

Project on Gender and Governance: “Promoting Women’s political leadership and governance in India and South Asia”

**With support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Royal Norwegian Government**

November 2010

Project Background: Launched in December 2009, with a vision that by 2030, men and women elected representatives will have equal influence over political decision making within South Asia, the project is being successfully implemented by UNIFEM (Part of UN Women) South Asia Regional Office and its partners. This project is aligned with the Government of India’s mission to empower women and youth in the country, named Panchayat Mahila evam Yuva Shakti Abhiyan.

Project Partnerships:

- **The Hunger Project (THP):** UNIFEM (part of UN Women) has entered into an MOU with the Hunger Project on 22nd December, 2009 for a period of three years extendable up to five. THP works in 10 states across the country with over 80,000 elected women representatives in Gram Panchayats (village political institutions) and with 40 local NGOs. They have trained more than 800 staff trainers to lead women’s leadership workshop and provide empowerment to women leaders. Given their substantial experience in local governance in India, THP was considered suitable for this project. UNIFEM in partnership with THP aims to:
 1. Increase women’s influence in local governance institutions by strengthening women’s voice and participation in political and institutional mechanism at local level through capacity development and demand-led training programme. This is expected to result in:
 - Improvement in leadership capacities in individuals;
 - Improvement in the ability to implement key government programmes, fund allocation and development of village action plan;
 - Improvement in the capacity to develop gender equitable plans and undertake gender responsive budgeting;
 - Increase women’s participation in regulatory bodies and working groups at gram-sabha level; and
 - Strengthening and mobilizing accountability mechanisms in gram-sabha including women’s participation in right to information and public hearings.
 2. Support formation of linkages with existing women collectives and women political watch groups to hold politicians and political parties to account.
 3. Build a constituency of women through campaigns which will support elected women representatives to formulate women manifestos that can be used to put pressure on different political actors for stronger incorporation of needs women have as part of their policies and plans.
- **ANHAD:** In July 2010 UNIFEM (part of UN Women) collaborated with ANHAD to support the passage of the Women’s Reservation Bill in the Lok Sabha (lower house of the Parliament). UNIFEM (part of UN Women) is partially supporting the larger media campaign which began in April 2010 by funding two activities of the campaign – organisation of an umbrella signature campaign and the development of a documentary film to highlight the significance of political participation of women and the struggle for the Women’s Reservation Bill.

Project Information

Area: Democratic Governance

Budget: USD 10 Million

Project Duration: 36 months (2009 – 2012)

Implementing Agency: United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in partnership with The Hunger Project (THP), the National Institute for Rural Development (NIRD) and the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW)



UNIFEM (part of UN Women) is partially supporting the larger media campaign which began in April 2010 by funding two activities of the campaign – organisation of an umbrella signature campaign and the development of a documentary film to highlight the significance of political participation of women and the struggle for the Women’s Reservation Bill.

The support for this campaign is aligned with the second strategy outlined in the UNIFEM Governance programme document – support trainings, coalitions and lobbying (e.g. with political parties) so that women representatives transform and implement policies, programmes and resource allocations in favour of women’s rights. This will contribute to the second outcome envisaged in the programme under which civil society groups are supported to lobby with political parties to increase the number of women in decision making posts within political parties and to ensure that a larger number of tickets are given by these parties to women candidates during elections.

- **National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD):** UNIFEM (part of UN Women) has entered into a MOU with NIRD on 16 November 2010. NIRD is the technical division of the Ministry of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Government of India. NIRD is a very important partner in this programme for capacity development of elected women representatives in panchayati raj. It is envisaged that the Centre of Excellence, which will evolve over time as the project sets into motion, will be based out of NIRD.

Milestones:

- Between 26th and 28th April the **First Annual Consultation of the Governance Programme** was held in Delhi and Jaipur. The consultation constituted a series of meetings. Field visits were organised in Jaipur where participants engaged with Panchayat women and men elected representatives; and met with the Minister of Panchayati Raj as well as SIRD officials.
- In April 2010, UNIFEM supported the Institute of Social Sciences with their **Annual Women’s Political Empowerment Day Celebrations** on 24th and 25th April 2010 which awards the work of women Panchayat members. The theme of this year’s conference was ‘To end violence against women and the role of Panchayats’. UNIFEM (part of UN Women) supported the commissioning of two theme papers and the corresponding sessions to discuss them in the conference – on the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and on HIV and AIDS and trafficking of women. UNIFEM (part of UN Women) also partnered with THP to organise an additional day’s stay of the elected women representatives after the conference so that they could brainstorm jointly on how the women could use the political platform to advocate for ‘no tolerance zones’ for gender based violence in their villages.
- UNIFEM (part of UN Women) went to Oslo, Norway from the 6th to the 13th of August 2010 to attend meetings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Royal Norwegian Government and NORAD and give them an update of the project to the mission.

Forthcoming:

- UNIFEM (part of UN Women) hopes to bring on board in the future the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) as one of the research partners.
- UNIFEM (part of UN Women) is in the process to forge partnerships with institutions in Norway to help in capacity development and research cooperation for an India-Norway partnership within this Governance Project.
- UNIFEM (part of UN Women) is collaborating with the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Government of India in their project on

Project Location(s):

Starting in India - The project will be implemented in six states (Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, and Rajasthan)

Other countries in South Asia – Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh

