

*Report  
of the Project*

**"Strengthening the Participation of  
Women in Local Governance"  
(Project UMA)  
Volume II**

*Sponsored  
by*

**FORD FOUNDATION**

**Institute of Social Studies Trust**

No. 42, Sree Shyla, 15th Cross, 4th Temple Street,  
Malleswaram, BANGALORE - 560 003.

1995

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Volume II

*Report  
of the*

**UMA FACILITATION CAMPS  
FOR WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES**



## PREFACE

This volume of the report is the detailed documentation of the facilitation camps for elected Gram Panchayat women representatives conducted in eight selected areas of Karnataka under the UMA Project. The introductory chapter sets out the context in which the training was conducted.

An attempt has been made to view this issue within the larger process of gender-sensitive training on the one hand and the complexities of genuine decentralisation processes on the other hand.

**Chapter II** sets out the profile of the participants and the socio-economic environment of their geographical areas.

**Chapter III** focusses on approaches and methods used while conducting the camps. An illustrative set of six sessions on different topics of the training programme has been presented. These reveal a great deal about the nature and awareness levels of the participants as well as the need for innovative and participatory methodologies. The experience of organising and conducting the camps have been valuable learning which helped define future goals and strategies. These are summarised in **Chapter IV**, and form the basis for further work in this area.

This volume is supported by five annexures. The selection of training areas is described in **Annexure I**. **Annexure II** lists some of the NGO's working in the Project area. The itinerary of training is described in **Annexure III**, while **Annexure IV** gives a picture of women's participation in the camps. **Annexure V** lists the materials prepared and used during the camps.

## *Acknowledgments*

The report on training acquired its present shape due to assistance extended by different people at various stages of preparing the material and conducting the training. We express our gratitude to all of them.

- \* Ford Foundation for extending financial assistance to the project.
- \* Dr.Swapna Mukhopadhyay, Director ISST for her encouragement and support.
- \* Mrs.Devaki Jain, former Director ISST for giving us the opportunity to work in this challenging area.
- \* Elected women members of all the selected Gram Panchayats for participating in the training and making the programme a success.
- \* Deputy Commissioners, Chief Executive Officers, Block Development Officers/Executive Officers and Secretaries of Project Districts, Taluks and Gram Panchayats for their support in eliciting participation of women in training and for co-operating in arranging the venue for training and accommodation for trainers.
- \* ADATS, MYRADA and SIBS for extending support in conducting the training programme.
- \* Shri.L.C.Jain, Dr.K.S.Krishnaswamy, Ms.Srilata Batliwala, Mrs.Leelavati Chandrashekar, Ms.Suman Kolhar, Shri.Narayanswamy, Ms.Uma Kulkarni and Shri.Uma Shankar for their help in finalising the training content.
- \* Dr.G.Suvarchala for writing the first draft of the training report.
- \* Our research colleagues in ISST for extending their unstinting cooperation and support at various stages of training.
- \* Ms. Grace Fernandez, Mr.Joseph Fernandez, Ms.Aliyamma and Ms.Jolly Thankachan for meticulously typing the report.
- \* Mr.G.R.N.Moorthy, Mr.S.V.Aravinda and Ms.K.N.Sudha for their moral support at different stages of training.
- \* Mr.Somashekar and Mr.Krishna Karanth for assisting the training team.

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## CHAPTER - I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Women and Politics: Towards a Mutually Beneficial Partnership

Over the years, the participation of women in local and national governance has been limited to the exercise of adult franchise and this too, within increasingly questionable electoral systems. This has resulted in political decision-making which is skewed and often oblivious of or hostile to the interests of the female half of the population. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments ensuring the reservation of a third of the seats in rural and urban local bodies for women are, in one sense, a major step towards social justice. From another point of view, the entry of a large number of women into political processes may help the system break free from the shackles of corruption and crime.

The state of Karnataka was the first in the country to introduce reservation of seats for women in local bodies on such a large scale. According to the provisions of the 1983 Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, 25% of the seats were reserved for women. This brought in about 14,000 women as members of the Mandal Panchayats and Zilla Parishads. While formal processes were not set in motion at that time to facilitate these women in their new roles as politicians, the very experience of being Panchayat members did contribute to the process of empowerment in some cases<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Zilla Parishads and Mandal Panchayats Evaluation Committee, Bangalore: Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Government of Karnataka, March 1989.



There was however a general perception of the underpinning philosophy of these programmes on the part of various actors in the process. The women's movement and organisations working with women clearly perceived these processes as part of the larger struggle towards true empowerment of women. They saw the need to build into these programmes the critical elements of gender disparities and how patriarchal forces have led to the marginalisation and disempowerment of women. There was a clear vision that such programmes should eventually help women representatives make decisions on the basis of informed choice, that they should eventually be in a position to question and analyse whether the local bodies are truly units of self governance.

### 1.2 Differing Perceptions on Training Programmes

Further impetus was given to these efforts with the passage of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in December 1993. Strengthening processes for women representatives should help them identify a range of issues, from the societal forces that keep women subordinate and deprived, to the vested interests that keep the local bodies ineffectual and powerless to a great degree. Such is the vision and hope with which women's organisations approach this task. They are also aware of the need to equip women to handle the day-to-day functioning of the Panchayat, the nuances and interpretation of the Panchayat Raj Acts, the interactions between the local bodies and the bureaucracy and financial processes of the Panchayats (See also report of UMA seminar on "Alternative Methodologies and

Curricula for Women in Panchayati Raj" January 1994. A number of women's organisations discussed these issues).

At marked variance with the approach outlined above is the one adopted in some quarters, particularly in most of the programmes sponsored by government and the major training institutes in the country. (This issue has been discussed in some detail in UMA Occasional Paper 1, Vol.1, Annexure II). These programmes tend to focus on the more mundane and immediate needs of the representatives while paying lip service only to the larger issues that have an impact on women's lives. To reiterate, while it is nobody's case that these issues are not of prime importance, it is critical that they are located in the larger context of women's empowerment.

### 1.3 On Gender Sensitive Training

It would also be appropriate at this point to comment on gender-sensitive training and what passes in its name. Much work has been done in the past two decades on the approaches and content of gender sensitive training.<sup>2,3,4,5,6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Williams Suzanne, Seed Janet, and Mwari Adelina, The Oxfam Gender Training Manual, OXFAM, UK and Ireland, 1994

<sup>3</sup> Background Report on Gender Issues in India, Hyderabad: Anveshi Research Centre for Women's Studies, February 1995

<sup>4</sup> Sharada Jain and others, Exploring Possibilities: A Review of the Women's Development Programme, Jaipur: Institute of Development Studies, 1988

<sup>5</sup> We can Change our World: The Mahila Samakhya Experience, New Delhi, Ministry of Human Resource Development

Unfortunately however, owing to the fact that gender and gender training have become fashionable areas of work, (which are generally well-funded) there has been a tendency for the ersatz to surface unmindful of what is really needed to address gender related problems. Training for Panchayat Raj also suffers from this malaise and it is often quite difficult to separate the grain from the chaff.

Any worthwhile process of training for Panchayats should trigger social changes towards a just society. It should not only validate and translate the individual strength and tenacity of women into collective action for change, it should also search for an alternative framework in which this change can take place.<sup>7</sup>

The 1993 Karnataka Act which has been framed in accordance with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment has resulted in close to 35,000 women being elected at the three tiers of local governance. On the one hand, some of these women belong to the rural elite who own and control large amounts of resources in terms of land and capital, who dominate the socio-cultural and political facets of rural society. Some of these women are the proxies for the men in their family who seek to control political processes through these women. This is generally true at the Taluk and Zilla levels of governance.

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<sup>6</sup> Renuka Mishra, and Nitya Rao, *Instructional Design for Training of Trainers for Organising Women Quarry Workers Into DWCRA Groups*, National Institute of Adult Education, August 1993

<sup>7</sup> *Participatory Training for Women*, New Delhi: SPARC

However, the majority of women elected to the Gram Panchayats belong to the poorer sections of society with little or no control over resources including their own labour. (This aspect will be dealt with in some detail in Chapter II of this volume which profiles the women representatives).

Training for social change in this context should lead to informing and mobilising women in a way that they can identify, articulate and lobby for the interests of women, particularly the poor and marginalised among them. This is precisely the hope with which the reservation for women has been made. Implicit in social change are the conscientisation of the poor, the empowerment of the powerless and the organisation of the unorganised. Change will occur not only in individuals and groups but also in the systems and structures of society.

Training that is truly gender-sensitive has to identify oppressive structures and systems and enable women to see themselves as strong, capable and responsible individuals. This is all the more crucial in the training of Panchayat representatives who have to articulate and carry forward the interests of the community they represent. In the training curriculum, this aspect was particularly borne in mind. (See also Chapter III)

Women have been conditioned into an extremely low sense of self-worth and self-esteem.<sup>8</sup> They generally see themselves as worthless, unable to do anything on their own, ignorant and

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<sup>8</sup>       ibid No.7

generally inferior to men. This low self-esteem starts at the intra-household level and is further exacerbated in the Panchayat situation where women are expected to function as leaders (see also Vol I, Chapter I, Sections 1.6 and 1.7). Unless social change such as to empower women within households begins to take place, women representatives are faced with the contradictions of their roles within their homes and at the Panchayat. Our interactions with women repeatedly reiterate the need to help build up their self-esteem. Fears of women in this regard have led them to feel that compared to men, they have little to offer society.

The other problem area in programmes for women is the deeply rooted concept that women should fit into existing learning norms. Unless conscious attempts are made in programme structures and content to change learning situations according to women's needs, the entire process can result in the further peripheralisation of women.

This is again obvious in some of the programmes designed for women which do not take such factors into account. In one district of Karnataka, for instance, a "training" programme consisted of calling several Gram Panchayat women representatives from the district and reading out the Panchayat Raj Act to them. Quite naturally women expressed the view that they were as much in the dark after the session as they had been before. The training programme design must recognise and take into account the basic fallacies that abound on the abilities of women to learn and the processes needed for such learning.

Gender-sensitive programmes should be conducted for women as well as for men and for mixed groups that reflect the realities of the Panchayats. The importance of involving men in the process cannot be overemphasised. However, because of the large numbers involved and the shortage of time and space, training of mixed groups do not take place. Also, good programmes and methodologies for these programmes need to be developed as the focus has been more on those for men or women alone. The fact that women tend to feel inhibited in mixed groups has also to be carefully tackled; the element of discomfort in mixed groups cannot be wished away.

#### 1.4 Organisational Strategies for Training

It was against this background, that ISST took up facilitation programmes for Gram Panchayat representatives in eight selected areas in four districts of Karnataka. The hope was that ISST with over 25 years of work in the field of gender and poverty would be able to develop programmes that combined all the elements discussed in the previous section and take advantage of the wealth of material and methods, used by organisations working for the empowerment of women. The basis for the selection of training areas is outlined in Annexure 1 of this report. It was based on a study concurrently funded at the Institute of Social and Economic Change (See also Volume I, Chapter I, Sections 1.2 and 1.3)

The specific objectives of the training are the following:

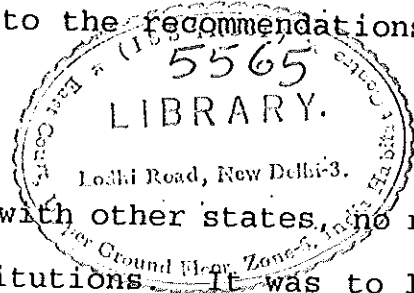


- 1) To make the members aware about the role and importance of local governance system.
- 2) To make the members aware of the statutory provisions concerning local governance.
- 3) To make the members conscious of the oppressive forces - both patriarchal and others - operating on them.
- 4) To build communication skills and self confidence among the members.
- 5) To build leadership qualities among the members.
- 6) To provide information on laws concerning women's issues and problems.

#### 1.5 History of Panchayat Raj in Karnataka

In Karnataka, attempts were made to constitute Panchayat Raj Institutions as early as 1950. The Government of the erstwhile Mysore state appointed an integration and coordination committee (Venkatappa Committee) which had recommended a two tier structure - Village Panchayat and District Board. It was on the basis of the Venkatappa Committee report that the Mysore village Panchayats and District Board Act was passed in 1952. However, considering the dissent expressed by various groups regarding the recommendations, the Government appointed yet another committee - Local Boards Enquiry Committee - which suggested a Three Tier Structure - Village Panchayat, Taluk and District Boards. The implementation however, was delayed by the states reorganisation. In 1959 Panchayat Raj Institutions were constituted as per the Karnataka Village Panchayats and Local

Boards Act and formulated according to the recommendations of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee.



Though the system adopted was in line with other states, no real powers were sanctioned to these institutions. It was to look into this aspect that the Government of Karnataka appointed the Kondajji Basappa Committee in 1963. Based on the recommendations of this committee, a bill was introduced in 1964 to set up a three tier structure. In addition to this, the then Minister for Rural Development, Mr. Ramakrishna Hegde recommended strengthening of Panchayat Raj Institutions by conferring upon them real powers and resources. However, nothing much happened as the ruling party and the government lacked the necessary will to implement the suggestions.

The enthusiasm for the local governance system, however, did not last long. By 1970's, the institutions had become defunct, as the elections were not held periodically. Further, the institutions served a limited section as they were controlled and dominated by the elite sections of rural society.

It was in 1977 after the Janata party came into power at the centre, that fresh attempts were made by the Government of India to reform and revive the system. The Government of India appointed the Ashok Mehta Committee to suggest measures to strengthen the Panchayat Raj Institutions. The committee suggested a two tier system at the district and for a cluster of villages; holding of regular elections and constitutional status for the set up.

While no action was taken at the Union Government level on the recommendations of the Committee, some State Governments took the necessary steps to revitalise the Panchayat Raj Institutions, West Bengal in 1978 and Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh in 1983. In accordance with the recommendations of the committee, Karnataka created the Mandal Panchayats for a cluster of villages; the Taluk Panchayat Samiti - a non-elective body at the Taluk level; and the Zilla Parishad at the district level. Further, the institutions were conferred with development functions and the District Rural Development Agency was merged with Panchayat Raj Institutions.

Apart from revitalising the basic structure and powers, the Karnataka Government provided reservation for women in Panchayat Raj institutions : 25% of seats were reserved for women at membership levels.

The Panchayat Raj Institutions, however, were restructured again in 1993 after the 73rd Constitutional amendment was brought in by the Union Government. Accordingly, the State created a three tier structure - Gram Panchayat for a village or group of villages, Taluk Panchayat at Taluk level and Zilla Panchayat at district level. Further, the percentage of seats reserved for women at membership level has been increased to 33.33%. In addition to the membership level, reservation (33.33%) has also been provided for women at office bearer level i.e., Adhyaksha and Upadhyaksha level.

