

# Gender Index of Panchayats

A tool for empowerment

An Initiative of Sushasini, Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan

Process Document (2013-2014)

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## ***Measuring Gender Index in Gram Panchayats***

Process Documentation

***An initiative of Sushasini, the Panchayat Cell of KMVS***

### ***Introduction***

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Inclusion of women in the positions of governance in local self governance institutions was ensured by the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act in 1993-94, bringing in large numbers of women in village panchayats across India. This raised hopes of substantive changes in the way developmental decisions and works were designed and executed at the ground level. The women's movement was buoyant and looked forward to engendered governance processes at least at the levels where it mattered.

The organizational engagement with empowering and supporting elected women representatives in Kutch and other places across the country has generated critical information on the approach of the society (family, community) and state (government authorities) to women's presence in what can be called as the "direct democracy" model. The approach of the state and its mechanisms views these EWRs with apathy and does not accord them the due respect and authority. This is visible in various ways, most strikingly in the acceptance of the husbands of the EWRs as representatives the official records. A study undertaken by Mahila Swaraj Abhiyan in Gujarat on the EWR's perceptions of corruption highlight that EWRs are often subjected to sexual harassment by the officials when EWRs approach them for developmental issues of their villages. The challenge begins with the family and community where often the female candidate for elections is propped up as a dummy candidate for the male member of the family. The behavior of other elected representatives of the GP is also such that instills a fear and disrespects the women representatives, thus de-motivating them from playing their designated roles in the GP. Some instances of such behaviours are not allowing women to hoist the national flag on Independence and Republic Days, not allowing women to sit on the chair of Sarpanch, deciding the date of meeting and its agenda without consulting the EWRs etc.]

In course of their working many tactics and strategies have been used by the civil society and the women representatives that would enable them to overcome these biases and challenges and take on an active role. Many women sarpanchs [village panchayat chairperson] have performed extremely well and delivered on their responsibilities so as to ensure that developmental needs of the village are fulfilled and that benefits are accessed by all villagers without any discrimination. Women elected representatives who have

challenged the patriarchal hold on local self governance institutions have also faced many backlash and opposition from the community members and

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### **KMVS and its engagement with women elected representatives**

The central focus of KMVS since its inception has been empowerment of women to address the gender inequities in Kutch. To achieve this, the strategy is to empower women economically, socially and politically through various efforts core being mobilizing and organising them in different forms of collectives. These collectives have over a period of time emerged as strong CBOs of women steered by women leaders from the community.

The engagement of the organization with women's political empowerment was intensified after the passage of 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act which brought large numbers of women in local self governance institutions namely the village panchayats. Many expectations were hinged on the factum of women in de jure positions of power; at the cost of exaggeration, there were expectations of complete makeover of the political systems and processes. The situation however has been fairly dynamic and women have marked their presence in the political system in many ways.

### **Interventions of KMVS in empowering the EWRs:**

The organization has been working with EWRs since late 1990's when the first batch of women were elected to local self governance institutions. The task began with celebrating the entry of women in politics to building their capacities to strengthen the functioning of the panchayat and also to discharge the responsibility entrusted to them.

As the challenges faced by the women became apparent, the work was expanded to include collectivizing the women representatives and advocacy efforts by them to create conducive conditions for work. Network of Platforms or **Manchs** from the blocks to the district levels were formed to bring to bring women together in an organized and systematic manner to challenge the entrenched patriarchal forms and mechanisms of governance and administration. These are informally managed collectives called **Gram Shasini** where several initiatives are undertaken to build the image and support EWRs in fulfilling their responsibility as leaders of the villages where they have been elected as representatives.

The approach has been to bring women's voices and concerns to the attention of development decision making thereby helping fulfill many practical needs and rights of women.

A review of the work of Sushasini was undertaken in mid 2012 by Dr. Rukmini Rao and Asha Ramesh highlights the tasks achievements of women sarpanchs in the following areas:

- Drinking water
- Check dams
- Toilets
- Water tanks for drinking water
- Electricity connections
- Roads
- Panchayat buildings
- MNREGA employment
- Revaluation of houses in order to raise revenue for the panchayat
- Housing under IAY

**Developing Gender Index as a Tool:** In this backdrop one of the areas of enquiry and action identified by Sushasini (the panchayat cell of KMVS) was to develop the gender index for village panchayats. Efforts had been and are being undertaken to make village development gender sensitive, and that needs to be unpacked. What do we mean when we say that women leaders would make a gram panchayat gender sensitive, what processes are needed or are undertaken for making a gender sensitive panchayat? What would be the indicators [long term short term, negotiable, non-negotiable] that would enable the ranking of a panchayat as gender sensitive?

