Building Capacities Towards Leadership

FACTSHEET 2014

Capacity building of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) is an integral component of The Hunger Project’s (THP) strategy in India.

Affirmative action, as envisaged in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, paved the way for thousands of women to be public office holders in Panchayats. Yet patriarchal and feudal structures in India, traditionally exclude women from decision making, which impedes first time EWRs active involvement in Panchayats. Other challenges include inadequate knowledge about complex government procedures, limited literacy, and insufficient information on their role, rights and responsibilities. THP seized the opportunity of building the capacities of EWRs, so that they can claim their rightful place in decision making and work towards development, social and gender justice in their Panchayats.

OBJECTIVES OF CAPACITY BUILDING

To build the leadership and confidence of EWRs by enabling a conscious change within them - as women and as political leaders

To break down complex ideas, terminology and structures so that as duty bearers EWRs can negotiate public spaces with a better understanding

To equip EWRs with information on their role, rights, responsibilities and entitlements

To empower EWRs to vision, plan, prioritize, draw up strategy and implement goals

To build a cadre of trainers at the grassroots level to train EWRs

“I have gone through the leadership training programme and post the training now I am losing my attributes like fear, uncertainty, shyness and gaining things like boldness, individuality, versatility and managerial capacity in my leadership.”

K.Tamil Selvi - Ward member, Karumanthur Panchayat, Chellampatti, Block, Madurai District.
**PRINCIPLES AND METHODOLOGY**

Capacity building initiatives are participatory in nature

Adult learning principles are imbibed across all trainings

Training inputs are contextualized to the state and the reality of EWRs

All Training of Trainers (ToTs) are conducted by master trainers of THP

A gender and human rights perspective forms the foundation of all programmes

**CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVES**

Capacity building of elected women representatives is undertaken through their five-year tenure to ensure their participation and leadership through different stages of political growth. It includes building capacities at the level of the ‘self’ as well as at the level of them being elected representatives. Besides gaining technical skills, EWRs are introduced to the construction of gender, patriarchy, power identities, equity and equality, leadership, politics, group dynamics, conflict resolution and so on. These processes enable EWRs to analyse situations, view them from a gender and human rights perspective, thus mediating access to the most marginalised in the community and engaging with structures of local governance. The methods used to impart trainings include role-play, small group discussions, songs, learning games and exercises, lectures and case studies. There are key capacity building initiatives pioneered by The Hunger Project. These include the primary Women’s Leadership Workshops (WLWs) that focus on social citizenship, political citizenship and vision building. Technical information is imparted in Need Based Workshops (NBWs). Information is given on various government schemes, policies and acts. Training on communication skills, advocacy, legal literacy and skills to engage with media, bureaucracy and state is also conducted. Federation Building Workshops (FBWs) facilitate in organizing women into federations. Other capacity building initiatives include orientation of EWRs to conduct campaigns and lead advocacy on decentralization, violence against women, food security, increased reservation in Panchayats and in Parliament and during pre-election in Panchayats. All capacity building initiatives are preceded by a Training of Trainers (ToT), for trainers and mobilizers of community-based organizations, that THP partners with. To facilitate capacity building initiatives learning materials have been developed. The material comprises training modules, training manuals, workbooks, handouts and posters.

