

How we are helping improve Women participation in political processes at grassroots level in India



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Synopsis:

Government of India has committed towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals which includes ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels. With the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act passed in 1992, there is already a mandate in place with more than three million ERs, who need to be oriented and sensitized on these aspects of good governance. Building capacities of such a large number of ERs within the stipulated time frame of one year of election to enable them to function effectively is still a challenge.

We partnered a leading Multi-Lateral Agency in designing and deploying a training tool in approximately 2,50,000 Gram Panchayats in India.



The Situation:

Women's participation in political processes at the grass-root level is essential to strengthen democracy and prevent marginalization. Competent women leaders in Panchayats can lead to holistic development and empowerment of women in general. The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution has created scope for women's entry into PRIs, both as members as well as heads of Panchayats. However, women face many operational constraints while playing their roles and discharging their functions in the PRIs.

In this context, the Multi-Lateral Agency, along with the Ministry, wanted to create awareness that good governance can happen with the participation of all marginalized communities, especially women. The Agency proposed to develop a virtual learning tool on 'Gender Friendly Panchayat' to disseminate knowledge on what is and what makes a gender-friendly panchayat.



The Solution:

We did an extensive desk review to identify under what conditions women leaders have emerged as successful Panchayat representatives. The idea was to identify what stimulates attention to women's needs in the Panchayats and how the mobilization of women in Gram Sabhas can act as a catalyst to prioritize women's needs. The study also summarised the overall women representatives' understanding of the development agenda of the panchayat and resource base as their rights, knowledge of the plans for economic development and social justice, and schemes in relation to 29 subjects given in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution, natural resource management including the protection of common property resources, environmental protection with sustainable practices, etc. which is specifically beneficial for active participation.

With the inputs from desk review, our content team prepared different scenarios and examples which empower the elected women representatives for broader participation in the local governance. At the same time, the stories of failures like Dalit women being harassed, raped, or killed also give insights into the limitations and threats.

Our creative team designed all scenarios and integrated them into the virtual tool. Within the tool, the user could view 180 degrees and navigate through different scenarios. We observed that people like to listen to their peers rather than any officials or leaders and hence, real cases with identity masking helped in positive reinforcement of learning.



The Impact:

All frontline workforce and elected representatives in 0.65+ million villages would have benefited from this project. This project would have empowered many Panchayats to create inclusive developmental plans that are sustainable for long-term growth.

Learning Content

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