

EMPOWERING PANCHAYATI RAJ

MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
WOMEN STATUS STUDIES IN PANCHAYATS



ALAPPAD, KOLLAYIL, OLAVANNA, VILAYUR  
GRAM PANCHAYATS



SAKHI WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE

**MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
WOMEN STATUS STUDIES IN PANCHAYATS**

*A brief report on the project  
in the Gram Panchayats of*

**Alappad, Kollayil, Olavanna and Vilayur**

*Partner Organisation*

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## PARTNER PANCHAYATS

### Alappad Gram Panchayat

**Alappad** is a coastal Panchayat sandwiched between the lake and the sea, in the Karunagappally Taluk of Kollam district. It is 17.5 Km lengthwise and has 7.38 sq. km of area. It is very densely populated. Its precious resource is black sand which is regularly mined by the Indian Rare Earths Company and does not receive any benefit from this. The population depends on fisheries for a livelihood and most of the men work in large canoes or boats.

In the total population of 30,867, women number 14,903. There are 163 'Ayalkoottams' (NHGs) and 171 other women groups. Women mostly do not work outside their homes.

Alappad is a Gram Panchayat where, unlike in other coastal villages, the level of educational and cultural activities is high. The famous Amrithandamayi Ashram is located here and hence there is always a big stream of foreign visitors and a lot of activities in and around the ashram.

The Tsunami which hit Indian coast in 2004, wrecked havoc in four of its wards, taking a toll of 150 lives, mostly children and the elderly. This was the main reason to have the projects's focused on rehabilitation activities.

### Kollayil Gram Panchayat

**Kollayil** Gram Panchayat is situated near Dhanuvachapuram of Neyyattinkara taluk, bordering Tamilnadu. It has a population of 23,935 and 51% of this are women. There are 986 scheduled caste families, spread over 12 wards.

Agriculture is the predominant occupation. The service sector which provides employment to many persons is expanding on account of remittances of the migrate workers in the Middle East countries.

The female literacy is 77%. Traditionally women are engaged in farming and weaving. While few women work in construction, handlooms, small business etc the majority are unemployed. In the last 5 years many Self-Help Groups have emerged and are active. About 200 such groups with a membership of around 3000 women are trying to start entrepreneurship programmes besides

savings and credit. They have also started marketing centers for their products in one or two wards, on an experimental basis. A strong network of groups of women in agriculture called *Haritha Mitram* is working in this area. Extreme poverty is also prevalent.

There are several educational institutions like schools, colleges, and technical institutions.

### Olavanna Gram Panchayat

**Olavanna** is the most populated among the four Gram Panchayats and is situated on the bank of the Chaliyar river, close to the Kozhikode Corporation in Kozhikode district. It has 20 wards with a population of 55,324. Though it is predominantly an agrarian society, a large number of women are engaged in coir making. Clay-mining is erratically carried out resulting in the reduction of agricultural land. Coir-making units are in a declining stage affecting several women working in these units.

### Vilayur Gram Panchayat

**Vilayur** Gram Panchayat is situated in the Pattambi Block of Palghat district, bordering Malappuram. Agriculture is the predominant activity. It has a population of 19,851 spread in 11 wards. About 13% are scheduled castes out of which 98% are below poverty line. A substantial number in the population belongs to the Muslim community. There is large migration of men to Middle East countries.

The sex ratio is favourable to women. But among children, the number of boys outnumbers that of girls. The labour participation rate of women is very low. Many girls drop out of schools and as a result the number of girls in higher classes is very low.

The Panchayat has good water sources but illegal and unscientific sand mining poses a threat, leading to depletion of water resources and consequent water scarcity for agricultural operations

## SAKHI WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE

Sakhi is a feminist collective functioning since 1996 and based at Trivandrum, Kerala, South India.

The ultimate goal of Sakhi is to work towards a society, in which there is no discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, caste, class, ethnicity and religion. Sakhi attempts to analyse and find the root cause of all types of oppression and discrimination and evolve perspectives, attitudes and programmes which can transform such a society into an equitable and just one.

We believe that women and men need to work together to transform the existing patriarchal relations which exploit women's labour, sexuality, fertility, labour, mobility, etc. Collectives of women can create the needed self confidence and strong women's movements can contribute to the social transformation process.

Knowledge is power and information collection and dissemination is one of the primary activities of Sakhi.

