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A STUDY ON THE ROLE OF ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES IN ADDRESSING DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

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Abstract:

The elected women representatives played an important role in addressing the development issues be it a reformation of state or protecting environment .The steps taken by them has got a national recognition. The women in Uttarakhand has crossed the reservation from 33% to 40 %. Despite the positive facts and figure the women has faced a lots of problem in contesting election and addressing the social issues in the region. The majority of the women panchayat representatives who are functioning are without training, orientation and technical knowledge on Panchayat Raj, rules, functions and duties. They are manipulated by bureaucrats, politicians and dominant power brokers in the villages. Most of the Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) faced the problems of non cooperation from the officials. These problems have slowed the pace of developmental works and also elected representatives to fully participate in the Panchayats. Needless to say that the women were not meant to be elected as the rest of the members, instead they were meant to be co-opted.

KEY WORDS:

Social Work, Education, EWRS, Panchayati Raj Institute, 73rd Amendment, Participation, Decentralization, Change, Participatory Method.

INTRODUCTION

The 73rd Constitutional amendments gave considerably increased powers to local governments including increased financial and administrative autonomy. But where administration is weak, the burden falls heavily on the poor, who suffer from skewed government spending, limited access to services, and employee indifference.

The elected women beneficiaries who are into the governance faced lots of problem in functioning and many a time male partners play the key role. The decentralization does not necessary means participation by the elected women. The much of the gender issues is not address as most of the male partners are still in position even if the women are holding the post. The problem of casteism and illiteracy is also rampant in reducing the participation of women in Panchayats. Only the persons who are affluent are enjoying the status and working at least for the objective of good governance. The need of the hour is to build the capacities of the women in the function of Panchayats so that they can truly make a contribution by creating good governance.

The objective of the study the development programme initiated by the elected women representatives and their level of decision power.

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METHODOLOGY:-

The study was carried out in the district of Dehradun and Bageshwar of Uttarakhand for a period of two years. The sample collected from 150 EWRs from Kalsi and Charkata blocks of Dehradun and Kapkot and Garur blocks of Bageshwar.

The method of the study adopted is descriptive research. The method of data collection is both primary and secondary. The NGOs and Government reports are used for the preparation of questionnaire and interview. Exhaustive field work is done to make the analysis. The EWRs selected were ward members, Pradhan and from the three tiers from ward members, Pradhan, BDOs and Zilla panchayat members. The FGD is also used for the interpretation of data on their day to day works, problem and remedies for better implementation. During the collection of data participatory method was adopted which was a part of social work participatory education.

The findings from the study reveals from the following parameters:-

Contribution made by the EWRs family members: - 30% of the EWRs husbands and 12% of other family members like mother-in-laws, father-in-laws, son etc. were reported as playing an important role in motivating women representatives to contest elections and help were also lend during the administrative work. While 58% reported that non-cooperation is been done with the EWRs and even the government official and villagers do not support if the women contest the election. Social work participatory method of PLA like prioritizing the need and discussion with the EWRs in group highlighted that most of the women are working without the support and feeling it hard to work or implement the development programme.

Election contested:- The majority of the elected representatives had contested only one election (87%) and hence the proportion of first timers in politics was also high (86%). Around 14 per cent were re-elected more than once at the Gram Panchayat level. Reservation has played a significant role as four-fifths of all the representatives got elected from reserved seats. Reservation facilitated the first entry into politics for most of the elected representatives (83%). However, it did not help much in continuing for second or third terms, as the proportion that got elected from the reserved seats was 58 per cent and 45 per cent respectively. Ex-women representatives, who faced defeat in their attempts to continue their careers, accepted that there was less social interaction and/or no proper campaigning (52%) on their part. The problem of unacceptability/conflict across different social categories was another important reason mentioned by two-fifths of them. 91 per cent did not contest any intermediate/Zilla Parishad election; higher levels of political aspiration are generally not present among the Gram Panchayat-level Panchayati Raj functionaries. 30% even reveals that most of the women felt dislike to contest election due to the ex-women leaders struggle for carrying out their role. The Social work participatory method of PRA techniques and discussion with the EWRs in group highlighted that the reservation has made the women to contest election but not fully as political strong leaders. They are not cooperated and the impact of the ex-women problems in performing their role the other are also facing it difficult to come forward as it may be the reason for few women contesting for open seat ad higher rank like any intermediate/Zilla Parishad election.

Participation of male member's w.r.t. EWRs and decision making power of EWRs: - 42% of the women and their families reveals that EWRs are performing their role but 58% said that women elected are not aware about the duties and responsibilities and male partners are dominated and takes most of the decision in the works of the panchayat. As the result reflects from the Social work participatory method of PLA highlighted earlier that most of the Women Representatives faced the problems of non cooperation from the officials and due to that fact that they have slowed the pace of developmental works and also elected representatives to fully participate in the development sector and no power in decision making. Needless to say that the women were not meant to be representatives as the rest of the members, instead they were meant to be co-opted.

Development programme initiated by the EWRs: - The development works carried are road construction(20%) , school building(10%), health and nutrition (40%) and drinking water facilities and housing (30%). Social work participatory method of PLA like prioritizing the need snake and ladder game, story telling and discussion with the EWRs in group highlighted that despite of the deplorable condition the women are performing the development works in their own villagers.

Social work intervention: While collecting the data it reveals that most of the women (60%) find it

difficult to perform their role and following the procedure for moving the file for speedy working environment to the government officials for approval. It was also noted that elected women could be enhanced and made effective with the knowledge of Participatory method of PLA which can even help them to work on priority base along with the deserving beneficiaries. The gram Sabha could be aware and made effective to work with the EWRs and create a pressure groups for effective development work in their villages. The pressure groups members can be the members from the CBO present in the villages. Some of the PLA exercises carried out were snake and ladder, filling the gaps, prioritizing the need etc. and role play: learning from each other experience which helps understand their problems and

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