WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN URBAN GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

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In an urbanising world women constituting half the population have a very limited role in urban governance—policy and decision-making as they are not adequately and appropriately represented in the urban local bodies. The 74th Constitution Amendment Act, 1992 for the first time provided one-third representation to women in urban local self-government institutions. This has raised the question as to what key role they could play in urban governance. This article examines the role of women mayors, chairpersons and councillors in city’s development and local governance. It argues that there is no difference between men and women mayors, chairpersons and councillors as regards their formal roles. There are areas, however, where women can play a catalytic role in promoting the causes of social development including women and child development. The number of women in the council though critical is not sufficient enough to neither impact the policies and decisions nor empower women. It requires capacity enhancement to build awareness, training, sharpening their skills, motivation and building confidence, and to engage in general and gender-based urban governance issues.

INTRODUCTION

THE WORLD is urbanising and is projected to grow to two-thirds of total population by 2050 from its present 54 per cent.¹ Women constitute half the world as well as in urban population. Despite their large numbers they have a very limited role to play in urban governance—policy and decision making as they are not adequately and appropriately represented in the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). Though the functions and working of ULBs

affect every man and woman, the latter has no or very minimal role as they are under-represented in leadership positions in local government institutions until recently. They do not have a role to influence local decisions resulting in inadequate access to services. This necessitates measures to provide equal representation in the municipal councils. As the municipal councils are closest to the community they are the best places to involve women in local policy and decision-making so as to enable them to participate in the policies and decisions that impact provision of civic services and quality of life. Several factors including discrimination, family burdens, financial constraints to contest to councils, cultural factors, etc., come in the way of women participation. The political empowerment requires transformation of existing political structures and processes that are more responsive to women.

Several International organisations champion the cause of equal representation to women in policy and decision-making bodies at national and local levels, but the progress has been slow.² The United Nations has been playing a pivotal role for greater representation and participation of women in local development. The UN’s Economic and Social Council passed a resolution in 1990 recommending increased proportion of women in leadership positions—30 per cent by 1995 and 50 per cent by 2000.³ The third Millennium Development Goal adopted by the UN in 2000 directs promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women which is critical for women participation in policy and decision-making levels and all other goals like eradication of poverty, child and maternal health, environmental sustainability, etc., also relate to women in one form or the other and significantly impact them more than men.⁴ International agency’s efforts to formulate gender sensitive schemes and projects for aid sharpened the focus on women’s participation in community level projects like water.⁵ Women’s participation in municipal councils will enable them to influence policies and decisions to ensure prioritisation of services and allocation of resources to provide access to the poor and needy equitably and efficiently. They can also participate in monitoring and evaluation for their continued access to services and sustainability.

²Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Promoting Women’s Leadership in Local Government: Local Government Associations Help Women Meet the Challenge, Ottawa, ³Ibid. p.3.
⁴For details of the Goals see http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/mdgoverview.html
As the World Declaration on Women in Local Governance, 1998 noted that the problems and challenges facing humanity are global but occur and have to be dealt with at the local level. Women have the equal right to freedom from poverty, discrimination and insecurity. To fight these problems and to meet the challenges of sustainable human development, it is critical that women are empowered and involved in local governments as decision-makers, planners and managers. This apart, in many countries women predominate in urban informal economy where they pursue survivalist activities. The economic contribution of these women has remained largely un-acknowledged and un-measured. In many cases urban laws do not address women’s work needs near home or elsewhere. This failure to support to women’s active contribution can negatively affect the urban economy as a whole. A number of countries have passed legislations to facilitate women’s participation in governance. Women’s formal involvement in local governance in some regions can be seen from the Fig. 1. From the Fig. 1 it is clear that in most regions, gender equality remains a major challenge for participation in formal local government politics. It is also clear that in transitional countries women participation is higher than in others. In most regions, gender equality remains a major challenge for participation in formal local government politics.

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**FIG. 1: WOMEN’S INVOLVEMENT IN FORMAL URBAN POSITIONS**

**SOURCE:** Urban Governance: Women in Leadership, p.103.

**NOTE:** Women’s involvement in formal urban politics is defined as the number of elected and of nominated local government representatives, per 10,000 metropolitan residents. It is shown in this graph as a percentage for both men and women in order to appreciate the gap between both sexes.