It was also observed that many women sarpanchs had noteworthy achievements to their credit, yet the socially located gender bias and discrimination persisted. The next logical question thus was what can be done and how should it be done that would bring in equality and justice between men and women in the village community.

A discussion was initiated with some of the women leaders [both EWRs and other dynamic leaders] in June 2011 in a two day workshop. After reviewing the work undertaken by EWRs and as well as the identified/demanded needs by the women, five issues which make critical difference to the lives of women were identified for developing and measuring the Gender Index. It was envisaged that once the governing body (PRI representatives) are sensitized on these issues from a women's rights perspective, that perspective will percolate down to the community.

The issues identified are: **Water, Health, Education, Livelihood and Domestic violence**

## A. DEVELOPING GENDER INDEX AS A TOOL: THE PROCESS

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### 1. PREPARATORY PHASE

This was a completely new concept/idea and various processes were simultaneously initiated with the decision to develop gender index of panchayat as a tool.

The external environment also played an important facilitating role by providing an opportunity and momentum to the initiative. A new batch of EWRs was elected in December 2011 and immediately thereafter the organization undertook the task of profiling the elected women sarpanchs. The focus of this data collection was to collect the generic baseline information of the woman representative and the village. As the activity was infused with deeper understanding, another round of detailed profiling of women sarpanchs was initiated from April 2013 [206/215 women sarpanchs were profiled in this exercise] and documenting their personal profile, their vision, their capacity building needs etc. The membership of Gram Shasini – district level forum for EWRs was reconstituted after the elections to comprise 50% each of outgoing and new EWRs.

This exercise also helped collect data for identifying the 50 villages where the initiative on developing the gender index would be started.

The criteria for village identification were developed in a different process in June 2012 by the Sushasini team. Basically the baseline data, collected earlier in 2012 after the new batch of representatives was elected, facilitated the identification of villages where Gender Index would be developed.

At another level, the drivers of the initiative and the implementers [the Organisational team] also needed to build an understanding and clarity on the meaning of gender index and looking at it as a tool that can be contributed to the wider civil society for up-scaling. A meeting was organized in February 2012 which was attended by the Founder of the organization as well. After experience sharing and analysis of the current political situation, it was emphasized that henceforth making the elected representatives of village panchayats gender sensitive should be made the central focus of organizational interventions. A few women headed village panchayats should be identified for this purpose where this process would be undertaken and identify issues of gender discrimination and discrimination against the marginalized, social exclusion for action. Two objectives were identified at this meeting:

→ To regularize Mahila Sabhas for increasing women's participation in governance and to institutionalize the same by undertaking advocacy.

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→ Develop independent identity for Gram Shasini

At the management level, there was organizational re-thinking where all the separate cells were brought together to bring cohesiveness in the activities of the organisation so that efforts are concentrated and holistic results can be achieved, thereby improving the impact of the organizational interventions. It was decided to anchor all the other thematic work [DV, Urban, Health etc.] around the theme of governance and link it with developing the gender index of panchayats. Thus core issues of women like health, social justice and livelihood were integrated with Panchayats so that the objective of gender sensitive panchayat could be realized. For instance the various specific cells like the health cell would support the Panchayat in capacity building of the Panchayat body as well as the Health committee on issues and perspectives of women's health issues etc. thereby bringing in subject specific knowledge and information to the benefit of building panchayat capacity.

At this juncture the capacities and readiness of the Gram Shasini and other leadership was reviewed and process to build their capacities was initiated.

Discussions were initiated in May 2012 to strategize for developing an independent identity of Gram Shasini Manch. The leaders of Gram Shasini shared their experiences and insights and deliberated on the nature of activities to be undertaken for strengthening the Manch. As a first it was decided that Gram Shasini will be formally registered as an independent entity and processes will be initiated to slowly make it an independently managed and governed institution for EWRs in the region. Regular capacity building, information and guidance on accessing development/welfare schemes, provision of basic needs in villages, organizing mahila gram sabha, creation/provision of livelihood opportunities for BPL families, equal wages for equal work, advocacy efforts for policy issues like honorarium for sarpanchs, 50% reservation for women in panchayats etc. emerged as some of the tasks that would be prioritized by the Manch.

At the KMVS level in June 2012, Sushasini Team undertook the process of deciding the qualifying criteria for village panchayats where gender index or ideal panchayats initiative as it was called earlier would be initiated. The criteria were:

1. The village panchayat must be headed by a woman sarpanch
2. Panchayat should have an active woman sarpanch/deputy sarpanch and/or women sarpanchs

3. Village/panchayat must include various social categories and communities implying thereby that there should be diversity
4. Ensure that panchayat includes marginalized communities, is located in interior and far flung/inaccessible area of the block
5. It should be an underdeveloped panchayat meaning thereby that basic infrastructural facilities should be lacking/minimal/non-existent
6. There should be support and cooperation of the outgoing sarpanch

In the preparatory phase thus, various discussions and deliberations were undertaken, which were in some instances facilitated by donors and experts on how to strategize for the development of a “gender index” for panchayats.

