

Women Councilors in Urban Local Governments

Avenues for effective participation in Governance in Karnataka, South India



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Report of the Study on

Women Councilors in Urban Local Governments

Avenues for effective participation in Governance in
Karnataka, South India
(April-September-2005)

In Association with
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
New Delhi



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The idea of this study is a result of our project interactions with women councilors of Udipi town of Udipi District of Karnataka and our subsequent efforts to bring the women councilors to share and learn from their experiences. The women councilors' exposure programme in Udipi in June 2003, the women councilors' state level workshop in Bangalore in November 2004, their orientation programme, done as a part of this study for the women councilors in Mysore in August 2005 and a meeting to exchange the views on this study held in Bangalore in September 2005 are some of the specific activities carried out to bring women councilors together.

The study adopted a methodology in which local organizations, women councilors, former women councilors and well wishers were involved from the very planning stage. A series of meetings were organized in April 2005 to discuss the methodology and the questionnaire to be used in the study. The study team visited the various towns and interacted with the women and men councilors, members of the legislative assembly and the legislative council and had fruitful discussions with them.

Credit is due to the partner organizations and their staff members for the groundwork they did in meeting the women and men councilors and the party and municipal officials. Our thanks are also due to Prof. Bhargava, Prof. Hanumantha, Mr. L.C.Jain and Mr. Bapu Heddurshetti, who inspired us and provided us with valuable insights.

Mr. Raghavendra assisted, planned and coordinated the entire process of the study, interacting with the partner organizations and organizing the various activities, workshops etc. This study would not have been possible without him. The members of the Urban Research Centre and of the Council of Management also have been very helpful.

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Foreward

Urban governance today incorporates a whole host of players – the citizens, the local bodies, and the state government as also the central government along with various autonomous bodies, which fall within the purview of any of the above mentioned political structures. The 74th CAA with its emphasis on decentralisation of fiscal, administrative and functional powers to elected local level bodies raised hopes of improved governance with the deciding elected women and men being close to the people and their concerns. The practical experience, since the 74 CAA came into being in 1994, unfortunately does not vindicate these expectations. Overlapping jurisdictions between the urban local bodies, independent agencies, and various state departments have resulted in lack of clear delineation of functions for service delivery and indulgence in a blame game for the failures. Added to this is the connivance of interest groups to serve their own purposes and in most cases the helplessness and to some extent the apathy of the governed. The citizen's movement as in the case of Mumbai or the judicial activism in Delhi to get rid of infrastructure bottlenecks and land misuse issues are some responses which came through too late and maybe with too little. Having said that, one needs to keep in mind the mammoth investments, which are coming forth in urban infrastructure. The Central government set up Jawahar Lal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission in December 2005 with a promise of Rs.1,25,000 crores to 63 chosen cities to improve urban governance, meet their infrastructure needs and provide basic services to the urban poor. The intention is to meet the 'Millennium Development Goals' by halving hunger, reducing poverty and ensuring water to all. While several of the reforms are progressive in nature it is very crucial to ensure that such initiatives are rooted through the local bodies. And for this to happen the elected representatives need to be proactive and discerning in taking up these tasks.

It is against this background that one needs to view initiatives to build capacities of elected representatives with the involvement of women and men in their respective representative areas. There are examples of organisations, elected representatives and citizen's groups who all are trying to bring in changes for the better. Urban Research Centre (URC) is one such organisation working on issues of Governance and Economy in Urban areas in Karnataka. One of its focus programmes is to bridge the gap between local groups and elected representatives through participatory planning. As a step further, to understand the ground realities concerning elected women representatives URC undertook the present study. Its main objective is to examine factors affecting women councillors for effective policy making, and to understand support measures available for women councillors in political parties, state government and through other groups. The study results are expected to help in developing a framework for intervention to enhance the effective participation of women councillors in urban governance.

In order to facilitate the discussion on crucial issues related to the development process in India, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung publishes a series of books and papers of which this publication is a part. The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is a non-profit, NGO supported by the Government of Germany. Aiming at the strengthening of democratic structures, the FES promotes training and policy oriented research programmes in Germany and in cooperation with partner organizations - in more than 100 countries across the world. The India office of FES works with policy makers, academic and research organisations, trade unions, and NGOs. Within the overall gender approach the Women's Empowerment Project of the FES extends support to initiatives of NGOs and self-help groups aiming at the economic and political empowerment of women. Accordingly its priority areas are livelihood and income generation, natural resource management, displacement and rehabilitation and participation of women in decision making. Facilitating workshops and roundtables, action based research and publications around these concerns are integral to the Project.

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1. The Background

The Constitutional Status of Urban Local Bodies The 74th Amendment to the Constitution of India enabled and empowered the urban local bodies to function as the constitutionally mandated institutions of local self-governance. Several other changes have made local governance more meaningful. Single member constituencies known as wards, reservation of not less than one third seats and offices of the Chairpersons to women and reservation of seats and of the offices of the Chairpersons for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes proportionate to their population in the total population etc. New elections, before the expiry of the five-year terms of the local bodies and within 6 months of their dissolution, if any, have been made compulsory.