**CASE STUDY**

Khatun Bahan, Ward Member

Gram Panchayat Karamseevas, Block Tijara, District Alwar, Rajasthan,

Year of Election: 2010 for the post of Ward Member

Khatun Bahan leads a nomadic existence as she belongs to the Gadia Lohar tribe who are blacksmiths. She says, “While travelling from one village to another, I would see that people asked for votes in the name of development, but after winning the elections they would never show up again to ask about our problems. Therefore, when I got the opportunity to stand for elections from Karamseevas Panchayat due to the reservation for women, I grabbed it. I had to mortgage my jewellery to raise money for my election campaign, but it is an honour to serve the village and the people, and solve their problems.” Democratic decentralization has the required impact only if there is representation from different communities. Khatun has decided to represent her Lohar caste and respond to their needs and aspirations. While Panchayati Raj has empowered her to respond to these needs, society has thrown its fair share of challenges. The powerful people in the Panchayat tried to dominate given her low caste. She refused to be cowed down, and continued with the campaign. She won the elections only to be faced with more taunts regarding her capability to work as a Ward Member. She is well aware of the problems in her ward and has focused her attention in responding to the developmental needs. She has worked on getting regular drinking water supply and electricity to her ward and also proper implementation of the Indira Awaz Yojana for the BPL families. Khatun Bahan has made several representations to the authorities on these issues apart from getting resolutions passed in the Gram Sabha and Panchayat meetings and she is certain that soon action would be taken. She says, “My aim is to gain recognition for my community of Gadia Lohars who have been neglected and exploited for centuries. I have decided to use my post to campaign for better entitlements and development for my Community.” Khatun Bahan’s struggle showcases the deep urge for recognition as a citizen and identity that marginalized communities such as the Gadia Lohars nurture in their hearts amidst a milieu of severe neglect.

**ACHIEVEMENTS**

100,000 EWRs capacities built through multiple capacity building initiatives

Instilled confidence, self-respect, dignity and enhanced solidarity amongst EWRs

Patriarchal structures and institutions that perpetrate inequality are understood by EWRs

Transformation of EWRs from “I cannot” to “I can” and further to “We can”

Technical knowledge on government policies and programmes enhanced of EWRs

1000 grassroots trainers’ training skills and technical knowledge enhanced through ToTs

Strengthen capacities of over 50 community based organizations

Leadership training modules accessed by government and other civil society organizations

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Federations of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in Gram Panchayats, have been facilitated by The Hunger Project (THP) across the states of Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

These are secular in nature, non-discriminatory in practice and are not affiliated to any political party. EWRs understand that as individuals their voices are scattered, but as an informed group they can protect and represent their own interests. By working together on a legitimate platform such as this, they can advocate for issues of accountable governance and gender sensitive legislation. Federations have exclusive membership of EWRs from Gram Panchayats. They are formed at the block level with representation of EWRs from multiple Panchayats. In Karnataka, a state level federation has also been registered.

**OBJECTIVES OF FEDERATIONS**

- To provide a common platform for EWRs at the Gram Panchayat level for collective action and co-learning
- To establish political identity and role of EWRs in local governance as informed and engaged public office holders, and to advocate for their rights, powers and entitlements
- To demand fulfillment of the provisions of the 73rd constitutional amendment, and to highlight issues of gender and social justice
- Advocate for effective functioning of Panchayats as institutions of local democracy that practice good governance, are accountable to citizens and are participatory and inclusive in nature
OUTREACH OF FEDERATIONS

132 block level federations are active across 60 districts in the seven states that THP works in. The overall membership is of 7000 EWRs. Federations are established as VIRANGANA (brave woman) in Uttrakhand, APARAJITA (one who cannot be defeated) in Bihar, JAGRITI (awakened women) in Madhya Pradesh, ALIBHA (the one that cannot be erased) in Odisha, MUZHAKKAM (to proclaim) in Tamil Nadu, PANCH-SARPANCH SANGATHAN (ward member-president federation) in Rajasthan and as SUGRAMA (good village) in Karnataka at the state level which is formed also at the block level.

PROCESS OF FORMATION AND STRUCTURE

The need to federate was articulated by EWRs when they realised that their biggest strength was their own peer group. They felt that by organizing and strengthening themselves, they can emerge as a formidable group. This would enable them to protect and promote their own interest as public office holders, advocate towards effective functioning of Panchayats, and engage with multiple stakeholders like media, local bureaucracy, civil society and the state. It would also allow them to raise a voice against oppressive feudal structures. The Hunger Project supported the formation of federations and gave inputs at multiple levels on developing vision, goals, objectives, identity, membership and structure. Inputs on the basic principles of a collective were also outlined. All federations’ primary membership constitutes EWRs in Gram Panchayats and ex-EWRs from the previous term. The structure at the block level comprises an executive committee which includes office bearers like president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary and deputy secretary.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Political empowerment of women and enhancing presence in local governance
- Knowledge enhancement through co-learning and sharing strategies
- Better accountability, good governance, and rightful implementation of livelihood schemes
- Ensuring rights and entitlements to citizens
- Strengthening the institution of Panchayats
- Highlighting gender discrimination and marginalization
- Advocacy towards policy change/policy implementation that impede women’s participation in local democracy as equal citizens
- Networking with multiple stakeholders

“I am glad that I am a member of VIRANGANA. The process of getting together under one platform, sharing experiences without hesitation, opportunities for cross learning, to move forward towards a common cause, independently taking decisions, has led to my own confidence building. The federation has made it easier to build pressure and move in the right direction.”