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Urbanisation Trends—India

India’s urbanisation trends present a picture of contrasts and complexities in terms of size, pace, pattern and consequences to overall development. In 2011 the urban population of India stood at 377 million constituting 31.16 per cent of the total population. Census of India projected that by 2026 the urban population would be 470 million constituting 33.4 per cent of total population. But by 2011, the urban population crossed Census projections of 30 per cent. The 12th Five Year Plan estimated that by 2031 India’s urban population would be about 600 millions; an increase of over 200 million in the next two decades. The United Nations projected that the urban population would reach 37 per cent by 2025 and cross 50 per cent by 2050. In absolute terms the urban population would cross 525 and 814 million in 2025 and 2050 respectively. Urban growth is bound to lead to economic, social and ecological disruptions, adversely impacting living conditions of urban population, poor in particular. This also results in pressure on the delivery/provision of basic needs. For example, over 30 per cent households do not have access to tap water in their premises and depend on alternate sources; over 20 per cent do not have access to personal or public toilets, over 55 per cent households do not have closed drains and many release waste water into the open areas and over two-third households do not have sewerage connection and leave toilet waste water into septic tanks or open drains. Proliferation of slums, growth of informal sector, increasing casualisation and under-employment, crushing pressure on civic services; deprivation of educational and health facilities, growing sense of helplessness, leading to crime and violence. Women are the worst sufferers in the absence of access to basic services.

Reservations for Women

The 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts, 1992 (CAAs) for the first time widened the base to provide representation to hitherto under represented or unrepresented categories of the community, including women, in rural and urban local self-government institutions. This has raised the question as to what key role women could play in rural and urban governance. This article examines reservations to women in ULBs.

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under 74th Amendment and the role of women mayors, chairpersons and councillors in city’s development and local governance. It argues that there is no difference between men and women mayors, chairpersons and councillors as regards their formal roles, they are similar. There are areas, however, where women can play a catalytic role in promoting the causes of social development including women and child development. This also argues that traditional bias against women and their inability to govern should pave the way for positive thinking.

The debate regarding reservations for women in local bodies is not new. In fact, reservations for women and other categories were on the political agenda even during the nationalist movement. After Independence, though provisions were made in the Municipal Acts for reservation of seats for SCs and STs, for women and backward classes, provision was made for nominations to ensure their representation in the local bodies. It was Balwant Rai Mehta Committee that recommended reservations to women through cooption in 1957 in Panchayati Raj Institutions. Later, efforts were made to reserve a percentage of seats for women in different states though the percentage varied from state to state. For example, in Andhra Pradesh there was no provision for reservation in the Municipalities Act, 1965 but in 1981 five per cent reservation was provided and it was increased to nine per cent in 1986. The Government of Karnataka made a provision for 25 per cent reservation for women in local bodies. In Maharashtra 30 per cent seats in all the ULBs were reserved for women in 1990. Similarly, the Government of Kerala reserved 30 per cent seats for women in the district councils. The 73rd and 74th CAAs provided one-third reservation for women. Based on the experience gained over two decades, the Government of India proposed 50 per cent reservation for women in rural and urban local bodies. There are many programmes in the formal and informal sector which promoted women’s participation in local development like urban basic services to poor (UBSP), development of women and children in urban areas (DWCUA), community contracting system for women groups, self-help groups, Kudumbashree in Kerala, etc., with different degrees of success in mobilising women and their participation in local planning and development.

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The reservation for women in the local bodies is aimed at securing their active involvement and support in socio-economic development. Reservations became imperative as in the normal process women were reluctant to contest the elections either because of murkiness and violence that often characterise electoral politics. A look at the number of women in the Parliament would clearly indicate that there has not been any substantial increase in the number of women Parliamentarians after Independence. It is not different in state legislatures. In addition, apathy of the political parties to nominate women to contest elections necessitated reservations for women. Despite the rhetoric to reserve seats in the political institutions by different political parties, like many electoral promises they remained unfulfilled either because women were considered unsuitable for a political career or inexperienced. Politics was perceived to add to the social responsibilities and burdens of the women. It was also a popular belief that it was easy for men from the socially disadvantaged groups to move upwards in the political ladder or electoral politics than women with similar background. This brought out the need for affirmative action to enable women to join the political mainstream. Meeting women needs is critical to sustainable development as women see development from different perspective than men. In traditional Indian society women’s interest are conventionally under-represented in policies and planning.

