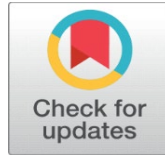
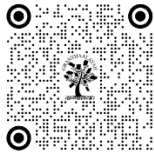


# CHALLENGES BEFORE WOMEN LEADERS IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the barriers which the women leaders need to overcome in order to participate as leaders in the local self-governance structure and be an effective leader. Despite a legal provision to ensure the women's representation in LGs, the sociocultural and the institutional (also political) constraints were found at work. Cultural and social norms and traditional role expectations affect W or 'w Insider' in two ways: through misappropriation of resources, insufficient training and lack of bureaucratic support, women's integrity is doubted. Party tokenism, men meddling and party neglect further contribute to the issue. "There are also personal conflicts, the architecture of the home in terms of leader and manager, and economic dependence. This study notes the challenge that faces the policy when it is looking for the correct response, in the form of a policy, to the women leaders' empowerment at the local level, and the process of gender equality in the society. The results reinforce the significance of legislations, resources, capable leadership, and spreading awareness in terms of campaigns about changing people's mindset. The role of civil society and international organisations in facilitating gender sensitive policy making and control is also addressed. In addressing these challenges to preparedness, women can play, and take up, leadership roles that help make local governance more inclusive, effective and sustainable.

**Keywords:** Women leadership, Local self-government, Gender equality, Sociocultural barriers, Political challenges, Capacity building, Legal frameworks, Resource allocation, Mentorship, Women empowerment



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Local self government is a cornerstone of democratic governance and a means to distribute power for people to govern themselves. It is the philosophy of participatory government, through which locally elected leadership makes decisions, implements them, and allocates resources. Constitutional provisions for LGAs In India, local self-governance is mandated by the Constitution under the 73rd and 74th Amendments which stipulate one-third reservation of the seats in Panchayat (rural local bodies) and U LB's for women. This program sought to bring women closer to the realization of electoral power and candidacy at the local level, for them to have an impact on the development of their communities. Yet, while women may be afforded some measure of legal support to ensure their leadership in the local administration, there are still other obstacles in terms of their full participations and ability to be empowered. In spite of the reserved seats, patriarchal norms and values, lack of training, access to finances, and lack of institutions are some of the major factors preventing women from becoming effective participants. Female leaders frequently face male colleagues and locals who challenge their authority. Additionally, their lack of political experience and rudimentary knowledge in decision-making for positive outcomes further add to these challenges. Women's representation in local self-government needs to be strengthened. Women have a different way of looking at things and different priorities: maternal health, child

education, clean water and sanitation and gender equality - all of which are vital to a stable and thriving community. Their leadership can change government, and how government happens, particularly for those who are marginalised and under-represented. And women in power are more likely to pass policy friendly to women and children, thus making some of these perpetuating societal imbalances addressed. If India is really moving towards a society with an attitude of inclusivity, giving power to women in local bodies is a necessary component of a strategy for social justice and sustainability. The objective of this study is to identify and understand several of the issues faced by women in leadership positions in the self-government institutions of local level in India. Women continue to encounter social, cultural, and institutional limitations to successful leadership in spite of their election to municipal councils. These issues differ based on the region and the context and on rural and urban areas, making it difficult for female politicians<sup>1</sup>.

## 1.1. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

The women had been in Local Self-government for a number of centuries with a journey from the stage of dealing with the ballot paper to the level of candidates and representatives in local bodies. Women's participation in local self-governance is linked to wider social and political changes in gender roles and legislation regarding experience and equality. Like in other countries, women in India have experienced opposition in politics from some men due to the prejudice and patriarchy which exist in both of those male-dominated countries. Decades of work have not been wasted, helped by legal reforms and grassroots activism and global movements for gender equality.

## 1.2. PRO-INDEPENDENCE ERA

At the time of India gaining independence in 1947, women's participation in public life (in politics at the local and community levels) was curtailed by the pervasive patriarchal norms recognized in terms of family structure and Indian culture. Women were underrepresented in politics and had virtually no role in decision making, including locally. Political activity on the part of women was neglected, and women's participation in politics was of little interest to the British colonial masters. The handful of women involved in public life were literate, affluent ladies who concerned themselves with social reform rather than politics proper. But there were still some oddballs. The 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed a surge in women's activism with women organising several social reform movements which included campaigns for women's education, abolition of child marriage, and later came to a head with the opposition to sati (the practice of widow immolation) and the traditional practices that stripped women of their basic human rights. Sarojini Naidu, Kamini Roy and Begum Roquiah Sakhawat Hossain were leading figures in the national independence movement and the social reform, who prepared the ground for women's participation in the independence and reform movement. These women, and others, worked to create formal recognition of women's rights and social equality, thus paving the way for greater political activism from women in the future.

## 1.3. POST INDEPENDENCE PERIOD AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS (1950S-1970S)

After gaining independence in 1950, India was the first country to grant women the right to vote and to hold political office. Since then, albeit with a legal legitimacy, women's participation in administration has remained limited, especially at the local level. In the beginning, Indian politics was an arena reserved for men in the highest echelons of government and power. Women's representation in panchayats and municipal bodies was grossly inadequate. After independence, for a few years women were more or less limited to honorific or advisory positions in municipal authority. There were no formal gender participation policies at the local level. There were many obstacles at the national level and the state level in the fight to pass suffrage because women faced societal biases, little education, and few connections to politics. Further, there were no reservation mechanism for women in municipal bodies and political spaces became male domains.

<sup>1</sup> Guha, J., & Chakrabarti, B. (2019). Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through decentralization and the role of local governments: A systematic review. *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance*, 22, 1-21.

## **1.4. THE 73RD AND 74TH CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS (IN THE 1990S)**

There were 1992 amendments to the constitution which were the 72nd and 73rd, they had amplified the role of women in the domain of the municipal administration. These amendments represented a radical change as they transferred power to the villages and established a decentralised system of governance through Panchayats at the intermediary and district levels in rural areas, and through Municipalities in urban areas. The most significant among these changes was to allow reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj. The 73 amendment itself specifically provided for one-third reservation of seats for women in panchayats, including one-third of the leadership posts of panchayat head or sarpanch. The 74th amendment provided for reservation of seats in Urban Local Bodies for women. This law also drastically raised the number of women in local political positions and gave them an official place in government. It was very vital to include these reservations in politics of local self-governments, especially in rural areas, for the better representation of women. Yet the effectiveness of these reforms was often hindered by a number of factors, such as the persistence of normative patriarchal systems, as well as the challenges of empowering women to effectively use any political power gained.

## **2. WOMEN AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE LEADERS (2000S ONWARD)**

**Women's Participation in Local Self Government** The participation of women in local self-government has increased in 1990s, but problems remain. After the amendment, women in the Mofussil level started coming to the forefront as political actors who raised issues – health of women, sanitation, education. The leadership of rural women mobilised community priorities and local options for development, and introduced a leadership which prioritised social issues and community development. Some women leaders have achieved a considerable voice in their communities through the local system of government. In states like Rajasthan, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh, women of local representative bodies have used their influence to pass laws for wellbeing of women and children. Their leadership is raising the awareness of the equality in gender and encouraging more women to engage in politics.

### **2.1. TRENDING AND FUTURE PROSPECTS**

Exciting times Eminent historian Ramachandra Guha had said that this period is a time frame when women are being part of local self-governance more. Women are emerging as a potent force in local governance in different parts of India, demanding a holistic development agenda across the country. Their work in education, health, and rural development has made a positive impact on the standard of living of some families, especially in disadvantaged regions. In fact, this very anxiety is a major barrier to women becoming politically active as, along with barriers such as lack of political training, scarce financial resources, and social stigma, politics becomes intimidating. Further reforms, training and institutional support is needed so that any future local woman leader can use power effectively. The path of women in the local governance of India has been a mixed bag of progress and impediments. While legal and policy tools has played a crucial role, big challenges are ahead to overcome societal, cultural and institutional obstacles to successful female leadership. The empowerment of women at the grassroots is essential to creating level playing fields in India and promoting an inclusive and sustainable style of governance.

### **2.2. KEY CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN LEADERS**

Women leaders in local self-governance faced numerous barriers that seemed to constrain their potential for effective leadership and participation. The barriers are multidimensional and include systemic sociocultural challenges along with structural and political barriers. This serves not only to circumscribe the reach of their potential but also to impede the efficacy of governance at large. Identifying these challenges is vital to devising approaches to support women leaders and achieve gender equality at the local level.

#### **1) Sociocultural Barriers**

##### **Gender Stereotypes and Patriarchal Ideology**

The obstacles faced by women leaders in local governance are grounded in the patriarchal ideology that informs societal role expectations about gender. The belief that men are by nature better leaders and decision makers than

women is deeply-rooted in most of India. Women are regarded in society by patriarchal measures that exclude their participation in the public. This brainwashing is hurting women and the communities who have to then consider these women as their leaders afterwards. The notion that women are more emotional, vacillating, and unfit for public office than men simply serves to entrench patriarchy. Women entering local leadership positions, these few women must be able to find places in which they can succeed and they must work hard to prove themselves because people who think they are better than they are will claim that women do not belong in this form of life because they are women. These stamped images they will play out over and over again that just do not bode well with friends, neighbours and even family.

### **Community and Family Resistance**

73rd and 74th Amendments have provided a constitutional framework for ensuring women's entry in local bodies, but the reality on the ground is very different. Leaders are more likely to face controversy, both in the community and, as some cases have shown, in their own home. Women leaders are often frowned upon specially in orthodox society in rural India. They are likely to be criticised as absent from their traditional role at work, which prioritises responsibility in the home and views politics as relatively less important. And the family resists coming in either passive or active ways. A female leader's actions could also be controlled by male kin through frank advice and challenges to her authority. Other women are a figurehead queen who has been given a title but has no real power. This unwillingness to stand up is a glass ceiling against women who otherwise would have a shot and earn respect in successful leadership.

### **Social Stigma And Credibility The lack of social acceptance would be pronounced.**

In the cases when women do take these roles, their power is often questioned. The more or less social acceptance of women leaders in politics may affect their leadership effectiveness. ... Women might be considered "outsiders" when they enter domains which have historically been dominated by men, and gender may diminish the legitimacy or importance of their choices in comparison to men's choices. In many contexts, a woman in a position of leadership is considered a freak of nature (not normative), and such a lack of faith has the potential to drive her away from her community as an agent that can improve its status. These barriers are even more pronounced in rural areas, where traditional gender stereotypes are entrenched. In such environments, women leaders have to not only prove themselves as leaders but break stereotypes on what it means to be a woman in public life. Such a lack of social acceptance can evoke feelings of loneliness, disappointing and lack of confidence amongst the women in leadership positions<sup>2</sup>.

## **2) Barriers Institutional and Structural**

### **Barriers to Resources and Funding**

There's a lack of resources and funding is certainly a barrier for women at the municipal level. Local governance, particularly at rural levels, is woefully insufficiently and under financed further exacerbating the financial gap for women led initiatives. Leaders of women's organizations often have to work and achieve success with scarce funds, which limits the scope of potential accomplishments. In addition, women in local self-governments can be marginalised by the lack of recognition and support accorded by state or central authorities. The deficit is also compounded by limited infrastructure, technology and knowledge. Without these assets, women in office find it hard to translate political power into community progress.

### **Insufficient Training and Development Opportunities**

A large number of women who are elected to the local bodies do not have the required political and/ or administrative expertise to function effectively as holders of power. The paucity is due to the absence of empowerment schemes designed for the needs of women. Not all girls have access to political training in India and to those who do, there is a lack of female oriented content and training specifically to help girls gain leadership skills. The lack of such exposure has been a serious constraint on women leaders in the exercise of both political and administrative leadership. They might not always understand complex policy issues, figure out byzantine bureaucracies or competently run the

<sup>2</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). (2012). *Compendium of good practices for advancing women's political participation in the OSCE region*. United Nations Development Programme & National Democratic Institute.

business and building of a country. 419 Their chances of implementing policies successfully are, therefore, limited, which prevents them from establishing their authority and credibility vis-à-vis local organisations.

## **DEFENCE MECHANISMS OF PATRIARCHY AGAINST BUREAUCRATIC OPPOSITION AND MALE-DOMINATED NETWORKS**

There are enormous difficulties for women leaders challenged by a male dominated bureaucracy. It is also to do with interfacing with various government departments and officials who are not used to taking orders from women, especially in rural and semi-urban areas. The BIASES set within bureaucracy may mean frustrating delays, resistance or outright sabotage when female executives try to push their agendas. More importantly, politics is often a closed shop for women and, therefore, next to impossible for them to break the public glass ceiling. These old boy networks usually, but not always, comprised of men are key political brokers when it comes to policy and politics. Women leaders have not had access to such networks. further marginalised and struggle to form alliances or gain the support necessary to do their jobs effectively<sup>3</sup>.

### **3) Political Challenges**

#### **Leadership Roles with Tokenism on the Basis of Reservations**

Reserved women's seats in the municipal government empowered but also superficialized women. Commands of woman presidents were not only powerless in a majority of cases, but female-headed states were, more often than not, led by male kin, or male politicians. Under such circumstances Panchayat or Municipal women leaders are elected, decisions are contaminated under the curtain with male counterparts who keep operating at the background and overtaken our decision. This tokenism is contrary to the empowerment that reserve is meant to bring about. Turn Let us then posit that there is nothing about women that makes them inherently politically powerless. Reservations have enabled women to enter representative politics; however, they are insufficiently (substantively) represented and participate unequally in decision-making.

#### **Interference and Proxy Leadership**

To break through the glass ceiling, businesswomen face another challenge: political influence, especially from male relatives who are their intermediaries. There is a similar phenomenon in the countryside, where women have to survive under the law of the jungle, whether even her husband or son even has a "job title," women must cope with most of household work. In those cases, female presidents could be nothing more than figureheads, while their male relatives or supporters actually make all the key decisions. This not only works against women leaders, but also makes it harder to break the chain of male dominance in politics.

#### **Hazard of Not Being a Political Party**

Party memberships play a critical role on political leaders' career paths, yet women leaders continue to be side-lined within political parties. While many parties claim to support women's inclusion, the actual support given to women candidates is tokenistically low. In many cases, women are also put in a situation where they are fighting an uphill battle, or are given lowly roles in the party structure. Women candidates often do not have political connections and the resources available to their male peers, which makes it difficult for them to win party backing and elections. As a result, they could be marginalized in political shaping and reap little benefit from advancements within their parties.

### **4) The Private and Financial Struggles**

#### **Project Management and the Double Shift: Project Management and the Couch Balancer<sup>4</sup>**

The reconciliation of domestic responsibilities with leadership tasks constitutes a significant personal barrier for a female leader. In a patriarchal society where women are predominantly responsible for domestic labour and childcare, the pressures of political leadership might be overwhelming. Many women cannot attend to their own desires as set out

<sup>3</sup> Shames, S. (n.d.). Barriers and solutions to increasing women's political power. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 13.

<sup>4</sup> Singh, S. (2011). Challenges faced by women for vertical mobility in politics: A comparative study of Sweden and India. *A Structural Social Work Approach for Gender Empowerment*.



for them by families and communities, instead compromising health, stability, and self-care just to survive. The dual burden that private responsibilities and leadership positions of (some) women represent may prevent them to fully engage in politics. Constant changing of hats could wear them down and eventually reduce their leadership effectiveness. Women are often denied political authority and works to hand to male relatives, and this only serves to perpetuate the notion that women are inherently subordinate leaders in society.

### **3. MONETARY DEPENDENCE AND ECONOMIC REPRESSION**

A significant number of women politicians are financially dependent on their families or party, and this depends on them from achieving political independence and freedom. Many of the women involved in local politics do not have access to independent economic resources and depend on male relatives or political backers for money. This reliance weakens their ability to honour their responsibilities to the community and constrains their ability to be independent leaders. They are so overwhelmingly dominated by women and by a political party that - thanks to these social structures - cannot finance campaign expenses, purchase basic necessities or implement social policies. This lack of economic freedom results in a vicious circle where women are further subdued for need to financial support from outside party.

### **4. SAFETY AND SECURITY CONCERNS**

Security and safety risks are major obstacles for women leaders, especially in societies that have a reputation of violence against women. Women politicians are often victimized, threatened and even physically attack by political rivals or members of the community who refuse to see them as leaders. When women are subjected to acts of violence, or threatened with violence, they hesitate to provide effective leadership, become less effective and less willing to take difficult decisions. Woman leaders are also being threatened of their life and some have been threatened of the safety of their family too in places. The intimidation caused by those threats can prompt behind-the-scenes jockeying for control, or, in less fortunate cases, the back rooms fill with the sound of leadership by proxy, since its occupant cannot actually make any decisions. "Without security and protection, women leaders cannot exercise their political agency and cannot play a role in the development of their communities.

### **5. STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES**

Challenges for women leaders: Women in local government have enormous obstacles, though not insurmountable, to leadership. If we want to give women the best chance to be good leaders, we need a strategy with policy change, building capacity, changing cultural habits and attitudes, and a muscular role for civil society and international organizations. These are strategies that can help women become leaders and move beyond the institutional barriers that have slowed their full participation in government. In subsequent paragraph, we should consider how to empower women to deal with the issues they confront when they lead local government.

#### **1) Policy Interventions**

##### **Enhancing the Enabling Environment for Gender Equality in the Law**

Patriarchy is deeply rooted in these social structures, and while the 73rd and 74th amendments have made it easier for rural women to get representation in Panchayat Raj, the law needs to be amended to ensure that men and women are truly equal and can participate unconditionally in governance. The reform should not end with reservation of seats, it should also ensure that women leaders would be able to exercise their power without any hitch. "We need policies that make it such that these women in leadership roles aren't just there for show, but that they really do have the ability to make decisions and to do policies. Better legal frameworks might range from passing laws to protect women from political violence and harassment. There also are other laws that are very important — the laws that protect women leaders from threats to physical and mental, their safety, for example. There also needs to be broader legal changes that prioritize making it easier for women to access resources. It also means, for instance, having a gender-responsive budgeting on the local level so programs that work well for women are adequately funded and implemented. Governments also need to ensure that women filling these jobs are legally immune from politicians' and bureaucrats' interference. Some of these include laws that say male family members can't make decisions for female members of the family, and empowering the women in decision making roles to make their own informed decisions. It is the task of

government in order to guarantee that women can be enabled to participate in political life here which provides a supportive legal structure<sup>5</sup>.

## **2) Improvement of Resources Allocations and Support Circuits**

Women leaders need the right “enabling environment” in order to do a good job in local government. Leaders need resources to set up programs and projects that are sensitive to gender, and governments need to have the money to provide that assistance. Yes, this also involves allocating a portion of the local government’s budget to programs for women in areas like health, education, sanitation. Women leaders often have a hard time scrounging money for projects like these that help women and other groups often left out. As well, it is also crucial to monitor how resources are being invested and the readiness of provision of these programs to support women in leadership. (Technical help and information, as well as other forms of support, are also critical.) It’s access to data, knowledge and tools that enables women leaders to make smart decisions. Both governments and local organizations must influence an environment that is conducive to women’s parliamentary leadership. This covers both advisory committees and technical expertise. Governments can make the most out of resources, along with a mechanism to support women leaders.

## **3) Leadership and governance programmes.**

Organizing women to rescue themselves For women who are in trouble with local self- government It's one way to solve the problem of ensuring that they have proper training to handle the job and that it is given all round training in leading and in governing. Training should encompass political process, budget process, project management, policy organization and public speaking. These leadership programs train women to lead by showing them how to turn around the hard problem of being in charge. Training could also involve the developing the skills of running political campaigns, understanding the legal and institutional framework for local government, as well as forming coalitions with other groups. Both local government and members of civil society can collaborate in the planning and operation of these training systems, and they must be extended to reach all women leaders, regardless of their place of work and residence. A: Such efforts would also need to be targeted at specific categories of women — including young women, women on the margins of society and those who live far away. Governments and other organizations should invest in leadership training for women. This may help ensure that women leaders are empowered to implement changes in their communities. Also, this kind of training can address tokenism in women’s political participation by preparing women and demonstrating what real leadership looks like and how women can be involved in the decision-making process.

## **4) Mentoring and Networking Opportunities**

Female leaders in local government require much more than an education. They also need mentorship, and opportunities to network. Those women who have made it through the political system can help other women, who are either new to office or thinking about running, to be there to mentor and listen to them. Mentorships can also provide women with the confidence and strategic thinking they must muster to confront the variety of challenges they encounter. Women can also benefit from other people's failures through these programs, which use shared stories of mistakes and insights to help them become better leaders. Along with networking with other professionals, women in leadership can connect with other women in leadership to build a supportive network of colleagues to learn best practices and gain insight on best practices<sup>6</sup>. National and regional women in local politics networks can be created to enable such linkages. Through the networks, women can be in solidarity with each other, share best practices, and work together on projects to advance gender equality in local government. Moreover, such networks can serve to raise the profile of women within political parties and public sphere, thereby enhancing of their chances of rising up the political ladder.