Nanda Bhist,
President, Gram Panchayat Tankul,
Block Dharchula, District Pithoragarh, Uttrakhand

CASE STUDY

VIRANGANA marches ahead: Struggle to secure reproductive health rights

The VIRANGANA federation in Dharchula block, faced a unique problem. Dharchula block has a population of 65,000 and is located in the remote district of Pithoragarh in Uttrakhand. The government hospital in Dharchula did not have facilities for childbirth specializing in maternal and reproductive health or a lady doctor, for over one and a half years. This discouraged many women from accessing the hospital for their gynaecological problems. The nearest hospital with requisite facilities was 91 kms away. As a result, some pregnant women even lost their lives during the arduous journey. VIRANGANA members deliberated and decided to raise the issue with the district administration. In doing so, they handed over a petition with their demand for a qualified lady doctor to the Chief Medical Officer (CMO). However, in spite of getting assurances of immediate appointment, no action was taken for six months. VIRANGANA held another meeting with the CMO and demanded action on their previous petition. They warned him that they would lead a protest along with hundreds of women if there was a prolonged delay in addressing their demand. Finally, a lady doctor was appointed in Dharchula. Thus, after collective efforts by VIRANGANA for over a year, a breakthrough was achieved which affected 65,000 citizens. This gave immense confidence to EWRs and they realized that with the strength of numbers behind them, anything is possible.
In 1992, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment introduced 33 percent reservation for women in the three tier Panchayati Raj system.

Over the years this has evolved and matured, galvanizing women’s political participation in local governance, making them effective leaders. Among India’s 28 states, there has been a move towards providing for reserved seats ranging from 33% to 50% of the total seats in Panchayati Raj Institution. However, this appears to have been notional and restricted to only reservation, with effective participation in local democracy being impeded by certain provisions in the Act, policies, laws and norms. The advocacy of The Hunger Project India is therefore designed to seek reforms at the state and local levels, so as to reduce the misuse and adverse impact of certain policies concerning women’s political, economic and social rights. This would enable Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) to be more effective leaders in local governance. The approach has been to garner support of multiple stakeholders representing different perspectives, build a consensus, and then engage with the state.

STRATEGY

Identify goals, formulate demands, and influence policy decisions for the desired change

Decentralization and participation

Develop partnerships with multiple stakeholders to generate awareness, and build general consensus to affect policy reforms, enabling women representatives to become better leaders

Lobby with systems of governance at all levels

Inform the community of the importance of the advocacy initiative, thereby strengthening local capacity by involving them

1Out of the 7 states that THP is currently working in, 50 percent reservation of seats is in Bihar, Odisha, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. In Karnataka, 50 percent reservation will be introduced in next cycle of elections.
Safeguarding the spirit of decentralization EWRs and their federations have launched signature campaigns, engaged with local administration and all stakeholders, filed petitions, and presented memorandums on various issues identified. In the government, lobbying with political parties-MPs, MLAs has also taken place with heads of Panchayats. New strategies and linkages continue to be undertaken. To advocate for minimum bureaucratic control and intervention, in Madhya Pradesh a status report to understand the impact and misuse of Section (40)² has been commissioned. Prior to the state assembly elections in 2013, JAGRITI, an elected women federation of the state, was successful in convincing the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) and Indian National Congress (INC), to include the removal of this section in their party manifestos. In Karnataka, for the leadership to grow and be effective, advocacy to demand a minimum term of five years for the President and Vice President of a Gram Panchayat, as against the present 30 months, has been undertaken. In a study commissioned by The Hunger Project and SUGRAMA³ affected individuals have testified that section (46)⁴ has adversely affected their functioning and stunted their political growth. A regular dialogue with policy makers of the state is being undertaken, with sustained engagement with the media to generate awareness.

