4.1. Pre-Training - Agency/Assets of Women Panchayat Presidents

The knowledge levels of women panchayat presidents on various aspects of panchayat Raj were studied through a questionnaire. The aspects such as knowledge of the meaning of panchayats, Indian Constitution, 73rd Amendment, three-tier system, Tamil Nadu State Panchayat Act, reservation for women in Panchayat Raj, existing status of women, existing status of Dalits, social justice, development planning, protecting natural resources of panchayats, liaison with officers, social behaviour, community based organizations, income generation of the panchayats, Gram Sabha/panchayat meetings, administration of panchayat office, maintenance of records and registers etc. were studied. In addition to this knowledge to analyse and handle the problems in the administration of the panchayat, solitary visits to office, association with political party, knowledge of foundation works for social development, attitude towards male leaders and male officers, membership in SHGs and in other women organizations were also studied.

For the leader of the panchayat a complete knowledge of the office and subjects handled by him is essential for the overall development of the panchayat and its people. The meaning of panchayat that it is a local democratic government to be elected by the
local people for their social and economic security should be known to the panchayat presidents. The women panchayat presidents were not aware of the complete meaning of panchayat. 38 percent of the total respondents said that they were aware of the meaning of the panchayats, and the remaining 62 percent said they did not know the meaning of the panchayat before attending the training programme. With regard to the knowledge of the Indian Constitution, only 17 percent of the respondents said that they knew to a certain extent, and the remaining 83 percent said that they did not. The 73rd Amendment that gave the panchayat constitutional status and opportunity to women to participate in the election through the provision of reservation was known to only 22 percent of the women and the remaining 78 percent said that they did not know. As for the constitution of the Panchayat Raj, a three-tier system, only 41 percent of the respondents knew about it while the remaining 59 percent said they did not know. 60 percent of the women were aware of the reservation for women in the Panchayat Raj system and only 40 percent said that they did not. The women, particularly the women panchayat presidents, should have knowledge about the status of women in the community. But the majority (74 percent) of the respondents did not know their status in the community while 83 percent did not know about the status of the dalit community. Knowledge of social justice was reported by a very low number of respondents, i.e., 32 percent before attending the training and the remaining 68 percent did not know. Planning is very important for panchayat development, particularly participatory planning for panchayat development by the Gram Sabha. The panchayat president should know about the planning
process and accordingly the presidents have to plan for the
development of their respective panchayats. But, before attending the
training programme, only 21 percent of the women panchayat
presidents were aware of planning and the remaining were not.
Protecting the natural resources for the development of the panchayat
is one of the techniques for ensuring income for the panchayat. The
women presidents should utilize the natural resources for the
development of their respective panchayats. Before the training
programme, only 28 percent of the respondents had an idea of utilizing
the natural resources for panchayat development and the remaining
respondents said that they did not know. Liaison and public relations
are very much required to administer the panchayat. Particularly
liaison with government officers is required to get information on
schemes and also get sanction for any schemes meant for panchayat
development. Before the training programme, only 18 percent of the
respondents knew to contact government officers and the remaining 82
percent said that they never contacted any government officials and
they did not know how to liaison with them. Though the women
panchayat presidents knew very well about good behaviour within the
family, 25 percent of the respondents did not know behaviour with
society, public and officers. There are community based organizations
working at the grassroot level and carrying out development/welfare
activities. Knowledge of community organizations is essential to get
people's participation and enlist the support of the like minded
organisations for any development activities. Before the training
programme, 36 percent of the respondents were aware of community
based organizations since they were involved in SHG activities. The
remaining 64 percent did not know about the community based organizations. Income generating sources for panchayats are the only way to finance infrastructural development and poverty reduction in the panchayat jurisdiction. But, among the total women panchayat presidents, only 30 percent were aware of the sources of income generation of the panchayats and the remaining 70 percent said they did not know. Before the training programme, only 19 percent of the women presidents did good public oration and the remaining 81 percent did not have any experience in public oration. Ability to conduct any type of meeting is one of the qualities of panchayat presidents. Among the total number of respondents, only 36 percent said that they had knowledge of conducting Gram Sabha/panchayat meetings and the remaining 64 percent said that they did not know. The administration of panchayat office is the responsibility of the panchayat president. Before the training programme, only 36 percent of the respondents knew to administer the panchayat office and the remaining 64 percent said that they did not know. Problem solving is also one of the qualities of any leader, particularly the women panchayat presidents. Before the training programme, only 15 percent of the women panchayat presidents knew to solve the problems of panchayat administration and the remaining majority (85 percent) did not know. Knowledge of foundation works existed only among 36 percent of the respondents before the training programme. In their role as panchayat presidents the women were to interact and mingle with males. But, before the training programme, 79 percent of the respondents were hesitating to interact with the male leaders and male officers. Before the training programme, only 9 and 8 percent of
the respondents said that they had membership in women self-help groups and other women organizations respectively.

The analysis revealed that a very low number of women panchayat presidents had sound knowledge of the important aspects of the panchayat before the training programme. Hence, it was realized that the study on the impact of the training programme is vital for the dissemination of knowledge and knowledge support to the women panchayat presidents to execute their duties and responsibilities properly and efficiently.