## **2. IMPLEMENTATION PHASE: THE PROCESS**

The actual work in the development of gender panchayats began from April 2013 after all the preparatory work was undertaken. There was clarity that each knowledge cell of KMVS would contribute to the development of gender panchayat. Each cell thus developed the framework of its support and contribution and planned accordingly. Thus as part of development of gender index three processes or arms of activities were simultaneously initiated – organizational realignment of work, building capacity and identity of Gram Shasini and working as a team with 50 panchayats on developing the “ideal panchayats” (gender panchayat). Often thus there is an intermixing of activities which may not purely be in the design of gender index, but would contribute to building a gender sensitive panchayat, for instance the idea of promoting Mahila Sabha which was taken as an activity of the organization and manch.

The focus of activities in 2013 was on building capacities of the EWRs as governors and administrators of the village panchayats. Simultaneously the messaging concentrated on spreading the concept/idea of Mahila Sabha<sup>1</sup> [women’s meeting] in all village panchayats, modeled along similar efforts in Maharashtra where these sabhas have been institutionalized. The roots for this also lay in the fact that women representatives and leaders in Kutch have also been talking about separate women’s meeting since 2005-06 as part of the

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<sup>1</sup> Mahila Sabha is a concept where all women in the village community meet prior to the village gram sabha to discuss their issues and concerns and prioritize actions on the same. Technically the village gram sabha [literally meaning villagers meeting] is supposed to be inclusive of all adult residents of the village; however social taboos and patriarchal, feudal culture inhibits women’s participation in the public forum. Hence the idea of a separate women’s meeting was evolved so that women’s voices could become part of developmental decision making.

leadership building and thus the organisation decided to actively work on this issue as part of developing the gender index. Various efforts were undertaken as part of this. The leaders of two women's CBOs promoted by KMVS, namely Ujas and Saiyrejo Sangathan were given gender training so that they become active participants in the gram sabha in their villages.

Between June-September 2013 several awareness building and sensitization meetings were undertaken in the selected panchayats on the issues of women's political participation and development of gender index of panchayats. It was the organizational experience that in many instances the entire panchayat body met for the first time after elections [of December 2011] especially in Abdasa and Lakhpat blocks to discuss the issue of women's political participation.

### **2.1 Mahila Sabha – An Entry Point for Developing Gender Index**

The idea of mahila sabha was floated in the process of developing the 'ideal panchayat'. The approach was to make the panchayat itself responsible for including women [in gram sabha and in panchayat]. The organization strategized its efforts at institutionalizing the mahila sabha by working with the male leaders/elected representatives by building their "ownership". Ideas were invited from the male leaders on ways to include women in the development process of the village. They discussed that women are unable to talk freely and openly about their problems and suggested holding separate meetings with the women on their issues. To advocate for institutionalization of these Mahila Sabhas, Sushasini suggested Panchayats pass resolution to this effect and was successful in securing this support from the men in the panchayat body. Resolutions were passed by the panchayats to the effect that these mahila sabha meetings have equal status to Gram Sabha and that the resolutions passed in these meetings will be approved in the main gram sabha.

It was a strategic decision to involve the male elected representatives and community leaders in seeking solutions to engaging with women in the context where the societal culture, traditions do not promote and/or inhibit women from participating in public life. A few copies of these resolutions are annexed as samples.

Various mahila Sabhas were facilitated as a part of this process of development of gender index. Thus in many villages (48) the mahila sabhas were held before the main gram sabha and decisions and discussions from that forum were brought to the main gram sabha of the village. Some women would muster courage



and attend the main gram sabha and report the discussions and concerns raised at the women's meetings.

Often actions have been initiated by

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*Women leaders from Fulra village, Lakhpat Block would regularly attend the Gram Shasini Manch meetings held at the Block place regularly. They would also carefully listen to and understand the information shared with them at these meetings. However they were unaware of how and where to make use of this information; however to share this with the panchayat was beyond their imagination. In one of the meetings they mentioned their problem and requested to organize a Mahila Sabha in their village to raise awareness amongst other women in the village. Based on this, a mahila sabha was conducted in the village, which was attended by around 20 women from the Dalit hamlet/colony and discussed the main challenges faced by women there. The problem of water supply emerged as a major problem faced by them which had remained unresolved despite repeated requests. So all the women went to meet the sarpanch after the mahila sabha was complete and informed him that if we do not get water even now, we will go to the Block and District if need be. They also threatened that we will damage the pipeline bringing water to the Sarpanch's colony. The sarpanch took up this matter seriously now and ensured that water supply reached the dalit colony regularly.*