In 2013, in Madhya Pradesh, 540 JAGRITI EWR federation members actively participated in the nutritional week organized by the state government. The members also led awareness programmes in approximately 52 Panchayats.

‘Data shows that 40% of the total cases of Section 40 are registered in the districts dominated with tribal population. In Bhind and Mandla districts, the total percentage of cases of Section 40, against elected women are 50% and 67% respectively.’ Section 40: Undemocratic Removal of Panchayat Representatives – A Status Report by DEBATE.

Removing barriers to women’s participation in political life: Advocacy against Two Child Norm

The Two Child Norm is a provision in the Panchayati Raj Act of Odisha and Rajasthan that discriminates against women. The two child norm is also against the basic spirit of equality and freedom which is guaranteed in the Constitution of India. It undermines women’s quota in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Persistent advocacy by THP by targeting its policy dimension through the National Coalition Against Two Child Norm and the Health Ministry passing an order for its removal as a conditional measure for the Janani Suraksha Yojana Scheme. Intense lobbying with all stakeholders continues in Odisha and Rajasthan. Various advocacy initiatives have also emphasized on the linkage between the Two Child Norm as one of the primary reasons for the declining child sex ratio in the two states (Census 2011).

Advocating to Demand for an Untrahkhand Panchayati Raj Act

In Uttarakhand, EWR federation VIRANGANA, has advocated for the state’s own Act, as presently it is still governed by the Act of Uttar Pradesh. A memorandum has been presented to Mr Pritam Singh, Minister of Panchayati Raj.

Strengthening transparency and accountability in local governance

To engender local governance, THP India continues to address issues of violence against women (VAW) through its existing programmes. While exercising their political leadership, the elected women have raised issues of VAW and have taken responsibilities to find effective solutions. Issues of child marriage, domestic violence, sexual harassment in Gram Panchayats and caste based discrimination in schools have been raised. In leading the 16 days of activism – VAW campaign, EWRs and their federations have created mass awareness on the issue. A collective show of strength in all seven states has successfully mobilized the public, civil society, government functionaries, police, district officials, and the youth. By establishing the linkage between the two campaigns (one local and the global One Billion Rising campaign), has helped in furthering the cause of the EWRs and the discourse on VAW.

THP India is committed to ensuring an unhindered participation of women in the political, economic and social spheres. With this in mind, THP actively engages in CEDAW country review processes undertaken at National level. Further, to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country, THP is committed to advocating for the demand of 33 percent reservation of seats for women in National Parliament and State legislatures.

In 2013, the states of Bihar, Odisha, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu undertook the 16 days of Activism – the Campaign on VAW, covering a total of 92 blocks of 38 districts in 1166 Gram Panchayats, involving approximately 3175 EWRs.

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¹Section (40) provides for the removal of an elected representative who is found to be not working in ‘public interest, guilty of misconduct or failing to carry out the duties assigned. The Sub Divisional Magistrates (SDM) are empowered as prescribed authority to take action under this particular section after investigation.

²SUGRAMA is the name of the state and block level federation of EWRs.

³Section (46) of Karnataka Panchayati Raj Act states that ‘the term of office of Adhyaksha (President) and Upadhyaksha (Vice President) shall be thirty months from the date of his/her election till he or she ceases to be a member of Gram Panchayat whichever is earlier.'
Women’s Equal Participation in Electoral Processes

**FACTSHEET 2014**

**Objectives of SWEEP**

To advocate for fair, gender sensitive and violence free elections in Panchayats

To increase participation of women in the electoral process (voters, candidates, campaigners, election agents), especially of dalits, tribals and minorities

To encourage women to contest from reserved and un-reserved seats, and claim their political space and rights

To redefine the concept of leadership by critically examining the qualities of a “good” leader, for both voters and candidates

Promote an enabling environment that supports women’s participation in the private space (within the family), as well as in the public space (community, village, Panchayat, civil society, media, state, State Election Commission)

