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# WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract:** This research aims to explore the linkages between active involvement of women in local governance and its result on policy design, formulation and outcomes. It uses data at local government level, in order to study the impact of women representation in local government in India, called 'Panchayati Raj Institutions' (PRI's), on various socio-economic indicators related to education and health. The researchers categorise Indian federal states on the percentage of women representation in government for further study and analysis. Efforts are made to understand the relationship between more women in government and the adoption of central and state government schemes to promote sustainable development policies and programs.

The findings of the study along with success stories of women 'sarpanch' support the hypothesis that more women in governance create positive outcomes in literacy, health and sanitation. Thus, establishing that if women have greater involvement in the development process, they can be effective social and economic change agents.

This research talks of the most established arrangement of local government in India i.e. the 'Panchayati Raj' system. There are few studies that have been conducted to understand the role of women in 'Panchayati Raj'. These existing studies focus on women's understanding of politics, their capacity to lead and their educational background. This paper however, provides an elaborate study of the schemes implemented by governments in different states and how having more women representatives in local government has improved the chances of implementation of policies that favour development, especially of women and children.

**Keywords:** Women Representation in 'Panchayats', Women 'Sarpanch', Women Empowerment, Women Schemes, Local Governance, 'Panchayati Raj'.

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**Introduction:** Economic development can be promoted effectively with the combined and concerted efforts of different levels of government and supportive public policy organisations. Judicious formulation of policies and their effective implementation can extend the critical governance support required to achieve higher levels of development in a sustainable development framework. A public service or programme involves multiple organisations and departments in its formulation and implementation; proper coordination among these is essential to achieve efficient outcomes. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment in 1992 gave Constitutional status to the 'Panchayats' as establishments of local governance for promoting economic development. This amendment proposed a reservation of at least 33% seats in 'Panchayats' for women. Such legislation facilitates women's participation in the governance process leading to the financial, social and ecological changes required for accomplishing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

A holistic approach to achieve sustainable development goals in a democratic, federal form of government highlights the need to improve the social, monetary and ecological dimensions of

development, by: i) reorganizing the traditional administrative structures ii) empowering different government offices and public sector organisations, while improving coordination amongst them iii) prioritising development needs through various levels of administration, iv) allowing commonly advantageous and interdependent decision making and v) evolving joint action for achievement of goals. Integration between the arrangements, needs, and projects of various government bodies is the basic requirement to achieve the SDG goals, both at the 'panchayat', local, state and national levels. Integrated local governance can be achieved by vertical and horizontal coordination among national and state governments, various departments and ministries. Territorial coordination also becomes an important aspect of integration. Such coordination would facilitate achievement of the SDGs. The role of women in local governance in achievement of SDGs is significant. (UN General Assembly, 2015) This is clearly brought out in the following SDGs: the target 5.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals emphasises on making sure that women have hundred percentage productive participation and equivalent opportunities for leadership at all ranks of decision-making. The target 16.7 states "Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels". Both the targets therefore, build the case for women representation and decentralized decision making as steps to achieve desired developmental goals and outcomes.

It implies that the pointers and information to gauge the advancement towards this objective should mirror people's observations and interactions with governments and administrators, and prime concern for this activity ought to incorporate enhancing government ideation processes (e.g. when drafting laws, creating approaches or executing programs), enhancing parliamentary commitment (e.g. empowering more effort by administrators) and executing particular systems for exceptionally marginalized groups (e.g. reservations for women, youth or other sensitive categories including those victimized based on caste).

(Rodrigues, 2016) The actions advocated to be taken in support of these objectives include: helping in local level participatory planning; steering endeavors to involve youngsters and women aggressively in leadership and decision making, undertaking reviews of 'panchayat' and village level projects, and testing different conflict resolution systems.

**Literature Review:** The literature available on women's role in sustainable development is quite large. This includes government publications, reports of special bodies and organizations in the area and studies conducted by research scholars, bureaucrats and academicians.

Most of the researchers accept that encouraging gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) is important in attaining sustainable human development, reduction in poverty, and to boost economic growth. In spite of many global pacts set to stimulate GEWE, women are not able to make a mark in education, occupation, political affairs, wellbeing, or access to public services comparable to men. According to the (Unfpa.org, 2018), gender equality is when men and women in the world enjoy the identical opportunities, consequences, privileges and commitments in all spheres of life. When men and women would share equal level of authority and influence, it can be said that there is equality. They need to have the same chances to attain financial independence by engaging in employment activities or entrepreneurial ventures. Education and dreams should be equally achievable, neither of the sexes should have an upper hand in attaining good education and/or fulfilling their desires. Unlike the present state of affairs, though arrived at after several long historical struggles, women empowerment will be natural and more effective when women have major control on their own life, when they have the power to make their decisions both in day to day dealings and in life changing choices. Without both, sustainable development is not possible. Numerous studies show that limited contribution from women in the areas of education, governance, finance and social development has negative impact on development (Lucas, 2001; Okojie, 1996).