While providing greater space for women, steps have also been taken to elicit participation of women from all sections of society in local governance. One third (1/3rd) of the total seats allotted for SC, ST, BC and other castes are reserved for women. Thus out of 18%, 33.33% and 49% of seats allotted for SC, ST, BC and other castes 6%, 11% and 16% are reserved for women respectively.

The elections to all the tiers of Panchayat Raj Institutions have been conducted and as a result of the additional space created many more women entered the local governance structures. The same has been indicated by Table 1. As the table points out 43.6%, 41.76% and 36.19% of seats are occupied by women at Gram Panchayat, Taluk Panchayat and Zilla Panchayats respectively.

Table 1: Sexwise Distribution of Members Elected to Panchayats

Tiers	No. of Panchayats	No. of Representatives		
		Female	Male	Total
Gram Panchayat	5,641	35,160 (43.62)	44,471 (55.13)	80,631 (100)
Taluk Panchayat	175	1,395 (41.76)	1,945 (58.23)	3,340 (100)
Zilla Panchayat	20	339 (36.19)	580 (63.81)	919 (100)

Source : Indian Express, (Bangalore), 2 May 1994.

The facilitation programmes undertaken by ISST intends to provide training and have focussed on the elected women members of the Gram Panchayats. This is based on the premises that the forces preventing the women's participation at village level are highly complicated and strong; information does not always reach the village level quickly and smoothly and all the

training programmes hitherto conducted for Panchayat personnel have been focussed at Taluk and District levels. Moreover, at the time of actual commencement of the training programme, elections had taken place only at the Gram Panchayat level. All the Gram Panchayats falling in the two erstwhile Mandal Panchayat areas of four districts of Karnataka have been selected for the training purposes.

The four districts selected were Kolar, Mysore, Uttara Kannada and Gulbarga. These districts have been selected as they are also the subject of a study on decentralization by Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore. Hence the funding agency - Ford Foundation had recommended that ISST conduct the training camps in the same districts. The method used by ISEC in selecting the districts, blocks and Mandal Panchayats and their names is presented in Annexure I. ISST constituted a team of district co-ordinators headed by a training co-ordinator. In addition to providing direct training, ISST also intends to strengthen the women in an indirect way by collecting and disseminating information from the experiences of women of the project area and other states to elected women representatives.

During the course of the UMA project, the training team conducted three to four camps in each of the four districts. The underlying principle was to convey information on a wide range of subjects adopting methodologies that were as simple, easily understood and participatory as possible. Several methodologies were tried out and different kinds of training and resource material were prepared and used. The experience of the

camps has been documented as exhaustively as possible in the present report and in resource material prepared by ISST. Such documents serve not only as records but as valuable guides for future training programmes for women representatives.



## CHAPTER - II

### PROFILE OF THE PROJECT AREA AND PARTICIPANTS

The approach and the methods adopted in any training programme are conditioned by its objectives as well as by the constraints faced by the trainers. A major determinant of the latter is the character of the participants for whom the programme is intended. It is therefore useful to set down briefly the profile of the group, and of the environment in which these people live.

#### 2.1 The Project Area

As already mentioned, the districts selected for the training programmes are Kolar, Mysore, Uttara Kannada and Gulbarga. Each of these is in a different agro-climatic zone of Karnataka; hence there are notable differences in the life-style and occupational pattern of their people. While Uttara Kannada is a coastal district with hill terrain, rich forest and marine resources, the other three are basically dry, with a preponderance of agriculture. However, these dry districts have varying proportions of wet land, with irrigation provided by canals or tube wells. According to the 1991 census, the proportion of female population to the total in all these districts is slightly below 50 per cent. Female literacy rate varied from 49.2 per cent in Uttara Kannada to 39.1 per cent in Mysore, 36.8 per cent in Kolar and 31.4 per cent in Gulbarga. While these ratios are above the national average for women they are lower than those for men.

Table 1: Demographic Details of Project Districts as per 1991 Census

Districts	Density of Population per sq.km.	Total Population	% of Female Population to Total Population	% of Female Literacy Rate
Kolar	82	2213024	49.14	36.8
Mysore	120	3155825	48.80	39.08
Uttara Kannada	103	1218367	49.17	41.19
Gulbarga	162	2574487	49.04	31.4

Source: Provisional Population Totals: Karnataka Series 11, Census of India, 1991.

Labour participation ratios for women in all the four districts are also less than those for men. Over two-thirds of women workers are engaged in agricultural operations - either on their own land (cultivation) or as agricultural labourers hired by other cultivators. In Uttara Kannada and Mysore, a fair number of them are however, in non-farm activities.

Table 2: Details of Economically Active Female Population in Project Districts Census (1991)

District	Proportion of all workers		Proportion of Main workers		Proportion of all female worker engaged as			
	Total Population %	Female Population %	Total Population %	Female Population %	Cultivation %	Agri. Labourers %	H.H. Industry %	Other Occupation
Kolar	43.09	30.88	39.89	24.99	45.15	40.79	2.01	12.05
Mysore	39.75	21.80	37.44	17.36	21.97	51.00	5.00	22.03
U. Kannada	38.66	23.57	35.08	17.23	32.86	34.93	1.84	30.37
Gulbarga	43.13	34.71	40.24	29.20	18.17	70.53	2.10	9.20

Source: Provisional population totals: Karnataka Series II, Census of India, 1991.

However, even in these districts, the major part of women workers is in the agricultural sector (Table 2) Among the agricultural workers, the category 'cultivators' denotes those working on their own (ex:family's) holdings, while the 'agricultural labourers' are engaged by others for wages (which may be paid in cash or kind). In three of the four selected districts, more female workers belong to the latter than the former category. Only in Kolar district, many more women workers seem to be engaged on their family land holdings than on other's farms. The predominance of agricultural labourers is particularly marked in Gulbarga and Mysore. Whether this is in any way related to the large proportion of SC/ST's in these districts is a moot point. Judging from the castewise distribution of seats for women at the Gram Panchayat level, \*<sup>9</sup> SC/ST population in the Mysore and Gulbarga districts together exceed 41 per cent, as against about 37 per cent in the other two districts.

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<sup>9</sup> According to the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act 1993, seats reserved for SC/ST's in the Gram Panchayat are in the same proportion as that of the SC/ST population to the total population of that Panchayat area (subject to a minimum percentage of 15 (SC) Plus 3 (ST). In this reserved category, 1/3 goes to women.

Table 3: Details on Occupational Pattern of Women in Project Districts as per 1991 Census

Districts	Cultivators		Agricultural Labourers		Household Industry		Other Workers	
	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female
Kolar	46.86	45.15	26.03	40.79	2.02	2.01	25.09	12.05
Mysore	37.74	21.97	27.89	51.00	2.82	5.00	31.55	22.03
Uttara Kannada	33.10	32.86	19.14	34.93	2.40	1.84	45.36	30.37
Gulbarga	30.66	18.17	44.11	70.53	2.32	2.10	22.91	9.20

Source: Provisional Population Totals: Karnataka Series 11, Census of India, 1991.

Gram Panchayat (GPs) \*<sup>10</sup> being the focus of attention in the training programme, eight Gram Panchayats were selected for the ISST Project - two from each district and from two different taluks. These were:

Table 4 : Areas selected for training

District	Taluk	Mandal Panchayat (Earlier)
Kolar	a. Bangarpet b. Bagepalli	Hunsenahalli Julapalya
Mysore	a. Mysore b. H.D.Kote	Hinkal N.Belthur
Uttara Kannada	a. Karwar b. Bhatkal	Binaga Koppa
Gulbarga	a. Gulbarga b. Shahapur	Tajsultanpur Sagara

<sup>10</sup> The 1993 Act reconstituted the former 'Mandal Panchayats' of the 1983 Act into Gram Panchayats. In the process, their area was also redefined, to cover one or more villages.

Among the villages covered by these Gram Panchayats, population ranged between 2718 (Koppa) to 10,786 (Belavadi) The proportion of females in the population also varied considerably - from around 50% in many cases to as low as 36% in D.B.Kuppe and 38% in Dattagalli

Table 5: Castewise Distribution of Seats Reserved for Women at Taluk Panchayat Level

Districts	SC	ST	BC	Others	Total	Grand Total (M+F)
Kolar	11 (16.42)	11 (16.42)	22 (32.83)	23 (34.30)	67 (54.45)	123 (100.00)
Mysore	21 (25.90)	11 (13.58)	25 (24.69)	24 (29.60)	81 (43.54)	185 (100.00)
Uttara Kannada	20 (23.80)	10 (11.90)	26 (30.95)	28 (33.33)	84 (41.20)	204 (100.00)
Gulbarga	19 (19.79)	11 (11.45)	30 (31.25)	36 (37.50)	96 (39.50)	243 (100.00)

Source: District Commissioner's office of Respective Project Districts

Note: Figures in parenthesis are in percentages

Table 6: Demographic Details of Gram Panchayat

Gram Panchayats	Total Population	% of Female Population to Total Population
<b>Hunsenahalli:</b>		
Ainoorahosahalli	6337	50.30
Chinkote	6271	49.76
Desihalli	6797	50.31
Magundi	4650	49.74
Ulibele	6885	49.61
<b>Julapalya</b>	8730	48.22
<b>Hinkal:</b>		
Belavadi	10786	39.38
Bogadi	8450	49.94
Dattagalli	10293	38.32
Hebbalu	8658	46.96
Hinkal	9213	42.52
Malalavadi	7200	47.13
<b>N.Belthur:</b>		
Antharsanthe	8400	41.33
D.B.Kuppe	4010	36.08
N.Belthur	7600	44.94
<b>Binaga:</b>		
Araga	2637	49.56
Binaga	7381	48.84
<b>Koppa</b>	2718	51.87
<b>Tajsultanpur:</b>		
Bhimhalli	5451	49.60
Kappanur	4921	48.32
Kusnur	6000	49.91
Rajapur	6807	47.99
Tajsultanpur	5749	47.93
<b>Sagara:</b>		
Naganatagi	7200	48.05
Rastapur	6959	51.68
Sagara	9549	50.37

Source: Secretaries of Respective Gram Panchayats



Female literacy rates also differed noticeably from a high of 43.45 per cent in the Mysore taluk to about 43 percent in Karwar and Bhatkal, 40.89% in Bangarpet, 36.30 percent in Gulbarga, 34.93 percent in H.D kote, 32.85 per cent in Bagepalli and 29.44 percent in Shahapur taluks. By and large, female literacy levels tended to be somewhat higher in taluks and Gram Panchayats which were close to and well-connected with taluk or district headquarters. Hinkal in Mysore taluk, for instance, is more or less an extension of Mysore city; while Gram Panchayats in Shahapur and H.D.Kote taluks are 15 to 30 kms away from the taluk headquarters, and much further away from district headquarters, resulting in relative paucity of educational facilities.

The occupational pattern of women workers in the selected Gram Panchayats reflects broadly the pattern discerned in the districts to which they belong. Agricultural work constitutes the main occupation (outside home) for women, with the major part consisting of agricultural labourers. This is true even of villages in the Binaga and Koppa Gram Panchayat areas in Uttara Kannada, where a sizeable number of women are engaged in fish-vending or collection of forest produce.

In all the Gram Panchayats covered by the training programme a considerable number of women workers are classified as 'cultivators'. These are, in fact, women working on the family's landholdings, rather than owner-farmers in their own right. Though the land reforms introduced in Karnataka in the early 1970's conferred ownership rights on share-cropping tenants, not many of the beneficiaries were women. Even when

land holdings are inherited, the normal practice has been for ownership titles to pass from father to the sons rather than daughters. Except for parts of the coastal district, where there are still vestiges of matriarchy, Karnataka's society has traditionally been patriarchal. Recent changes in the Hindu code, giving daughters an equal right with sons in paternal property have not yet begun to make any material change in the status of rural women.

There is a preponderance of small and marginal farmers among the land-owing households. However, their share in total cultivated land is not commensurate with the relative proportion of such families to total land-owing families. This class of farmers is among the poorest in the village, along with agricultural labourers, village artisans, and other wage-workers. In this situation it becomes a virtual necessity for the workers of the household to work regularly on the farms, besides managing the household work.

Such economic backwardness is often combined with low status in the caste hierarchy and illiteracy. As already observed, the SC/ST population in the chosen districts and Gram Panchayat areas is a considerable proportion of the total; and except in some villages, the male-female ratio is not far different from 50 per cent. These factors combine to make women workers an integral part of the labour force. As elsewhere in India, women workers are mostly in unskilled occupations, and are paid less than their male counterparts.

Unlike in the neighbouring states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, Karnataka has so far not had a strong social movement to empower women and elevate their status in society or in the household. Educational levels, health status, adoption of family planning methods, labour participation ratios etc, have yet to reach the standards attained in the neighbouring states. Average family size, infant mortality rate, and the school drop-out rate for girls are fairly high. Infra-structural development to facilitate access to health facilities, drinking water, energy sources and educational institutions are still not adequate to enable a large number of women (and girls) to utilise them to their full advantage. These lacunae, together with poverty and the strain of having to manage families of a fairly large size have made it difficult for women to play an active role in the political and social fields of rural life. This has been compounded by the traditional social and domestic practices supporting male dominance. This is generally true of all of the Gram Panchayat areas, though there may be variations in individual characteristics.

This does not, however, mean that rural economy and society have remained unaffected by the many programmes of economic development and social welfare undertaken by the Karnataka Government as part of its five-year plans. Nor does it mean that there is no worthwhile NGO activity in these districts or Gram Panchayat areas to promote the cause of women. Change has, indeed occurred by way of commercialisation of agriculture, development of other land-based activities (like dairying and sericulture), extension of primary health centres and adult

education programmes, rural electrification and so forth. However, the impact of these developments on the economic, social and political power of women in rural societies has not been able to make a marked change in their status or decision-making authority.

Within the household, it is still the male members who exercise all the power, and who benefit from state sponsored programmes. Outside of the household, traditional handicaps associated with caste differentiation, economic status, and educational attainments continue to favour male dominance. It is only in recent years that organisations like Mahila Samakhya and Akkana Balaga have promoted women's cause and helped them to utilise more effectively the opportunities that are becoming available under the numerous poverty alleviation and women and child welfare programmes administered under the auspices of the Central and State Government.