The 74th CAA has laid foundations for the emergence of strong bottom up women leadership who could climb the ladder to occupy positions of power at the state and national levels. The 74th CAA, which provided a constitutional status for ULBs in the country and considered a revolutionary and radical legislation, provided reservation of one-third of the strength of the council to women and also extended the same principle of reservation to women in other categories like SCs, STs apart from General category. The Act also provided one-third reservation for women in the political executives, chairman/mayors of ULBs. This enabled the women to participate in urban local governance in large numbers than was the case earlier. These provisions provided opportunities as also challenges for women to engage in local governance though there are many constraints.

The 74th CAA entrusts, through the 12th Schedule, important development functions to ULBs viz., urban planning, planning for socio-economic development, slum improvement, urban poverty alleviation, provision of basic amenities like roads, water supply, public health and sanitation, protection of the environment, safeguarding the interests of the weaker sections, etc., which have a major bearing on the development of
women and children.\textsuperscript{16} The ability of the local bodies to undertake these functions, particularly those relating to poverty alleviation, safeguarding the interests of the weaker sections would, to a great extent, depend on the composition of the members of the councils who influence the local decision-making process.

Reservations for women made a substantial difference in the composition of the ULBs. For example, in Bombay Municipal Corporations there were hardly five women corporators out of 170 but the reservations would increase their number almost by 10 folds. In Andhra Pradesh, for example, there are more than one thousand women councillors/corporators after 74th CAA whereas their number was hardly one fourth or one-fifth before. There were hardly a few chairpersons earlier whereas their number has increased by two to three-folds after the 74th CAA.\textsuperscript{17} Thus, for the first time a large number of women’s representatives are entering the council halls which were hitherto forbidden for them for a variety of reasons. As a result, the municipalities would now present a totally different picture both in terms of number of women sitting in the council hall and also their socio-economic background, political and administrative experience as well as their keenness to participate actively in civic affairs. In PRIs also, as the Second Administrative Reforms Commission has noted, that as on 2006 over 36 per cent women were elected to PRIs, though reservations was only one-third.\textsuperscript{18}

The Second Administrative Reforms Commission noted that women elected to panchayats and municipalities have performed very creditably resulting in their empowerment.\textsuperscript{19} The elected women representatives bring along with them enthusiasm, encouragement and their contribution has enriched quality of life of the communities. Still they encounter gender bias, obstruction and exclusion.\textsuperscript{20} But the Standing Committee on Urban Development noted that “the expected empowerment of women in decision-making process has not fully materialised”, despite increased representation.\textsuperscript{21} Studies also show that representation in water management projects enhanced women’s self-confidence and developed their skills,

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\textsuperscript{17}D. Ravindra Prasad and V.Gnaneswar, “74\textsuperscript{th} Constitution Amendment Act: Conformity Legislation in Andhra Pradesh”, \textit{Urban India}, Vol.XV, No.1, January-June, pp.79-100, 1995.

\textsuperscript{18}Government of India, Second Administrative Reforms Commission, \textit{Local Governance - An Enquiry into the Future}, (Sixth Report), Para, 1.22

\textsuperscript{19}\textit{Ibid}. para 3.1.3.6.

\textsuperscript{20}\textit{Ibid}. para 3.6.12.

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despite negligible impact on project outputs. In others they have reduced to tokenism. These efforts provided a great understanding of the gap between women’s motivation to participate and their ability to do projects. Bridging the gap is critical to strengthen women’s role.

Constraints on Women’s Work

The constraints to women representatives are many and varied and include lack of clear understanding of the legal and governance processes—Municipal Acts, rules and regulations, urban administration, urban development issues, etc. A majority of women councillors were first time entrants into council halls and as they lack prior experiences they find it difficult to work with local institutions. Lack of support from their experienced male or in some cases even female colleagues in the council and outside and lack of proper cooperation from municipal officials who were mostly working only with men in the councils also makes their task tough. Another problem is the lack of support from the political parties, as also over all climate, which was not very encouraging and finally lack of confidence in themselves, as they were associated with the political processes for the first time. This was compounded by their role in family management. With increasing urban population the political institutions need responsive participation of women members.