## **5) Interventions Targeting Sociocultural Components**

### **Promotional Activities to Counter Gender Myths**

123 Premal Khanam Viacom To showcase how you can cure people. They visited the doctor regularly, except for some minor troubles beyond their control. These types of ads should break existing gender stereotypes and evolve the conversation around women in leadership. The campaigns should also educate community members on women’s leadership and how they can create a significant impact in political decision-making. “Display women who have led well at the grassroots will be a great way to change people’s perception. Both old and new media are having a major role in these efforts to raise awareness. Documentaries, TV programmes, and social media campaigns can all feature inspiring

<sup>5</sup> Siddaling, R. (n.d.). Women and political awareness: A sociological study of representatives of local self-government. Lulu.com.

<sup>6</sup> Narayanan, Y. (2003). Women aiding sustainability in local self-governance in India. In International Sustainability Conference.

stories of women leaders who have overcome historical and cultural barriers. Such efforts can provide role models to young girls, by presenting women leaders who have excelled. They can also encourage more women to engage in politics. These sort of deeds have to be done, because people need to get accustomed to the idea, that women can be leaders, too.

### **Outreach and Organizing for Generating a Demand for Women Leadership**

If women are going to do well in local government, they will need their communities' support. Engaging the community in taking action to promote the leadership of women would be beneficial for women candidates and those elected. Those types of actions might include staging community gatherings, workshops and talks for local officials on the importance of gender equality in government. Community participation also contradicts social norms, which do not allow women to lead, instead insisting that they help. People of various ages and genders in communities should be included in conversations like this that shine a light on both the negative and positive results of women in control. Over the long term, these efforts to engage the community will help people get used to women leaders and feel that we can all indeed work together to create a more open politics for all of us."

## **6) THE CIVIL SOCIETY AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS Content I.**

### **Promoting and Supporting Women's Leadership**

It is the responsibility of CSOs and INGOs to advocate for a greater participation of women in local government. But such groups can go a long way to draw scrutiny to the obstacles women confront and to advocate for legislative changes to make it easier for women to engage more in governance, he said. CSOs can engage in advocacy to call for enhanced legal furor legal protection, gender-sensitive budgets and investments in women. The U.N. and other such international groups can also help the women around the world to get into politics if they will give them money, technical help, and a place to talk. Such groups can also offer women leaders in different parts of the world a chance to join forces across borders and help women join forces more often. This will assist in amplifying women's voices and influence on government.

### **Gender Sensitive Policies and Monitoring/Evaluate Them**

M&E is also essential to the analysis of the impact of gender- relevant policies and programmes. Local governments are CSOs, and international organisations can collaborate with local governments to track the implementation of policies that would increase women's participation in local forms of government. These groups can watch the progress of women's representation in local government — where it is not working, and advise how we need to change policy to better protect the rights of women and their opportunities for leadership. Also, regular M&E of gender-focused policies fosters an environment of accountability, transparency, and government ownership over gender equality aims. Through scoping regional and local experience and evidence on the effects of such policies, plays a critical role in informing policy advocates the case for making concrete policy recommendations for greater levels of women's participation and leadership.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The involvement of women in local governance is a crucial step towards the promotion of inclusive, equitable and sustainable governance: Apart from polices and reservation-based better representation, the two main areas of improvement, the challenges women leaders at panchayat/ community-level are faced with are still excessive. Whether social, cultural formations rooted in patriarchal domination and practices or institutional obstacles like no resources, political backing, the bar is high. But they aren't impossible ones. ♦Working on women's challenges in local governance is a multistate effort. It is important to reinforce the legal frameworks and ensure that women are not just characters of tokenism in leadership. It's not good enough to have women in positions of power – there also have to be policies that support those women to use their power and make a difference. There is also that not everybody has the resources and support systems in place to just do gender fair in an extreme way. Investment at scale in women-led solutions, coupled with women leaders' access to technical support, will provide women leaders with requisite resources to succeed. (L) The leadership capability of women needs to be developed (including leadership training, coaching and networking). Efforts to empower women to lead, including leadership training, mentorship, and networking. Through these programs, women learn how to govern, campaign for political office, and make decisions for their communities. Moreover, cultivating an environment where women can thrive through networking with other women and role models is an



incentive for women to succeed. Sociocultural approaches are as equally important in tackling the embedded gender norms, stereotypes and biases which often act to reject women as leaders.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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