In this conjuncture, the Karnataka Zilla Parishads Act of 1983 introduced a major political change, by way of the reservation of 25 per cent of elected seats in Mandal Panchayats and in Zilla Parishads for women. [This has subsequently been enhanced in the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1993 to "not less than one-third" of the seats] In consequence, a large number of women, some of whom belong to the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and the "backward classes", were elected in 1987 to Mandal Panchayats and Zilla Parishads, making them active participants in local governance.

Entry into politics was for most of the women representatives an entirely new experience, for which their home or social environment had hardly prepared them. Apart from their poverty and illiteracy, their traditional attitudes and approaches were based on a complete acceptance of male superiority, both within the household and outside. They were accustomed to leave the decision-making to men, to accept the hierarchy of caste domination and to take a back-seat in community affairs or gatherings. But in the Panchayats, they were expected to function as the equals of male representatives, and even more, to ensure that there was no gender discrimination in the decisions relating to economic and social development.

This was not at all easy and as the Zilla Parishad and Mandal Panchayat Evaluation Committee (1989) observed "women and scheduled caste members of these Panchayats, however, still seemed hesitant in asserting themselves" (P.14) Obviously, women representatives belonging to the scheduled castes/scheduled tribes suffered from a double disadvantage. Since then, awareness among women about their rights as active participants in governance has grown significantly - partly on account of the involvement of some of them in local affairs as elected representatives, and partly as a result of the work of several NGO's interested in the empowerment and development of women. Some Government programmes - such as health and nutrition education, provision of school and hostel facilities for girls, the "girl-child" advocacy, adult literacy etc. have also helped. Even so, women in Panchayats have yet to overcome the handicaps which the traditions of a patriarchal society have imposed on

them. "Hopefully, with more experience and better spread of education and employment to these neglected groups, this will also change for the better" (Ibid.P 14).

Recent elections to Gram Panchayats, held in December 1993 and to Taluk and Zilla Panchayats in May 1995 already bear evidence of increasing awareness, and willingness, of women to become involved in local governance. Younger women are now contesting elections, of their own volition rather than due to pressure from the male members of the family or the community who want to exercise authority through them. The average level of education of women elected to these bodies is also somewhat higher than before. Since the new system requires adequate representation of women among the adhyakshas and upadhyakshas of Panchayats, more women now occupy positions of authority and decision-making responsibility. Some of the women representatives in the present Gram Panchayats have had "Parliamentary" experience, having been member of the erstwhile Mandal Panchayats and Zilla Parishads. Thus there is already a trend towards equal and effective participation of women in local governments; and it is this trend that can be greatly strengthened by well-conceived and implemented programmes of training at the ground level.

## 2.2 Profile of the Participants

The profile of the participants is examined in terms of their caste, age, education, occupation and the motivating force behind their contesting elections.

The participants as already noted refers to elected women members of all Gram Panchayats falling in the two selected Gram Panchayats of Kolar, Mysore, Uttara Kannada and Gulbarga districts. The total number of the participants is 176 with a majority belonging to Hinkal (47), Hunsenahalli (33) and Tajsultanpur (33).

Table.7 shows the castewise distribution of the participants. As is to be expected, women from "backward classes" formed the biggest group (69) with those from Scheduled Castes (46) general category (43) and Scheduled Tribes (18) following in that order. More than a third of the participants consisted of women of Scheduled Caste and Tribes. In the group from Tajsultanpur, scheduled caste women actually constituted the biggest group.

**Table 7: Distribution of Participants by Caste in different Mandal Panchayat Areas**

Mandal Panchayat	SC	ST	BC	General	Total
Hunsenahalli	11 (33.33)	4 (12.12)	15 (45.46)	3 (9.09)	33 (100.00)
Julapalya	1 (11.11)	1 (11.11)	5 (55.56)	2 (22.22)	9 (100.00)
Hinkal	8 (17.02)	5 (10.64)	22 (46.81)	12 (25.53)	47 (100.00)
N.Belthur	5 (27.78)	3 (26.67)	-	10 (55.55)	18 (100.00)
Binaga	3 (27.27)	-	6 (54.55)	2 (18.18)	11 (100.00)
Koppa	-	1 (33.33)	2 (66.67)	-	3 (100.00)
Tajsultanpur	12 (36.37)	2 (6.06)	9 (27.27)	10 (30.30)	33 (100.00)
Sagara	6 (27.28)	2 (9.09)	10 (45.45)	4 (18.18)	22 (100.00)
Total	46 (26.14)	18 (10.23)	69 (39.20)	43 (24.43)	176 (100.00)

Source: Secretaries of Respective Gram Panchayats

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages of row totals

As regards age composition, a majority belong to the age groups of 26 to 35 (36.94%) and 36 to 45 years (35.79%), followed by the 46 to 55 (13.64%) age group. Most of members thus are in the age groups which are part of the effective labour force of the area. The proportion of women below 25 (7.95%) and above 55 (5.68%) years of age is quite low. (See Table 8). Across Gram Panchayats, the proportion of women in the age group of 25-35 and 36-45 is high in Hinkal, followed by Hunsenahalli and Tajsultanpur.



**Table 8: Distribution of Participants by Age in different Mandal Panchayat Areas**

Mandal Panchayat	Below 25 yrs	26 to 35 yrs	36 to 45 yrs	46 to 55 yrs	56 & above	Total
Hunsena-halli	1 (3.03)	12 (36.36)	13 (39.39)	7 (21.21)	-	33 (100.00)
Julapalya	1 (11.11)	5 (55.56)	3 (33.33)	-	-	9 (100.00)
Hinkal	5 (10.64)	20 (42.55)	15 (31.91)	5 (10.64)	2 (4.26)	47 (100.00)
N.Belthur	-	5 (27.78)	7 (38.89)	1 (5.56)	5 (27.78)	18 (100.00)
Binaga	1 (9.09)	6 (54.54)	3 (27.27)	1 (9.09)	-	11 (100.00)
Koppa	-	1 (33.33)	1 (33.33)	1 (33.33)	-	3 (100.00)
Taj sultanpur	6 (18.18)	13 (39.39)	10 (30.30)	4 (12.12)	-	33 (100.00)
Sagara	-	3 (13.64)	11 (50.00)	5 (22.73)	3 (13.64)	22 (100.00)
Total	14 (7.95)	65 (36.93)	63 (37.79)	24 (13.64)	10 (5.68)	176 (100.00)

Source: Secretaries of Respective Gram Panchayats

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages of row totals

Within the total participants, the proportion of literate women members is as high as 62.50%, with 37.5% being non-literate. As regards the level of education, the largest concentration is in the primary school category (42.05%), followed by secondary school (14.2%) and college category (6.25%) (See Table 9). Across the different Gram Panchayats, the proportion of non-literate women is high in Sagara (86.36%), Julapalya (77.78%) and N.Belthur area (55.50%) and the proportion of those with secondary and college level education is high in Hinkal, Hunsenahalli, Tajsultanpur and Binaga.

**Table 9: Distribution of Participants by Education Level in different Mandal Panchayat Areas**

Mandal Panchayat	Non-literate	Primary	Secondary	College	Total
Hunsenahalli	4 (12.12)	23 (69.70)	6 (18.18)	-	33 (100.00)
Julapalya	7 (77.78)	2 (22.22)	-	-	9 (100.00)
Hinkal	12 (25.53)	20 (42.55)	8 (17.02)	7 (14.89)	47 (100.00)
N.Belthur	10 (55.56)	6 (33.33)	2 (11.11)	-	18 (100.00)
Binaga	1 (9.09)	5 (45.45)	4 (36.35)	1 (9.09)	11 (100.00)
Koppa	-	3 (100.00)	-	-	3 (100.00)
Taj Sultanpur	13 (39.39)	12 (36.36)	5 (15.15)	3 (9.09)	33 (100.00)
Sagara	19 (86.36)	3 (13.44)	-	-	22 (100.00)
Total	66 (37.50)	74 (42.05)	25 (14.20)	11 (6.25)	176 (100.00)

Source: Secretaries of Respective Gram Panchayats

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages of row totals

Contrary to the district level picture on the occupational pattern of women, more than fifty percent of the participants are housewives. Among the remaining occupational categories, the proportion of agricultural labourers is high (21.02%) and is followed by cultivators (13.63%), others (5.12%) and business (3.41%) (See Table 10). Among the different Mandal Panchayats, the proportion of housewives to total size of elected women members is high in Tajsultanpur and Binaga, whereas the proportion of women engaged in agricultural labour is high in Julapalya, Sagara and Hinkal area.

**Table 10: Distribution of Participants by Occupation in different Mandal Panchayat Areas**

Mandal Panchayat	Agriculture	Cooli	Business	Housewife	Others	Total
Hunsena-halli	12 (36.36)	7 (21.21)	2 (6.06)	10 (30.30)	2 (6.06)	33 (100.00)
Jula-palya	3 (33.33)	5 (55.56)	-	1 (11.11)	-	9 (100.00)
Hinkal	4 (8.51)	2 (42.56)	3 (6.38)	5 (10.64)	3 (6.38)	47 (100.00)
N. Belthur	3 (16.67)	6 (33.33)	-	9 (50.00)	-	18 (100.00)
Binaga	1 (9.09)	3 (27.27)	-	7 (63.64)	-	11 (100.00)
Koppa	-	1 (33.33)	-	2 (66.64)	-	3 (100.00)
Tajsul-tanpur	-	3 (9.09)	-	28 (84.84)	-	33 (100.00)
Sagara	1 (4.54)	10 (45.45)	1 (4.54)	8 (36.36)	2 (9.09)	22 (100.00)
Total	24 (13.63)	37 (21.02)	6 (3.41)	100 (56.82)	9 (5.12)	176 (100.00)

Source: Secretaries of Respective Gram Panchayats

Note:1 Others include professions like tailoring, weaving, social work and industrial worker.

2. Figures in brackets are percentages of row totals

Entry of women in sizeable numbers into Panchayat institutions is a relatively new phenomenon, and the idea of contesting elections has yet to take root in the minds of women. The fact that now one third of elected seats in Panchayat institutions are reserved for women is often used by vested interests and power-brokers in the village to push their nominees into elections. Women who contest elections of their volition are still a minority. However, as elected women representatives

gain more experience, and as general awareness among women to improve their power and status in society increases, the position should change. As of now, however, more women are motivated to contest elections by their families or community (or caste) interests than of their own volition. This was true of the participants also, as may be seen from Table 11.

Table 11: Distribution of Participants by Motivating Force in different Mandal Panchayat Areas

Mandal Panchayat	Self	Community	Husband	Family Members	Total
Hunshen-halli	3 (9.09)	11 (33.33)	10 (30.30)	9 (27.27)	33 (100.00)
Julapalya	-	1 (11.11)	7 (77.78)	1 (11.11)	9 (100.00)
Hinkal	6 (12.77)	13 (27.66)	15 (31.91)	13 (27.66)	47 (100.00)
N.Belthur	2 (11.11)	6 (33.33)	7 (38.89)	3 (16.67)	18 (100.00)
Binaga	1 (9.09)	4 (36.36)	3 (27.27)	3 (27.27)	11 (100.00)
Koppa	-	-	1 (33.33)	2 (66.64)	3 (100.00)
Taj Sultanpur	7 (21.21)	11 (33.33)	8 (24.24)	7 (21.21)	33 (100.00)
Sagara	2 (9.09)	8 (36.36)	8 (36.36)	4 (18.18)	22 (100.00)
Total	21 (11.93)	54 (30.68)	59 (33.52)	42 (23.86)	176 (100.00)

Source: Secretaries of Respective Gram Panchayats

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages of row totals

**Table 12: Number of Women with Membership in Previous Mandal Panchayats**

Taluks	With Membership	Without Membership	Total
Hunsenahalli	-	33 (100.00)	33 (100.00)
Julapalya	1 (11.11)	8 (88.89)	9 (100.00)
Hinkal	3 (6.38)	44 (93.61)	47 (100.00)
N.Belthur	1 (5.56)	17 (94.44)	18 (100.00)
Binaga	1 (9.09)	10 (90.90)	11 (100.00)
Koppa	-	3 (100.00)	3 (100.00)
Tajsultanpur	-	33 (100.00)	33 (100.00)
Sagara	1 (4.54)	21 (95.45)	22 (100.00)
Total	7 (3.98)	169 (96.02)	176 (100.00)

Source Secretaries of Respective Gram Panchayats

Note Figures in brackets are percentages of row totals

Thus, the points that emerge from the foregoing discussion are: first the proportion of backward and general category members among the participants are high and are followed by Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes. Secondly, a majority of participants belong to the younger generation and fall in the age groups of 26 to 45 years. Thirdly, the proportion of educated members is high when compared to the non-literates. Among the educated persons a majority of them have completed pre-primary level education. Fourthly, the nature of occupational pattern is such that a high proportion of housewives was followed by agricultural labourers and

cultivators. Lastly, very few women contested the election on their own volition, where as the majority were motivated to contest by their husband, family members and community.

Except for the high level of literates, the characteristics of these participants are perhaps typical of the entirety of women representatives elected to Gram Panchayats in Karnataka in the 1993 December elections. Perhaps even the high proportion of literates is to be expected in the initial stages - that is to say until SC/ST women in rural areas become fully aware of the need to utilise effectively the opportunity afforded by the reservation of seats for them in Panchayat Institutions. Training programmes have clearly to focus on making these women fully utilise the opportunities available for them and the need to use such occasions for the empowerment of all women in the Panchayat area. They have also to recognise the unfamiliarity of most rural women with political or economic issues and even with training courses. These factors as well as the confidence build-up that women representatives, especially those from SC/ST's and non-literates need, were kept in mind while fashioning the approach, and the methods, used in the ISST training project.

## CHAPTER - III

### TRAINING: APPROACHES, CONTENT, METHODS AND IMPACT

In order to realise the objectives of strengthening the position of elected women members, ISST conducted training in all the selected areas. Except in Hinkal and Koppa of Mysore and Uttara Kannada districts respectively, in all other areas two training camps were conducted. The reason for conducting only one camp in Hinkal is that the women from Hinkal participated in a Mela on Panchayat Raj organised at Bangalore. Communal tensions in Uttar Kannada prevented the team from having a second camp in Koppa.

#### 3.1 Approaches

Training in the project districts was conducted by a team constituted by ISST. The training team headed by a training co-ordinator essentially consisted of three district co-ordinators and a documentalist. Training was conducted by ISST by evolving and developing suitable approaches, content and methods which were evolved and developed before and after the first round of camps. The approaches, content and methods were developed essentially by reading existing materials, organising in-house and national level workshops, holding discussions with experts on Panchayat Raj and women, conducting field tests, attending training of trainers programmes and evaluating the experiences of the first round of camps in Julapalya and N.Belthur areas. Annexure III provides the sequence of workshops and seminars

organised.

