Empowering rural women to strengthen their leadership capacity

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We Need to Empower Women and Develop their Leadership

Because

- 70 percent of the two billion poor are women
- Two thirds of illiterate adults are women
- Employment rates for women are declining
- Women earn 10% of the world’s income and own 1% of its property
- Women do more than 67% of the hours of work done in the world

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And Because

- Women perform reproductive roles in families and society
- Make major contributions in informal sectors of economy in rural areas
- Their knowledge, skills, experience, competencies, talent and potential needs to be utilized and developed to the fullest
UN Milestones in Support of Women

- 1975 International Women’s Year
- 1975 – 1995 The Four Global Women's Conferences
  - Mexico
  - Copenhagen
  - Nairobi
  - Beijing
- 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Beijing Declaration and the Platform of Action in 1995

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Why Empowerment of Rural Women in India?

- India has the lowest sex ratio-933 (per thousand males)
- The female literacy rate in India is 54.16% compared to 75.85% for males
- Only two percent of women workers are employed in the formal sector
- Representation of women in national parliament is only 12%
Indian National Agenda for Women’s Empowerment

- 1990 National Commission for Women
- 1991 National Committee on the Status of Women
- 1993 Ratification of UN CEDAW
- 1995 National Policy for the Empowerment of Women
Schemes for Empowerment of Rural Women

- Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)
- Trade-related Entrepreneurship Assistance and Development (TREAD)
- National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)
- Rural Women’s Development and Empowerment Project
- Indira Mahila Yojana for Holistic Empowerment of Women
Structure of Women’s Participation in Major Centrally Sponsored Schemes

WATER

- At least 30% of hand pump technicians should be women
- Women technicians to be represented on the village level water monitoring committees
- Completion certificate of hand pump installation to be obtained from women technicians only
Primary Education

- SSA National Mission Governing Council provision for representatives from three women's organisations.

- School Development Management Committee has 15 members of which 50% are women parents.
Health (National Rural Health Mission)

- 50% representation of women in the Village Health and Sanitation Committee

- Women’s groups at habitation level to have a role in building local health team (Auxiliary Nurse Midwife)

- Accredited Social Health Activist at the village level
Rural Employment (MGNREGA)

Central/State Employment Guarantee Council - Out of fifteen non-official members, not less than one-thirds are to be women

- District Planning Committee
- One third or 50% representation in these committees at the Panchayat level.
73\(^{rd}\) and 74\(^{th}\) Constitutional Amendments

- 73\(^{rd}\) and 74\(^{th}\) Constitutional Amendments of 1993 mandating one-third of women in rural and urban local bodies, at all tiers, including single posts.

- There are 1.2 million elected women representatives in institutions of local governance in India - more than in the rest of the world put together.
Capacity Building Interventions

At a Personal Level

- Developing self confidence
- Public Speaking Ability
- Media relations
- Raising issues of concern and priorities in village level meetings
- Personal behaviour
- Organising skills
- Independent identity
Capacity Building Interventions contd..

At a Collective Level

- Gender sensitisation and awareness
- Agenda setting and prioritization of needs of constituency
- Conflict Resolution and Peace Building
- General Knowledge/Current Affairs
- Networking and Collaboration
- Budgeting and account keeping

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Micro Planning

Bottom up or Base Upwards planning process on issues related to

- Water Supply
- Electricity
- Community Toilets
- Garbage disposal
- Improving Agriculture
- Land Encroachment
Social Audit

A tool to understand the extent of benefits reaching the target groups

- National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
- Health – Pre & Ante Natal services, Maternal mortality, Immunisation
Impact upon women leaders

- Building of knowledge base
- Developing of skills
- Increase in self confidence
- Respect within families and community
- Clarity on rights and roles as citizens
- Solidarity amongst women
- Challenging male dominated spaces and roles
What helped

- Family support
- Gender sensitisation and awareness
- Capacity building
- Access to information
- Enhanced literacy levels
- Networking
- Membership with local CBOs
- Support from men – families, community, elected representatives, government officials

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Continuing Challenges

- Gendered Identities, practices and culture
- Stereotyped gendered roles
- Inferior self image
- Gendered relations with household
- Role models of men as figures of power and political actors
- Masculinity of political culture and processes

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Continuing Challenges contd..

- Lack of gender mainstreaming in institutions
- An “add on women” approach
- Gendered policies, norms & systems
- Difficulty to maintain a ‘work life balance’.
- Lack of financial independence
- Violence including sexual harassment against women in leadership