The important issues that are to be dealt with for the upliftment of rights of women from a particular community or sect are better understood by the women who belong to the same society and community. They recognize the travails and possible opposition faced by the community and thus, are

better equipped to address them. Being part of the same community these women are also, in a better position to be accepted by the community. When women push for social change and responsibility, they develop leadership skills; some use these skills to transform their lives, their families, and their communities for the better. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), African Union (AU), and African Development Bank (ADB) (2008) “has grouped GEWE into four broad categories: economic participation, social participation, political participation, and women’s human rights”.

Discrimination against women exists in economic, social and political dimensions. In many societies women do not acquire any land, assets, agricultural inputs or occupational opportunities and thus, do not have much recognised contribution when it comes to economic activities. ( Bayeh, E ,2016) The social involvement refers to the discrimination faced by women in access to fundamental public services, for example, education, wellbeing, water, social safety, and security. The discrimination within political circles includes women not being able to take an interest in basic leadership forms, political foundations, strategy making associations, and citizenship. Besides, UNECA, AU, and ADB (2008) take note that, "African ladies do not generally make their interest known in the open or in their homes; basic leadership circles to bring their needs and requirements into the forefront are almost absent."

Few researchers in their studies have concluded that there is evidence of gender perspective when it comes to political participation and political opinions. Women and men do not have similar political visions; women are more inclined towards backing policies and programs that are related to children. These policies may include expenditure on child care, child education and any other related expenses (Lott and Kenny (1999), Edlund and Pande (2001) and Edlund, Haider and Pande (2003)). (Nidhiya Menon et al.,2013) in her research paper titled Women’s Land Rights and Children’s Human Capital in Vietnam, indicated that the families with only mother being the bread winner and taking the lead in using the land for cultivation has children who were less sick. These families had proper health insurances and had school education; the family income was redirected towards improving the standard of living rather than using in any addiction or vices. The results also showed that the above stated effects were stronger in all the families than the once which had a male person earning or jointly living families. Other researches like Lundberg and Thomas in their studies have associated gender to spending patterns. They conclude that men and women who have direct income or properties spend differently; men do not spend on education, wellbeing and supplementary activities as much as women (Lundberg, Pollak, and Wales (1997), Thomas (1990), Thomas (1997), Duflo (2003)). Thomas in his studies has supported that improvement in income of the female in the household also decreases mortality rates for children and improves child wellbeing (Thomas 1990, 1997). The above mentioned studies recommend that women should be given strong positions in policy making, because men as decision makers may fail to emphasize or integrate policies that are beneficial for women and children. One of the possible ways to strengthen women representation and reduce traditional discrimination trends in politics is by instituting a reservation system in different levels of federal form of government, be it at the center, state or local levels. Representative contribution from women in policy making will also, help in the attainment of sustainable development goals.

“Towards Equality Report” of the Government of India (1974) is an initial report to assess the importance of women in the political system. The report summarized the roles, responsibilities and options available for women in the wake of planned economic development in the country. It was found that women at large were not enjoying the favourable chances provided to them under the Indian Constitution. The report stressed on the need for political participation and furtherance of women representation in political bodies and systems. The report advocated setting up of women functionaries/ bodies/ ‘panchayats’ at the village level with autonomy and resources to manage and execute welfare and development programmes for women and children. The committee recommended it as a transition measure to break traditional attitudes that inhibit women from articulating their problems and enable them to participate actively in local bodies.

Manikyamba (2003) in one of her studies concluded that the 73rd Constitutional Amendment is an achievement of Women's Movement in India. The Amendment is expected to provide bigger and better share to women in political decision making process and enhance the scope for women in the male dominated territory of public policy, enabling to bring ordinary women into the task of governance. Though since the inception of 'Panchayati Raj', need for women's representation has been recognised, the challenges relating to the share of women representation and the manner of their engagement and recruitment continued unresolved for a long time.

Manikyamba (2003) in her paper also talks about few women 'sarpanches' in India<sup>71</sup>. In her narration of some of the successful women 'sarpanches' she mentions specific examples, such as: Sudha Patel, 'Sarpanch' of Changa village in Gujarat state, Koeli, 'Sarpanch' of Nimuchana village in Rajasthan and Fathima Bhi, 'Sarpanch' of Kalva village, Orvakal Mandal of Kurnool district in Andhra Pradesh State. Fathima Bhi even received the UNDP 'Fight against Poverty' Award from the hands of United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan. Manikyamba points out that woman in 'Panchayats' took up social issues as an important agenda. Suramanjari President of 'Panchayat' Union of Katpadi, in Vellore district of Tamil Nadu State facilitated inter-caste marriages and widow marriages. In turn, she was honored with Outstanding Woman 'Panchayat' Leader Award by the Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi. Manikyamba is optimistic about the future of women in 'Panchayats'. She says 'women in 'Panchayats' have moved from innocence to strength, from reluctant entry to assertion and from passive to active role performance'.