Women face many difficulties regarding taking part in electoral politics. Many, who were grafted into the political system, were mainly due to their contacts with persons in positions of power. Decades of democratic experience clearly indicates that unless reservations exist for women in the political institutions at various levels, it would almost be impossible for them to enter the political arena and play their part of the role in social reconstruction, economic development and nation-building. No doubt questions like how effective would women be in the local bodies? Would they able to play a positive and constructive role to further the cause of women’s development? Will they support women’s movement? These are some of the questions that are often raised in the context of the 74th CAA. The reservation has introduced a silent revolution in the local political arena. This has called for actions at different levels to empower the women councillors to enable them champion the cause of city development, in general and women and child development, in particular.

In a male dominated society women’s voice gets drowned in the din created by men. Women councillors sometimes even face gender based harassment and discrimination from public, colleagues, police and other

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22Priyam Das, op. cit.
government officials as well. There are many cases where women councillors asserted their right and even threatened to lead agitation for provision of services like water. There are also cases where they have demanded exclusive time slot to discuss civic problems. With 50 per cent reservation proposed women feel that they have a fair chance of being taken seriously.

It is commonly believed that women are unable to make meaningful contribution on municipal matters either due to illiteracy or lack of awareness. But studies show that there was not much difference in the educational status of men and women, thereby indicating other reasons like dominating role played by the male members and presence of their husbands in municipal meetings which nullifies the possibility of women’s participation in local governance. Often, non-member husbands’ interference was identified as negative factor. The other factors coming in the way of women’s participation is ignorance of Municipal Acts and rules, influential members ignoring women’s grievances and requests, factionalism, etc. Often women members feel that due to these factors, they have not been able to be accountable to the community which elected them and get disappointed and disillusioned resulting in their non-participation.

Functions and Roles

Municipal Acts governing their organisation and working specify the functions of municipalities and municipal corporations. What role the women can play in urban governance? Is their role different from that of their male counterparts? Can they play any significant role in women’s development? Can they play any clear specific role? If so what are the areas? These are some of the questions that are often raised. Experience reveals that the chairpersons or councillors, whether they are men or women, have broadly four important roles to play in ULBs viz., policy, developmental, political and administrative.

Policy Role

Formulate development policies, prepare town development plans, take decisions regarding the integration of spatial development planning with economic development planning, lay down broad parameters for the future growth of the towns, mobilise resources to undertake both obligatory and


discretionary functions, undertake measures for assisting the weaker sections, etc.

Development Role

Formulation, implementation and monitoring of development plans, including those for the weaker sections, women, etc. is their responsibility. Both national and state governments have articulated a number of development programmes. Formulation of city action plans under these schemes and ensuring their proper and effective implementation is a part of their development role. They have also to mobilise their share of the resources, to implement various plans and programmes wherever necessary.

Political Role

As peoples’ representatives, the elected councillors are to be in constant touch with their constituents to reflect their aspirations, needs and perspectives in the articulation of town’s development policies and plans. They are the links between the electors and the urban local body. Apart from this, as representatives of political parties they also have to undertake political activities. Mayors, Chairpersons and Councillors are constantly approached by their constituents with complaints or grievances relating to the municipal functioning. As people’s responsibilities, they have to attend to their day-to-day problems and continuously establish rapport with the community.

Administrative Role

Mayors, chairpersons and the chairpersons of standing and special committees play important role in civic governance. Supervising the functions of municipal officials in the implementation of development plans, monitoring their progress, ensuring the proper implementation of municipal laws and regulations, administrative coordination and convergence within the municipality and with external agencies, liasoning with non-governmental organisations, resolutions of conflicts in the management of municipal affairs between the groups and communities, effective utilisation of resources both internal and external, etc. are some of their administrative roles. The mayors and chairpersons, who are directly elected and have a term co-terminus with that of the council, will tend to have more of these responsibilities. The UN-Habitat has brought out a series of handbooks on the roles of the elected municipal councillors as policy-makers, decision-makers, communicators, facilitators, enablers, leaders, institution builders, power brokers, overseers, financiers, and negotiators.26 Experience shows that there is no difference in these roles between women and their counterparts either as mayors or corporators.