The following are some of the other activities of Sakhi

- Library and documentation centre
- Publications-books, training manuals, posters and a bimonthly newsletter in local language
- Capacity building on gender, development, health, governance and life skill education for adolescents
- Gender and governance; developing manuals on gender planning, budgeting and auditing; networking elected women
- Action research in related fields
- Support to survivors of violence, campaigns against violence on women
- A space for women
- Community based work, supporting grassroots women's collectives and networking; advocacy and campaigns

Sakhi was associated with the People's Plan Campaign and the decentralisation process since its inception and the Coordinator was a member of the High Level Guidance Council formed, to guide and help the process. Prior to getting associated with this particular project, Sakhi had undertaken the following projects related to decentralisation.

- **Networking elected women representatives** in 2 districts of Kerala (2000-05). It was part of a South India networking process initiated by the

Singamma Sreenivas Foundation(SSF) based in Bangalore, with 4 partners in 4 southern states of India

- An action research project on **Gender, Citizenship and Governance** in 4 gram panchayats in Trivandrum district (2000-2003). This was part of a multi country programme supported by the Royal Tropical Institute(KIT), Amsterdam
- Organised an International Seminar on **Gender, Citizenship and Governance** in 2004, as part of the above action research programme
- Research on Political Decentralisation and Women's Health in association with the Achutha Menon Centre for Health Sciences Studies of the Sree Chitira Thirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (2002) and CHANGE, USA

All these study reports are available on the website of Sakhi: [www.sakhikerala.org](http://www.sakhikerala.org)

# I

## INTRODUCTION

The 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan documents of the Government of India talk of gender mainstreaming and allocating 30 percent of funds for Women's Component Plan (WCP) by all departments and ministries. Kerala is, perhaps, the only state that attempted to do this, (other than notional flow) especially through the local governments (LG), involving grassroots women in the planning process.

It is to be noted that in Kerala, during the 9<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan period (1997-2002), allocation for WCP (10 percent of the devolved funds) was made mandatory for the local governments to get sanction of the District Planning Committee (DPC) for the entire projects of the Gram Panchayats. There was a conscious effort to mainstream gender in the local level planning process. The Kerala State Planning Board (KSPB) gave the necessary leadership with directives, guidelines and handbooks and also organized training programmes on gender and planning. The suggestion from the KSPB was to initially conduct a study of the 'Status of women' in each Panchayat so that issues and needs of women are identified and integrated into planning.

Yet, many local governments were not able to carry out the mandate due to lack of continuous support and assistance. In 2004, when the SDC-CapDeck Programme initiated the empowerment programme, Sakhi was identified as one of the partner organisations, as a facilitator to '**Mainstream Gender in Governance**'. Four Gram Panchayats with divergent socio-economic profiles, located in four districts of Kerala were selected for a pilot project. Sakhi undertook a process of gender mainstreaming as an opportunity of wider gender sensitization in the Gram Panchayats of Vilayur in Palakkad district, Olavanna in Kozhikode district, Kollayil in Trivandrum district and Alappad in Kollam district.

Learnings from Panchayats



MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN  
LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
WOMEN STATUS STUDIES IN  
PANCHAYATS



MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN  
LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
WOMEN STATUS STUDIES IN  
PANCHAYATS

## II

## GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

**Much** has been talked about women in relation to development. The feminist analysis brings out the different approaches pursued by the planners, starting from welfare approach to the notion of empowerment. Initially it was just 'Women in Development (WID)', which later became 'Women and Development (WAD)' and then to 'Gender and Development (GAD)'.

When the SDC-CapDecK supported initiative on mainstreaming gender in Panchayati Raj was launched, the decentralisation process had already completed eight years and there was quite a lot of experience, studies, literature on the WCP and the other measures adopted to mainstream gender in the local planning process. The approaches varied, as explained below:

- **Gender is conflated with 'women':** Many local governments and the elected representatives misunderstood the concept of 'gender' to mean 'women'. So when any project for women is planned, it is pushed to the WCP without realizing that gender is about social and cultural conditioning and is about male-female relationships.
- **Gender as an 'add on':** Since the KSPB insisted, gender was an 'add on' to the existing approaches. If the focus was on poverty reduction or economic development, gender was added, either as an after thought or as an appendix!