Recent studies indicate that 'Panchayati Raj' institutions headed by women are a huge success. They have brought changes at the very lower levels of society, by improving governance and thereby bringing about higher development. It has also, changed the traditional perception that women cannot handle high pressure job or perform duties outside their homes. There is an obvious change in the organization and conveyance of administrations at Gram 'Panchayat' (GP) level predominantly; more prominent emphasis being given to the needs and necessities of the general population, more prominent straightforwardness, more noteworthy dependence on flat linkages between local, state and village governments and more prominent interest of individuals especially females from the community. Elected women representatives, acting as agents of change are usually women of twenty five to forty five years of age (Devaki Jain, 1996). Elected women members in the north Indian state of Haryana were handling various problems at the village level like water supply, pension, education and vocational training etc. (Pamela Singla, 2007). Further, the male members appeared to be focusing more on construction and infrastructure problems. This is indicative of the profile of the issues addressed by elected women members. The women who have been elected by the population have discharged their responsibilities well. They have used their political power to improve the state of women and children in their 'panchayats' and wards. Women 'sarpanches' and officials have not only given importance to gender discrimination problems but also, improved the state of facilities for general health and wellbeing of the women and children. There has been improvement in drinking water facilities, nutrition, pre and post-natal care and sanitation facilities in the villages, which have a direct effect on the quality of life of women in these communities (Ministry of Panchayati Raj, GOI, 2008).

**Local Governance and Women:** The government system in India came to consist of visible and well known layers as the central government and state governments. However, the third layer, of local government existed traditionally and in the Constitution. Overtime in most places its importance faded due to limited exercise of its powers: both its responsibilities and its rights. This led to a disconnect in identifying local problems and channelizing local resources to handle these, often resulting in both

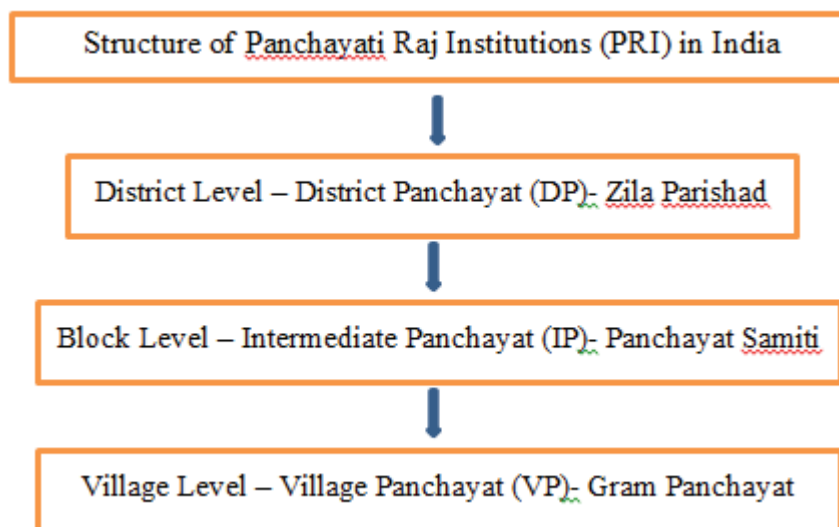
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<sup>71</sup> The elected head of a village-level statutory institution of local self-government is called a 'sarpanch'. In India there is establishment of 'panchayat' (village government) also known as 'gram panchayat'. The 'gram panchayat' consists of the 'sarpanch' and other elected 'panchas' (members). The 'sarpanch' is the central point of contact between government officers and the village community. He/she plays the role of the mediator, the 'sarpanch' is capable of bringing 100% development to his/her village through government support.

ineffective handling of problems and resource wastage. Thus, even though India had a local government system in its earlier history, it became necessary to resuscitate this local governance system widely known as 'Panchayati Raj'. During the late 90's efforts were made to re-establish the 'Panchayati Raj' system in the villages, with three tiers i.e. village, intermediate and district levels working in coordination with the state and central government. The elections for each level are conducted to appoint the representatives with a term of 5 years. To revive the same, the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution was finally given assent by the President in April 1993; this amendment bound all states to establish their own elected 'Panchayats'<sup>72</sup> with an additional requirement of have 33% of women reservation quota. It is observed that Indian political power has rested in the hands of wealthy and influential people, the economically poor section does not have much say in the general government system nor they have any active participation in the political decision-making. More so women were not at all considered as a competent decision maker or change initiator.

The 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment also opened up the space for women by putting the condition whereby one-third reservation was made for women. This was indeed a required and welcome step towards women empowerment as the women participation percentage in parliament after independence had been between 4 to 7 per cent on average.

The 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment also undid ways for women participation in the political decision making process. The policy initiators and implementers became conscious of the role of the poor and marginalised population especially women in the rural areas of India in the political structure. Providing a Constitutional status to the PRI brought equality in regard to gender across the country.