When facilitation programmes for women representatives are held, it is essential to document the approaches, content and method used and analyse the impact of training. The present section is an attempt at the same. The section initially discusses about the approaches, content and methods and subsequently moves on to the impact of training. While doing so, the section highlights the variations - if there are any - in approach, content and method used.

Training may be conducted either by following a project or process approach. Project approach allows the training to be conducted for a specific period of time at one go without any scope for follow up and continuity. Whereas, a process approach views training as a continuous one and provides scope for follow up or reinforcement or reorientation of important issues discussed in the training. The variation in both the approaches essentially emanates from the strategy used in selecting the trainees or participants. In process approach participants are selected such that the potential trainers like school teachers, social workers, educated youth, mahila mandal members and NGO staff are included.

Inclusion or exclusion of potential trainers or choosing one of the two approaches, however, depends upon the nature of the participant group. For participants who are educated and have easy access to information, project approach is more suitable.

On the other hand, if the participants consist of non-



literate and people with low levels of literacy, lack of experience and access to resources, the logical conclusion is to follow a process approach.

Given the nature of the participants of UMA training, it is needless to point out that a process rather than a Project approach is more suitable. It may be quite relevant to restate here that a majority of the women elected members are in-experienced, their literacy levels are low and they lack easy access to information pertaining to functioning of Panchayat Raj Institutions. Whatever may be the suitability or rationality of an approach, the choice ultimately depends upon the availability of resources and potential trainers.

Keeping in view the rationality and limitations of both the approaches while conducting the training, ISST has used a combination of both depending upon the prevailing situation in selected districts. This has obviously resulted in variation in approach used from district to district and camp to camp. Apart from involving potential trainers from local areas, ISST has attempted a reinforcement of values on a long term basis by using different methods and resource materials.

For instance while conducting the training for women members of Julapalya Gram Panchayat, ISST sought to take advantage of the presence of a big NGO - ADATS. ISST not only involved the NGO staff but also organised the first camp in the NGO premises. The strategy, however, has not helped much and out of nine, only three members attended the camp. Further, out of three only two members attended all the three days (see Annexure Four for

details on members attended as against their total number). This is inspite of providing transport to all the villages and personal involvement of concerned district co-ordinator in bringing the women to the training venue.

On probing into the whole issue, it has been realised that since ADATS works with agricultural wage labourers and Dalits and organises Credit Coolie Sanghas, is not very popular among the land owning and higher caste sections. It so happened that both the members who attended the entire three day camp are also Credit Coolie Sangha members and were supported by the NGO at the time of elections. On further probing, it has been realised that other members including the one who turned up for the first day of the camp would have attended the training - irrespective of the venue - had the BDO been involved. Though the BDO had been contacted during the preliminary visits of the area, ISST had not involved him in actual training. This is precisely because ISST was apprehensive that Government officials if involved in actual training would dominate the programme and make it a centralised mode of training.

Reacting in a different vein, some of the women members noted that given the supervisory and monitoring role of the BDO, they would have attended the training. For them the presence of the BDO makes the programme a Governmental one and problem of identifying with an NGO militating against their interests would not have assumed importance.

In view of this, it may be noted that it is choice of venue

rather than the basic approach used which appears to have resulted in the poor attendance of the members.

The whole training was planned such that four selected districts were categorised into two groups depending upon their proximity to one another. Thus, Kolar and Mysore were categorised into one group and Uttara Kannada and Gulbarga into another group, since four district coordinators were intended to be recruited. ISST planned to conduct the training in both the groups and districts simultaneously with joint involvement of two coordinators. Accordingly, in which ever district, the training was to be conducted, the in-charge coordinator would act as the main trainer and the other one played a supportive role. The team head - the training co-ordinator would supervise the programme by travelling across the districts.

However, as it was not possible for two persons to bring the participants, make the arrangements and conduct the actual training, they depended on ADATS for the same. Realising the limitations of making two district coordinators responsible for conducting training, ISST changed its strategy at a latter stage after completing one round of camps in Kolar, Mysore and Gulbarga districts. Accordingly, the remaining camps were conducted by the entire team and in one Mandal Panchayat area of a district at a time.

Further, while conducting the second camp in Julapalya and both first and second camps in other areas, ISST involved the BDO and chose the venue with care by an indepth study of the village

dynamics. Though the BDO had been involved, the training team took the necessary precautions for preventing the domination by Government Officials. For instance, the BDO was involved in inauguration or valedictory functions of training camps but not in the actual sessions.

The precautions taken during the second camp in Julapalya, however, proved effective. All the nine members attended the training conducted in the village Panchayat office. However, language posed a serious constraint to the trainers and training had to be conducted by one person only. It may be relevant to recollect here that the spoken language of people of Julapalya area is Telugu and not Kannada.

No potential trainers were involved while conducting the first camp in Hunsenahalli Panchayat area. The training camp was organised at Bangaru Tirupathi and the communication was sent through the BDO. However, for the actual training, participation of members was elicited through using the services of a political party worker and no transport was provided. Nine out of 33 members attended the camp. The others could not attend the training as the venue was quite far away and due to problems of transport.

Keeping in view the experience of the first camp in Hunsenahalli, the second camp was conducted at a place which is easily accessible to participants. Further, during the second camp the staff of South India Biblical Society (SIBS) not only attended the programme but also made home visits for eliciting

participation of members. In fact, the camp was organised at the training centre of SIBS. Involvement of SIBS in the second camp did not pose any problem as the NGO adopted a welfare oriented strategy rather than organisational and mobilisational one while working with Dalits.

Potential trainers were involved in a limited way in the camps organised for women members of N.Belthur Mandal Panchayat area. The camps were organised at the training centre of MYRADA in H.D Kote. Even here, the involvement of an NGO, did not pose any problems as its participants constituted both landless and landowning sections cutting across different castes. Moreover, MYRADA is involved in sustainable agricultural activities like watershed management.

In Hinkal Mandal Panchayat area of Mysore, while conducting the training, only women members were involved in the camp arrangements. Informing the secretaries and some of the women members was sufficient to ensure good participation in the camp. This is because the women are better educated when compared to Kolar and Gulbarga and have easy access to information. It may be relevant to restate here that Hinkal is located at about three kms from Mysore city.

Similarly, while conducting the training in Binaga Mandal Panchayat area only elected women members were involved. The educational level of women like in Hinkal area range from primary to college and have easy access to information.

This, however, was not the case with Koppa Mandal Panchayat area. The members of the Yuvathi Mandali were involved as they were interested in attending the training along with the elected members. It may be quite relevant to state here that Koppa Mandal Panchayat has been converted into one Gram Panchayat and has only three women members. Since the human resources and time required for training, irrespective of the size of the participants is more or less same, ISST involved the Yuvathi Mandali members as well.

Similarly in Tajsultanpur no potential trainers were involved as the educational levels of members was good. Though the elected women members of Sagara Mandal Panchayat area were either non-literate or have low levels of literacy and have problems of access to information, potential trainers could not be involved in any of the camps. Moreover, no NGO's are working in the project area.

Thus while conducting training in the project districts ISST used a combination of both project and process approach considering the nature of participants and availability of potential trainers. Going by the pulse of the people, certain Government Officials like the BDO were involved in the training process in a limited way. Further, the training strategy of making two staff members responsible for training in a group of two districts has been changed in the light of experiences of the first round of camps in Kolar, Mysore and Gulbarga. Instead, the entire team conducted the training in one Mandal Panchayat area at a time. Whatever may be the nature of

approach and changes made in the strategies, the realisation of objectives set ultimately depends upon the contents and methods used for disseminating the information. An attempt is made to discuss the same in the following sections.

### 3.2 Training Content

Given the type of the participants and the nature of the objectives set to be realised, the content of the training obviously concerns both Panchayat Raj Institutions and women. The list is quite endless and all the issues and areas on which Panchayats can exercise power and have control and basic procedures concerning meetings, functions and powers of members, adyaksha, upadyaksha, Panchayat funds and mobilisation of resources become part of the content. The issues and areas to be covered by Panchayats are quite wide ranging from agricultural development to women and child welfare, welfare of weaker sections, minor irrigation, provision of civic amenities identification of beneficiaries for income generation programmes and so on. Being the members of Panchayats, the women need to know the details and intricacies involved in exercising the powers and functions of Gram Panchayats concerning the aforementioned areas.

It is needless to point out about the importance of focusing on the position and status of women and opportunities provided and available for them to participate in decision making processes in a patriarchal and male dominated society like that of ours. As such it is essential to include in the training content,

issues like gender sensitisation, forces preventing women from taking active part in various activities, personality development, improving communication skills, confidence building and leadership qualities.

Notwithstanding the validity of these issues, keeping in view the availability of time and resources, what is more important is to choose the most relevant ones in the training content on priority basis. It was to decide these priority areas, that ISST conducted a National level workshop on Alternative Methodologies and Curricula and attended a similar one organised by SEARCH, Bangalore in the initial stages of the Project. It consulted the experts on Panchayat Raj and Women and about the possible areas to be included in training content before organising the first round of camps. Further, the felt needs and training requirements of participants was collected during the first and the second camps. As the whole process has been carried out over a period of time minor variations crept into the training content used in terms of degree of emphasis given from camp to camp and district to district.

As indicated elsewhere the first camp was conducted initially in Julapalya of Kolar and subsequently in N.Belthur of Mysore. An examination of the actual process reports reveal that in both the places during the first camp, issues like confidence building, building up communication skills, ability to make choices, importance of mutual co-operation, gender inequality, history, structure and functioning of Panchayat Raj Institutions, three tier system as per 1993 Panchayat Raj Act



of Karnataka, theory of decentralisation and responsibilities of members, adyaksha and upadyaksha were discussed. While doing so, importance was given to issues like confidence building, communication skills and gender inequality rather than to those related to Panchayat Raj. External resource persons were involved in both the districts.

The training content, however was changed subsequently while conducting the first round of camps in areas other than Julapalya and N.Belthur and for the second round of camps, in all the areas. The training content was basically changed considering the information on felt needs and training requirements of women collected at the end of the first round of camps in Julapalya and N.Belthur and during the preliminary visits to other areas.

Being harassed and exploited by various persons starting from in-laws, employers, on issues related to dowry, wages, control over finances and choice regarding the family size, the women considered legal issues and procedures related to their problems as important. In addition, being conscious of the needs of their fellow members in the village society, a majority of women considered as important an information pertaining to State Government programmes like type of schemes available, procedure involved in making applications, details on eligible beneficiaries, officials to be contacted, procedures involved in follow up and actual sanctioning. Further, apart from the State Government programmes, the women considered basic functions of the Gram Panchayat, responsibilities of members,

adyakshas and upadyaksha, standing committees, Gram Panchayat funds, resources mobilisation aspects and passing of no confidence motion against an erring adyaksha as important.

Going by the felt needs and training requirements specified by the participants, the training team of ISST revised the training content. The issues considered under the revised training content are as follows.

- I. 1) Societal analysis in terms of gender, caste, and class discrimination.
- 2) Status of women.
- 3) Women and Law - Laws relating to Dowry, Rape, Equal Remuneration Act, Child Marriage Act, Hindu Marriage Act, Divorce and provisions concerning untouchability.
- II. 1) Leadership and Communication skills.
- 2) Personality Development - self confidence and self esteem.
- III. 1) History of Panchayat Raj Institution.
- 2) Importance of decentralisation.
- 3) Principles and objectives of Panchayat Raj.
- 4) Main features of Constitutional 73rd Amendment.
- 5) Importance of Reservation for Women.
- IV. 1) Main features of Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act 1993.
- 2) Three Tier System.
- 3) Importance of Gram Sabha.
- 4) Scope and Constitution of Gram Panchayat.

- 5) Types of Gram Panchayat Meetings and Meeting Procedure.
  - 6) Quorum.
  - 7) Standing Committee.
- V.
- 1) Functions of Gram Panchayat as given in Schedule I
  - 2) Duties and Responsibilities of Adyaksha, Upadyaksha, and Members.
- VI.
- 1) Staff of Gram Panchayat.
  - 2) Gram Panchayat Funds and means of Resource Mobilisation.
  - 3) Budgeting.
  - 4) Community Development and Panchayat Raj Institutions - needs of community, priority of needs, action plan, implementation.
  - 5) Details on Income generation and Welfare Schemes of Union and State Government.

In accordance with the revised content the training team prepared extensive training materials. It was this revised content and the material prepared that was mainly used for the second round of camps in Julapalya and N.Belthur areas and for both first and second rounds of camps in other areas. While doing so, the training team did not involve any external resource persons.

The training content was eventually finalised taking into account several factors. The basic philosophy of the UMA

project was that training should be located in the larger context of women's empowerment. To this end, it is important that elected women representatives are thoroughly knowledgeable about the Panchayat Raj Act, procedures and the system. Only then, would they be able to extract the best out of the system for the benefit of women and other marginalised sections of society. Only then will they be able to recognise, analyse and suggest alternatives for the shortcomings of the Panchayats as they exist today.

One of the basic problems of "democratic" institutions in the country today is the unbridled and unabashed use of "power" by the representatives who feel little or no accountability to the people who elected them.

If women representatives of the Panchayats are to usher in a new political culture where accountability is a prime concern, they must exercise their "power" as people's representatives in a very different way. For a humane, just and meaningful exercise of their "power", they must be able to evaluate the reasons for their own disempowerment as women and as people.

Attempts were made to elicit the opinions of women representatives during the earlier camps and during preliminary visits to the project areas. Responses were varied and several opinions expressed the urgency of learning about Panchayat structure, function and procedures. However, the fact remained that the sessions on societal analysis and causes of the lower status of women were the most participatory and satisfying

sessions. The dilemma was aptly summed up by one participant who said, "This (discrimination against women, violence against women and so on) is our Karma, our fate. But we must also learn all the new things".

It was also felt by the training team that detailed analyses of the reasons for discrimination against women could lead to some backlash against the participants within their homes and their communities. ISST's interaction with the participants were brief and short-term and it was felt that an in-depth study of such subjects could be handled only in long term and sustained interactions with the participants.

A further constraint was imposed on the training because it had to be carried out in eight far flung areas. This meant fewer interactions with each group of participants than would have been desirable for a more sustained impact of the training.

Keeping all this in view, the training content was drawn up to emphasise on both general and specific aspects. Some sessions were devoted exclusively to topics related to the status of women while equal emphasis was given to the sessions of panchayat structure and function. These topics were handled constantly keeping a gender perspective. The concern was that the women representatives relate these structures, procedures and functions to the realities of their lives. At the same time, the training content and choice of topics handled were a response to the needs expressed by the participants themselves.