Learnings in small groups





MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN  
LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
WOMEN STATUS STUDIES IN  
PANCHAYATS

- **Integration of gender issues into planning:** The strategy is to see how specific gender issues can be addressed in the process of planning for a specific sector or in various sectors like agriculture, health etc and is not about agenda setting or changing organizational practices or policies. It may also result in the promotion of the interests of women as equal partners in development.
- **Gender mainstreaming:** This was the least understood of all strategies but most talked about, without understanding what it means.

So when Sakhi decided to undertake the integration of the gender analysis in the planning process in the four selected Gram Panchayats, we used this word in the following context:

*The strategy of Gender mainstreaming for gender equality has been advocated since the Fourth World Conference of Beijing in 1995. It aims at sustainable integration of gender equality perspectives and strategies into the functioning of organizations and institutions. Gender mainstreaming has a double meaning, as it is a **strategy** and a **process of agenda setting and change at different levels within organisations and institutions**. It means **changing institutional rules and practices**.*

In the context of decentralisation, it means that we should aim at change at different levels in the local government - not just at the level of elected representatives but also at the level of people-men and women in the various Community Based Organisations (CBOs), transferred institutions, and other stakeholders. The approach and strategy of the project was accordingly formulated keeping this in mind.

Gram Sabha group discussion





MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN  
LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
WOMEN STATUS STUDIES IN  
PANCHAYATS



Meeting with SHG members

### III

## ABOUT THE PROJECT AND ITS GOALS

The goal of the process was to *strengthen the local governments* through mainstreaming gender in the planning process. This was to be achieved through a process of gender sensitisation at a wider level and also by engendering the planning process at the local level. The specific ways of achieving these objectives were:-

- Conduct a study on the **status of women** in the selected 4 selected Gram Panchayats with focus on the processes as a form of gender sensitisation in the village.
- Undertake a **gender sensitisation** process among all sections of people through community based organisations.
- Through the study and various participatory processes, **strengthen various local level groups** like the NHGs, SHGs, Mahila Samajams (Women's organisations), NGOs, CBOs etc for effective intervention in the Gram Sabha (GS) and make gender an agenda in Panchayati Raj. This should lead to greater and effective participation of women in the formal and informal political structures.
- In the second phase, **popularise a gender analysis frame work** in local level planning with focus on livelihood issues, violence related interventions and health, to deliver services that address the specific needs and interests of women and men in the community which requires engendered economic development, development planning and resource allocation.
- Create awareness of women's rights and develop a **bill of rights of women** in the model of CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women) or develop a women's policy for the local governments
- Setting up of a **Resource Centre** for women which can act as a focal point for women and women's groups.
- Evolve a **methodology** for the study of status of women and gender analysis which can be later used by others who wants to undertake such processes.

## IV

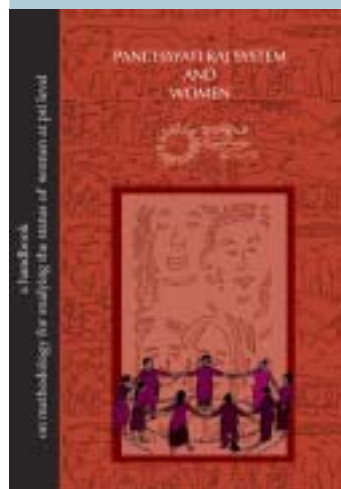
### METHODOLOGY

- Equip a **core team** of young women from each of the Gram Panchayats, to carry on the work once the project officially ends
- Conduct **study of status of women** using participatory methods and through wider consultation and as a means of wider gender sensitisation
- **Gender analysis** of institutions which are transferred to the local governments, like the primary health centre (PHC), agricultural offices etc and their gender friendliness
- **Study of CBOs** to understand the participation of civil society in public activities and the role of women in them and as a forum for wider gender sensitization among men and youth
- Study and review of the **SHGs** which are exclusive women's groups focussing on poverty eradication
- Review of the **WCP** of previous years to understand where the focus was and whether it, in anyway, addressed women's practical and strategic gender needs
- **Special Gram Sabha** to disseminate the report of the status study and based on that, to evolve issues for gender based planning
- **Gender sensitisation** of all sections of society through the process of the study and gender analysis
- **Capacity building of women leaders** (Area Development Society of SHGs (ADS) / Community Development Societies of SHG (CDS) –apex bodies of SHGs) and **exposure** trips/exchange visits.