**Figure 1:** Structure of 'Panchayati Raj' Institutions (PRI) in India

**Source:** www.ereadersforum.net

Of the 26 Indian States, whose data on elected representatives in 'Panchayati Raj' Institutions (PRI) are available, 11 States have equal representation of women and men in 2008 and 2016. In some states, share of women is even more than 50%. Only in 5 states the women representation is almost one third. The following table also shows the comparison between percentage of elected women representatives in the

<sup>72</sup> In India, the local government system in village level is called as a 'Panchayat'. It is formed by an organised group of five elected functionary from the local population. Along with India, Bangladesh and Pakistan also have the term 'Panchayat' used for the local governance system. 'Panchayats' as local governance bodies have been in existence for last 2000 years. This local governance arrangement was re-established under the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Bill. Since then 'Panchayati Raj' Institution (PRI) as they are called denoting the village level governance is common in most of the villages in India.



year 2008 and 2016. It can be noted that in states like Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab and Tamil Nadu the percentage of elected women representatives have reduced in the year 2016 compared to the year 2008, while in all other states the percentage of elected women representatives have increased.

**Table 1:** Comparison of Elected Women Representatives (%) 2008 & 2016

S. No.	States/UTs	Elected Women Representatives (%) 2008	Elected Women Representatives (%) 2016
1	Andhra Pradesh	33.04	50
2	Arunachal Pradesh	38.54	33.07
3	Assam	38.93	50
4	Bihar	54.12	51.64
5	Chhattisgarh	33.73	55.14
6	Goa	34.25	32.97
7	Gujarat	33.34	32.9
8	Haryana	36.53	36.5
9	Himachal Pradesh	38.86	50.11
10	Jammu and Kashmir	NA	33.56
11	Jharkhand	NA	59.18
12	Karnataka	42.89	53.4
13	Kerala	30.38	51.85
14	Madhya Pradesh	34.35	50
15	Maharashtra	33.33	49.93
16	Manipur	43.66	48.65
17	Odisha	36.37	49.31
18	Punjab	34.97	34.58
19	Rajasthan	35.37	58.29
20	Sikkim	39.96	49.95
21	Tamil Nadu	33.79	33.48
22	Telangana	NA	45.14
23	Tripura	34.64	35.93
24	Uttar Pradesh	38.75	41.36
25	Uttarakhand	37.42	57.83
26	West Bengal	36.29	49.88

**Source:** Ministry of Panchayati Raj

The above data clearly indicates that the increasing role and activity of women in politics in India is the outcome of 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments in Indian Parliament. The new legislations are landmarks to address the issue of women's participation in politics in India. Both these amendments provided for reservation of women in the representative bodies at the grass-root level in both urban and rural areas. (Roadmap for the Panchayati Raj (2011-17): An All India Perspective, 2017) The 50% reservation for women in the 'Panchayats' has far-reaching implications for the 'Panchayati Raj' Institution (PRIs) functioning as a platform for all women and child policies/programmes. Lori Beaman, Esther Duflo, Rohini Pande, And Petia Topalova (2007) in their research conducted in West Bengal in randomly selected village councils (one-third of total villages) with reservation for Women Pradhan or 'Sarpanch' in every election, showed that women decision makers have brought in various changes in the makeup of the villages, these villages have comparatively shown better school attendance rates for girl students and less dropout rates than other villages which do not have a female 'Sarpanch'. They have larger number of public goods with better quality and value in comparison to the other villages. It is also noted that the cases of bribes are also reduced if the village is run by a women representative. They

pointed out that female representation at grass root level also helped women to participate better at higher level politics and contest in assembly polls. Their findings suggested that administratively endowing women may have significant development for children too in terms of better educational policies and health care infrastructure.

Based on the above research findings the researchers propose to analyse if women representation in governance, especially at the level of local government, has a favourable impact on policies and programmes aligned with attainment of SDGs.

The present study aims to analyse the programmes implemented by states for achieving women empowerment and impact on socio-economic development. The samples of 6 states selected by us for this study represent 2 each from the three categories of low, medium and high percentage of elected women representatives in 2016.

**Table 2:** States Selected showing Elected Women Representatives (%) 2008 & 2016 and Their Difference in Percentage

S. No.	States/UTs	Elected Women Representatives (%) 2008	Elected Women Representatives (%) 2016	Difference (%)
1	Goa	34.25	32.97	-4%
2	Punjab	34.97	34.58	-1%
3	Odisha	36.37	49.31	36%
4	Andhra Pradesh	33.04	50	51%
5	Chhattisgarh	33.73	55.14	63%
6	Rajasthan	35.37	58.29	65%

**Source:** Compiled from Ministry of Panchayati Raj

**Women Representation and Implementation of Schemes in States:** As per the Indian Constitution, 'Panchayats' in their particular territories would device strategies for economic development and social justice and also, be responsible to implement them. To enable this, states shall entrust functions to 'Panchayats' (29 subjects as mandated) and also provide monetary resources required for implementing the plans into actions (as per State Finance Commission's<sup>73</sup> recommendations). The tasks of 'Panchayats' are distributed between several Committees, which are widely known as Standing Committees/ 'Sthayee Samitis' / 'Upa Samitis' etc. The committees consists of many members, there is a single person in charge of the whole committee functioning while the chairperson of the 'Panchayat' is responsible for the overall functioning or working of the all the committees. 'Panchayats' are also sustained by an array of additional representatives, the extent of which differs from state to state.