26See for details  http://ww2.unhabitat.org/habrdd/cappubli.htm
In recent years there has been a paradigm shift from urban governance to good urban governance underpinning sustainability, decentralisation, equity, efficiency, transparency and accountability, civic engagement and security. Though the role and contributions of local councillors to achieve good urban governance (GUG) is common to both men and women, there are specific gender aspects that should be understood, as can be seen from the Table 1.27

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>GUG Feature</th>
<th>Gender Dimension</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>Access to basic services that allows women to pursue livelihood strategies and manage their households without getting into conflict with the local governments</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Decentralisation</td>
<td>Involvement of women in city planning processes and management.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>Equity relates to representation and access to services and resources. Much of the development resources target men unless specific gender provisions are made.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>Effective delivery, targeting and financial performance to help support women in their livelihood strategies (water and toilets in the house), mobility (better public transport), rights achievements (access to education and health care) and participation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>Greater women participation of women in public life reduces public sector corruption and increasing women’s engagement in public planning and debate makes good governance sense, as it will bring about greater probity and openness of public agencies. Transparency promotes inclusiveness.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Transparency strengthens accountability—political, administrative and social, of all actors and stakeholders towards gender policies and their implementation.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Civic engagement</td>
<td>Women’s organisations play a crucial role in advocating for better services for women. Local authorities must encourage full engagement of women citizens, especially from the poor and excluded groups, for finding better ways of reaching services to poor.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Unsafe cities restrict women’s mobility, putting a ceiling on their contribution to urban economic development. Violence against women, both at homes and public spaces prevent women from full and equal participation in social and public life. City planning must redefine the rules to ensure cities become safer for women.</td>
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Specific Role of Women Representatives

As representatives of ULBs, the councillors, have access to the resources of the council and will be able to influence the council's decisions relating to distribution of resources between wards and beneficiary groups. They take up issues relating to women and demand resources for women and child development. Their position and actions legitimise the cause of women and children in the eyes of the community. Women feel free to approach the women corporators/councillors to represent their problems and grievances with confidence and freedom. Women as a group exert pressure in the council on a variety of issues confronting the city particularly those relating to environmental cleanliness, water and sanitation, pre-school education, preventive health care, etc., whose absence is felt more intensely by them as home-makers. They also mobilise the community towards constructive activities and build support structures to enable the implementation of municipal development programmes in a more sensitive way.

Women can play – often have played – a positive and supportive role which would facilitate mass movement against discrimination and struggles to gain gender equality. They can mobilise women with considerable ease to protest against the non-provision of services, non-allocation of resources for basic needs and improper implementation of civic programmes. Women, as members of committees of the municipality, effectively supervise the implementation of all development activities particularly those relating to women. In fact, their presence in the councils, which is primarily male-dominated, would be a deterrent against unsavory happenings in the Councils. A process of change, both in language and in decorum would improve the quality and status of the deliberations in the urban civic bodies. They bring new relationships of feedback, accountability and responsibility.

Strategies are being worked out to translate the promises into actions. It is also being recognised increasingly that eradication of poverty, achieving sustained economic growth and social development, environmental protection and social justice require the involvement and active participation of women as agents of change. The critical areas where women play a positive, constructive, and significant role are: eradication of poverty, removal of inadequacies and inequities in education, training ensuring access to primary health care, protecting women against violence and discrimination, access to economic resources, share in political power and decision-making structures, protecting the rights of children particularly the girl child, etc. In particular, women can play a purposive role as mayors, chairpersons and councillors,

- Ensuring access to basic services like water and sanitation and to provide higher allocation to these services.
• Enhancing the access of women to economic resources by strengthening linkages with banks and other financial institutions and encouraging innovative savings, thrift and lending practices.

• Ensuring access to education to all with a view to eradicate illiteracy, particularly among women and children.

• Improving access to women to vocational and technical training for skill formation and development.