The structure of Urban Local Bodies Urban population constitutes 30 + % of the total population of India and there are about 3,641 urban local bodies like the Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils and Town Panchayats in India and there are about 69,704 elected councilors, of whom more than one third are women. In Karnataka there are about 270 urban local bodies and about 5,004 elected councilors. A study of

seven cities in Karnataka conducted by Technology Informatics Design Endeavour (TIDE) in 1999 revealed that the councilors play an important role in urban governance. The councilor is the link between the people and the municipality, which is the most accessible level of the State.

The Women Councilors, their background and Status Women councilors have been playing an important role in these urban local bodies in addressing the issues of urban development. In particular they are addressing issues concerning women, like the issues of women hawkers, petty traders, aged women, abandoned and harassed women and women living in poorer conditions. These women councilors have been playing their roles under several constraints.

Women councilors have to depend on their close relatives like fathers, husbands, brothers etc., at least in the initial years of being councilors. The challenge before them is to graduate from the role of a mother, a wife, and a sister to that of the elected representative in an urban local body or at least perform both the roles in parallel.

Women councilors do not get adequate support from their respective political parties. Their

previous experience as social workers, teachers, small traders, or their work with local associations, in political parties or in people's movements, provide them with a starting point to function as councilors. However learning to perform their role as the elected councilor comes gradually through their 'on the job' experience in identifying the issues concerning their wards, carrying out development works and maintaining public relations etc.

The space for growth of women councilors is constricted by the gender disparities existing in the society, in the municipal councils and both inside and outside their respective political parties.

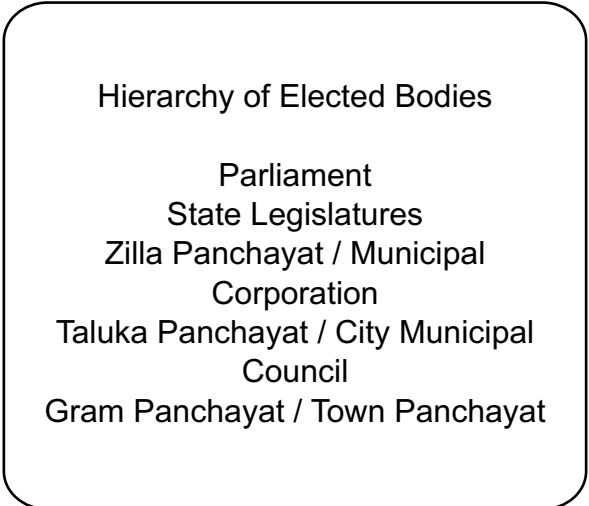
Women Councilors and the Political Parties All political parties have representatives in all the six levels of governance in India, i.e., Town Panchayats (i.e., urban local bodies for towns) which are parallel to the Gram Panchayats, (i.e., Village level rural local bodies), City Municipal Councils for larger cities, which are parallel to the Taluk

Panchayats (i.e., intermediate level rural local bodies), Municipal Corporations for Metropolitan cities, which are parallel to the Zilla Panchayats, (i.e., District level rural local bodies), the Legislative Assemblies and Legislative Councils at the State level and the Parliament at the national level. Thus, in the political hierarchy, the elected representatives of the local governments are considered to be at a level lower than the members of the

legislatures and the members of Parliament.

A councilor grows through the various layers of this hierarchy in the Party structure. He or she faces stiff competition based on party politics and women councilors have to

contend with the additional disadvantage of gender bias. The Party leadership and higher layers of the government structure also view the councilors as the 'soldiers' meant to manage small urban territories. Their involvement in policy making and the consideration given to their opinions on policy matters are negligible.



The Political parties have a clear organizational structure with the criteria for membership, roles and responsibilities of members, delegation of work at different levels to carry forward the party goals. The Parties also have 'manifestos' at municipal, state and national levels published during elections, detailing the priority areas of concern in socio-economic development. The role of the Party in extending institutional support to the councilors becomes critical, as there is a direct link between the party priorities and their members performing the roles of elected representatives in the local governments, both urban and rural. However, the political parties do not appear to be concerned on 'how' the manifesto has to be implemented by the councilors, 'what' capabilities of the councilors have to be strengthened for the purpose and 'when' the councilors have to be equipped with these capabilities.

Women Councilors and the State Government

The Laws governing Urban Local Governments: At the time of formation of the State of Karnataka in 1956 there were several enactments governing the constitution and functioning of the urban local bodies, which were prevalent in the old Mysore area, Bombay and Hyderabad

Karnatak areas. At present two enactments hold the field, The Karnataka Municipalities Act, 1964 for the smaller urban areas and the Karnataka Municipal Corporations Act, 1976 for the larger urban areas. These enactments provide for the roles, responsibilities and the obligations of the councilors also.

The issues of autonomy of the urban local governments, domination of state agencies, power of the state to decide on reservations and delimitation of wards have eroded the credibility of the urban local bodies. Their credibility is also getting eroded as they are now forced to take loans from multi-lateral and bi-lateral funds as part of global capital flow and 'development aid'. However these global capital flows and their influence on policy changes cast a responsibility and obligation on part of the State Governments to safeguard social justice, social development and to further the cause of democracy.