The 'Panchayats' obtain monetary resources from three major fronts:

1. Local body grants, as recommended by the Finance Commission of India<sup>74</sup>

<sup>73</sup> "State Finance Commission is the Constitutional body of experts on public finance and public administration appointed by each state government at regular intervals of five years under the article 243I of the Constitution to review and revise the financial position of 'Panchayati Raj' institutions (PRI's) and urban local governments. Some of the functions of State Finance Commission are to review the economic condition, boost the financial condition and allocate funds to the various 'Panchayati Raj' institutions (PRI's) and municipal bodies in the state".

<sup>74</sup> The Finance Commission was established by the President of India in 1951 under Article 280 of the Indian Constitution. It was formed to define the financial relations between the central government of India and the individual state governments.

2. Funds for implementation of centrally backed schemes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Backward Regions Grant Fund (BRGF), Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) etc.
3. Funds released by the state governments on the sanctions of the State Finance Commissions.

As the present study aims to identify policies and programmes that would help in achieving Sustainable Development targets 5.5 and 16.7, segregation of these schemes has been done from the total central and state schemes implemented in the selected sample of states i.e. Goa, Punjab, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan.

As per the Government of India initiative Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana<sup>75</sup> (SAGY) the central and state schemes are classified into eight sectors such as:

- Personal Development (PD)
- Human Development (HD)
- Social Development (SD)
- Economic Development (ED)
- Environmental Development (En D)
- Basic Amenities and Services (BAS)
- Social Security (SS)
- Good Governance (GG)

**Table 3:** Number of Central and State Schemes Implemented under different Sectors

Sl. No.	Sector	Number of Schemes						
			Goa	Punjab	Odisha	AP	Chhattisgarh	Rajasthan
		Central	State	State	State	State	State	State
1	Personal Development	6	0	0	0	0	4	1
2	Human Development	58	3	9	11	9	34	16
3	Social Development	36	0	3	2	1	27	0
4	Economic Development	87	9	17	19	4	51	18
5	Environmental Development	13	0	4	5	0	11	0
6	Basic Amenities and Services	24	2	8	8	0	11	0
7	Social Security	10	0	6	1	3	11	5
8	Good Governance	18	0	0	3	2	9	0
	<b>Total Schemes</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>40</b>

**Source:** Compiled from State Samanvay's – Indian Panchayat Knowledge Portal

<sup>75</sup> Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) is a rural development programme broadly focusing upon the development in the villages which includes social development, cultural development and spread motivation among the people on social mobilization of the village community. Its key objectives were to: develop model villages, called Adarsh Grams, through the implementation of existing schemes, and through certain new initiatives to be designed for the local context, which may vary from village to village. It also envisages in creating models of local development which can be replicated in other villages.



The above table provides the number of central and state schemes that are being implemented in the six states chosen for the present study. All the central schemes are implemented in all the states, while some states have their own schemes under the given sector, some are yet to press forward in implementing the state programmes. It is noteworthy that Chhattisgarh has 158 state schemes apart from the 252 central schemes that are implemented in the state. Thus, a total of 410 schemes in fewer than eight sectors are implemented in the state. Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan are the only states to have state Personal Development Programme. While all the six states have state Human Development and Economic Development Programmes Goa has the least number of state level programmes amounting to 14 while Andhra Pradesh has 19 state level programmes. Punjab, Odisha and Rajasthan have 47, 49 and 40 state level programs respectively. From a study of overall schemes, our paper identifies the schemes that are specifically targeted for Women and Children. Implementation of such schemes is expected to better support the sustainable development goals at large.

**Table 4:** % of Elected Women Representatives and Number of State Schemes Implemented Specifically for Women and Children Under Different Sectors<sup>76</sup>

Sector	Sr. No.:	Schemes implemented for:	Number of Scheme/Institutions					
			Goa	Punjab	Odisha	Andhra Pradesh	Chhattisgarh	Rajasthan
		<b>Elected Women Representatives (%) 2016</b>	<b>32.97</b>	<b>34.58</b>	<b>49.31</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>55.14</b>	<b>58.29</b>
HD	1	Increasing sex- ratio in the state	1	3	-	-	2	-
	2	Nutritious food and diet for children especially teenage girls, expecting women, and lactating mothers	-	-	3	1	5	-
	3	Basic Health Facilities	-	-	-	-	1	1
	4	Education facilities till Higher Secondary and Retention	1	3	-	3	-	6
	5	Basic Vaccinations	-	-	-	-	2	1
	6	Hospital Deliveries for Women	-	-	1	-	1	2
	7	Improved and IT enabled Schools	-	-	-	1	1	-
	8	Infrastructure for Persons With Disability (PWD), especially children and women	-	-	-	1	-	-
	9	Adult Literacy	-	-	-	-	1	-
	10	Information Technology enabled Literacy	-	-	-	-	-	1
PD	11	Improved sanitation practices and cleanliness	-	-	-	-	1	-
	12	Reducing alcoholism, smoking, substance abuse and other vices	-	-	-	-	1	-
SD	13	Increased representation of general population in local development	-	-	-	-	3	-
	14	Bharat Nirman Volunteers	-	-	-	-	3	-
	15	Development for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes	-	-	-	1	-	-
ED	16	Infirmity, disability and widow pensions	-	1	-	-	-	-
	17	Rural industrial development	-	-	-	2	-	-
	18	Skill Development	-	-	-	-	6	1

