | |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Yes | 51 (32.7) |
| No | 98 (62.8) |
| No opinion | 7 (4.5) |
| Total | 156 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey, second stage

Table 31
Rotation Dampening Women's Leadership

| | |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| True | 92 (58.9) |
| False | 56 (35.9) |
| No opinion | 8 (5.1) |
| Total | 156 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey, second stage

Table32

| Nature of Change: | No. of response |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Remarkable improvement | 62 (39.7) |
| Moderate improvement | 78 (50.0) |
| No change | 16 (10.3) |
| Total | 156 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey, second stage

Table 33
Level of Self-confidence

| Stage | Had self-confidence | No self-confidence | Small degree of self-confidence | Total |
|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Initial stage | 63 (40.4) | 84 (53.8) | 9 (5.8) | 156 (100.0) |
| Present stage | 129 (82.7) | 9 (5.8) | 18 (11.5) | 156 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey, second stage

Table 34
Changes in Women Community

| Area of Change | No response |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| Perception | 13 (8.3) |
| Attitude | 9 (5.8) |
| Approach | 23 (14.7) |
| Participation | 50 (32.1) |
| Attitude and participation | 38 (24.4) |
| Changes in all | 15 (9.6) |
| Does not know | 7 (4.5) |
| No change | 1 (0.6) |
| Total | 156 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey, second stage

Table 35
Difference in level of Women's Participation

| Difference in level of participation | Elected member (No. of responses) | Gram Sabha member (No. of responses) |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Yes | 88 (56.4) | 163 (53.8) |
| No | 63 (40.4) | 133 (43.9) |
| Does not know | 5 (3.2) | 7 (2.3) |
| Total | 156 (100.0) | 303 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi Survey, second stage

Table 36
Nature of Difference

| Nature of difference | Elected members' response | Gram Sabha members' response |
|---|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Higher attendance of women in wards represented by women | 61 (69.3) | 84 (51.5) |
| Active participation of women in wards represented by women | 23 (26.1) | 50 (30.7) |
| Both higher attendance and active participation in wards represented by women | 4 (4.5) | 29 (17.8) |
| Total | 88 (100.0) | 163 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey, second stage

Table 37
Women's Participation in Wards of Women

| Level of participation | No. of responses |
|------------------------|------------------|
| Higher | 112 (71.8) |
| Lower | 29 (18.6) |
| Same | 14 (8.9) |
| Does not know | 1 (0.6) |
| Total | 156 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Table 38
Sensitivity Towards Schemes for Weaker Sections

| Preference shown | Elected members' response | Gram Sabha members' response |
|------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Yes | 109 (69.9) | 88 (29.0) |
| No | 47 (30.1) | 214 (70.6) |
| Does not know | 0 | 1 (0.3) |
| Total | 156 (100.0) | 303 (100.0) |

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Source: Sahayi survey, second stage

Table 39
Contesting Election in Unreserved Seats

| Contest in unreserved seat | No. of responses | Percentage |
|----------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Will not contest | 116 | 73.4 |
| Will contest | 42 | 26.6 |
| Total | 158 | 100.0 |

Source: Sahayi survey, first stage

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