Group discussion in Gram Sabha



MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN  
LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
WOMEN STATUS STUDIES IN  
PANCHAYATS



Hand book on  
Status study methodology



MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN  
LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
WOMEN STATUS STUDIES IN  
PANCHAYATS

## V

# THE PROCESS OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING

The process began with several rounds of discussion in the Panchayats about what the project intends. Efforts were made to conscientise the elected members, authorities of transferred institutions and Key Resource Persons (KRP) on the need for integrating the concept of gender into the entire functioning of the Panchayats. A thorough training of investigators was held to sensitise them on issues of gender, Panchayati Raj and research methodology and to impress upon them the need for status study which would help the incorporation of gender into the entire planning, with special emphasis on WCP.

### 5.1. The Core Team

The **core team** consisted of 6 young women in each Gram Panchayat. They were from the area and selected through a process of interview with the cooperation of the Panchayat Committee.

The selection of the core team was a long drawn out process. Information about the recruitment of graduates who are socially conscious and with some experience in the field, was widely disseminated in each of the Gram Panchayat. But it was very difficult to get the right kind of persons. In Kollayil, the recruitment was easier but the Co-coordinator, a post-graduate, dropped out of her position unable to bear the stigma imposed by society that despite being in her 30s she was not getting married.

Training of Core group





MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN  
LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
WOMEN STATUS STUDIES IN  
PANCHAYATS

In Vilayur and Olavanna, we had to give up our requirements of women being graduates. We realised that many of the graduates had no interest in field work. Through a careful process of selection and training, constant review and monitoring, we were able to build a good team of field workers. They intervened pro-actively in the *Gram Sabha*, development seminars, in ADS and CDS of Kudumbashree and in all programmes of the Gram Panchayats.

The core team was given training in several phases, on decentralisation, gender, local planning, women and development, research methodology etc and thus equipped to act as a resource team on gender issues in the Panchayat.

The experience was not uniform, as there were several layers of power structures and hurdles that these young women had to pass through. In one Panchayat, the struggle was with a political party and in another place it was rivalry between members of the group. But on the whole, these strategy paid in the long run, as one member each from the core teams stood for elections and except one, all were successful. One is president of the Gram Panchayat, one a Block Panchayat member and another is member and chairperson of the Welfare Standing Committee. Most of the others continue to associate with the local Panchayat in one capacity or the other.

Several cases of women have been taken up by the team and they act as mediators and have brought all complaints from the field to the Panchayat. Many have become members of CDS and ADS and secretaries of Kudumbashree. They have started playing the role of facilitators in the Gram Sabha.

Core group members in group work





MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN  
LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
WOMEN STATUS STUDIES IN  
PANCHAYATS

## 5.2 The Study

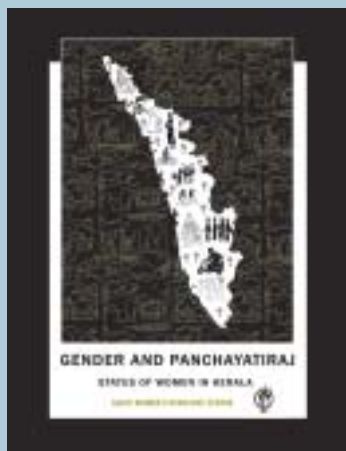
As mentioned earlier, the study of the status of women was undertaken in various ways in each Panchayat

- Through questionnaire survey of 250 randomly selected women
- Through Focus Group Discussions (FGD)
- Through interaction with CBOs and SHGs
- Through a review of the functioning of the SHGs
- Through gender analysis of transferred institutions

The methodology of gender sensitisation and mainstreaming was a combination of study, workshops, trainings and focus group discussions. Study of the status of women was the basic premise which helped to understand the position of women in the villages, in order to do gender based planning and to bring together various people of the village, understand their views on the status of women and have gender sensitisation sessions with them.

For a wider participation in each Panchayat, a **core group** and an **expert group** were formed. The **core group** comprised of women elected members, Anganawadi teachers, women doctors, retired Headmistresses and Junior Public Health Nurses. The **expert group** comprised of other elected members, retired Headmasters and KRPs including men. These groups were formed after holding several discussions and brainstorming on issues faced by women, the status of decentralization, their concept of development and the importance and participation level in the Gram Sabha in the respective Panchayats.

The preparation of the questionnaire itself was participatory and in consultation with the core group and expert group from each Panchayat. The initial focus group discussion with



Status study report



Presenting the report of group discussion in the Gram Sabha- Olavanna

Discussion with the Panchayat committee - Olavanna



these groups, the CBOs, SHG leaders etc elicited the general perception about women in the community and this process, in due course, led to gender sensitisation of the various stakeholders.

These groups of experts were forthcoming on various issues and interaction with them elicited a wealth of knowledge and their support was very important for the core team.

A meeting of Anganawadi teachers was held. They were much concerned about awareness class for adolescents, which was part of their mandatory responsibility. In the meeting of CBOs, they said that women do not participate as their meetings are in the night. The common notion of men in most of the Panchayats was that women were so obsessed with television serials (soap operas) that they do not participate, whatever be the time of the meetings. They said that in women's organisations, there is no unity and they are apathetic about their functioning. These perceptions of men reveal the deep seated patriarchal notions which prevail in all areas.

In the leadership **training of SHGs** held for two days, women participated in large numbers. Women discussed issues of dowry harassment, ostentation during marriage ceremonies, alcoholism, child sexual abuse, exhibitionism on roads and lack of marketing space for their products. In the ADS and CDS meetings, women emphasised the need for making men conscious. A discussion on the Gram Sabha, its relevance in Panchayati Raj and its lack of functioning was discussed among the core group, expert group and CBOs.

The sample size of the study was 250 women from each Panchayat. The interviews held with women were dialogues lasting for half a day with each woman, where there was a process of give and take of information. Life experiences

Interaction with SHG members



MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN  
LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
WOMEN STATUS STUDIES IN  
PANCHAYATS



Training



MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN  
LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
WOMEN STATUS STUDIES IN  
PANCHAYATS

were understood with empathy. The team was trained to respond if the need arose on issues of development, violence in the family or elsewhere when help is needed and sought.

**Focus Group Discussions (FGD)** were held with groups of men and women to understand their perceptions about the status of men and women. FGDs were very effective and it made us realise that a gender friendly atmosphere in the Gram Sabhas would help elicit the real nature of the problems women faced. The elected members held and propagated the false notion that women were only interested in individual benefits. It was in fact the elected members who used the Gram Sabha only for the distribution of benefits under welfare schemes. So women never felt that it was a forum where they could discuss other issues. Focus group discussions were used as a means of understanding the status of women and their perceptions. They were an excellent method to generate discussions and most of the women felt free to speak.

The status study was completed in a period of three months. All the processes mentioned here were used during the study and several significant groups in the Panchayats went through the gender sensitisation and brain-storming process.

FGD with coir workers



### 5.3 Gender Analysis of Institutions

With the help of a guideline and observations, a gender analysis of selected transferred institutions was conducted, to understand how women friendly they were, what the facilities are and how to improve such services for women to use them effectively.

## 5.4 Study of Community Based Organisations

A study of **Community Based Organisations** comprising of arts and sports clubs, libraries and trade unions was also undertaken. Information was collected about their origin, activities, issues they take up and the extent of women's participation. Meetings were held with different Community Based Organisations in all the four Gram Panchayats to discuss the scope of Panchayati Raj, importance of Gram Sabha and participation in it, gender issues and the need to mainstream gender in Panchayati Raj. The sessions were received with scepticism in the initial stages. The question posed was what is the need of discussing women's issues with men? What relation does it have with their life? But in two Gram Panchayats, the process was reversed, especially after conducting Focus Group Discussions (FGD), with regard to their perception about gender. These discussions were stimulating and helped them realise the poor status of women in their Panchayats.

In one of the Panchayats, we realised that "Karayogams" (traditional community groups) that we had listed as a CBO was in fact a collective of people, exerting considerable influence on their lives as much as the Gram Panchayat.

A painful learning has been that except for Alappad Gram Panchayat, no other Panchayat has a library for women and no arts and sports club, managed by women or has women members. Participation of women in meetings is nil. CBOs, for the first time seemed to realise that women can also be included in the decision making committees or boards. Factors, which hindered the effectiveness of CBOs were the process of globalisation, propagation of consumerist culture, and media onslaught that has led to the loss of interest and commitment.