<sup>76</sup> Detailed List of Schemes by State Government Under Different Sectors is provided in Annexure-1

Sector	Sr. No.:	Schemes implemented for:	Number of Scheme/Institutions					
			Goa	Punjab	Odisha	Andra Pradesh	Chhattisgarh	Rajasthan
		<b>Elected Women Representatives (%) 2016</b>	<b>32.97</b>	<b>34.58</b>	<b>49.31</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>55.14</b>	<b>58.29</b>
SS	19	Pensions for all eligible families- old age, disability and widow	-	-	1	1	1	-
	20	Affordable insurance schemes	-	-	-	-	-	1
GG	21	Active Gram Panchayats and Gram Sabhas	-	-	-	-	1	-
BAS	22	Provision for Housing, Land Rights and Land Records transparency	-	-	1	-	-	-
		<b>Total Schemes by State Govt. Under different Sectors</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>13</b>

**Source:** Compiled from State Samanvay's – Indian Panchayat Knowledge Portal

It is remarkable that the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment gave opportunity for States to bestow the 'panchayats' with supremacies and right 'to enable them to function as institutions of self-government'. All the States have the right to organise a 'Gram Sabha' under the 'Sarpanch'/ Mukhia/ Adhyaksha/ Pradhan and persons listed in the electoral rolls related to a village contained within the area of 'panchayat' at the village level, at least two times a year. The problems sited before the Sabha also includes decisions related to selection of schemes, beneficiaries and locations. Which schemes are adopted by the states is decided along the needs and priorities of the local government.

As noted earlier in this paper, women representation at local levels translates into choice of policies and programmes that generally enhance the women and child wellbeing, women empowerment, hygiene, health and education factors of the state. In turn this promotes the adoption of those schemes that would be related to attainment of SDGs.

Each state selected for the study is individually analysed based on the percentage of elected women representation and the policies adopted by them in different sectors to identify and validate if more number of women representation at the local level government is a factor contributing towards implementing more schemes that will be beneficial for women and children.

**Goa:** The Goa 'Panchayat Act' was assented in 1994; the entire Act came into force in 1995. There are 190 Village 'Panchayats' (VP) and 2 District 'Panchayats' (DP) in the State. The total elected representatives for these 'panchayats' were 1559 in the year 2016, out of which 514 (32.97%) were elected women representatives (including 79 'Sarpanch'). Even though most of the central schemes are implemented in Goa, the state has only two state level schemes for women and children. To support the activity under balancing the sex-ratio, E- Laadli Laxmi Scheme was launched by Women & Child Development department in the State in July, 2012. It aimed at providing financial assistance of ₹ 1.00 lakh to the girl child upon attaining 18 years or on marriage. Another scheme under the activity: universal access to education facilities up to class X and retention is the Goa Scholars Scheme supported by Education Department, Government of Goa. Under the scheme, the scholarship amount of ₹ 6.00 lakh each is provided for those studying within India and ₹ 12.45 lakh each for those studying abroad and also ₹ 5 lakh to ₹ 20 lakh can be extended as loan assistance. Both these schemes are a part of Human Development Sector. Unlike other states which have higher women representation, Goa fails to support other sectors like Social Security and Economic Development; which are crucial to promote sustainable development goals. Therefore, it can be said that a lower percentage of women representation in Goa 'Panchayati Raj' Institutions (PRI's) limits the number of development schemes adopted by this state.

**Punjab:** The Punjab 'Gram Panchayat Act' came into existence in 1952. In 2014 there were 13041 Village 'Panchayats' (VP), 146 Intermediate 'Panchayats' (IP) and 22 District 'Panchayats' (DP). Out of the total 97180 elected representatives of the state 33609 are women amounting to 34.58%. The state places much importance to improving the ratio of girl to male child and also emphasizes on female education. It has thus, implemented three schemes namely Shagun Scheme, Mai Bhago Vidya Scheme and Bebe Nanki Ladli Beti Kalyan Scheme. These schemes help in providing social security fund, better access to education and to check dropout rate at secondary and senior secondary level, along with providing free bicycles to all the girl students studying in class 9 – 12 and to uplift the social and educational status of girls. Another area of concern for Punjab is to improve the attendance of girl child in schools as two out of three policies implemented under the activity of universal access to education facilities up to class X and retention focuses on providing attendance scholarships to SC/ BC/ EWS( Schedule class/Backward class/Economically weaker class) primary girl students and disabled girl students. Punjab is also doing well in implementing state schemes in the sector of Economic Development under the activity of Rural Industrialisation, but the schemes are not specific for women empowerment or economic support to women.