• Increasing access to quality health care, particularly preventive and promotive health care, provision of information about factors which increase risks to women’s health.

• Initiating measures for the prevention of violence against women, raising awareness among women on the issues of violence against women and organising support to community-based organisations working in this field.

• Promoting women’s economic right including access to employment and appropriate working conditions and strengthening women’s economic capacity through skill development, training, self-employment and establishment of market and trade networks.

• Ensuring full participation of women at all levels of decision-making concerning the well-being of the society, particularly those concerning women, children and disadvantaged people.

• Preparing women to leadership positions, organising legal and administrative literacy programmes to educate women on various aspects of their rights.

• Involving women’s groups in environmental protection and upgradation; and

• Protecting the rights of the children, particularly those of the girl child.

Women play a very effective role in initiating the process of leasing out of government/municipal land to women groups within the city to enable them to undertake greening, recreation and income generation activities. Quite often, large chunks of land are locked up in disputes in cities without use. Such disputed land can be leased out to women groups for undertaking socially useful activities. Experiments have revealed that one-fourth of an acre of land can provide employment to a group of five to seven women by way of income generation activity such as vegetable growing. Women councillors can mobilise women groups in environmental protection and upgradation activities. Chairpersons and mayors, can promote discussion
among civic officials, NGO’s and the community and prepare a civic agenda for the development of children. By taking up the cause of the children they can strengthen their relations with the community. They can create a more supportive environment for the implementation of child-related development activities, allocate more resources for such activities and protect the vulnerable groups of society. They can support urban poverty eradication programmes through their increased participation and allocation of more resources for critical sectors like water supply and health. They can review effectively women and child development programmes as they understand their problems better.

As chairpersons, mayors and councillors, they can facilitate the constitution of women’s committees in the local body to protect and promote the development of women, children and other disadvantaged groups. They can co-opt educated and active women to the committees to give wider representation and to have the advantage of expertise and experience. They can encourage women to talk about sensitive issues such as rape, sexual abuse, violence, etc., and give confidence to them that they would stand by them in case of need. They can also put harassment of women and children on the political agenda. Women can play a positive role in activities relating to social justice. Violence and atrocities on women are increasing and women councillors, both in the council and outside, can take up the cases of violence and exploitation of women and protect their rights with a view to ensuring the elimination of all forms of discrimination. There are many additional functions which the councillors can undertake in addition to the purely civic functions.

There is a large number of urban poverty alleviation programmes launched by Central and state governments. Women representatives’ role is crucial in the preparation and implementation of plans under these programmes. They can support the neighbourhood groups and committees in implementing all the poverty eradication programmes effectively. By proper targeting of services, they can help those who are in the greatest need. This would contribute to sustainable economic growth and social development.

With the success of women’s involvement in urban affairs after 74th CAA or as a matter of political strategy, it was decided to increase women representation to 50 per cent in local bodies and the Constitution (112 Amendment) Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on November 24, 2009. The Bill seeks to amend the Article 243 T to enhance the quantum of reservation for women from one-third to one-half of the total seats in ULBs and this is also applicable to chairpersons. The Standing Committee of
Lok Sabha to which the Bill was referred noted that major states supported the proposal for enhancing reservations to women. Sikkim, which has enhanced reservations to women from 33 to 40 per cent desired to maintain the same level. Meghalaya felt that as reservations do not exist at present, it wants to start with one-third initially and move towards half in stages. Arunachal Pradesh however, wanted only one-third reservation. The Standing Committee agreeing with the proposed amendments felt the enhancement of women’s reservations would not only ensure their increased representation and participation in ULBs, but would also go a long way in articulating the voice of women and ensure that their concerns and problems get reflected in policies and programmes of urban development. As per the Task Force constituted by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj 14 states have made provision for 50 per cent reservation.