### 3.3 Details of some training sessions

This section of the report presents, in exhaustive detail, six sessions during the training camps. Topics include the History of Panchayat Raj, Societal Analysis, Reservation for Women in Local Governance, Leadership and Communication Skills, Gram Panchayat Funds and Means of Resource Mobilisation and Gram Sabha. These have been selected from the 24 topics listed on pp.47-48 to illustrate several points. (Further details for all the sessions are available in a resource book on training which is being prepared at ISST). The range of topics to be covered is large and sometimes intimidating. However for any meaningful participation by women representatives, it is necessary to attempt this approach. ISST, has in the course of training adopted several different strategies and methodologies, all aimed at making the session as participatory as possible. Some of the strategies, have worked very well, for instance, the use of one participant's own life experience to illustrate caste and gender discrimination (Kenchamma's story in the session on Societal Analysis), and the adaptation of an episode from the Ramayana to illustrate how the entry of women into the Panchayats will make a difference.

Another reason for the inclusion of this section is to emphasise the gap between the awareness levels of the participants and the complex nature of the information to be conveyed. We would like to reiterate here that any attempt at facilitation should start with what the women know and not highlight their areas of ignorance. A document of this kind also serves as a benchmark,

an indicator of starting levels in the process of empowerment of the women representatives. It is critical to have this kind of record if one is to make a realistic assessment of the effectiveness of training over a period of time. During this period, their experiences as representatives will also contribute to their empowerment. A record of this type will also help in the design of future training programmes. This section also serves to highlight the native wisdom and honesty of these women who have no qualms about speaking their minds. Finally, this section, as a near verbatim report, is meant to convey as closely as possible the details of the training camp and the efforts put in by participants and facilitators.

3.3.(i) Session: The History of Panchayat Raj

Methodology: Lecture, Group discussion, stories

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment has ensured that a large number of women are elected to the Panchayats. While this will certainly bring about fundamental changes in the local bodies, Panchayats have existed in some form or the other since ancient times in India. In this session, the facilitator tried to elicit information on the evolution of the Panchayats through group discussions. The first reaction of many participants was that Panchayats have been associated in some way or the other with arguments and quarrels at the village level.

When asked when and where are Panchayats conducted, one participant answered laughingly, - "The men conduct Panchayats in the evenings at the Aralikatte, Agasi, and arrack shops,

while women meet at the borewells, wells, while washing clothes and in the fields.

It was clear to most participants that the Panchayat is a place where a group of people meet in their wards and villages and discuss the rights and wrongs of any incident that had occurred.

The discussion continued and some participants said that apart from this, the important people in the village discuss the incident along with the villagers and give justice to those in the right and punish the culprits. They also take decisions on the celebration of festivals and fairs.

When asked when the word Panchayat evolved - the participants answered "from our ancestral days". A few of the participants explained the situation in their Gramas while a few others said that Panchayats existed even during the period of the kings by giving examples of a few historical films. Gradually the discussion led participants to realise that Panchayats always existed in our country in one form or the other. The facilitator then gave an example of how even during the Ramayana, Panchayats existed. This point was illustrated by the following story when a washerman in the kingdom sends his wife away, her parents and a few other village heads conduct a Panchayat and asked the washerman to take his wife back. At this he questions the Panchayat "do you think I am Sri Ramchandra, to take back the wife I sent away". King Rama in disguise was in the crowd and heard what the washerman said. He felt that his people are not happy because he bought back Sita



and suspected her morality, so Rama decided to send her away into the forest.

This example lent itself to the illustration of two important points: The first one was that the post 73rd Amendment Panchayats were very different from the earlier Panchayats. It also provided an excellent handle to introduce the concept that a large number of women in the Panchayat would bring about a gender perspective and sympathy for women's concerns in the decisions of the Panchayats.

It reiterated the need for women to participate actively in the Panchayat. Continuing the Ramayana story, the facilitator asked,

"What would have happened if there had been women on the Panchayat?"

Participants immediately expressed their unhappiness at the way Sita was treated.

"If the decision had been left to a Panchayat which had women members, Sitamma would not have been treated so unfairly. Because there were only men, they decided to send her to the forest".

This provoked much discussion among the participants.

"This has been happening for too long. Women have never been given a chance to attend Panchayat meetings and voice their opinions. If some injustice is done to a woman, there is no one to speak for her.

Some participants turned to the male facilitator and said, "It is because men have been unjust, that women are suffering today".

A few more historical examples were cited. The group was told how there was evidence from art and architecture that Panchayats existed in the time of the Ganga and Vijayanagar rulers. The area near the D.C's office in Gulbarga is still called "Jagath" which is the word for a meeting place where justice is dispensed to people.

The discussion then moved to the earlier Mandal Panchayat system in Karnataka. One participant who had been silent until then said, "It was there when our government was in power and women were members". This helped in illustrating some of the similarities and differences in the provisions of the 1983 and 1993 Karnataka Acts. Another participant said with pride, "For a very long time, only the upper caste people could become a Sarpanch or Adhyaksha. Now I am sitting on that seat. It was clear that she belonged to the Scheduled caste community. Another woman supported her saying, "Not only that, the Chairmanship was given to one family for generations. Now it is all upside down". This provided much laughter and the session ended with all the women agreeing that the new system was much better than the old one.



Let's Learn The Panchayat Act Together



Avoiding Snakes And Climbing The Ladder To Success

3.3.(ii) Subject: Societal Analysis

**Aim of the session and background:** Panchayat Raj Institutions should help bring about social justice and through it, social equilibrium. In order to realise this, Panchayat representatives should have a very clear idea about social structures and as such this session on societal analysis was felt to be a crucial input for the training programme. Not only should Panchayat representatives be able to identify the poor and needy sections of society, they should also be able to apply the correct yardsticks so that the benefits of development processes reach everybody. Discrimination within society takes place mainly on the basis of gender, caste and class.

**Methodologies - Case Studies and Stories which were illustrated using flexi-flannels and puppets**

This session was introduced to the participants through a case study of one of the participants of the training programme - Kenchamma, Upadhyakshini of D.B. Kuppe Panchayat, H.D.Kote Taluk, Mysore District.

Living in a remote tribal hamlet, Kenchamma hardly had any contact with the outside world until she was forced to become a member of the Panchayat under the reserved category for Scheduled Tribes. This completely shattered her calm and peaceful life. The government's good intentions of giving power to women virtually ruined Kenchamma's life especially when she became Upadhyakshini of her Panchayat. Societal stereotyping

based on gender, caste and class have given rise to certain roles and images for public figures. Thus, when Kenchamma tried to resume her work as a "coolie" which was her only means of livelihood, she found herself the target of the villagers' scorn. Barbed comments like, "How can an Upadhyakshini work as a coolie", met her wherever she went. Kenchamma herself was confused by these arguments based on false notions of prestige. In despair, she gave up working, preferring to starve and relying for food on the meagre supply of roots and tubers that her children were able to forage from the forest. Matters grew worse especially when her children fell sick. Kenchamma was in a pitiable condition, reduced to it by the comments of people...

The story of Kenchamma, rooted as it was in the ever present problems of the participants, moved them deeply. For a few minutes after the story was told there was complete silence in the room. "Do you think that Kenchamma did the right thing?" This was the question posed to the group.

"No", disagreed one participant, "Kenchamma should have continued her work as a coolie. Why should she give so much importance to what people say?"

"People will go on talking; they are not feeding her. Why should she listen to them?"

"She has no guts. Why should she listen to such rubbish and starve herself?"

"We can't let other people run our lives"

The facilitator expressed an opinion that we should care about what society thinks and says.

This provoked a sharp response, "What society? We should not take note of such vicious comments".

One bitter response was as follows, "Society will let her starve and die because they are not happy about the seat going to an ST candidate. If she dies, the seat will go back to them. It must all be preplanned"

This comment changed the tenor of the discussion.

"Why did Kenchamma listen to people and give up working?" asked the trainer.

"She didn't have the guts to stand up to people and defend herself".

"Why did she not have courage?"

"Because she was illiterate", said Sumitrabai of Sagara.

The facilitator pointed out that under similar circumstances, Mallava of Sagara (also illiterate) continued to work as a coolie inspite of the taunts of the people. On the one hand was Kenchamma's illiteracy and poverty and on the other hand was the selfishness and craving for power among people. Various such factors contribute to the poor treatment and esteem given to women in society. Problems also rise from the stereotyping of political roles. This was illustrated by the case of Sharmila,

a member of D.B.Kuppe Gram Panchayat in H.D.Kote Taluk. She has to travel a long way into the forest to collect firewood and people taunted her for doing such things when she was a Panchayat member. However, Sharmila was unmoved by their comments, saying that her children came first and she was collecting firewood for her house. These examples, taken from the lives of their sisters in the Panchayats made a deep impression in the minds of the participants about gender discrimination in society.

Repeatedly, certain names like Gowdaru, Patel, Shanbogue and so on kept cropping up in the discussions. When asked to describe these people, there were many amusing replies

"They are fine".

"They are fat, well-fed, with luxurious moustaches, big tummies".

"They are rich with a lot of land, large houses and estates, cattle. They have a lot of wealth and comforts".

"They are big bosses in the village, make other people work while their children study comfortably in the cities".

The discussion led to an understanding of how the poor are oppressed by the ruling elite in the villages and that there are various government programmes for the uplift of the poor.

Age-old caste barriers have demarcated different jobs for different classes of people and led to practices like untouchability and atrocities perpetuated in the name of caste and class.

Decentralised governance can become a powerful tool to break down these barriers. Although women are equal in numbers and in capacity and skill to men, their hopes and aspirations have been nipped in the bud.

As described by Sharmila, "Although I am an educated representative, men still try to put hurdles in my way, they have even threatened my life. People of my village are trying to spoil my reputation. In these circumstances, how do you expect me to do social work? There should be a police station with lady officers within my Panchayat area".

By illustrating problems of society through examples from the lives of the participants, the group was able to link their problems with the larger issues of societal conflicts based on gender, caste and class discrimination.

### 3.3.(iii) Reservation for Women in Local Governance

**Aim of Session:** To create awareness among participants about the need for and the implications of reservation for women and the weaker sections of society.

**Methodologies:** Participatory discussions and games

#### Playing the "Circle Game"

Women were asked to walk around a circle drawn on the floor to the accompaniment of music. The stopping of the music was the



signal for the women to step into the circle. The size of the circle was progressively reduced and as the game proceeded, fewer and fewer women could stand within the circle. The facilitator demonstrated how the winning participant could have made room for one more person if she had wanted to.

The participants were requested to share their feelings about the game:

"The game was really nice"

"She pushed me and I got out"

An eighty-year-old woman said that she had not played such games even as a child "Why are you making us play like school children, of what use is this to us? However, I enjoyed watching the other women play, so I got up and ran with them".

"I find it enjoyable to learn through games".

The facilitator probed further to see what participants felt about the importance of the game.

Some women were defensive and felt that they could not analyse the game because they were not literate. Some were sceptical and said that the game involved pushing one another. One participant felt that the main point of the game was that only the strongest survived in the circle.

Taking the argument forward, the facilitator pointed out that all participants had become Panchayat members only because of reservation, by which a space had been provided for them.

Asking them to think about the earlier Panchayats, the

facilitator wanted them to list the people who were in power then.

The participants were quick to reply

"Men".

"Upper caste people".

"The Gowdas (village headmen)".

"The Reddys' (Dominant Caste)".

In some places, the response was, "the rich people".

It was obvious that these women, many of whom were from the poorer sections of society were quite aware that the old Panchayats were dominated by men, the rich and the upper castes.

In such Panchayats, the group reiterated that only the few who were close to the ruling elite were favoured with the 'fruits' of development while the majority remained voiceless, deprived and marginalised. This situation has prevailed in different forms over centuries. In Indian society today, there are various forms of discrimination leading to social unrest and disharmony.

The following question was posed to the participants.

"What will happen if someone eats a sumptuous meal in front of a starving person?"

The different responses included one woman saying "Look at this person, I am so hungry and he continues to eat without giving me even one morsel".

"I am hungry. Why don't you give me some food"?

"For how long will the hungry man sit and watch him eating? After some time, he will grab the food" said an SC participant.

The facilitator wanted to know if the first man would sit quiet if his food was grabbed from him. Answers were varied - some women felt that the first man would sit quiet while others felt that he would fight back to keep his food.

The facilitator then equated the food in this anecdote with the concept of power. The reservation for women and weaker sections is meant to ensure equitable distribution of power among all sections of society which are now represented in decision making bodies.

Women have been, for centuries, the weakest group in society and their needs and perspectives have never been reflected in decision making processes. Reservation is the means to end this injustice.

When asked to give their impressions about reservation for women, the participants came out with the following answers.

"If men alone are in power, they will only look after their own interests"

"Only women can understand women's problems. The men don't understand"

"With men in power, all they will think of are arrack shops. But if women are in power, they will look at the villagers as their own children and try to act in their best interests".

The life experiences of woman as a home-maker and nurturer helps her to be more sensitive to the problems of others, in particular, of other women. This is why reservation for women should have far reaching consequences for society.



Give Us Pens And We'll Draw Our World



Reaching Greater Heights

### 3.3.(iv) Leadership and Communication Skills

#### Methodology

This session was a lively one where methods employed included practical exercises like "pick and speak", extempore speech, songs and rhymes, group discussions, questions and answers.

#### Background

Some people are born leaders

Some achieve leadership

Some have leadership thrust upon them.

Most of the participants belonged to the third category. These women who had become representatives of the people had come from restrictive, patriarchal societies that gave them no opportunity to display leadership skills in any form. When pitchforked into their new roles as leaders of the people, they needed special help to develop leadership and communication skills which will give them the respect of the community.

Getting the benefits of development schemes through government officials to deserving beneficiaries is a Herculean task in itself. This called for special communication skills from the women representatives.

"What are the qualities that a leader should have" was the question posed to the participants.

"Should be confident".

"Should be courageous".

"Should be a good speaker".

"Should be educated and intelligent".

"Should be able to read and write".

"Even if you can't read and write, you should be intelligent enough to take the help of other people who can".

That speech is a great asset to any leader was illustrated with the help of examples from literature, anecdotes and so on. A good speaker should also be able to communicate changes of tone, facial expressions, and body language.

An exercise was carried out to improve tone variation where the facilitator used action to indicate tone variation for the song..

"Suvi... Suvi... Suvi....