Barriers and avenues for effective participation

The lack of institutional support by the Political Parties and the State Governments to the councilors constitute an atmosphere of constant stagnation. In India and in South Asia, politics has been a domain

traditionally held by men. Reservation and the consequent participation at the decision making level are definitely an aspect of the empowering process initiated in India. It is evident that the political parties have not encouraged enough women to come to the forefront. Though the provision of law providing for reservation to women states that the reservation **shall not be less than** one third of the total number of seats and of offices, it is not perceived as the minimum but as the ceiling. Violence against women, attitudes, perceptions, constraints on mobility, lack of political will, threats, malicious propaganda, women-unfriendly structures in the Governments and the political parties continue to be barriers for the participation of women in the political process.

These internal impediments blur the roles of Councilors and restrict their scope in involvement in furthering the cause of democracy. The situation creates a loop wherein Councilors are busy performing their 'jobs', engage in local 'political' fights and are hence unable to think beyond. The situation of women councilors is more worrisome in this scenario.

Avenues for effective participation:

The issues of resistance to the participation of women, gender discrimination affecting their

performance, and the absence of effective involvement of women councilors in the implementation of the agenda of the political parties for social development are some of the issues that need to be seriously looked into. The assessment of the existing avenues for participation of women councilors in urban governance and the scope for their enhancement has to be understood in the present context.

2. The Existing Studies on elected women representatives

Existing Studies on elected women representatives in rural areas

The studies so far carried out focused on the elected women representatives in the rural local bodies like the gram panchayats etc. The Institute of Social Sciences has studied issues like the "Women and their political empowerment", and the Centre for Social Research has studied issues like "Gender and local governance, their implications on development" and the PRIA has done a case study on "Gender paradigm in local governance – An Indian experience".

Existing studies on elected women representatives in urban areas

Very few studies have been carried out on the elected women representatives in the urban local bodies, i.e., on the women councilors and the role of the political parties in facilitating the participation of women councilors. The Centre for Social Research has conducted a study on "Women in Urban Local Bodies: A case study of the Delhi Municipal Corporation Elections" (UNIFEM), The Singamma Sreenivasan Foundation, in partnership with UNIFEM, has carried out a study on "Building budgets from Below", and once again the Institute of Social Sciences has carried out a

study on "Women and Local Government in Urban India – The implementation and impact of Women's Reservations in the Municipal Corporations of Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata".

The role of the NGOs The focus of the Constitutional 74th Amendment prioritized the actions of a few Non-Governmental Organisations towards capacity building of women councilors. UNIFEM, in partnership with the Singamma Sreenivasan Foundation is working on gender budgeting in two municipalities and two Gram Panchayats. It is trying to influence budgets through bottom-up democratic micro-planning process. UNIFEM is also aligned with the Women's Political Watch to train women councilors in municipal governance in 20 districts of Karnataka. It is also developing core training modules and information material, networking and alliance of elected women representatives and a network of trainers. Urban Research Centre has been working with Councilors in Mangalore and Udipi towns in developing tools for ward management, improving relations between citizens and local associations etc. Urban Research Centre has been instrumental in bringing together women councilors on a platform from time to time to share their experiences and learn from each other.

3. The Proposed Study

Need for the proposed Study

Urban Research Centre has been working with women councilors in Karnataka coast since 2001. It has organized a meeting of about 35 women councilors in 2003 and another state level meeting of about 45 women councilors in 2004. Our experience in working with women councilors, the project experiences in Mangalore and Udipi and our experience in bringing together women councilors on a platform, first at the regional level and later at the State level, drew our attention to the core issue of needs of women councilors and the role of political parties in facilitating their performance as councilors.

Lack of policy in Political Parties

Urban Research Centre met a host of representatives of major political parties with a view to discuss with them their policy on councilors for implementing the decentralization process in Karnataka. However, it was surprising that the party representatives could not address the issues, as the parties they represented did not have a 'policy' on councilors. In the present study also 40 of the respondents said that their parties did not have a policy on women councilors. It became obvious that the parties did not have a

commitment for empowering the councilors or for decentralization of democracy. However the redeeming feature was that a few senior and experienced councilors tended to understand the broader aspects of policy towards the two issues.

The emerging questions The situation raised the following questions:

How do women councilors perceive their role as elected representatives?

- What is their perception of the issue of democratic decentralization in general and the Constitutional 74th Amendment in particular?
- What are the difficulties faced by women councilors in the decision making process in the Municipal Council?
- What are the forces impelling the women councilors to perform their role?
- How does the Municipal Council facilitate the participation of women councilors in the decision making process in the Council?
- What is the perception of the political parties on the participation of women in the political process?
- What are the difficulties faced by women councilors in the Party?
- How does the Political Party facilitate the participation of

women councilors in the decision making process in the Council?

- What are the steps taken by the State Government to facilitate the participation of women councilors in urban governance?

An effort is necessary to understand the real implications of these questions and an action research is necessary to gain an insight into the situation to enable the finding of entry points for intervention.

Objectives of the present study

- To study the issues concerning women councilors both in the Municipal Council and in the Political Party.
- To examine factors affecting women councilors in policy making in urban areas.
- To understand issues and support measures available for women councilors in the political parties and the government.

Expected results of the study

The study is expected to make the devolution of power to the grass roots level elected representatives, more particularly the women representatives, more effective and thereby make democracy more meaningful. The study is also expected to yield the following:

- Critical analysis of issues concerning women councilors in urban areas.
- Identification of avenues supporting women councilors in the political parties and the State Government.
- Assessing the requirement of supporting measures in the political parties and the State Government.
- Developing a framework for intervention to enhance the participation of women councilors in urban governance.

