Women in Local Governance
UN milestones in support of women

- Between 70s and 80s
  - UN Conference at Mexico in 1975
  - UN decade for women (1976-85)
  - UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979
  - UN Conference in Copenhagen in 1980
  - UN Conference in Nairobi in 1985
UN milestones in support of women

- Between 90s and 2001
  - UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992
  - UN Conference in Beijing in 1995
  - UN General Assembly in 2000
  - Millennium Peace Prize for Women in 2001
Women’s inclusion in the National Agenda

- National Commission for Women in 1992
- Ratification of UN CEDAW in 1993
- National Policy for the Empowerment of Women in 1995
Women’s inclusion in the National Agenda

Schemes for 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
Women’s Participation at Local Levels

- Education
  - Village Education Committee for primary education
  - Mahila Samakhya for women’s literacy

- Water and sanitation
  - WATSAN Committee

- Micro credit & Livelihood
  - Mahila Sanghams

- Health
  - Saathin – Women Development Programme
  - Auxillary Nurse Midwife (ANM)
Women on the NGO Agenda

- Livelihood and entrepreneurship
- Literacy and non-formal education
- Sexual and Reproductive Health
- Maternal and Infant Mortality
- Sustainable Environment
- Financial Management
- Technical skill development
- Awareness of Women’s Rights
73rd & 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts

- **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act**
  - Direct participation in rural local elected bodies: three tier Panchayati Raj institutions
  - Village, block and district level

- **74th Constitutional Amendment Act**
  - Direct participation in urban local elected bodies: municipalities
  - Municipal Towns, Municipal Councils and Municipal Corporations
73rd & 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts

- Acts envisioned
  - A vibrant local body responsive to the needs and aspirations of the local community
  - Informed and inclusive participation of all citizen, across caste, class and gender in the planning and administration
  - Transparent & responsive governance accountable to the local community
Opportunities for Political Empowerment

- One-third of all seats reserved for women in all tiers of *panchayats* & municipalities
  - Bihar (50%); Tamil Nadu: 2 consecutive terms

- Supportive legislations
  - Mandatory Participation of women in the *Gram Sabha* quorum of 1/10\(^{th}\) women’s representation
  - Mandatory representation of women in the *panchayats* and municipal sub-Committees: education, health, social justice, infrastructure, works and management, finance and budget
Women’s Leadership in Local Governance (Study)

• Objectives
  - Collating experiences of women elected representatives
  - Analysing these experiences from a gender perspectives
  - Documenting actual practices of gender inequalities in Governance

• Domain
  - Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttaranchal
Study Findings (1)

- Individual Profiles
  - Majority above 35 years and married
  - High levels of illiteracy
  - Predominantly from agricultural backgrounds: land owners or agricultural labourers
  - Majority contested for the first time primarily to fulfil family and community pressure
  - Majority contested from the reserved seats
Study Findings (2)

- Women’s Participation in local body meetings
  - Low attendance
  - Low participation
  - Token representation
  - Overwhelming male dominance
  - Women’s issues not on agenda: priority concerns related to infrastructure
Study Findings (3)

- Constraints
  - Internalized low self image and lack of leadership
  - Interlocking of private and public patriarchy
  - Household responsibilities
  - Limited support structures
  - Mobility restrictions
Study Findings (3)

- Constraints
  - Lack of
    - access to resources and opportunities
    - institutional infrastructure
    - training and orientation
  - Negative attitude of male elected representative and government functionaries
  - Policy constraints: rotation of seats, no confidence motion, two child norm, honorarium
Study Findings (4)

- **Strengths**
  - Political background of family
  - Class and caste of elected representative
  - Family infrastructure
  - Supportive male colleagues and Government functionaries
  - Mandatory participation
  - Pro-active support from CBOs
Study Findings (4)

• Strengths
  ➢ Self confidence
  ➢ Ability to speak out in public
  ➢ Educational levels
  ➢ Organising skills
  ➢ Personal behaviour
  ➢ Independent identity
Civil Society: Working Towards Efficient Leadership

- Membership to community based organisations
- Easy entry into politics through caste associations and other groups
- Membership to political parties
- Gender mainstreaming strategies in governance mechanisms and institutions
Civil Society: Working Towards Efficient Leadership

- Raising issues of concern and priorities in *gram sabha* meetings
- Simplification and dissemination of information
- Assistance in implementation of schemes
- Systematic capacity building interventions
Lessons for Future

- Family support
- Gender sensitisation and awareness
- Capacity building
- Access to information
- Enhance literacy levels
- Local networking
- Sustained civil society engagement