Observe, document and report on incidents of violence, corruption, coercion and exploitation

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**Strengthening Women’s Empowerment through Electoral Processes (SWEEP) is an extensive pre election campaign undertaken by The Hunger Project (THP) in the fifth and final year of a state’s Gram Panchayat election cycle.**

THP has conducted 20 Sweep campaigns since 2001. SWEEP aims to include and increase women’s participation in local elections as informed candidates, campaigners, election agents and responsible. SWEEP also looks into the need to support marginalized candidates and women contesting from non-reserved seats. A key focus is to ensure a violence free, fair and free election. The SWEEP campaign does not promote an individual, political ideology or political party. It singularly focuses on designing and rolling out a campaign for “women” so that they can exercise their rightful role and duty as equal citizens in a democracy, in accordance with the principles of the Constitution of India. The campaign also engages men to support and encourage women’s participation in democratic processes at the grassroots level.
THE HUNGER PROJECT AND SWEEP

SWEEP has been conducted most recently in the states of Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand and in the past in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Assam and Jammu & Kashmir (Ladakh). During this period, reservation in a large number of states has increased from 33% to 50%, thereby increasing the opportunity for women in Panchayats and enhancing the scope of SWEEP. The outreach of SWEEP has been across 175 districts and 15,000 Gram Panchayats, reaching out to approximately 75 million citizens in India.

STRATEGIES ADOPTED AND PROCESS OF SWEEP

SWEEP is implemented through an intensive and extensive campaign. The intensive campaign focuses on key Panchayats, where multiple inputs are given, while the extensive campaign’s main emphasis is to spread the message of SWEEP to a larger area through one or more inputs. SWEEP coverage area is demarcated based on varied factors. Areas with low Human Development Indicators and low Gender Development Indicators are selectively prioritized. Support of the State Election Commission (SEC) and Panchayati Raj Department is accessed for timely information on the process of elections, and relevant permission and support is sought to conduct SWEEP in sensitive districts across states. Activities during the SWEEP campaign include Potential Leadership Workshops (PLWs), rallies, street plays, village meetings, wall writings, radio programmes, conventions, simulation camps, mobile van campaigns and setting up of resource centres. A range of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) material is also developed and distributed in the vernacular language, to include local dialects and popular art forms.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF SWEEP

- Increased women's visibility during election process
- Enabling gender sensitive environment for women to participate in elections
- Social taboos and patriarchy are challenged
- Simplified, complete and accurate information of election procedures
- Successful advocacy with the government
- Working partnerships established with other civil society organizations
- Improved network with multiple stakeholders

"My confidence increased tremendously after seeing the street play which made me decide to stand for elections. I am contesting for elections on my own and will fight them with my will power. I have filled up my own forms and have submitted them personally in the block office and got my ticket without anyone's help."

Participant from Potential Leadership Workshop, Uttarakhand

CASE STUDY

From Shepard to Sarpanch: Breaking the stereotype of the President

Shyama Bai, Sarpanch
Gram Panchayat Posta, Block Rampurnaikin,
District Seedhi, Madhya Pradesh
Year of Election: 2010

Shyama Bai was a goat herder from the Gond tribal community. One day she met representatives of The Hunger Project who were talking about elections, Panchayat development and role of women in governance. Shyama says, "I had never before heard anyone talk about women being important for decision making." She also came to know that the seat of Sarpanch had been reserved for women. Grasping as much as she could from the discussion and with the advice of her husband, Shyama Bai decided to contest for the seat of Sarpanch. Being fairly articulate, she was able to express her views on development issues, thereby winning the support of women in the village. Encouraged by the people of her community, and confident about her own understanding of development issues, she prepared herself for the elections. To raise money for the campaign and determined not to use any illegal means, Shyama Bai even sold off her goats. Despite stiff opposition and attempts to derail her campaign, Shyama Bai won by a huge margin against eight other candidates. One of the key achievements of her campaign has been to increase women's democratic participation from marginalized groups. She says, "I would have been with goats and more goats, and not in an influential position which allows me to work for my people, if it was not for the information and support of the outside help (SWEEP Campaigners)."

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