Suvi..... Suvi.....

Suvakka.. Suvallali.."

The participants were asked to pretend that they have donkey ears which would be raised on a high pitch and lowered on a low pitch. The participants initially were shy to sing with action but gradually involved themselves in the exercise.

One participant told the facilitator that if she went to the Panchayat office and asked for any Government schemes they would shoo her away saying they'll inform her if any scheme is available.





Here's A Tough Fist - Open It If You Can!



Understanding Their Roles As Leaders

A folk song was sung to explain communication skills. The song highlights how the husband sweet-talks his wife not to go to her mother's house. The facilitator explained the different types of speeches and the tone used for each of them.

To further highlight how speech skills can be used to persuade people, a game was conducted wherein the participants were divided into two groups. One group had their fists held tight while the other had to open it and vice-versa. It was seen that the women tried to open the fists by force. Some ended up being pushed and pulled while a few others easily gave up without a fight. The participants used tricks like tickling and pinching to open the fist. A few withstood all these and emerged successfully. The facilitator then demonstrated how the fist could be opened by convincing the other person. The game was linked to communication skills, demonstrating how persuasive speech can be used to get things done. The participants agreed in approval by nodding their heads.

Another exercise "pick and speak" was conducted so as to give the participants a practical training on how to speak using tone modulation with body language. The participants were given a topic and were allotted three minutes to speak. It was seen that most of the women spoke well while a few were very hesitant and stood up with their eyes on the floor. The exercise also served the purpose of confidence building in the participants.

Apart from this, the ability to remember what is said during the sessions, is another skill. The participants were asked to



evaluate the day's sessions at the end of the day. The following day too the participants were asked to explain the previous day's sessions. It was seen that a few participants remembered the entire day's sessions chronologically to the point, whereas a few remembered the sessions that impressed them most. A few others spoke on the games conducted, the songs sung and the food provided.

### 3.3. (v) Gram Panchayat Funds and Means of Resource Mobilisation

The topic of funds and finances of the Gram Panchayat is of great interest to all participants. One of the first questions at the Tajsultanpur Gram Panchayat camps raised by Sharada Bai Ogi (Adhyakshini) was "You say that the government grants one lakh to all the Gram Panchayat but we have received only 25,000/- so far". This provided an opportunity to explain to the participants that the money comes in installments and to show them what a cheque looks like. Quite a few of them had never seen a cheque before.

Charts and posters used depicted various visuals and pictures on the sources of funds to the Panchayats. For example, auctioning of fruit trees, fisheries, levies on autostands, tickets on temple entry etc.

The discussion elicited varied reactions from the participants. The main problem seemed to be the difficulty in collecting taxes from a poor rural population. While talking about an increase in house tax, participants rejected the idea saying "there are

so many poor people who cannot pay the present tax then how can they pay if we increase it further". "When we went to collect house taxes we realised that a number of them did not pay it for years", "All this time they did not have the membership which they have got now. She has come to ask us for taxes, there is no proper drinking water and the only borewell is not functioning for the last three months which she cannot afford to repair. Ha! she has come to ask for taxes".

In the course of discussions it was suggested that the ideal place to resolve these issues would be in the Gram Sabha.

The session also brought up a few examples of how the funds can be misused. For example, in Tajsultanpur an influential person was able to force the Panchayat to give him a shop at a very low rent and he had been availing of this privilege for the past 20 years. However, the new adyakshini heard about this and decided that the shops would be properly auctioned. Although this gave rise to some unpleasantness between the two parties, the adhyakshini persisted until the owner agreed to a reasonable price of six times the original amount.

In N. Belthur Gram Panchayat of H.D. Kote Taluk, participants told the team how they had gone from door to door with officials collecting taxes. One participant, Sharanamma of Kapanur Gram Panchayat was so enthused by the session that she went that very evening to demand vehicle tax for the Panchayat from a lorry passing through the Panchayat. Since the lorry was only taking a diversion through the village the owner refused to pay saying

that he was paying the taxes on the highway checkpost. Sharanamma brought this problem to the camp the next day. It was thus explained to the participants that tax can be imposed by the Gram Panchayat only on non-motorised vehicles. However tax could be imposed on any resources eg: mud, sand, livestock etc which belong to the Gram Panchayat which is being transported out by any kind of vehicle.

Under resource mobilisation the question of villagers contributing their labour for village development was also discussed. Obviously the participants took this session quite seriously and felt that it was relevant to their everyday lives. So much so that Shivagami of Chinkote Gram Panchayat went back to her village and requested the students of a local school to help her clean the village paths which were full of weeds.

### 3.3.(vi) Subject: Gram Sabha

**Aim:** To highlight the importance of the Gram Sabha.

**Background:** The foundations of democracy lie in the Gram Sabha where villagers can articulate their concerns, problems and aspirations about their own villages. Solutions to the problems of the village are best expressed by those most affected by them. Institutions and governments situated at distant places cannot offer the appropriate and correct solutions needed for the village. To the people whose thirst can be quenched only with water, they offer Pepsi and Coke!

The Gram Sabha provides a forum where there can be free and frank discussions of the problems confronting the village. All villagers can use the opportunity to express their problems as well as to find solutions. Thus it is of great importance that Panchayat representatives understand the potential of the Gram Sabha.

**Methodologies:** Group exercises, lecture and discussion, mock sessions

**Group Exercise:** Consider a village which needs the minimum facilities of housing, electricity, water and roads. An amount of one lakh rupees is available. Four participants were asked to make individual budget estimates to carry out this work. They were then asked to sit in a group and work on a common estimate. (This exercise was later linked to the concept of Gram Sabha)

Reactions to the exercise were interesting

"How can I manage such a huge amount of money all by myself"

"How can we all work on this, we cannot read or write"

"I don't understand all this accounts business" said one participant, moving back.

The facilitator asked, "How will you manage the Panchayat accounts if you do not try now?".

"But there was a Secretary and an Adhyaksha to take care of it. Why should I do anything".

"Then, why have you been elected?" asked the trainer.

"To keep an eye on them" said Saraswathamma, member of Chinkote Gram Panchayat, Kolar.

"If you don't understand anything about accounts, how will you keep an eye on them?"

"If you participate in our exercises, you will learn about accounts and financial procedures; you will then be able to understand the Panchayat accounts and to keep an eye on the people handling them".

Saying this, the facilitator asked Kenchamma who had been a little hesitant, to come forward and participate in the exercise. Though she was not very keen to participate Kenchamma agreed to come forward. But Saraswati of the same Gram Panchayat volunteered to participate. The difference in their attitudes was mainly because of education and confidence level. When a similar exercise was conducted in Aroga and Binaga Gram Panchayats the participants were enthusiastic. This was possible because these women involve themselves in all the day-to-day economic activities and are literate.

But the scene was different in Sagara Gram Panchayat where Mallava asked the facilitators why should she prepare a budget for an amount of money that she did not have.

"Give me one lakh and I will manage. I don't want to go through this exercise". This participant was quite cynical about the entire process.

When the session was conducted in different districts, participants highlighted different priorities according to what they felt were their pressing needs. Participants from areas close to towns saw roads, street lights and sanitation as priorities, while the needs of interior villages seemed to be drinking water, houses and employment. Participants expressed a preference for group decisions when asked which part of the exercise they liked.

This was linked to the Gram Sabha which would be truly meaningful only if all villagers participated in it. Everybody's problems can be discussed and prioritised. This part of the session made a great impression on the listeners about the importance of functions of the Gram Sabha.

"We have never had such meetings in our villages"

"We had Gram Sabha meetings but it was quite different from what you describe"

"We had a Gram Sabha but it was only a loan sabha".

### 3.4 Methods of Training:

Any information can be disseminated to the participants in the two basic forms - writing /published and orally through lectures, talks and group discussion. Depending upon the nature of the participants one can use either one or both the forms. Since the participants of UMA project are a mixed group of literates and non-literates, while conducting the training both the forms of dissemination were used.

The content disseminated through using both the forms are more or less the same. The writing/published form has been used essentially to supplement and reinforce the issues discussed in the course of actual training. The written information on training content is provided in the form of a kit bag and was given to the participants in the first session of the training camp. The kit bag provided to women contained the following.

- 1) Pictorial Handbook on Gram Panchayat.
- 2) Pictorial Book on Women and Law.
- 3) Narrative book on Women and Law.
- 4) Path to a Model Gram Panchayat (Snake and Ladder Board).
- 5) Clock on Government Department functions/ schemes and officials at district and taluk level.
- 6) Songs on Panchayat Raj.
- 7) Calendar depicting Women's Rights.
- 8) Handout on Roles and Responsibilities of members.
- 9) Pamphlet on Main Features of 1993 Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act.
- 10) A Report on DAWN.

- 11) A copy of UMA Prachar.
- 12) Scribbling pad, Ball point and Sketch pens.

The written/ published materials provided to women in the form of a kit bag have also been used as supplementary materials. While conducting the actual training, the purpose behind providing each of the written/published material is provided in Annexure five.

Information has been disseminated orally in the course of a formal training using the methods of talks, group discussions and lectures in a class room set-up, while doing so, attempts were made to involve the participants to the maximum extent possible. It is to ensure the participation and involvement of members that the training team used aids like audio-visual cassettes and materials, charts, flexies, puppets, role plays, simulation games, exercises and mock sessions.

The different methods used to impart information was decided considering the geographical background, literacy level, and the capacity to understand by the participants. The success of the training programme is not solely dependent on the variety of methods used. However, to conduct an effective programme, apart from the methods, a conducive atmosphere is important. Some of the venues naturally have a conducive atmosphere while a few others do not have, for which, efforts have to be made to create such an atmosphere.

While the core theme has been depicted or portrayed using



different aids; talks, discussions and lectures were used for raising relevant issues, providing additional information and analysing the issues that emerged. In other words both the talks, discussions, lecture and aids were used hand in hand while conducting the training. Apart from conveying the relevant information, the training team in order to make the participant feel free of any inhibitions and to break the monotony has used some games as well.

Since a wide ranging number of games and aids have been used in the course of conducting training, it is considered essential to provide a brief account of the purpose and the context in which they are used. The same is discussed in the following paragraphs. Some sections have been further illustrated with examples.

(a) **Ice-breaking exercises:** Ice-breaking exercises like pairing up, vegetable salad, chain game and circle game were used at the very beginning of a training camp for enabling the participants to get acclimatised to the idea of training, introduce themselves to each other and to the training team.

(b) **Breaking of Monotony:** In order to break the monotony between the sessions and to enable the participants to concentrate on issues discussed in training, games like river and bund, fist game, finger dance, songs, stories, jokes, riddles, lawyer games, buzz game and fire in the mountain game were used.



Throwing Away Inhibitions



Flexies - Reflecting Harsh Realities

(c) **Role Play:** Role Plays were enacted by involving the participants to explain the proceedings of a Gram Panchayat meeting, importance of decision making and gender discrimination.

(d) **Mock Sessions:** Mock sessions were used to highlight the importance of conducting the Gram Sabha, proceedings of Gram Sabha meetings, importance of peoples' participation and functions of Gram Sabha.

(e) **Story Telling:** Stories have been narrated to initiate thought processes, discussions, reinforcement of social values and for analysing the issues concerning personality development, theory of decentralisation and corruption.

(f) **Case Study:** Case studies were developed from the experiences shared by women at various stages of training on issues concerning caste, class and gender discrimination.

(g) **Flexie Flannel:** Flexie flannels were used as aids to narrate case studies and stories. "Flexies" are cardboard dolls with free body movements which are used against a flannel cloth background. These help particularly for topics like Quorum and Societal Analysis. They were made with an intention to help the participants identify the characters with people from various walks of life, as for example: politicians, officials, women, children, the rural poor and elite to illustrate stories and discussion points. They help create visual imagery and also help to lighten the mood during the camp.

Using the flexies along with lectures brought about varied reactions from the participants. A few of them were surprised to see the flexie movements while a few others found it amusing. A few women held their saris against their faces and began laughing. It was noticed that when the flexies were put up on the board a few women intentionally stayed back and experimented with them during their free time. They looked at each other and joked about it. Looking at the flexie of a politician (a man with a large stomach, thick moustache and a Gandhi cap) the participants identified him with the influential people in their village. Seeing the flexie of a poor rural woman with a torn sari and a sorrowful face the women were expressionless and took a long breath.

(h) **Puppetry:** Puppetry was used primarily to introduce certain topics on Panchayat Raj like Gram Sabha and types of Gram Panchayat meetings. When the facilitator held a screen, the participants were curious to know what was happening and looked at the facilitator with knitted eyebrows. Behind the screen a few puppets were seen. Initially the puppets had a casual conversation with the participants. Some participants felt shy to reply to the questions the puppets asked. They would hide their faces in their saris and laugh. Gradually the women began talking to the puppet. Sometimes a combination of training aids were used. For example, flexies were used to demonstrate the different types of meetings and puppets were used as narrators. The participants enjoyed the puppet show.

(i) **Pictorial handbooks:** While puppets and flexies helped combine a basic understanding of Gram Panchayat procedures with relaxation and enjoyment, a more rigorous understanding was achieved through the use of the pictorial handbook. This handbook was prepared by ISST for an easy understanding of the basic principles of the Karnataka Act. The handbook was specially designed with neo-literate and non-literate women in mind. The participants were thrilled seeing the pictures as they could easily understand the Act. The participants were proud seeing the picture of an **Adhyakshini** in the Panchayat meeting and the Gram Sabha meeting. Seeing the pictures on the qualities required to become a member, the participants made signs at each other. The pictures of the **adhyaksha** who was thrown out for not doing his duty well, a criminal behind bars, a person who has not attended three meetings, were appreciated by the participants who vowed never to miss any meeting in future and to do their duty well.

A second pictorial book used was on 'Women and Law'. While explaining on 'Women & Law' using the pictorial book, the participants expressed their dissatisfaction about wage discrimination against women. Seeing the picture on abortion one participant said to another - 'Look, how he is forcing his decision on her. Even if she wants a child, her wishes are not valued'. Seeing the picture of a mentally sick man in the marriage pandal taking off his turban and throwing it away aroused a lot of laughter. But after a few minutes the women were engrossed in deep thoughts. On seeing the picture of a woman being beaten by her husband, the participants seemed very

unhappy and sympathised with her. The topic of rape made a few women very upset while some others bent their head down feeling shy. Participants were told that only women police could search or arrest women culprits. On hearing this, the women heaved sighs of relief. Participants felt that most of the pictures in the book represented the day-to-day happenings of their lives.

(j) **Songs:** Songs were composed by the training team on provisions of the Panchayat Raj Act, women in politics, importance of reservation and importance of the Gram Sabha. Songs were essentially used for introducing the topics, initiating discussion, breaking monotony, and reinforcement of values of Panchayat Raj.

(k) **Exercises:** Exercises were essentially used to help women experience the actual process of planning and preparation of budget and to realise the importance of individual verses collective decisions.

(l) **Flash Cards:** Flash cards were used essentially to explain various sources of Gram Panchayat funds.

(m) **Audio & Video Cassettes:** Audio & Video Cassettes were used to introduce and initiate discussions on issues concerning gender and caste discrimination, responsibilities of members, proceedings of Gram Panchayat meetings and six killer diseases.

To encourage discussions among the participants on certain topics a few films were shown among the audio-visuals.

Materials used are the following: "Girija" (a fable on the girl child made by activist film maker Deepa Dhanraj), "Niru Kallathana Nillisi" (a short video film made by ISST on illegal tapping of water) and Six Killer Diseases a documentary on health. In addition, commercial films with the theme based on women's lives like the award winning Panniyamma were also shown. A few of the participants when watching Girija told the facilitator that they had watched it earlier on T.V. While watching the film a few women pitied Girija for the pains she goes through. The participants expressed fear while seeing the Demon threatening Girija. When Girija succeeded in bringing the rain seed the women felt very happy and appreciated her courage. A few women, particularly the tribals told the facilitator that it is the first time ever that they have watched a film. Discussions on the film, "Girija" helped to start the session on gender inequalities.

To highlight the role of an elected woman representative in bringing justice and unearthing wrong doing a documentary entitled 'Niru Kallathana Nillisi' was prepared by ISST. Watching the cassette, the participants said that they do see such cases in their gramas. They felt that if they probe into issues like this with a lot of responsibility they will be as successful as the representative portrayed in the documentary. Apart from this they will provide justice to people who are suffering. The participants seemed to recognise the characters among the facilitators and smiled at them.

The participants watched the movie "Ranjitha" with total

concentration as the movie highlighted the problems faced by the bride because of dowry. It was noticed that the participants seemed very emotional and cried while her in-laws tried to kill Ranjitha. But Ranjitha escapes from the house and goes out to achieve success for herself. This made the participants very happy. They expressed the hope that she would not go back to her husband.

In traditional Hindu communities, women are pressurised to follow certain customs which suppress their desires. The movie Panniyamma highlighted these evils in society and portrayed how Panniyamma fights against these evil practices. Watching this the women too decided to fight against these practices. A song from a movie was often shown to the women which highlighted the duty consciousness of the elected person and the fruits of being efficient. The song was limited to the roles and responsibilities of the members. The song was then analysed by the participants. One participant agreed that any kind of work can be done if one is determined to do it. Along with this a cassette on health which highlighted the six killer diseases and its symptoms, medication etc was shown to the participants. They watched it with rapt attention and cleared their doubts.

When asked about the films, the women said that they enjoyed the films and learnt a lot of new things. A few of them liked it but a few others considered them to be a mirror of the happenings in the society.



(m) **Charts & Posters:** Charts and posters on various aspects of Panchayat Raj were displayed in the training halls for the purposes of reinforcement and creation of a conducive atmosphere. What a hundred words can say can be conveyed by just one picture. The charts and posters displayed in the training venue attracted the attention of all the participants. They highlighted topics like Panchayat Raj System, Gram Sabha and its importance, literacy, health and sanitation and the government schemes. During the lunch break or any other free time the participants would read the pictures and, if they had any doubts, would ask the facilitator for clarification.

(o) **Visual Reading:** Visual reading of the pictorial book on Gram Panchayat, Women and Law was undertaken to explain in detail various issues on Panchayat Raj and laws concerning women.

In addition to these, games like the Rangoli game, Smiling Exercise and the Throne and Power game were also used to raise awareness and start discussions on the issues concerning personality development, communication skills and leadership qualities.

The atmosphere outside the training session was open and free. A few women attended the training all by themselves but a few others were accompanied by the men in the family. The men who came did not interfere with the training but watched the facilitation programme from outside. They would peep from the windows and roam outside on the corridors. In Sagara and

Bangarpet the men not only sat inside the training hall and nodded their head in agreement whenever they felt the information was right, as a moral support to the trainees.

This section highlights the fact that the training team has used a wide range of methods and techniques. Though the list of methods and aids is quite exhaustive, what is ultimately important is the effect of the training on the participants and the extent to which they feel strengthened by the processes and the knowledge gained. The following section attempts to analyse these aspects.

### 3.5 Impact

As a post - training exercise, it is essential to analyse to what extent it has enabled the members to participate effectively. Such an exercise, however, calls for an examination of behavioural changes in women. The changes in behaviour may be captured firstly by observing the actual participation of women in Panchayat meetings through participatory observation method; secondly by discussing about the changes in levels of participation of women with secretaries of Gram Panchayats; thirdly by discussing with people about activities taken up by women members and fourthly by discussing with women, about their role perception after attending the programme.

Though, usage of all the above mentioned methods provide clear cut understanding about the changes in participation of women, it, however, was not done in view of the constraints of time and resources. Instead, a combination of two methods was used for getting insights about the changes in levels of participation of women. The training team members discussed the changes in participation of women with secretaries and women members of Hunsenahalli, N.Belthur, Binaga, Tajsultanpur and Sagara areas before and during the course of the second training camp. The same, however, could not be done in Hinkal, Koppa and Julapalya where only one camp was organised and only two members attended the first camp.

The statements made by the women members and secretaries of Gram Panchayats about their post-training experiences are presented

in the following paragraphs. The experiences, however, varied from woman to woman. While some women felt more confident others thought that their communication skills have improved.

Thus Kenchamma from D.B Kuppae (N.Belthur Gram Panchayat) village stated that "Initially I used to cover my face with my saree during the Gram Panchayat meetings and was very afraid to open my mouth. Now after attending the training programme I have not only stopped covering my face but also began to participate in deliberations of Gram Panchayat meetings".

A more or less similar experience has been shared by Prabhavathi, Yellamma and Sarubai of Tajsultanpur area. Prabhavathi has noted that "in the first two meetings I did not participate, but silently observed the proceedings. After attending your training programme, I have gained confidence and speak during the meetings".

Yellamma from the same area has noted that "I want to get a name like Indira Gandhi did. I have benefitted a lot from your training programme and have gained a lot of confidence. Today I can ask my husband to cook while I attend the meeting".

Sarubai has noted that "Initially I used to be very quiet and scared to talk to government officials. Now after attending the training programme I not only talk in Gram Panchayat meetings, but also with government officials".

Discussing about the improved communication skills of elected

women members in general the secretary of Kappanur Gram Panchayat noted that "earlier women used to come and sit quietly. Now after the training they talk a lot. Even if I say that there are no resources the women insist on getting details".

Expressing a similar experience, Mallavva from Sagara area - an erstwhile Mandal Panchayat - noted that "though I attended the meetings for five years I was unable to communicate my ideas and feelings earlier. Now after attending the training programme, my communication skills have improved and people listen to me now including the secretary".

Similarly Sharanamma from Tajsultanpur area noted that "since your first training programme I have attended about five meetings. In the first two meetings I was very silent and did not talk much but after attending the training, I have started to talk.

The experience of other women like Parvathi, Savithri and Lakshmiamma of Tajsultanpur area, however was different. For instance Parvathi stated that "I had not attended the first two meetings but during your training you told us that if we don't attend three meetings continuously, we will be removed from our post. Since then I have attended all the meetings regularly. The men in my Gram told me not to come for the meetings and attempted to make me sign on the book. However, I have not only refused to sign the book, but also showed them the picture related to attendance from the pictorial book and collected the

sitting fees for all the meetings from them".

Shantamma of Sagara also shared a similar experience concerning improvement in communication skills. To put it in her own words "I never used to talk earlier in meetings. Men members used to discuss among themselves and decide about Gram Panchayat meetings. After attending the training I realised that men and women have equal rights regarding participation. Now I take active part in the meetings and communicate my ideas clearly".

Savithri and Lakshamma also noted that earlier we used to attend the meetings irregularly. Now, after the training programme we are attending the meetings regularly as we understood the procedures, roles and responsibilities of the members".

Durgamma from Koppa area noted that "She stopped attending the meetings after she lost the elections for Adhyakshas position. However, after attending the training she realised the rules concerning disqualification of members and started attending the meetings".

The levels of participation of other women like Anjanabai from Tajsultanpur area, Mallavva, Shivamma, Sabuamma, Bharathi and Theresa has increased in a much better way compared to the afore mentioned ones. For instance Anjanabai though is Adhyakshini has neither conducted nor attended the Gram Panchayat meetings. It is the former Adhyaksha in collusion with secretary who used to conduct the meetings and send the register for signing. However

after attending the training Anjanabai noted that she realised the responsibilities of an Adhyaksha and managed to take charge of the position in real sense".

In a more or less similar vein Mallavva, Shivamma, Sabuamma of Tajsultanpur area and Bharathi and Theresa of Binaga area have not only realised the responsibilities of members but also about the functions of Gram Panchayat. After attending the training programme while mallavva has undertaken the repair of school buildings and construction of toilets for women. Shivamma requested for a separate vegetable market. Sabuamma managed to get cattle loan and electricity; Bharathi managed to obtain ration cards for 35 people. Discussing about the responsibilities of members and role of secretary, Theresa of Binaga area noted that "earlier whenever people asked for amenities I used to give an application form and forget it. Now after attending the training programme, I realised that we need to follow it up with the secretary and enquire about it frequently".

The experience shared by Sharanamma of Tajsultanpur area is different. After attending the training programme she has gone one step ahead of others and attempted to generate resources for Gram Panchayats. It so happened while returning to her village after attending the training, Sharanamma found a lorry carrying a load of sand entering her village. Recollecting the provisions of the relevant section on Gram Panchayat funds, Sharanamma stopped the lorry and collected Rs.50/-. It may be quite relevant to note that under the Panchayat Raj Act, Gram

Panchayat can collect taxes from the lorries and tempos carrying loads from the villages falling in its jurisdiction.

These being the experiences shared by women across the different districts, it may be noted that training has strengthened the position of women by equipping them with information. As the majority of women entered the local level political structures for the first time with exception of seven, they are unaware of basic procedures, roles and responsibilities of members and Adhakyasha and functions of Gram Panchayat. It appears that it is their ignorance and lack of knowledge rather than anything else that has prevented them from taking part in Panchayat meetings. In other words, equipped with information about relevant procedures women can perform political roles as good as the other roles being played by them.



CHAPTER - IV  
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The UMA (UTSAHI MAHILA ABHYUDAYA) project for strengthening the participation of women in local governance has concentrated its efforts in two main areas. These are (1) the training of women representatives of the Gram Panchayats in eight selected areas of Karnataka state and (2) the setting up of a resource centre for women in Panchayat Raj. Volume I of this report deals with the activities of the Resource Centre and the concluding chapter of that volume sets out general areas for further action that can be taken up by those involved in strengthening the participation of women representatives. In this chapter, we summarise the activities undertaken for training women representatives in the course of the UMA project. Further areas of action specifically in the direction of training and field level interactions with women representatives have been set down in this chapter.

The introductory chapter of this volume highlights the need to strengthen the participation of women in local bodies through gender-sensitive processes of training which are located in the larger context of genuine empowerment of these women. Such an approach also helps to evolve a framework for training processes which has long term validity; which will require the adoption of participatory, people-friendly methodologies; which will eventually result in women representatives being able to look critically at their roles and the roles of the local bodies.

Such an approach also dictates a choice of subjects and topics that are wide-ranging and cover both general subjects related to the position and condition of women and to their specific knowledge and information needs as representatives of the people. The training under the UMA project has adopted such an approach.

The location of training has been as follows.

All the Gram Panchayats falling in two erstwhile Mandal Panchayat areas of four districts of Karnataka were selected for this purpose. The four districts selected are Kolar, Mysore, Uttar Kannada, and Gulbarga. The Mandal Panchayat areas selected from among these districts are - Julapalya, Hunsenahalli (Kolar), N.Belthur, Hinkal (Mysore), Binaga, Koppa (Uttara Kannada), and Tajsultanpur, Sagara (Gulbarga).

To give a brief account of the profile of the districts, Kolar and Mysore are located in Southern Maidan region, Uttar Kannada in Coastal Malnad region and Gulbarga in Northern Maidan region.

In terms of distance Hunsenahalli, Hinkal, Tajsultanpur and Binaga areas are located close to the taluk and district headquarters. Julapalya, N.Belthur, Koppa and Sagara are situated away from the taluk and district head quarters.

In all, the areas except in Julapalya and Binaga the spoken language of people is Kannada. The spoken language of people of Julapalya and Binaga is Telugu and Konkani respectively. No

other area other than Hinkal has good accommodation facilities. One or two NGOs are working in the selected areas.

The total number of elected members in the selected areas is 176. A majority of the women belong to the general and backward caste categories and are in the age group of 26 to 45 years. They have received primary education and are engaged in household activities. They are motivated by their husbands and family members to contest the elections. Two training camps each have been conducted in all the areas except in Hinkal and Koppa.

The training was conducted by a team consisting of three district co-ordinators and a documentalist headed by a training co-ordinator. In the initial stages, the training was conducted by two district co-ordinators in an area and by involving external resource persons. However, subsequently the strategy was changed and the entire team conducted the training by moving from one area to another.

A combination of project and process approaches was utilised. Potential trainers like NGO staff, school teachers, Yuvathi Mandal members and social workers were included in the camps wherever available and necessary, so as to make provisions for follow up.

Organisational assistance was sought from both Government officials and NGOs working in the area. While conducting the training, Government officials like the BDO and the Gram

Panchayat Secretaries were involved essentially to elicit the participation of women. NGOs were involved mainly for the purpose of venue, food and accommodation arrangements and to some extent in eliciting member participation.

While conducting the training, emphasis was given to statutory provisions concerning Panchayat Raj with specific focus on Gram Panchayats, societal analysis, personality development, and women and law. The content of the training was decided by organising national level workshops, holding discussions with experts on Panchayat Raj and women and by giving due consideration to felt needs and training requirements of women.

As the participants consisted of both literates and non literates, information has been disseminated both in written and oral communication forms. The written information supplied as kit material during the training camps consisted of a pictorial handbook on Gram Panchayats, a pictorial book on Women and Law, a narrative book on Women and Law, a cardboard clock indicating the Government departments, officials and programmes, a Panchayat Raj song book, a snake and ladder board, a hand-out on responsibilities of member and a pamphlet on main features of the 1993 Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act.