This strategy of working with CBOs also seemed to have yielded good results. Many young men became facilitators in conducting Gram Sabhas. Women were included in

FGD with young people



MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN  
LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
WOMEN STATUS STUDIES IN  
PANCHAYATS



Textile print training at Alappad



MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN  
LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
WOMEN STATUS STUDIES IN  
PANCHAYATS

Karayogams in Alappad, for the first time, as members. In some arts and sports clubs also, they gained membership.

## 5.5 Reviews of SHGs

The various reviews of the SHGs, transferred institutions, WCP etc also enriched the data and helped in the next phase of gender based planning.

## 5.6 Extracts from the Study Findings

The status study not only included conventional indicators like health, education, work participation and income but also marriage, dowry, property rights, reproductive health, sexuality, political participation, violence, freedom of mobility, use and influence of media and perception in relation to the status of women. The study revealed the gender paradox of the state. It was realized that though women are literate, most of them had not received satisfactory education or skills.

The work participation rate outside the home never increased beyond 10 to 12%. Within homes, there was hardly any recognition of the work women performed in the domestic domain and no help was received from any male members.

Women's income was really negligible and it was usually spent for children's education, health purpose and emergencies of the house.

Women hardly had any choice regarding their marriage. Dowry was a predominating problem which affected the lives of women in all the Panchayats. Very few women i.e. below 10% had any property rights. Land redistribution reforms, which was successfully carried out in Kerala, had not helped women in gaining better access to property. Women had very little say in decision-making even in relation to purchase

Inauguration of Alappad Anganwadi and Women Resource Centre by the District Collector and Panchayat President



of food or clothes and negligible when it came to gold and costly equipments. Only women in Kollayil seemed to be better placed when it came to joint decision-making in relation to food and clothes.

In relation to sexuality, women had received no information about menstruation or sexual relation before marriage. Men received distorted information. Very few women could discuss sexuality with their husbands.

Political participation of women in all the three panchayats was abysmally low. Very few women (below 4%) were members of political parties, trade unions and other CBOs. They were members of SHGs and this had definitely brought about a slight change in their lives in terms of mobility and being recipients of information.

In relation to mobility, women said that they hardly went out except for social visits or hospital needs. They feared eve-teasing and molestation in public places and this was a restriction to their traveling. With relation to violence, women faced mental, sexual, physical and verbal violence.

Study of SHGs revealed the lack of co-ordination, paucity of marketing outlets, inability to manage accounts and work and increase in the burden of women's work. Sometimes, violence in the family was aggravated when women started moving out to participate in Panchayat meetings, gained information and initiated micro credit activities.

## 5.7 Dissemination of Findings of the Study and Moving into Gender based Planning

Since the study was conducted in collaboration with the Gram Panchayat, the latter had a sense of ownership of the study and the draft report was discussed with them and the required changes and clarifications were made.

In two of the three Gram Panchayats, **Special Gram Sabhas** were conducted to disseminate the report of the status study. A lot of preparation had gone into the conduct of the Gram Sabha, which had representatives from all wards, all stakeholders in the study and the elected representatives. The President of the Panchayat presented the report. Youths from CBOs and the core group of animators were trained to conduct group discussions on the findings of the study and the focus was on ideas which can be carried forward into the planning of the projects.

The Gram Sabhas were very dynamic and more women than men attended. Discussions on the various findings brought to light some more issues or nuances of understanding of the way issues were discussed in the report. Very concrete suggestions for projects to be included in the local plan were submitted.



MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN  
LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
WOMEN STATUS STUDIES IN  
PANCHAYATS



Indepth learning by  
Core group and Investigators

### BOOKS AND HANDBOOKS

#### Be Empowered Be Equipped

A handbook for women elected representatives

#### Panchayati Raj and Women

A handbook on methodology for studying the status of women at PRI level

#### Gender and Panchayati Raj

Status of women in Kerala

#### Gender Planning, Budgeting and Auditing

Manual



MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN  
LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
WOMEN STATUS STUDIES IN  
PANCHAYATS

## VI

### PROJECT ON GENDER PLANNING, BUDGETING AND AUDITING

As the project was coming to an end, the Department of Local Self Governments of the Government of Kerala took note of the initiative and Sakhi was awarded a project to prepare a manual and a handbook on **“Gender Planning, Budgeting and Auditing”**. on **“Strengthening Women Component Plan”**. This was one of the initiatives under the Decentralisation Support Programme(DSP) supported by the Royal Netherlands Embassy.