*Laxmiben Harijan, an ex-EWR of Dharesi village, Lakhpat block was a member of Gram Shasini Manch and would attempt to resolve the problems faced by women in her village by bringing those matters to the Manch. She would make all efforts to ensure that most disadvantaged persons are able to access their rights by accessing benefits of various schemes. However lack of livelihood options for the women in the village was one matter that constantly plagued her. She requested for organizing a mahila sabha in her village to talk about MNREGS and job cards. One person from the village took responsibility to prepare the list of persons who need work and filed an application in the Panchayat. The panchayat then allocated work as per norms to the people.*

The impact of this initiative was thus that the Government passed a GR in November 2013 directing the authorities to call for a compulsory mahila sabha prior to the main gram sabha of the village. The GR made holding a Mahila Sabha prior to the main gram sabha compulsory for all Panchayats to achieve the objective of including women's voices and concerns. The Secretary of the Panchayat (Talati) was now officially

directed to attend and record the discussions and decisions and communicate the same in the main gram sabha of the village.

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In reality however this is not very effective as many talatis and officials dismiss this as just another initiative and do not consider it their duty to ensure its implementation. For women and their leadership however this has been a highly motivating factor since this recognizes their 'voice' and gives them the space to influence decision making in their village. This has to a large extent facilitated the feeling of being 'powerful' amongst women and awareness of their decision making capacity and the role. So women leaders make strategic use of the Mahila Sabha to mainstream their concerns.

*An all woman Panchayat body was elected in Nana Kadiya village, Nakhatrana block in the elections of 2012. The local village school was only upto standard 8 and the children from the village have to go to Nakhatrana for further studies. The children used the public transport to undertake the commute. The government bus would come and take the children and bring them back. Lately however, the bus would not come to the bus stand in the village and instead would drop the children a little outside the village and the children would have to walk all the way to the village. This had raised the issue of safety of young girls and led to the situation where many girls began to drop out from schooling /higher education. This issue was taken up by the panchayat and brought to the notice of the authorities orally. This did not lead to any improvement in the situation. Then the Panchayat body decided to get a resolution passed in the gram sabha and send a copy of the same to the Depot Manager. It was decided that if this led to no improvement in the situation then the matter would be escalated to the District authorities. This resulted in a state transport bus coming to the village regularly to enable children to commute to school daily. Girls from the village have resumed their schooling /higher studies now.*

**Formation of Support Committee:** There were sincere efforts at implementation of this provision in the villages where KMVS's engagement/presence is intense. To support the institutionalization of the Mahila Sabha and making it a norm, **a support committee** has also been formed in these villages. This is a solidarity group comprising of 7-8 women members like the other women SHG leaders, the Anganwadi worker, women members of other panchayat committees like the school management committee, *sanjeevani* committee etc. who support and lead on issues of health and social justice, and undertake various activities.

This acts like a solidarity group which provides support and strength to elected women representatives to dialogue and negotiate with the system.

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The members of this support committee have also been provided trainings on various issues.

Meanwhile the KMVS team was also involved in the process of developing the Gender Index in a phased manner. Various workshops [5] were conducted with the KMVS core team on gaining clarity on the concept of gender index, building a common understanding on gender, demystifying each issue for action (amongst the 5 issues identified for action under this process) and each cell developed its framework of action and contribution in the process of development of gender index of panchayats as a tool.

## **2.2 Meetings, Trainings and Capacity Building of Elected Representatives**

The next step comprised building capacities of elected women representatives/elected representatives by different means. They did not have an understanding of their roles and responsibilities as governors and administrators. During the period October – December 2013 the panchayat body and the EWRs were trained on the issue of Gender Responsive governance. In the process men elected representatives were trained as well since they also demanded trainings and strategically, it was decided to also engage with men in the process of development of gender index.

Trainings were customized according to the target group since all the levels of personnel engaged in this work – KMVS core team, Gram Shasini leadership, and elected representatives of the villages where the Gender Index was being piloted – needed some perspective and skill building. Their needs varied based on their role in the process. The Gram Shasini leadership (Executive body) and about 50 EWRs, representing each block where the work of Gram Shasini is going on were trained on basic concepts of gender sensitive panchayats and to introduce the concept of Gender Index as a tool to measure it.

<b>Panchayat Body</b>	<b>EWR Trainings</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functions of village Panchayats, roles and responsibilities of the Sarpanch and the elected representatives,</li> <li>• women's role and participation in the various Panchayat committees,</li> <li>• Fundamental rights,</li> <li>• Improving women's participation in decision making.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• building gender perspective,</li> <li>• leadership,</li> <li>• rights and duties of citizenship,</li> <li>• discriminations against women in Society</li> <li>• gender governance</li> </ul>
<b>Executive Committee of Gram Shasini</b>	<b>Trainings to Panchayat Committee</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gender discrimination and patriarchy: its</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SJs: Roles and Responsibilities, social</li> </ul>

impact on society and social relations, identifying local issues, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• leadership,</li> <li>• communication and management,</li> <li>• construction of toilets (identifying the land, identifying the needy, provision of water supply for toilet, dialoguing with Panchayats etc.)</li> </ul>	justice and development of the marginalized groups, protection of women from violence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SMCs: Importance of Education for girls, Understanding RTE, basic infrastructure</li> <li>• Sanjeevani Committees: Roles and responsibilities, health issues of women, use of grant received by the Committee from the Government, orientation on Cervical Cancer</li> </ul>
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The EWRs and other Panchayat representatives were trained on the generic roles and responsibilities, the committee members were trained on the specific issues to be dealt by their respective committees. Example members of School Management Committee were trained on the RTE with gender lens, the members of Sanjeevani committee were trained on health considerations from a gender lens etc.

*Women were also imparted professional skills training like beauty parlour, embroidery etc. in the villages where they articulated a need for livelihood training, they passed a resolution for such skill building trainings in the Mahila Sabha, which were approved in the main Gram Sabha of the village. These resolutions were then sent to the ITI and the trainings were organized. This demonstrates the success of the strategy of forming alternate structures [mahila sabha] for including women's voices in a patriarchal social setup, strategy of engaging with men which gives it validity and acceptance in the village community as the 'suggestion' had come from them, the involvement of men in the process and the entire panchayat taking responsibility to coordinate and implement in the interest of women in the village.*

**Meetings:** The regular Manch meetings were also a medium for building capacities of the EWRs on issues like gender, governance, preparation of budget, panchayat's role in primary education, possible role of social justice committee in addressing violence against women, information on PDS system and other welfare schemes etc. Meetings were held in the Panchayats where GI was being developed; often these were around some developmental initiative towards gender sensitization like organizing a hemoglobin check up camp, check up for cervical cancer, organizing livelihood capacity building training for women of the village etc.

### **2.3 Information Centers: A Critical Initiative**

Block level Information Centres were devised as a strategy to educate and empower women with information on different aspects of governance and Panchayati Raj institutions when the first batch of elected women representatives assumed power after the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act. These information centres were managed by EWRs, supported by the leaders of Gram Shasini Manch. These centres have proved extremely helpful not only for EWRs but the entire rural population and thus have been continued and expanded into newer areas. When the work around developing gender index/ideal panchayats was conceptualised there were 4 Panchayat Information Centres operational at the Block level [Abdasa, Lakhpat, Bhuj and Mandvi] and it was decided to spread these further to increase rural poor's access to information by opening centres at cluster level. The details of the information centres is provided in Annexure 2.

The Information centres primarily provide information on various government welfare schemes and support the needy rural population in accessing these. These are managed by an ex-EWR along with 1-2 other woman leader. The idea for expanding the outreach of these centres was that the EWRs of the identified villages would also be able to access information from these centres which would help them access benefits under various development schemes of the government like Widow pension, Old Age Pension, Sant Surdas scheme etc. for their village and all the BPL and needy especially women residents.

### **2.4 Other Activities for Developing Gender Index:**

Capacity building and information centres are generic activities which are being implemented since the organization began working with the elected women representatives. These were however infused with the concept of gender index and customized to steer the formation of "ideal panchayat" – a gender sensitive panchayat and implemented from that vision.

There are several other activities undertaken for this purpose. **Lecture Series** was organized with the objective of perspective and capacity building of panchayats in these 50 villages on various issues concerning governance and administration and to inculcate values of good governance among the elected representatives. While these lectures were open to all members of civil society and elected representatives, special efforts were made to ensure that EWRs from the study villages attend the same.

**Monthly meetings** were planned and regularly organized in 53 villages for developing gender Index where the objectives and indicators of gender index of panchayats were introduced to the community especially to the elected panchayat body. Some of these were accepted for monitoring by the panchayat, and certain

other priority issues were suggested by the elected representatives like securing pending grants, demarcation of land, appointment of teachers in schools, condition of water structures etc. The agenda for every meeting is some task of panchayat functioning which is discussed from a gender lens. Some **activities conducted as part of development of gender Index** was conducting health camp for checking hemoglobin levels of women in all the action villages, save girl child campaign in 20 villages of Mundra Block, profiling of the School Management Committee and Social Justice Committee of all the 53 villages, training the members of these committees etc.

Various **initiatives were undertaken by the Gram Shasini manch**, as part of its routine activities, ensuring that these 50 villages are included in the same. Women leaders take action on issues which are articulated by the women from the community which provide some benefit to them. For example women leaders of the Manch took initiative and planned to work on constructing toilets in 200 villages and linked with the relevant government department and scheme for this initiative. As part of the process the women were given an orientation and training on the technical and social aspects of hygiene and sanitation. Similarly, Gram Shasini members initiated many discussions on issues of violence against women in the villages, with the support of Hello Sakhi and succeeded to form Women protection committees in 9 villages to work on women's issues like health, vaccination, domestic violence and abuse, unnatural death of women etc. Access to PDS and adequacy of material provided by the PDS system has always been subject to issues like corruption, adulteration, etc. The Manch has decided to organize a public hearing on PDS system and for this, has undertaken data collection to prepare for the public hearing on the PDS issue. For building subject knowledge and understanding, workshops have been organized in collaboration with other organizations in the district on issues like water, livelihood etc. and many panchayats received guidance on these matters.

***In December 2013 Gram Shasini intervened and suggested the Chairperson of District Panchayat to include hemoglobin testing as part of Mamta Diwas in the Block. The Health Committee of the District Panchayat issued a GR (Government Resolution) directing the Block Health Officer to include hemoglobin testing as part of Mamta Diwas and to report to Gram Shasini on the outcome of this. As part of this initiative 4294 women from 60 villages were checked for haemoglobin levels. The women sarpanchs also kept a record of the Haemoglobin status of women in their villages and monitored it. They linked the women with the other schemes where ANM gave the women iron supplements. This led to an overall improvement in the health of women in the villages and they were commended by the Chairperson of the health committee of District Panchayat for this.***

**Advocacy efforts** of Gram Shasini with the District Panchayat continues. In July 2014 a meeting was organized with the entire District Panchayat body on the 5 issues identified for action. As a consequence different developmental works and tasks have been undertaken in different villages based on the need expressed by the village/women elected representative.

*Women leaders made many applications but were not receiving any favorable response. As a result they decided to hold a meeting with the local MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly) and President of the District Panchayat to understand from them why their applications did not receive any response. The MLA decided to organize a conference or a dialogue with the local officials. Women were asked to come with applications and resolutions of the Gram Panchayat and then demand answers from the President of District Panchayat. Many applications put in by the EWRS received favorable response from the administration. This process went a long way in building confidence of the women elected representatives.*

## B. OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS:

This is a unique effort initiated by a feminist organisation to consolidate the years of experience of developing women's leadership and gender sensitization of the wider community. This is still work under progress and will take some efforts to consolidate and standardise the process. However, such concerted efforts show much promise for building measurable indicators and processes for wider social changes.

- Developing gender index for any institution – in this case the village panchayats – is **an extremely intense process mandatorily involving different initiatives [mobilization, awareness raising, capacity building, advocacy etc.] with multiple stakeholders**, including men and women from the community, leaders of the community and elected representatives, officials etc. The organizational commitment and political will in seeing this process through is the mainstay for this process.
- In the case of KMVS initiative, **an organizational synergy** is witnessed in this process, where all sectoral interventions converged in the panchayats identified for developing the gender index. Hence the **different Knowledge Cells (departments/units) came together to converge their expertise and efforts** in the 50 villages which were identified for developing the gender index.
- While the organization considered developing the gender index as a tool, it also simultaneously worked on **aligning the critical activities to support and sustain the process** in the future. Strengthening the Gram Shasini Manch and developing its identity at the district level as an independent institution, expanding the outreach of Panchayat Information Centres etc. are evidences of this.
- **Existence of other solidarity and support platforms**, which the elected panchayat representatives identified for gender index can access and relate with, boosts the process of gender sensitization of panchayat body. In the case of initiative under study, the women representatives mentioned that linkage with Gram Shasini Manch is a motivating factor for them. They discovered that their work gets done; they get respected by the authorities etc. which is a win-win situation for both the forum and the women sarpanchs.
- The **strategy of convening a mahila sabha or formation of support committees of other women leaders is essential for EWRs** of identified villages as it builds a critical public mass that supports their decision making and advocacy in the local community.
- Based on the experience of actions initiated by women representatives, it is clear that **to begin with they also have to undertake work on developmental works that are needed in the village** thereby allowing us to hypothesize that working in gender panchayats is similar to working in general panchayat.



The only distinction being **in the gender panchayat, the women and girls form the fulcrum around which decision making revolves.**

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- **Awareness raising in the village community** on the necessity of engaging women in the governance process is the first step in developing the gender index. The learning in the process is that development of gender sensitivity and gender index/tool must necessarily engage with men. This can serve the dual purpose of gender sensitization of the village community as well as building acceptance for women's leadership in the process [especially since the focus is on women headed panchayats].
- Providing **trainings and capacity building support to Panchayats is desirable and necessary** to infuse a gender perspective in them. **Sequencing and prioritizing** these trainings [phasing them] would enhance the impact of these trainings. It would be more effective useful to develop a proper, phased capacity building plan and training modules prior to embarking on the project.
- It is **good strategy to introduce gender equality perspective through the regular functions and developmental plans** of the Panchayat. However, **care should be taken that the purpose of each activity is clear to the village community** and they are in agreement with the same. It was observed that various interventions were initiated, with purpose clarity at the organizational level, but it could not be clearly ascertained if the village community also was in agreement, participated in the planning and implementation of those activities or if they were merely recipients of the actions.