During the training, every effort was made to render an informal atmosphere and make it participatory. A great deal of emphasis was given to games, role plays, mock sessions, visual reading and other group exercises. The maximum possible use was made of audio-visual material, puppets, charts, posters, flexie flannels

and so on.

Since the statutory provisions are generally couched in complicated languages, while disseminating the information, pictorial illustrations were found to be useful. The pictorial illustrations not only provide for easy understanding but also help in reinforcing the issues at a later date.

The information disseminated to women members on Panchayati Raj and on problems of women using a wide range of methods have enhanced their participation levels. Information collected before and during the second round of camps from women and Secretaries of Gram Panchayats indicate this effect. By and large after attending the training, women noted that they have become more confident, communicate better, attend the Gram Panchayat meetings regularly and have become familiar with procedures in getting various facilities and amenities for villagers.

#### Future Strategies: Some lessons learnt

The first chapter of this volume has dealt, in some detail, with the issues involved in the training of Panchayat women representatives. Experiences during the UMA training camps have reinforced the view that such training should be located in the larger context of the empowerment of both the individual and the institution, in this case the women representatives and the local bodies respectively. A conscious effort was made at the camps to raise questions on gender, caste and class disparities

and these sessions were usually the most moving. At the same time; participants evinced a great deal of interest in the immediate issues of learning about procedures and finances. In some cases, they were eager to test out their new found knowledge at the first possible opportunity. This lends credence to our earlier assumption that training cannot be limited to only the immediate, practical needs of learning about procedures and finances. In fact, imposing such limits to training content may be viewed as yet another insidious attempt to reinforce existing patriarchal norms. Such norms insist on taking the system as "given" and avoid any processes that lead to questioning of the system, in this case, the Panchayat Raj, which is far from perfect.

At the end of the programme, it was strongly felt that results would have been even more satisfying if constant and consistent interactions had been possible with the trainee group.

Training content and methodologies may be extrapolated and enhanced by observing, understanding and documenting the issues and problems faced by the women representatives throughout their term of office. As such, future strategies should involve interactions with women representatives at regular intervals. This may take the form of informal discussions, workshops, observations of the Panchayat proceedings, interaction with the village community and so on.

Training content should take into account larger national issues of development, economic reform and market economies which will

definitely have an impact in some form or the other on the working of the local bodies. To make the participation of women effective and the reservation of seats for them meaningful, training programmes should eventually lead to the engendering of development at the local level. Women should be able to articulate their concerns and development choices at the local level. The other dangerous trend is that the Panchayats are being viewed by the Central and State governments as implementing agencies of various states. This is directly linked to the lack of financial autonomy for the Panchayats. Despite the plethora of schemes for women and other disadvantaged sections of society, no significant gains have been made towards social justice and a more equitable distribution of resources.

While it is better in the long run to have camps for women and men together, it is also an undeniable fact that women find it easier to attend and participate effectively in all-women camps. Further, innovative strategies are needed to get round the inability of most women to attend camps of more than two or three day duration.

Eventually, efforts should be made to have joint camps for men and women. A beginning can be made by having sessions for women and SC and ST representatives, both coming from the marginalised sections of society. It should also be possible to have mixed groups of women and men chairpersons and vice-chairpersons.

Efforts should also be made to involve other women in the

training processes, not only as potential members, but also to create support and accountability mechanisms for the women representatives.

Projects could be taken up for the training of trainers, especially local people from NGO's, in allied areas like reproductive and general health, sanitation, literacy, nutrition, civic rights and local level planning. Creating awareness in the community on such subjects are vital for the functioning of the local bodies.

Since this kind of training is linked to the processes of social change, the scale of training should be as large as possible. This can happen only through networking at local and national level.

It then becomes important to relocate training in the mainstream of national activity rather than allow it to remain on the fringes as it is now. Thus both the quality and the scale of training and trainers become critical issues. (See also Vol.I, Chapter I and UMA Occasional Paper I in this report).

In this context, it becomes necessary to reiterate the importance of the production of relevant quality training and resource material for both literates and non-literates.

Several such possibilities may be explored to continue the work that has been started in the present project. One of the key areas of work is the collection of gender-specific information



for use at the village level which would serve as data for negotiation and advocacy, as information and resource material for women representatives. The documentation and dissemination of information, collected through field interactions, among various constituencies including NGO's and policy-makers is an important task.

While the strategies outlined above are far too many and far too wide-ranging to be undertaken by any one group, ISST will be putting in a concerted effort in the next few years on the last three mentioned above.

The attempt has been in this chapter, as well as in the concluding chapter of volume I, to identify areas of action in this field in the coming years. The strengthening of women Panchayat representatives provide both opportunities and challenges to those interested in social change and may be exploited to the fullest extent possible.

## ANNEXURE I

### Selection of Project Areas for Training.

As mentioned earlier, ISST, under the UMA Project, undertook the task of conducting training and facilitation camps for women Gram Panchayat representatives in eight areas of the state. These had been selected earlier by a study team at the Institute of Social and Economic Change, Bangalore using a three stage sample procedure. Initially, four districts representing the important agro - climatic regions of state viz. Southern and Northern maidan, Malnad and Coastal were selected. As already indicated, these districts are Kolar and Mysore (Southern Maidan), Gulbarga (Northern Maidan) and Uttara Kannada (Coastal and Malnad). In the second stage using the criterion of physical distance, two blocks - one close to and the other away from the district headquarters were selected from each of the four districts. From each of the selected blocks, one Mandal Panchayat which is representative in terms of socio-economic characteristics of the block was selected in consultation with the district and block level development officers. Since the training was slated for women Gram Panchayat members as per the new structure adopted, ISST has chosen all the Gram Panchayats falling in the erstwhile Mandal Panchayats by collecting the relevant information from the district headquarters and concerned administrative authorities.

The Blocks, Mandal Panchayats, and Gram Panchayats selected from each of the four Districts are:

DISTRICTS	BLOCKS	MANDAL PANCHAYAT	GRAM PANCHAYAT	TOTAL WOMAN MEMBERS
KOLAR	Bangarpet	Hunassenahalli	Ainoor- Hosahalli, Chinkote, Desihalli, Magundi, Ulibele,	42
	Bagepalli	Julapalya	Julapalya	
MYSORE	Mysore	Hinkal	Bogadi, Belavadi, Dattagalli, Hebbalu, Hinkal, Malalvadi	65
	H.D.Kote	N.Belthur	Antharsanthe, D.B.Kuppe N.Belthur,	
UTTARA KANNADA	Karwar	Binaga	Araga, Binaga	14
	Bhatkal	Koppa	Koppa	
GULBARGA	Gulbarga	Tajsultanpur	Bhimhalli, Kappanur, Kusanur Rajapur, Tajsultanpur	55
	Shahapur	Sagara	Naganatagi, Rastapur, Sagara	
TOTAL				176

## ANNEXURE II

### List of Some NGOs Working in the Project Districts

#### KOLAR:

SIBS, Bangarpet Taluk, Kolar District.  
Sunanda Maitri Sagar, Bangarpet Taluk, Kolar District.  
Gram Vikas, Yelagondanahalli, Kolar District.  
Society for Urban and Rural Development, K.G.F., Kolar District.  
REACH, Malur Taluk, Kolar District.  
RORES, Chelur Taluk, Kolar District.  
Teresian Family Helper Project, K.G.F., Kolar District.  
PRAYOG, Malur Taluk, Kolar District.  
SEVA, Gauribidanur, Kolar District.  
MYRADA, Bangarpet Taluk, Kolar District.

#### MYSORE:

MYRADA, H.D.Kote Taluk, Mysore District.  
FEDINA-VIKASA, H.D.Kote Taluk, Mysore District.  
Development Through Education, H.D.Kote, Mysore.  
SUMANA, Alanahalli, Mysore District.  
People's Movement for Self Reliance, Kollegal Taluk, Mysore District.  
Sukhrodaya Animation Society, Alanahally, Mysore.  
PRAGATHI, J.P.Nagar, Mysore.  
Rural Literacy and Health Programme, Udayagiri, Mysore.  
Organisation for Development of People, Bannimantap, Mysore.  
International Human Development and Upliftment Academy, Irwin Road, Mysore.  
PARIYARTHANA, Hunsur, Mysore.  
ENEDSA, J.P.Nagar, Mysore.  
Rural Community Health and Development Project, Mysore.

Vivekananda Girijana Kalyana Kendra, Yelandur Taluk, Mysore.

**UTTARA KANNADA:**

Sahyadri Parisara Vardini, Sirsi Taluk, Uttar Kannada.

Snehakunja, Honnavar Taluk, Uttara Kannada.

**GULBARGA:**

FEDINA AVISHKAR, Shahapur Taluk, Gulbarga.

ICDSS, Old Jeevargi Road, Gulbarga.

Integrated Development Organisation, Humnabad Road, Gulbarga.

Youth for Action, Yadgiri Taluk, Gulbarga.

MYRADA-Pidow, Sangameshwar Nagar, Gulbarga.

Itinerary of Training

August 1993

Familiarising with Project Proposal, Identifying the training content.

September 1993

Attending Training of Trainers organised by other agencies.

October 1993

In-house Training on Strategies and Approaches.

November 1993

Familiarising with NGOs working on Panchayat Raj and visits to Government Departments and NGOs for Training Materials.

January 1994

Workshop on Alternate Methodologies and Curricular for Panchayat Raj.

January 1994

Field Testing the method and material with Mahila Samakhya Women Groups.

January 1994

Preliminary visits to selected areas - Kolar and Mysore.

February 1994

Report building with participants, Secretaries of Taluk and Gram Panchayats.

March 1994

First Training Camp conducted in Julapalya and N.Belthur areas. Evaluation of First set of training camps and identification of weak points of trainers.

April 1994

Consultation about relevance of content and methods developed with Ms.Srilatha Batliwala, Mr.L.C.Jain, Ms.Suman Kolhar, Mr.K.S.Krishnaswamy, Ms.Leelavathi Chandrashekar, Ms.Uma Kulkarni, Ms.Usha Rao and Mr.Uma Shankar.

May - July 1994

Training of Trainers.

August - October 1994

Preparation of training materials by observing functions of Panchayats in N.Belthur and Koppa areas.

November 1994

Field testing of materials developed.

December 1994 - May 1995

First and Second round of camps in Uttar Kannada and Gulbarga and Second round of camps in Kolar and Mysore districts.

## ANNEXURE IV

Total number of Members who attended first and second camp as against the total member of participants

Mandal Panchayat	Participants who attended one Camp	Participants who attended both Camps	Participants who did not attend any Camp	Total
Hunsenahalli	9	10	14	33
Julapalya	5	3	1	9
Hinkal	35	-	12	47
N. Belthur	10	8	0	18
Binaga	3	7	1	11
Koppa	2	-	1	3
Tajsultanpur	5	26	2	33
Sagara	8	14	0	22
TOTAL	77	68	31	176

Source: ISST Camp Registration book

TRAINING MATERIALS USED IN THE UMA PROJECT

Resource and Training Materials in Kannada prepared by the Training Team for the UMA Project

1. Pictorial Book on Panchayat Raj

Purpose : To help the non-literates and neo-literates understand the Act.

Content : Three tier system  
Gram Sabha  
Scope and Constitution  
Eligibility for membership  
Election  
Reservation  
Cessation of membership  
Disqualification of members  
Gram Panchayat meetings and procedures  
Quorum  
Adhyakshas and Upadhyakshas  
Dissolution of Gram Panchayat  
Removal of Adhyakshas  
No confidence motion  
Duties and Responsibilities of Adhyakshas  
Standing Committees  
Functions of Gram Panchayats  
Gram Panchayat Funds  
Gram Panchayat Staff

2. Pictorial Book on Women and Law

Purpose : To impart information on Laws relating to women

Content : Equal Remuneration Act  
Protection of Civil Rights  
Abortion  
Hindu Marriage Act  
Dowry  
Atrocities on Women  
Women and Police

3. Path to a Model Gram Panchayat (Snake and Ladder Board)

Purpose : To reinforce values related to Gram Panchayat by highlighting the do's and dont's for a member.

Content : The Do's  
Concern for People,  
Contact with Poor  
Understanding Gram Panchayat rules  
Co-operating with People



Sensitivity towards poverty  
Proper implementation of Government programmes  
Discussing at Gram Panchayat meetings  
Regular attendance at Gram Panchayat meetings  
Priority for Government programmes  
Working for the villages growth  
Awareness of village problems  
Networking with Government officials  
Mobilisation of resources  
Interacting with people  
Campaigning for literacy  
Unbiased politics  
Communal harmony  
Communal amity

The Dont's

Avariciousness  
Partiality  
Misappropriation of Gram Panchayat Funds  
Negligence of responsibilities

4. Clock on Government Departments, functions/Schemes and officials at the district and taluk level.

Purpose : To inform women about the various Government Departmental function/schemes and the officials at the district and taluk level.

5. Panchayat Raj Song Booklet

Purpose : To convey messages relating to Panchayat Raj

Content : Women in politics  
Importance of reservation  
Importance of Gram Sabha

6. UMA Prachar: A collation and Kannada Translation of several background articles on Panchayat Raj that appeared in the Project Newsletter UMA Prachar.

7. UMA 1995 Calendar on Women's Rights

OTHER RESOURCE & TRAINING MATERIALS PROVIDED ARE:

8. Handout on Roles and Responsibilities of Members

Purpose : To reinforce the statutory provisions pertaining to roles and responsibilities of members.

9. Pamphlet on main features on Panchayat Raj Act 1993 by FEVORD-K

**Purpose :** To impart information of the three tiers of Panchayat Raj and relevant statutory provisions.

**Content :** Gram Sabha  
Constitution of Gram, Taluk and Zilla Panchayat:  
Reservation  
Eligibility for membership  
Functions of Gram, Taluk and Zilla Panchayat  
Adhyaksha and Upadhyaksha  
Standing Committies  
Administration - Secretary, Funds

10. Narrative Book on Women and Law by Shasikala, Advocate

**Purpose :** To impart information on Laws relating to women

**Content :** Our Constitution  
Marriage Act  
Dowry  
Abortion  
Maternity Benefit Act  
Sexual Harassment  
Prohibition of child marriage  
Women Labourers Rights  
Muslim Women  
Property Act

11. NAVODHAYA : A kannada translation by Meera Thushara of the book written by Gita Sen with Caren Grown for Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) an international network of women working for new and gender - sensitive development paradigms. A background material on Women & Development.

12. FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT - This book is the result of our observation during the camps and will be used in future interactions with the women representatives.