**Odisha:** Odisha is a state that has witnessed 36% rise in the elected representation of women from the year 2008 to 2016. The women 'Sarpanch' of Ganjam district in Orissa was nominated for Rajiv Gandhi Leadership Award in 2014. Ms. Arati Devi introduced the advantages of Public Distribution System (PDS) to her village. She also took initiative to start a most important literacy campaign in her village especially for women in the 'panchayat' where simply signatures would be recorded for official applications instead of thumb impressions. Taking inspiration from her, women participation in local governance in Odisha has improved and so have the schemes that are implemented. Out of the 49 state schemes 6 are specifically designed and implemented for the wellbeing of women and children. Under the activity of improving nutrition status for all, with special focus on children, adolescent girls, pregnant women, and lactating mother's schemes such as Mo Mashari and Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP) are being introduced. Health & Family Welfare Department has envisaged a programme for providing Sanitary Kits to adolescent girls of fifteen districts in the State, under the scheme Sanitary Kits to Adolescent Girls. Efforts are also made for 100% institutional child birth deliveries in the state. There is ample amount of scope for Odisha to out-perform other states in providing better facilities and infrastructure to women and children and thus, align its goals with the sustainable development goals.

**Andra Pradesh:** Out of 156050 elected representatives in 2016 exactly 50% of them i.e. 78025 were women representatives. A study report Sreedevi (2007) shows that the trend of expenditure on education has increased steadily over the period in Andra Pradesh. In comparison to other states, Andra Pradesh has been doing well in terms of implementing specific schemes for the betterment of women and children and thus, promoting sustainable development. There are 10 state schemes that benefit women and children directly under the sector of human development, social development, economic development and social security. The state has implemented two schemes under the activity of rural industrialisation called Knitting Rural Self-Help Enterprises (KRuSHE) providing 100% subsidy over interest on loans to SHGs and `600 per unit of sand sold from village under SHG (Self Help Group) guidance. These schemes provide women with the opportunity to become economically independent, thus, improving their ability in decision making and leadership.

**Chhattisgarh:** The state of Chhattisgarh has been doing well in most of the central schemes that have been implemented. It is also a state which boasts of 54.48 % of women beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana and 63% increase in elected women representatives from the year 2008 to 2016. Chhattisgarh has implemented 158 state schemes, highest number of states schemes from the states chosen in the study. 27 schemes are specifically targeting the development of women and children. The state has implemented schemes in sectors of Personal Development for inculcating hygienic behaviour and practices and reducing risk behaviour like alcoholism, smoking, substance abuse, etc. Mahila Jagriti Shivar Scheme works towards 100% institutional delivery and total immunisation. Noni Suraksha Yojana is to incentivise girl child. Mukhyamantri Kishori Shakti Aahar Sabla Yojana Scheme of the state works

for instilling self-confidence and empowerment among adolescent girls. Provide nutritious food and encouraging out of school girls to continue their education. Spreading health, hygiene, sanitation and nutrition related information. Providing Ready to Eat Food (RTE) Packets of 990 grams once a week. The eligible beneficiaries for this scheme are out of school girls between 11 - 14 years, out of school girls and school going girls between 14 - 18 years of age. Shakti Swaroopa Yojana is also a unique scheme which is for promotion of self-employment and empowerment among widowed and divorced women. And free of cost education to women who are interested to study after Standard XII. Social Development is encouraged through women self-help group (SHG) formation. Interest free loan of ₹ 25,000 for the formation of 10 member women SHG is provided under the scheme female labourers SHG. Chhattisgarh has other schemes that allow women to be independent and attain economic freedom. Women are also encouraged to participate in Gram Sabha (village assembly) and contribute to development of the village amenities. The state is an example of women 'Sarpanches' working towards implementation of policies that will align with sustainable development goals in the long run.

**Rajasthan:** The state of Rajasthan has made an impressive increase of 65% of elected women local governance structure, highest in the country. Rajasthan has examples of women 'Sarpanches' leading the way in bringing education, sanitation and women empowerment to their villages. One such example is of Radha Devi, the women 'Sarpanch' of a village in Rajasthan. Despite the Right to Education Act, thousands of kids through the state of Rajasthan could go to school. Women 'Sarpanch' leaders took an active interest in this situation and started programmes to revert this tendency and saw to it that girls start attending school. With the assistance of local NGOs and self-help groups, Radha Devi challenged the school authorities in her village and convinced parents into sending their kids back to schools. One of such unique schemes of the state is Aparajita: One Stop Crisis Management Centre for Women Under the provision of the scheme, a center is opened at Jaipuria government hospital for women in crisis where all the departments related to women and child welfare and protection can be accessed. This center is operational 24X7 in the hospital. The state has made efforts to improve institutional child birth deliveries and total immunisation.