The objectives were:

- To prepare a **training strategy, training plan, training module and training handbook** on the WCP.
- To **create a pool of state level trainers in Gender and Development Issues** and to capacitate them on the WCP
- To prepare a **comprehensive manual on Women Component Plan, Gender Planning , Budgeting and Auditing**
- To identify a **shelf of project ideas** that can be adapted in the WCP.



A draft manual on  
Gender Planning,  
Budgeting and Auditing

As part of the of this work, **reviews** were undertaken of the studies already done by state level institutions on WCP, analysis of the reports of the study of ‘status of women’ conducted by the Panchayats etc.

Critical examination of the WCP of **seven** selected LSGIs was done (three Gram Panchayats, one Block Panchayat, one District Panchayat, one Municipality and one Corporation ) with reference to approaches, guidelines, handbook, composition and functioning of Working Group on WCP, training programmes, nature and impact of the projects under WCP was undertaken. These were presented in a validation workshop of experts and stakeholders and suggestions were elicited for further work.

A draft manual **on Gender Planning, Budgeting and Auditing** was prepared and an action research was conducted in the seven local governments to validate the manual and to see how it can be used functionally.

Along with this, a capacity building programme was undertaken. A pool of 20 master trainers and 120 state level trainers were identified and they were capacitated to help the local governments transcend the limits of the Women In Development (WID) approach and adopt a GAD (Gender And Development) approach . These trainers were from different government departments like education, health, planning, and from the training institutes.

Skill upgradation of ADS members

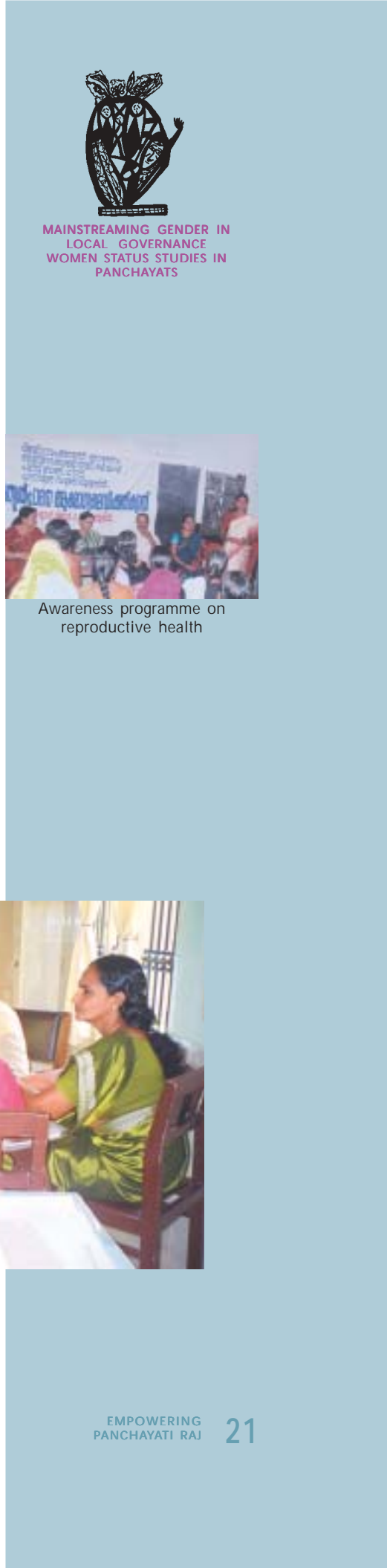


## VII

### UP SCALING OF THE STATUS STUDY

**One** of the major outcomes of the study on the Status of Women was **the finalisation of the methodology** of the study and its wider dissemination. In 2006, the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) with support from SDC- CapDeck and in collaboration with Sakhi, decided to conduct **the study in more Panchayats** as a tool for wider gender sensitisation and also as a preparation for the 11<sup>th</sup> plan. KILA wrote to all Local Governments and the first 60 Gram Panchayats out of the 300 who applied were selected for the study.