Way Forward

There is an urgent need to create a suitable environment for the women mayors, chairpersons and councillors to enable them to play meaningful roles as responsive and responsible local leaders of the post – 74th Amendment Act era – the roles with which many of them have been unfamiliar. There is a need for orientation/education/training to empower them to function effectively as public representatives, policy-makers, change agents and political leaders. Only periodic training and orientation can motivate them and increase their confidence to take up the new and changing roles and the causes of local self-government and women’s development. Secondly, they need to establish productive linkages with training and research institutions to undertake studies about successes and failures in development effort and training programmes for their staff. Third, there is need for frequent interaction between women chairpersons of cities and towns at state and national level for exchanging experiences and for lobbying for their rights and responsibilities. Fourth, official as well as the non-official functionaries must be sensitised towards gender issues with a view to establish a harmonious working environment. This helps in overcoming the problems of understanding the needs of women. Fifth, women representatives must involve themselves and continuously monitor the implementation of development programmes particularly those having a bearing on the critical areas referred to earlier. Based on monitoring, the

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29Ibid. p.114.
effectiveness of the system can be understood and new ways of working can be established, wherever necessary.

In recent years urban development strategies are articulated through Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM).\textsuperscript{31} The programme was mostly gender neutral and does not focus on specific problems of women in cities and towns. Though it talks of inclusive planning but does not specifically focus on participation of women. There is a need to reform the mission objectives to bring women issues into urban development agenda and process. The City Development Plan (CDP), which is mandatory for accessing funds under JNNURM, has not made it mandatory to consult women, though their participation was a requirement. The guidelines for formulating the CDPs need to be revised incorporating the consultations with women mandatory and to incorporate women’s concerns in CDP.\textsuperscript{32}

The Community Participation Law under JNNURM is aimed at bottom up planning, development and governance through Area Sabhas and Ward Committees. The law also laid down the process of selecting Area Sabha representatives. The objective is to ensure their participation in local decision-making and to represent voice of the community so as to play an active role in urban governance. But unfortunately, there is no mention for the inclusion of women in the Area Sabhas and Ward Committees. No doubt, some states like Andhra Pradesh have in their legislations made provision for women members. This is important and the Community Participation Law needs to be amended making provision for 50 per cent of members in these committees to be women as is being proposed to the municipal councils in many states. Participatory budgeting, pioneered by Porto Alegre, Brazil has been successfully implemented in several cities across the globe. The process helped correct inequalities in the city where about one-third live in slums and poor settlements. The Area Sabhas and Ward Committees should evolve such a process wherein they become fulcrums of participation, decision-making and governance. The JNNURM, which is likely to be revised based on experience, and the proposed Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission or the other urban programmes should keep gender high on the agenda.

Reservation for women would provide opportunity to widen the basis of individual participation in electoral process and contribute to the democratisation of the electoral process. It would lay the road for accessing political power at the grassroots level and enabling eventual participation


\textsuperscript{32}Renu Khosla, \textit{op. cit.}, 2009.
in policy and decision-making at the higher levels. It is hoped that in the
course of time, the urban local bodies would act as training grounds of
democracy and leadership, particularly for women who, with experience
gained over time, can climb the ladder and occupy positions of power at
the state and national levels. Women urban leadership, particularly mayors,
chairpersons and councillors, can play a very significant role in civic
matters, developmental aspects of the city and improving the quality of
life of the residents, particularly the poor, women and the disadvantaged.
The 74th CAA has facilitated the emergence of new women leadership. It
is a fact that some of the women councillors were hitherto unfamiliar with
the dynamics of politics as well as development. Many of them are first-
time entrants to the civic politics as well as council hall. They need strong
support from higher level political institutions as well as from the executive
to play a very constructive and positive development role.

The number of women in the council is critical, but is not sufficient
easy enough to make impact on the policies and decisions in the councils. It by
itself does not empower women and require capacities to actively participate
in mostly male dominated urban governance in the country. It requires
follow-up actions like awareness building, training, sharpening the skills,
motivation and building confidence, etc. It requires capacity enhancement
to engage in general and gender based governance issues. The urban
development policies and programmes should be gender sensitive to get
the expected outputs. The urban functionaries, both officials and elected,
need to be gender sensitive to address and overcome burgeoning problems
in the context of increased pace of urbanisation.

We have made tremendous progress in the political
empowerment of women. However, a lot more remains
to be done in terms of social and economic
empowerment of women ... I call upon everybody to
join hands with Government in upholding the dignity
and protecting the rights of the girl child and further
enhancing their status. Let 2001 see the true
empowerment of women in India.

—Atal Bihari Vajpayee