Respondents in the study on women councilors

	Women Councilors	Men Councilors	Party Members	Municipal Officials	Total
Planned	44	28	40	15	127
Planned %	35	22	31	12	100
Interviewed	49	21	30	22	122
Interviewed %	40.16	17.21	24.6	18.03	100

4. Methodology

Selection of the Municipalities

Initially it was proposed to study the Municipalities in the ten towns of Karnataka. However, on the basis of the familiarity of the Urban Research Centre and the Partner NGOs with the towns and the earlier work done and interactions with the municipal councilors in these towns, five Municipal bodies were selected for the Study:

Madikeri City Municipality
in Kodagu District.

Udipi City Municipality
in Udipi District.

Tumkur City Municipality
in Tumkur District.

Mangalore City Corporation
in Dakshina Kannada District.

Hubli-Dharwad City Corporation
in Dharwad District.

Selection of the Respondents The following number of respondents were identified in the above municipalities and interviewed by the Partner NGOs.

Selection of Partner NGOs Partner NGOs were selected on the basis of the familiarity with the towns and the earlier work done by these NGOs in these areas.

Inputs for the Study Extensive interactions with the women and men Councilors, Political Party leaders and

Municipal officials in these areas and their detailed interviews based on the questionnaire provided the necessary inputs for the study. These inputs were verified in the discussions held with them at various levels. The Study team interviewed the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council, residing in the study towns, in the month of June 2005.

A preliminary meeting of the Partner Non-Government Organisations, men and women Councilors and representatives of other Non-Government Organisations was organized in the 2nd week of April 2005 at Mangalore to seek inputs for the study in general and the questionnaire in particular. The follow up meeting to finalise the questionn-aire and the methodology was held in the 3rd week of April 2005 at Mangalore. A mid-term review meeting was held in the 2nd week of June 2005 in Hubli to review the progress of the field survey. In June 2005 meetings with the women and men councilors were held in all the towns where this study was conducted. An orientation workshop was organized in July / August 2005 for a select group of women councilors from Madikeri City Municipality, Mangalore City Corporation, Udipi City Municipal Council and Hubli-Dharwad City Corporation.

The time frame for the Study The entire study was conducted between April and September 2005.

5. The Findings

The analysis of the data collected is presented in the following sections:

- Profile of the Respondents
- Entry of women as councilors in the Municipalities
- Women Councilors: Supports and Constraints
- Women as Councilors : Expectations
- Women as Councilors: Role Clarity
- Women in Councils: Council Meetings
- Women in Councils: Party Constraints
- Women in Councils: State and Bureaucracy
- Women in Councils: Expectations for better performance

Profile of the Respondents

In all 49 women councilors were interviewed. Of them six were in the age group of 20-30 and 31 were in the age group of 30-50. While 39 were married, only one had separated from her husband and only 3 were widows. 36 were elected for the first time, 11 were elected for the second time and

only one was elected for more than three times. While none were uneducated, 17 had studied in High Schools, 14 were degree holders and 2 were even post-graduates. However, inspite of their education, only 2 respondents were employed and the rest were unemployed. Only 8 respondents said that they were into business and the remaining were not associated with any business venture. But interestingly, 30 of the respondents were involved in associations or service organizations. While 22 of the interviewed women councilors belonged to the Congress Party, 19 belonged to the Bharateeya Janata Party, 5 belonged to the Janata Dal (Secular), one belonged to the Janata dal (United) and one did not belong to any party.

Entry of women as councilors in the Municipalities

74th Amendment to the Constitution : Women have always been participating in the governance of the country ever since independence. Many had entered municipal councils also. But their participation was scanty. Today many factors facilitate the entry of women in the municipal councils. The foremost among them is the reservation provided to women under the provisions of the 74th Amendment to the Constitution effected in the

year 1992. Under the provisions of the amendment, not less than one third of the seats in all three tiers of municipalities were reserved for women. This has resulted in a quantum jump in the quantity of women representatives in the various municipal councils all over the country. Women councilors acknowledge and give credit to the said amendment for providing them with such a vast opportunity to enter municipal bodies and participate in urban governance.

Avenues for entry of women

- Reservation under 74th Constitutional amendment.
- Political Parties
- Influence of the family
- Social Work

However, though the amendment provides women with such vast opportunities, not many have a proper understanding of what the amendment is about. It is interesting that while 29 interviewed women councilors had 'heard' about the 74th Amendment, 20 of them had not even heard about it. Even those who had heard about it were not very clear as to what it was all about. Only 4 said that they had attended some program related to the subject and others had not attended any program. Only 10 councilors stated that they were aware of the subjects

entrusted to the municipalities under the 12th Schedule to the Constitution whereas 39 were not even aware of the schedule.

Family as a facilitator In most of the cases the family played an important role in the entry of women in the municipal councils. The influence of the family in the locality is one such factor. The presence of other members of the family in politics is another such factor. When a particular male member of the family is denied the opportunity of contesting elections for various reasons, the positioning of his wife, daughter or daughter-in-law in his place is still another factor facilitating the entry of women in municipalities. Of the 49 respondents 11 stated that they could contest elections because of the support of their families.

Other Factors facilitating entry Apart from reservation provided under the 74th Amendment to the Constitution, and the family, there are other factors that facilitate the entry of women in the municipal councils. Involvement of some women in social work in the locality also contributes for such women getting an opportunity to enter the municipalities. 11 respondents stated that it was the public support that made them contest municipal elections. Some times, doing the

party work over a period of time also provides them with such opportunity. Of the 49 respondents, the highest number i.e., 16 of them stated that they were selected to contest municipal elections because of their party work.

Women Councilors: *Supports and Constraints*

Role of the Family The women councilors feel that the role of a municipal councilor is quite new to them and is very different from the role which they had been playing earlier, like that of the mother, sister, daughter etc. The role of the municipal councilor is a responsibility, which they find have to bear, in addition to the traditionally defined role at home. Their daily routine begins with attending to the household work in the morning, followed by a visit to the ward, then a visit to the municipal office and then back home by evening. By contrast men councilors returned home late in the evenings also.

Families play different roles in the life of the women councilors. Some families are supportive and some others are restrictive and some are even prohibitive. Supportive families provided them with moral and some times even financial support for their entry in the municipal councils. 10 of

the Respondents said that their families gave them financial help to contest elections. The support was extended even after the elections to the performance of their duties as councilors. Some times the family even shared the household responsibilities of the women councilors so that they could attend to their municipal work.

The restrictive families curtailed the mobility of the women councilors to inspect their wards and development works in the wards by placing constraints that they should visit only during broad day-light and not early in the mornings or late in the evenings. Some women councilors have tried to over come the constraint by taking the help of their male relatives like brothers etc., to visit the wards or the development works.

Role of the general public In many cases the women were involved in the local social and cultural associations. The general public, in such cases, extended their moral support to the women to enter municipal councils. This also facilitated the work of women as councilors after the elections.

**Women as Councilors:
Expectations**

Matching expectation with reality

One of the main problems being faced by the women councilors is the hiatus between the expectations and the reality. The voters and the political parties have expectations from the women councilors and the women councilors have expectations from the voters, political parties and the municipal officers. But the women councilors find that there is a considerable gap between the different kinds of expectations and the reality.

Expectations of voters

The actual journey of women councilors towards decision-making begins after the elections. The women councilors feel that they make many promises to the voters during the elections, and that there is a high level of expectation from the voters that the councilors will fulfill the promises. However, the women councilors are unable to fulfill the promises after the elections. Many women councilors dreamed of 'changing so many things in the city', but found that the reality was different.

Expectations of the Parties The political parties expect women councilors to perform well and attend to the needs and requirements of the wards so that the party gets a good name so that the Party can encash it in the elections. The non-performance by women councilors affects the fortunes of the political parties adversely.

**Women as Councilors:
Role Clarity**

Role of women councilors:

Councilors, both men and women play a dual role in the municipalities. They act as the councilors and represent the residents of their respective wards.

They also represent the political parties to which they belong and their ideologies.

Orientation by Municipalities and Parties:

Orientation is provided both by the political parties and the municipalities to the newly elected members, including women, about the role of the councilors. However, the thrust and the content of the two orientations are different. While the municipality provides orientation

The Roles Women Councilors Play	
<u>Private Life</u>	<u>Public Life</u>
Daughter	Councilor
Sister	Ward Representative
Wife	Ward Leader
Mother	Social Worker

about the rights and duties of a councilor, rules and procedures for the council meetings and other administrative matters, solid waste management, accounting and budget management, information about wards etc., the party provides orientation about the party, how to strengthen it, organizing the party in the urban areas etc. However, the trainings are not regularly organized. Women councilors feel that they should be given additional attention so that they can prepare themselves better to play the role of a councilor.

Role as ward representatives

Councilors in general and women councilors in particular perceive their role as that of an elected representative whose duty it is to provide basic facilities to the residents of the wards. They also attend council meetings, participate in the debates, vote in the meetings and propose issues for discussion in the meetings of the council etc. They also perceive their role as members of the political party whose duty it is to organize party meetings, obey party directions, enroll members to the party etc. The duties and responsibilities of the women councilors as councilors and as party members appear to be overlapping to a considerable extent.

Role as leaders of the Wards

Another interesting aspect that has come to light is the fact that the councilors, both men and women, consider themselves as leaders of the wards from which they are elected. They try to address all issues arising in the ward, including those that are beyond the scope of the municipalities as also the issues raised by the officials of the various other departments of the state government. They consider themselves responsible for all the good and bad things that happen in the ward. Their role as leaders of the wards became apparent when 32 of the Respondents stated that they visited the wards every day.

Women in Councils: Council Meetings

Meetings of the Councils Council is the decision making body of the municipality. The council meetings are generally organized once in a month to deliberate on the issues concerning the development of the city in general and the wards in particular. The meeting reviews the development works, deliberates on the budget and then there is the zero hour. However, the women councilors expressed ignorance as to how policies are made in the council meetings. They feel that the council discusses the public works and

passes the government schemes. However, the women councilors feel that many a times unnecessary issues are deliberated in the council meetings.

The Gender Bias Women councilors have certain handicaps in the council meetings. Generally the men councilors do not allow women councilors to express their views freely and sometimes they are not even allowed to speak. Men councilors shout at the top of their voices in the meetings to make their points while it is difficult for women councilors to do so. Women councilors feel that they are not able to raise and highlight important and relevant issues in the meetings. 15 respondents stated that they were not allowed to make their points in the meetings, though 14 respondents stated that they had no difficulty in participating in the council meetings. The personal attacks on women councilors are also a handicap adversely affecting the freedom of the women councilors to express themselves freely in the meetings.

Political Parties and Council Meetings In every Council meeting the discussion takes place on party basis and the party issues dominate the meetings.

Many a times it is only a place for fighting and relevant issues do not

receive recognition due to them. The attitudes of the ruling party and the opposition party towards important and development issues are too rigid and hence the real issues do not get solved. Councilors of both the ruling and the opposition parties hold meetings of their own councilors before the meetings of the municipal council and in such meetings take decisions as to what stand the parties should take on the issues coming up before the council meeting. This results in preempting genuine discussion in the council meetings. The limited discussions that do take place in the council meetings do not get converted into actions after the meetings. The decisions made in the council meetings are also not immediately communicated in writing to the councilors and that there is considerable delay in doing so.

Lack of fruitful discussions Most of the councilors do not come prepared for the meetings and hence while some of them are unable to contribute anything valuable to the discussions others disrupt the meetings. In the meetings the procedures and the rules are not followed resulting in chaos. The highest number of respondents, i.e., 16 of them said that the discussions were useless and the meetings were noisy. Decisions are

taken with great difficulty and in many cases even those decisions are not implemented. The need to stick to the party line also constricts genuine discussions in the meetings.

Women in Councils : Party Constraints

Role of the Political

Parties All political parties play an important role in the functioning of the municipalities. Since the members of the party having majority in the council occupy the positions of the Mayor or the President and the chairman of different standing committees, the political parties involve themselves in the functioning of the municipalities by proxy. While the party does play a role in the municipal affairs through its members who are councilors, its involvement is limited. It is interesting to note that in some cases, the women and men councilors have opposed the involvement of the party in local developmental issues.

What Women Councilors feel:

- We are not allowed to express our views freely, sometimes not even allowed to speak.
- Men shout at the top of their voices in the council meetings, it is difficult for us to do so.
- Discussion takes place on party basis and the party issues dominate the meetings.
- Meetings of party councilors before the meetings of the municipal council preempts genuine discussion in the council meetings.
- The procedures and the rules are not followed resulting in chaos.
- The discussions are useless and the meetings were noisy.

Perception of the Party The party feels that it has given an opportunity to the women councilors to contest the elections, get elected, do social service and enhance the good will of the party among the electorate. However, many party leaders felt that

there is deterioration in the quality of the councilors and that the time had come to de-politicise the municipal elections, i.e., that the political parties should not contest the municipal elections.

What the Party does

- * Identifies the women to contest the elections
- * Provides them with support, guidance and assistance
- * Organizes orientation and training programmes for them
- * Organises pre-council meetings to reaffirm party positions in the Council meetings
- * Assists the Councilors to mobilize funds for the party and party work

What the Party does not

- It does not have orientation and training programmes on regular basis
- It does not have a policy for capacity building for women councilors
- It does not provide any additional measures for harmonizing political and family relations of women councilors, or for their ward management or for their participation in council meetings

Women in Council : State and Bureaucracy

What the State does and does not:

- It provides legal status to the municipalities and it organizes elections to them
- It provides grants and allots schemes to be implemented by the municipalities
- It organizes, occasionally, training programs through the Administrative Training Institute
- It has tried to create an understanding of the 74th Amendment to the Constitution though not much
- It has not put forth enough efforts

to strengthen the women councilors to perform effectively in municipal affairs

- It has not made efforts to make the council meetings effective and participatory so that men and women councilors participate equally
- It has not made efforts to improve the relations between the councilors and the municipal officials

Role of the State Government:

The State Government and its various departments treat the municipalities as the 'post box' where the government schemes are posted and the municipalities deliver them. Municipalities are treated only as implementing agencies of the state government.

Women councilors' view of State:

The Councilors view the government as a 'high authority'. The women councilors also perceive the government as the 'law' maker, 'policy' maker and the provider of 'schemes' for implementation and as the provider of 'funds'. Hence women councilors feel that the Government should provide more funds for development, frame better rules for better administration of the municipalities and give more schemes for implementation and give

more powers to the municipalities. They also expect the government to increase their remuneration as councilors, give them more perks and facilities to function as councilors and hold timely elections to the municipalities.

Women Councilors' view of 'state'

Municipalities are 'post boxes' of the Government.

Government is the 'high authority'.
Government is the 'law giver'.
Government is the 'policy maker'.
Government is the provider of 'Schemes'
Government is the provider of 'funds'

Role of the Bureaucracy: The key persons facilitating the performance by women councilors are the municipal officials. However there seems to be a constant tussle between the elected representatives and the officials of the municipalities. While the officials bestow attention on the women councilors and attend to their work promptly in the beginning of their term, later, gradually they start ignoring them, delaying the passage of files and thus approval of development works and create procedural obstacles in sanctioning development works in the wards, thus adversely affecting the image of the women councilors as performers. For example, the highest number of respondents i.e., 14 of

them said that they faced difficulties with the officials in addressing the ward issues. Women councilors feel that the officials expect them to run around them to follow up the development and other works. Women councilors expect the municipal officials to attend to urgent works, extend co-operation, render help and guidance, follow the rules and not be corrupt. On the contrary the municipal officials feel that the councilors should be decent and use decent language and should not be harsh with officials.

Women in Councils:
Expectations for better performance

Expectations of male Councilors
Men councilors felt that women councilors were co-operative and that they did not face any problems due to women councilors. They felt that women councilors should be able to take their own decisions, get the ward works done, should prepare themselves well for the meetings by studying rules and regulations etc., and be transparent. They felt that the husbands should not accompany their wives who are councilors. They also felt that women councilors get more sympathy from the general public, that they have the advantage of reservation etc.

Expectations out of male councilors Most of the women councilors opined that men councilors co-operate with them in their ward works. But they said that men dominate the discussions in the council meetings, criticize women councilors and sometimes do not even allow them to speak. While men councilors of the same party are more co-operative, those from other parties are argumentative, non-co-

Women Councilors' view of
'Bureaucracy'

There is constant tussle with them.

They ignore us.

They delay approval of development works.

They create procedural obstacles.

They expect us to run around.

operative, and oppose development works. They felt that men councilors should have an open mind and have free discussion with women councilors. However, women councilors feel that men are more capable of exerting pressure on the officials and getting their works done, that they can move around more freely etc.

Expectations out of citizens The women councilors understand and acknowledge, the importance of citizens, local associations and NGOs

play an important role in the ward and the city. However they feel that though the citizens expect the councilors to work hard and address their issues, they are ignorant, expect things to be done immediately and do not pay their taxes. The women councilors feel that it is important to educate the citizens about their rights and the importance of the municipalities.

Expectations out of local associations The women councilors feel that the local associations should respond to the public problems, extend their co-operation and encouragement, provide good service, work without political pressures and attain self-sustenance in their activities. They feel that the local associations expect co-operation, quick provision of basic facilities etc., from the councilors. However, they feel that the local associations should be oriented on the schemes of the municipalities, councilor's areas of operation, safeguarding the basic facilities, solid waste management etc.

Expectations out of NGOs About NGOs women councilors said that NGOs always look for some mistakes. However they felt that the NGOs should provide good service, bring ward problems to the councilors; provide training on solid waste

management and hygiene etc. To the question as to whether they have been oriented by the NGOs, 18 respondents replied in the affirmative while 31 replied in the negative. They felt that the NGOs should participate in development projects and work with peoples' representatives. Some women councilors opined that the NGOs create bad opinion among people about politics.

Expectation out of State Governments Women councilors expect the state government to train them in law, rules and regulations governing the municipal bodies, rights and duties of councilors, interaction with officials, personality development and provide them with information on new projects etc. They also expect periodical orientation of councilors by the state government.

6. Conclusion

The study provides first hand information on how women councilors are involved in urban local Govts. This is a new role that the women councilors are experiencing. It also provides them with an opportunity to get exposed to public affairs. The study reveals that the women councilors are taking up the new role as a challenge with enthusiasm. The experience is making them more confident that they too can perform the role of an elected representative effectively and that being an elected representative is not the exclusive domain of men. Most of the women councilors are bold, they assert themselves and are confident when they deal with municipal affairs. However a few of them had a limited exposure due to restrictive atmosphere and lack of encouragement at home, municipality and the party.

Male councilors and the male members of the parties appear to be coming to terms with the fact that women can also be capable councilors. They acknowledge that women can also work effectively as councilors. However some men feel threatened by the competition of women in politics. They say that if women are equal, then providing reservation to women is discriminating against men. This feeling apparently has roots in the 'gender' bias in the society. It is this bias that makes them snub women in council meetings, thereby depriving

the women councilors their right to participate effectively in the municipal affairs.

Even now the situations at home, at the municipality and in the party are favourable to men. Needed are the proactive initiatives and affirmative actions that would enable women to improve their performance as councilors by building their self-confidence. There is also need to bring about gender sensitivity in municipal governance. The Political parties and the government have to take steps to enlarge the existing possibilities for women councilors' participation and to move in the direction of realizing the spirit of the 74th amendment to the Constitution.

Councilors have guidelines from the Party as its members and from the Municipality as the Councilors. The missing link is the 'orientation' of the Party members to function as the Councilors. A firm commitment by the Party in this regard alone can make its members perform their role as Councilors. Hence it is imperative for the Party to have a clear policy in this direction.

The study, while providing with an understanding of the existing situation, also suggests remedial measures to make women councilors more effective in their functioning. However, further studies must be attempted to address the questions raised in the concept note.

**7. Areas of Intervention:
*Suggested for Political
Parties:***

At the beginning of the term

- Presently, only on the announcement of the seat, the members are selected to contest the municipal elections. The incapacity results in the candidate not being able to perform after the elections.
- The members of the party must be educated at ward level on citizen's rights, duties and functions of the municipality on a regular basis. A small active citizens' group can be further short-listed and a suitable candidate can be picked for contesting the elections. This avoids random selection of candidates.
- The contesting candidates must be oriented on the role of councilors, rights, responsibilities, and duties, functions of municipalities, 74th Constitutional Amendment and decentralization.
- The elected candidates must be clarified on the dual roles, as a councilor and as a party member.
- Extra meetings must be organized for women councilors in this regard.
- An orientation must be organized to discuss the action plan [or keep the manifesto of the municipal election as a base], prioritize actions, down scale it to ward level and set targets for achieving the same.

