

Women in Panchayati Raj

Posted at: 03/03/2025

Challenges Faced by Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in Panchayati Raj Institutions

Context

- The **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992** provided **33% reservation** for women in PRIs, with some states extending it to **50%**.
 - Despite this, **patriarchal norms, lack of experience, and political pressure** hinder women's leadership.
 - The Ministry of Panchayati Raj formed a **committee (Sept 2023)**, chaired by **Sushil Kumar**, to assess these challenges.
 - Findings are based on **four regional workshops** in 14 states, engaging governments and EWRs.
-

Key Challenges

1. Lack of Political Experience

- Many EWRs lack **administrative knowledge** and struggle with governance.

2. Gender-Based Discrimination

- Women are often **ignored in meetings**, with officials preferring male counterparts.

3. Patriarchal Norms

- **Purdah system, male dominance**, and social restrictions limit women's participation.

4. Political Pressure & Threats

- **Intimidation, coercion, and misuse of No Confidence Motions** weaken women's authority.

5. Socio-Economic Disadvantages

- Many EWRs belong to **SC/ST/Minority groups**, facing additional discrimination.
- **Domestic responsibilities** further limit their governance role.

6. Lack of Training & Mentorship

- **No structured programs** to enhance leadership or guide new EWRs.

7. Short-Term Reservation

- **5-year reservation cycle** is too short for leadership development.

8. Weak Legal Deterrence

- Laws against **proxy rule (Pradhan Pati, Sarpanch Pati)** are poorly enforced.
-

Recommendations & Way Forward

1. Strengthen Legal Framework

- **Strict penalties** against proxy rule and coercion.

2. Capacity Building

- **Leadership training, financial education, and mentorship programs** for EWRs.

3. Structural Reforms

- **Extend reservation tenure** beyond five years for continuity.

4. Awareness & Gender Sensitization

- **Campaigns to change societal attitudes** and promote women's leadership.
-

Conclusion

- **Legal, structural, and social reforms** are needed to **empower EWRs**.
- Implementing these changes will **strengthen grassroots democracy** and ensure **effective women's leadership** in PRIs.