The entire process of the study was under the responsibility of the concerned local governments. Sakhi, SDC-CapDeck and KILA only provided the needed capacity building support and handholding. More or less the same methodology developed from the first study was used. Since this study had to be done in a shorter period, the questionnaire was made shorter and more of FGDs were organised. The data analysis and report writing were also done locally. Out of the 60 Gram Panchayats, 40 completed the process of study and are using the data in the process of **gender planning and budgeting**.



MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN  
LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
WOMEN STATUS STUDIES IN  
PANCHAYATS



Awareness programme on reproductive health



Status study- the Master trainers

**A core team of state level experts** was identified as faculty that way available to the Panchayats for immediate contacts and support. This group continues as state level expert group on the study process. Clinics were conducted



MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN  
LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
WOMEN STATUS STUDIES IN  
PANCHAYATS

in different districts to help the Panchayats to deal with issues arising during the process of the study and the state level faculty assisted this process.



Management training for women SHG leaders

### Training in Gender Planning, Budgeting and Auditing

Such trainings were conducted, first for state-level resource persons and then in each district. Two day workshops were held for the Financial Standing Committee chairperson, ICDS Supervisor, Charge Officer and Women's Working Group Chairperson of each LG.

**A national seminar** was conducted to disseminate the findings of the studies and the methodology for Status study in Panchayats and to elicit ideas for project planning from a gender perspective.



Training for Panchayat members on disaster management



Adolescent education

### Women's issues find place in the Election Manifesto

**At** the end of the Special Gram Sabha to discuss the Study of Status of Women in Vilayur Gram Panchayat, the major political parties announced that many of the issues mentioned in the report will definitely find place in their manifesto for the forthcoming elections to the Gram Panchayat. And it happened too!

## CONCLUSION

**As** the local governments in Kerala started preparing their Eleventh Five Year Plan, many of them are now in the process of finalising the completed reports. In several Panchayats, the issues, which came out of the process of study are being used in the plan preparation exercise for the Eleventh Five Year Plan. Slowly the concept of gender planning, budgeting and auditing is gaining entry into the local governance process – a clear outcome of the interventions in mainstreaming gender in Panchayati Raj.



MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN  
LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
WOMEN STATUS STUDIES IN  
PANCHAYATS

### Tsunami reconstruction through Panchayat



**In** the Tsunami affected village of Alappad, a women's resource centre was established as a follow up of the women's status study. It was done as part of the reconstruction of the Anganwadi that was destroyed by the Tsunami. While all the rehabilitation and reconstruction activities during the post Tsunami period were bypassing and ignoring the local governments, an alternate approach was taken here. Right from taking various decisions on the site, type of building, selection of architect, to monitoring and inauguration, it was the Gram Panchayat which was taking the initiative and the Sakhi as partner organisation acted as a support system for the Panchayat.



## SDC CapDeck

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is Switzerland's international cooperation agency, under the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs. SDC supports sustainable development and seeks to improve the living conditions and quality of life of disadvantaged people in the South and East.

In India, starting with technical collaboration in livestock improvement in Kerala in 1963, SDC progressively expanded its activities to other geographical areas and to other fields such as natural resource management, rural finance and employment, rural energy and housing, decentralisation and local governance, empowerment and social justice, human and institutional strengthening and humanitarian aid.

SDC has been cooperating in these fields with a variety of partners, notably community based and non-governmental organisations, research and education institutions, central, state and local governments.

The Programme on Capacity Development for Decentralisation in Kerala (CapDeck) of SDC was conceptualised to support capacity building for the democratic decentralisation process in Kerala.

As part of this, SDC collaborates mainly with the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA). Starting with support for the transition from a campaign mode of capacity building to an institutionalised form, the KILA-CapDeck project developed a decentralised training system under the leadership of KILA and platforms for sharing of experiences on decentralisation and for co-ordination of activities.

The CapDeck Programme also supports people-driven and people-centred decentralised democratic governance by empowering the citizens and their democratic bodies to play a more pro-active role in local development. Strengthening Gram Sabhas, developing Panchayats as real institutions of local governance, motivating Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and other institutions for strengthening Panchayati Raj, mainstreaming gender in decentralisation and empowering the marginalised through Panchayati Raj, form the broad framework on which the local initiatives under the CapDeck's Panchayati Raj Empowerment component are designed and implemented. These interventions are carried out through Panchayats, NGOs, academic institutions, local government associations, Kudumbashree, State Women's Commission and other civil society organisations.