To encourage girl child to continue education after secondary schooling, distribution of bicycles to girl students in rural areas is undertaken under the activity Universal access to education facilities up to class X and retention. In this scheme, a girl student is provided a bicycle of ₹ 300 after passing 9th class where school is at a distance of more than 2 km. The state is the only one to have student accident insurance scheme, insurance cover of ₹ 1,00,000 in case of any injury or death in accident of a students studying in class 1<sup>st</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> and College/ Graduation. Premium of this scheme is paid by the education department Government of Rajasthan for the Government Schools. For the students studying in Government or Private Colleges, those who are doing Polytechnic and other Professional courses like Nursing and Teachers Education and for the students of non-aided schools the premium is of ₹ 50 per student. The schemes introduced in the state are a reflection of active role of women and the thoughtful process of identifying and designing programmes based on needs and priorities of the state.

The above examples of schemes implemented in different states reflect the amount of importance given to particular aspects of development in the state. It is evident that as the number of women representation increases the customisation of programmes also increases, thus, providing evidence that woman at grass root level/ local level governance can make meaningful contribution in implementing policies that are more realistic for women and child development. Understanding the difficulties faced by girls and women and working towards weeding out these cases through local, state and central mechanisms is an important mission for governments. Women representatives at local level can be key game changers both in creating policies and programmes that will align with attainment of sustainable development goals and in their effective and meaningful adoption.

**Conclusion:** Women representation has undoubtedly created more opportunities for promoting the adoption of programs to push women and child development. The present study seeks to build an evidence based argument that women have taken forward agendas related to: immunisation,

institutional child birth delivery, education, balancing sex ratio, improving enrolment and attendance ratio in schools, special attention to provide girl child with needed support to finish schooling, etc. They have also been working for women empowerment by implementing programmes and schemes that would help in attainment of human, social and economic development.

There have been several ongoing schemes that provide social security to women in different strata of the society. Nevertheless there had been little efforts to think that empowerment of women needs to be envisaged as a holistically incorporated approach and cannot be contained in a single scheme or as water tight compartments. Consequently, a great deal of extra work has to be carried out to empower girls/ women in local self-governments to play a more proactive role in decision making and through their very presence inspire more and more women to come forth and call for their rights.

Though the 73rd Constitutional Amendment strengthened the importance and structure of local governance with an emphasis on women participation and was therefore a step in the right direction, it has not resulted in attainment of SDGs. It is to be noted that the need to especially impact on enhancing the lives of rural women did not happen as expected. This could be due to the profile of women representative who were less educated and sometimes unable to assert their power due to unawareness of their rights. Bold and strong cultural and social traditions can be possible reasons acting as barriers in these women representatives exercising their full authority. In order to improve the effectiveness of the 73rd Amendment, there is a need to empower women representatives through training and education. Women leaders need to be sensitised, with respect to their rights and equipped to face social, political and economic challenges. It is suggested that campaigns can be organised as state or nationwide efforts to bring more women to the forefront of government which can not only reduce gender discrimination but also, help to improve both the qualitative and quantitative attainment of sustainable development goals in the country.

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1. The elected head of a village-level statutory institution of local self-government is called a 'sarpanch'. In India there is establishment of 'panchayat' (village government) also known as 'gram panchayat'. The 'gram panchayat' consists of the 'sarpanch' and other elected 'panchas' (members). The 'sarpanch' is the central point of contact between government officers and the village community. He/she plays the role of the mediator, the 'sarpanch' is capable of bringing 100% development to his/her village through government support.
2. In India, the local government system in village level is called as a 'Panchayat'. It is formed by an organised group of five elected functionary from the local population. Along with India, Bangladesh and Pakistan also have the term 'Panchayat' used for the local governance system. 'Panchayats' as local governance bodies have been in existence for last 2000 years. This local governance arrangement was re-established under the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Bill. Since then 'Panchayati Raj' Institution (PRI) as they are called denoting the village level governance is common in most of the villages in India.
3. "State Finance Commission is the Constitutional body of experts on public finance and public administration appointed by each state government at regular intervals of five years under the article 243I of the Constitution to review and revise the financial position of 'Panchayati Raj' institutions (PRI's) and urban local governments. Some of the functions of State Finance Commission are to review the economic condition, boost the financial condition and allocate funds to the various 'Panchayati Raj' institutions (PRI's) and municipal bodies in the state".
4. The Finance Commission was established by the President of India in 1951 under Article 280 of the Indian Constitution. It was formed to define the financial relations between the central government of India and the individual state governments.
5. Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) is a rural development programme broadly focusing upon the development in the villages which includes social development, cultural development and spread motivation among the people on social mobilization of the village community. Its key objectives were to: develop model villages, called Adarsh Grams, through the implementation of existing



- schemes, and through certain new initiatives to be designed for the local context, which may vary from village to village. It also envisages in creating models of local development which can be replicated in other villages.
6. Detailed List of Schemes by State Government Under Different Sectors is provided in Annexure-1
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