

**Women's Empowerment in the context of local government in India:
An assessment
OCTOBER 20-21, 2003
New Delhi, India**

Workshop Venue: Institute of Social Sciences (ISS) Auditorium, 8 Nelson Mandela Road, New Delhi.

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Workshop agenda

Monday, October 20, 2003, Day 1:

9.30-9.45 am: Welcome, introductions, agenda setting.

This will be followed by panels and small group discussions. We want to achieve a balance between “expert” presentations, and hearing from and documenting the voices of other participants. A longer description of the panels follows the workshop agenda.

The panel format will be as follows: The Chairperson will introduce the three panelists. The three panelists will present for about 15 minutes each. The discussant will take 10 minutes to discuss the three papers. Followed by Questions and Answers.

9.45am-11.15am: Panel 1: *Concepts and Models of Empowerment*

11.15am-11.30am: Tea

11.30pm-1.00pm: Panel 2: *Methodologies and tools for measuring empowerment*

1pm-2pm: Lunch

2pm-3.30pm: Simultaneous, moderated small groups discussions on the two panels.

3.30pm-3.45pm: Tea and snacks

3.45pm-4.45pm: Report back from the groups and conclusion.

5pm-6.30pm: Interactive session with some of the elected women representatives. Four elected women representatives will present a snapshot of the work they are doing, in their local language (5 minutes, plus 5 minutes for translation). The participants can then ask the women questions.

Tuesday, October 21, 2003, Day 2

9.30am-11.00am: Panel 3: Micro studies and case studies from the field.

11.00am-11.15am: Tea

11.15am-12.15pm: Small group, moderated discussion on experiences in the field

12.15pm-12.45pm: Sharing of small group reports at the Plenary

12.45pm-1.45pm: Lunch

1.45pm-3.15pm: Panel 4: *Current Innovations, Future Strategies*

3.15pm-3.30pm: Tea and snacks

3.30pm-4.30pm: Simultaneous small group discussions to suggest future strategies: What practical steps could civil society take to create an enabling environment? How can it improve upon current work? What can donors and UN bodies do? What role for academic and research institutes? And government?

4.30pm-5.30pm: Closing plenary: Recommendations will be shared. Summing up. Evaluation forms will be collected. Vote of thanks.

5.30pm-7.00pm: Film screening of *Swaraj – The Little Republic*, produced by the ISS. Directed and scripted by award-winning filmmakers Anwar Jamaal and Sehjo Singh. This is a feature film about an elected woman *panchayat* representative who brings water to her remote village in the desert state of Rajasthan. How does she do it and what happens next? We will invite the Delhi-based filmmakers to be present at the event so they can answer questions after the screening.

This workshop is **organized by** the Institute of Social Sciences (ISS), New Delhi, in collaboration with South Asia Partnership (SAP) Canada, Ottawa and **sponsored by** the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada.

Visit the websites:

www.issin.org

www.sapcanada.org

www.idrc.ca/index_e.html

Further Workshop Description

Introduction:

One definition of women's empowerment is as follows: A change in the context of a woman's life which enables her increased capacity for leading a fulfilling human life. It gets reflected in external qualities such as health, mobility, education and awareness, status in the family, participation in decision making, and also at the level of material security. It also includes her internal qualities such as self-awareness and self-confidence. (Human Development in South Asia, 2000)

The four panels have been conceived to cover the main themes in defining and measuring women's empowerment within the context of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments.

Panel descriptions

Panel 1: *Concepts and Models of Empowerment:*

There are various approaches to measure women's empowerment such as the program and policy based approach, a rights-based approach, empowerment within the context of social movements. Each approach has its strength as well as weakness.

The first panel will critically examine the various approach to women's empowerment. It will also situate the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments within the context of the women's movement in India.

Panel 2: *Methodologies and tools for measuring empowerment*

Several NGOs and research institutes have tried to measure empowerment by using different tools and methodologies. This panel will provide a critical review of such methodologies and suggest ways of improving existing methods and/or introduce new tools. It will also examine various training modules and other methods used to empower the elected women representatives .

Panel 3: *Micro studies and case studies from the field*

In this panel we propose to give some examples of the impact of the reservation policy at the grassroots level. We will look at positive impacts as well as obstacles to women's participation and some inadvertent negative consequences.

Some of the research we hope to showcase here is the experiences of all women panchayats in West Bengal and Maharashtra; studies like the one done by Ektra on Reimagining the State, the study done by the Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS) on emerging women's leadership, the study done by MARG on the inclusion of excluded communities, etc.

Panel 4: *Current Innovations, Future Strategies*

In the final session we want to highlight some of the innovative models used to empower women and think of future strategies in theoretical development, policy development and research methodology that will enable us to conceptualise and measure women's empowerment better. We would like this workshop to provide a foundation for building future strategies and programs.

Here we hope to highlight innovative models of empowerment such as the People's Plan in Kerala, the SEWA model centered around self help groups, the Right to Information approach, Gram Swaraj, etc.

Each panel will be followed by moderated small group discussions in which we will ask participants to elaborate on a particular theme, relevant to the panel, and share their experiences so as to make possible a larger pooling together of ideas and knowledge. We have also incorporated some "human interest" by including an opportunity to talk to "real life" elected local women representatives and through the screening of a feature film on the topic. We encourage participants to display their work on this theme - copies of reports, research studies, videos, training materials, etc. We plan to publish a report of the workshop as well as an annotated bibliography on this theme. These will also be available on the internet.