- A monthly meeting [one day] must be organized to discuss the action plan, achievements, difficulties faced and the plan for the next month. This meeting can coincide with the monthly council meetings.
- A separate orientation must be organized for the family members [specially the women councilors] to explain the supportive role they have to play as to the councilors.

At the council meetings

- Training must be given before the 1st council meeting about the objectives, procedures and the role of councilors in the council meetings. Follow up meetings should be organized till next four months to find out the experiences of the councilors and suggest improvements. A few seniors of the party can observe from the audience gallery and give comments in the follow up meetings.
- Extra meetings must be organized for women councilors to improve confidence to be able to participate in the council meetings.
- Gender sensitization programme must be organized for women and men councilors and for party members to understand the importance of political participation by women and their role in municipal governance.
- A few principles must be observed in the council meeting: every councilor has the right to participate

and speak; every councilor must respect the council schedule and maintain the decorum.

- The quality of council meetings to be enhanced by making them participatory and discussion oriented. The party needs to take a clear position to strengthen the decision-making process at council meetings.

Managing Ward works

- The members of the wards must play a supportive role to the councilor at ward level. These members must be able to mobilize the citizens for the ward development on a non-political basis. The role of party members at the ward needs to be specified in assisting the councilor.
- The councilor must be oriented on understanding the ward issues, consulting the citizens and local associations, preparing an action plan to be implemented year wise, linking action plan components to council meetings and implementing the same.
- For effective movement of councilors [especially women councilors] the party should obtain the assurances of their family members.
- The party must provide facilities for women councilors for attending meetings, doing ward works or site inspections either in the early morning or late in the evening.

- The party must ensure a continuous dialogue between the councilors and citizens at ward level, so that the action plan reflects the true issues of the ward. For this the councilors need to be trained in organizing meetings at ward level.

Policy for Councilors

- It is important for the party to have a document explaining the role of party members who become councilors. It should provide clarity for party member to play the role of an elected representative.
- The present party organizational structure can be a training ground and the party must assure participation of women in the party positions, from local level to national level.
- The policy should specifically mention the direction in which the councilors must move and the capacity measures required to be provided for women councilors.

Providing capacity building avenues

The party must organize monthly discussions, quarterly workshops and annual conferences to deliberate on the development issues and policies to provide a learning space for councilors.

- The party must encourage the councilors to visit other towns and cities to understand and learn the experiences.

8. Areas of Intervention: *suggested for State Government*

At the beginning of the term

- The state government through municipality must organize an initial orientation to the councilors. The orientation must be on the role of councilors, rights, responsibilities, duties, procedures of council meetings, schemes, doing ward works, 74th constitutional amendment and decentralization.
- The municipality must organize follow up meetings to clarify the role of councilors, doubts and confusions of the councilors to participate in the council meetings etc.
- The state government must organize face-to-face meetings of councilors with officials of state government departments at district level to familiarize about government schemes and procedures.
- The state government must ensure clarity of roles between the councilors and municipal officials, as this reflects in the ward works and council meetings.

At the council meetings

- The state government must ensure a strict procedure for organizing the council meetings to ensure qualitative discussion on ward and city development.
- The state government must ensure a code of conduct on the behavior of members and the discussions.
- The state government must ensure discipline, every one's right to speak and participate and meaningful discussion at the meetings.
- The state government must ensure the presence of officials of all departments to answer the questions.
- The state government must obtain the feedback of councilors related to the policies made at the state capital.

Managing ward works

- The state government must ensure a proper coordination between councilors and officials to ensure proper implementation of ward and city development works.
- The councilor must be oriented on understanding the ward issues, consultation with citizens and local associations, preparing an action

plan [as mentioned earlier] to be implemented year wise, linking action plan components to council meetings and implementing the same.

- The government must provide facilities for women councilors for attending meetings, doing ward works or site inspections either in the early morning or late evening hours.

Policy for Women and Men Councilors

- It is important for the government to have a document explaining the role of party members that become elected representatives at all levels. The document must provide clarity for the party member to play the role of an elected representative.
- The policy of the councilors specifically mentions the direction in which the councilors must move and the capacity measures required to be provided for women councilors.

Providing capacity building avenues

- The government must organize monthly discussions, quarterly workshops and annual conferences to deliberate development issues and policies to provide a learning

space for councilors and make it a part of council obligation and procedure.

- The government must encourage the councilors to visit other towns and cities to understand and learn the experiences.
- The government must utilize the structures at district level, district training institutes to orient and train the councilors of urban areas at district level.
- The government must also facilitate regular monthly meetings at ward level. This can be linked to the existing provisions of 74th constitutional amendment.
- The government must clearly define the role and interactions of state agencies keeping in mind, the 74th constitutional amendment to ensure autonomy of municipalities.

Recipe for better performance:

Men councilors should have open mind and freely discuss.

Citizens should bear with us and pay taxes.

Local Associations should co-operate, encourage and serve.

NGOs should provide service and work with councilors.

Governments and parties should train and provide information.