## CONCLUSION

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In conclusion it can be said that this is a very promising initiative and if implemented with the rigour as has been demonstrated in the preceding period, it has the potential to emerge as a tool that can change the course of women's leadership in gram panchayats. Change and impact are 'heavy' words that cannot be measured by a few interventions in the process of developing an empowerment and social change tool.

However it can be concluded that the signs of potential change are visible amongst all the concerned stakeholders. There is evidence of Gram Panchayat becoming increasingly sensitive to women's issues, there is evidence of government officials becoming increasingly sensitive to women's issues [Support received from the Chairperson, Health Committee, District Panchayat, improvement in the quality of Mid-Day Meal served at the schools as a result of Panchayat itself also monitoring the same], the community itself being main harbinger of change. Moreover, people's or community's perception of panchayats, its role and its relevance in their development has changed for better. It was earlier perceived that panchayats are a corrupt body where only the money and muscle power works. However with women at the forefront, and delivering on the many developmental concerns, this perception has changed. People, including women, are getting more accustomed to approaching the panchayats for their problems.

Similarly people's perception of women's public appearances and leadership roles is also changing for the better. One can also say that this process leads to development of a critical political understanding amongst women leaders.

The implementation of this intervention needs to be strengthened further as this clearly demonstrates the efficacy of this process in building gender sensitive leadership and community.

**List of Gender Index Panchayats**

Sr No	Block	Panchayat	Sr No	Block	Panchayat
1	<b>Bhuj</b>	Chapredi	26		Kuva padhar
2		Lakhod	27		Nani dhufi
3		Chundi	28		Bitiyari
4		Sarli	29		Kervandh
5		Bharasar	30		bera hadapar
6		Nana bandra	31	<b>Nakhtrana</b>	Desalpar(gu)
7		Gajod	32		Nana kadiya
8		Kotda(aa)	33		Ukheda
9		Bhujodi	34		Khirsara(sarva)
10		Aanandsar	35		Mathal
11	<b>Mandvi</b>	Ludva	36		Haripar
12		Mota aasambiya	37		Lakshamipar
13		Dhunai	38		Aanandsar
14		Bada	39		Bibar
15		Bhisara	40		Aanandpar(y)
16		Mamaymora	41	<b>Mundra</b>	Kukadsar
17		Kokaliya	42		Bhadreswar
18		Bhojay	43		Lakhapar
19		Pundi	44		Chhasara
20		Mota bhadiya	45		Karagogha
21	<b>Abdash</b>	Chhadura	46		Dhrab

	<b>a</b>				
22		Balapar	47		Bhorara
23		Khanay	48		Depa
24		Kharuaa	49		Ramaniya
25		Kandhay	50		Navi nal

### List of Panchayat Information Centres

Block	Name of the PIC	Village	Person managing the centre	Designation	Support and monitoring	No. days open
Abdasa	Panchayat Mahiti Kendra	Naliya	Manjulaben	GP Member	Sushasini	2
Lakhpat	Panchayat Mahiti Kendra	Dayapar	Mayaben	Manch Member	Sushasini	1
Nakhtrana	Panchayat Mahiti Kendra	Nakhtrana	Seetaben Rabari	Social Worker	Sushasini	1
	Saiyyar Mahiti Kendra	Ravapar	Tulsiben	Manch Member	Panchayat	3
	Vithon Mahiti Kendra	Vithon	Memunaben	Manch Member	Panchayat	3
	Kotda (Jadodar) Mahiti Kendra	Kotda	Mohanba	Manch Member	Panchayat	3
	Rampar Panchayat Mahiti Kendra	Rampar	Maniben	Dy. Sarpanch	Panchayat	1
	Ugedi Panchayat	Ugedi	Seetaben Rabari	GP Member	Panchayat	1

	Mahiti Kendra					
	Sayra Panchayat Mahiti Kendra	Sayra	Kasturben Hansaben	GP Member	Panchayat	2
	Nirona Panchayat Mahiti Kendra	Nirona	કાલજીભાઈ	Panchayat Computer Operator	Panchayat	3
Mundra	Ujas Mahiti Kendra	Mundra	Rohiniben	Social worker	Sushasini	6
	Navinal Panchayat Mahiti Kendra	Navinal		Panchayat Computer Operator	Panchayat	6
Bhuj	Kotda Panchayat Mahiti Kendra	Kotda	Amrutaben Madhuben	GP Member	Panchayat	1

પિના સહકાર નહિ ઉઠ્ઠાર

સત્યમેવ જયતે

પંચ ત્યાં પરમેશ્વર



॥ આવી ભારાસર ગામને નંદનવન બનાવીએ ॥



## શ્રી ભારાસર ગ્રામ પંચાયત કચેરી

મુ. ભારાસર, તા. ભુજ-કચ્છ. ફોન : (૦૨૮૩૨) ૨૭૫૩૭૫

જાવક નંબર :

તારીખ : ૨૬/૭/૧૩

તા. ૨૫/૭/૧૩ તારીખ મળેલ ગ્રામસભા ના  
ઠરાવ નં - ૨૩૫ ની જકલ

ઠરાવ નં - ૨૩૫ : - આથી ઠરાવવામાં આવે છે કે ભારાસર  
ગ્રામ પંચાયત ના એક નિર્ણય લેવામાં આવે છે કે  
ગ્રામ વિકાસમાં મહિલાઓના ભાગદારી વધતે હોય  
જુન્ય ગ્રામસભા પદોના ખાસ મહિલા ગ્રામસભા,  
યજ્ઞિયામાં આવે અને તેમાં વધેલ સ્ત્રીઓ મુદ્દાઓ  
મુખ્ય ગ્રામસભા યજ્ઞિયામાં આવે ત્યારે મહિલા ગ્રામસભા  
ના મુદ્દાઓ વંચાને લેવા અને તેની બરાબરી આપવી  
તેજ સર્વોચ્ચ ને બહુમતી ઠરાવ પસાર કરવામાં  
આવે છે

જે ઠરાવ સર્વોચ્ચ ને પસાર ---

જે સસત પરથી જકલ કરી તા. ૨૬/૭/૧૩

સરપંચ

શ્રી ભારાસર ગ્રામ પંચાયત  
તા. ભુજ - કચ્છ,

તલાટા સહ-મંત્રી  
ભારાસર, તા. ભુજ.



॥ सत्यमेव जयते ॥

सौनो साथ सौनो विकास

॥ वंदे मातरम् ॥

# श्री यपरेडी ग्राम पंचायत

(समस्त ग्राम पंचायत)

श्रीमति सविताबेन रणछोड केरासिया  
सरपंच

मु.पो. यपरेडी (अटलनगर),  
ता. लुज-कच्छ.

रेड. नं. ता. ल ७१२०१३ ना ५२१५ना-३ तारीख : नी १५.११.२०

बीभाबाई वेला केरासिया  
उप सरपंच वॉर्ड नं. ५

हरिबाई सया गांगल  
सभ्य वॉर्ड नं. १

रणछोड केला वासिया  
सभ्य वॉर्ड नं. २

वेलज गोपाल गांगल  
सभ्य वॉर्ड नं. ३

सोनूबेन मुकेश गांगल  
सभ्य वॉर्ड नं. ४

डाईबेन रामजु गांगल  
सभ्य वॉर्ड नं. ५

महेशबाई धना गांगल  
सभ्य वॉर्ड नं. ७

मुद्दा नां-३ महीला पिडास अने महीला सशक्ति ५२(१)  
इतिपना-३ अने समजुती अने मार्गदर्शन  
महीला ग्रामसला संस्था अंगे

आजकी सलास नां ५२(१) महीला पिडास संगठन ना  
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महीला सशक्तता, महीला परबता अत्याचारो पिडा  
पिडास हावर २०१३ इत्यानां धावी ग्रामसला महीला  
अने प्रमाणे वासा आपवा अने तेनी समुदायो प्रत्ये  
धारा आपवा थोपडका मुद्दा सवाक पलोमाइवा, महीला  
सुदका, महीला ना आरोग्य प्रमाणे समुदायो सशक्तता  
धारा प्रतिनिधित्व ५२(१) सलास पिडास मुद्दा सला  
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महीला प्रवृत्ति मावे ग्रामसला धारा प्रमाणे सलास  
आपवा नात्री आपवा नां धावी महीला प्रवृत्ति मावे  
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ग्राम. समुदायो यथा प्रमाणे आयोजन ५२(१) नां. लोका  
लाईवरी आजकी सलास नां नां.

सवाक नां ५२(१)

असमर्थता वसंत नां ५२(१) सवाक नां ५२(१)  
ना. ५०११३ श्री यपरेडी ग्राम पंचायत  
ता. लुज-कच्छ. यपरेडी

रे. : मु.पो. यपरेडी (अटलनगर), ता. लुज-कच्छ. पीन : ३७०१०५. ફોન : (०२८३२) २८०३५३, मो. 98257 60153,