4.2. Training Process and Impact of the Training Programme

The training organized by Gandhigram Rural Institute taught many things to women panchayat presidents of Tiruchirappalli District. The majority of the presidents, i.e., 83 percent, said that the contents of the syllabus in the training programme covered the entire subject and 52 percent said that on-the-spot changes were made in syllabus through participatory identification of the trainees’ requirement. The majority, 99 percent of the respondents, said that the methodology of the training programme was very much participative, which helped all the trainees to talk about the field reality in their respective panchayats. They added that the teaching was at their level and it contributed to a better understanding of the subjects. The place of the training programme was accessible to all the respondents. All the women panchayat presidents said that they had good opportunities for clearing their doubts in the subjects and topics and the place of the training programme was very safe in all respects, convenient, comfortable and conducive to learning. All the women panchayat presidents said that
they participated actively in the training programme and further said that the group discussions in the training programmes were very relevant to them and created an opportunity to share all kinds of experiences and learning.

All the subjects and topics were elucidated very well in the training programme said 97 percent of the women panchayat presidents. 97 percent of the respondents said that they learnt that solving the problems of drinking water and streetlights is not the only duty of the village panchayat president but the village panchayat president has much more duties and responsibilities towards development of the people and achievement of social justice.

The books and materials provided in the training programme helped better understanding of the subjects and were very useful to refer on a later date. The training material given in the training programme was very useful to women panchayat presidents since they referred to it whenever they had a doubt while performing their duty and asserting their position in the panchayat administration. They used the training manual for reference during discussions and meetings.

92 percent of the women panchayat presidents said that they maintained contact with the resource persons/team and clarified their doubts about Panchayat Raj whenever they needed. 93 percent of the women panchayat presidents said that the institute which organized and conducted the training provided knowledge support even after training programme. 93 percent of the respondents felt that they required further training. All the respondents except two percent said
that their quality and ability had increased after the training programme.

99 percent of the women panchayat presidents said that they had learned complete administration of village panchayat like passing of panchayat resolutions, implementation of resolutions, convening and conducting of Grama Sabha meetings, developed knowledge on rules, regulations and programme guidelines and a better understanding of the duties, powers and responsibilities of the panchayat presidents.

The majority, 89 percent, of the respondents said that they had direct involvement in all panchayat activities due to the training where they learnt the ways and means of approaching the general public, village people, government officers and district administration. All the women panchayat presidents said that the training enabled them to find opportunities for taxation to increase the income of the village panchayat.

97 percent of the women panchayat presidents said that they learnt to use the powers of the panchayat president to inspect schools, noon meal centers, primary health centers etc. and exercise power independently on important decision making occasions. The majority, 98 percent, of the respondents got a good understanding of the maintenance of panchayat records and registers. The majority, 90 percent, of the women panchayat presidents said that they are contacting the people and ensuring people’s participation in panchayat development.
The majority, 90 percent, of the respondents said that they are assisting the SHGs in their respective village panchayats and promoting the Women Self Help Groups in villages. The majority 98 percent, of the respondents said that they are paying special attention to women and child welfare in their respective village panchayats after the training programme. All the women panchayat presidents said that they learnt to create smooth interpersonal relationship within the office and maintain good official relationship with the government departments.

They learn the following subjects in the training programme.

- Exercising power independently on important decision making occasions.

- Panchayat legislations, rules, powers and responsibilities.

- Powers of panchayat president to inspect schools, noon meal centers, primary health centers etc

- Administration of panchayat

- Gram Sabha meetings and implementation of its resolutions

* Maintenance of records and registers

- Ensuring people’s participation in panchayat development.

- Increasing the income of the village panchayat.

- Promoting Women Self Help Groups in the village.

- Organizing the youth in the village
- Working for women and child welfare.

- Creating smooth interpersonal relationship within the office and maintaining good official relationship with the government departments.

4.3. **Post-Training - Changes and Development in the Agency/Assets of the Women Panchayat Presidents**

The selected women panchayat presidents were assessed by a questionnaire on the development and changes in their capacity after attending the training programme. The aspects such as knowledge of developing the income of the panchayat, knowledge of social justice, knowledge of planning, knowledge of protecting natural resources, knowledge of community based organizations, knowledge of the meaning of panchayat, knowledge of Indian Constitution, knowledge of 73rd Amendment, knowledge of three-tier system, knowledge of Tamil Nadu State Panchayat Raj Act, knowledge of reservation for women in Panchayat Raj system, knowledge of existing status of women, knowledge of liaison with government officers, knowledge of social behaviour, ability to perform public oration, ability to conduct Gram Sabha/panchayat meeting, knowledge of administration of panchayat office, knowledge of maintenance of panchayat records and registers etc. were assessed. On an average, less than 15 percent of the total respondents said that they were aware of the above said aspects before attending the training programme. But, after the training programme, an average of 95 percent of the respondents said that they had good knowledge on the above said aspects. All the respondents
(98 %) except two percent said that they had updated their knowledge on the meaning of panchayat after attending the training programme. Social justice is the main concern of any government and 87 percent of the women panchayat president respondents said that they learnt about social justice and its maintenance in the village community in the training programme. Planning is an important process for the development of the panchayat and 92 percent of the total respondents said that they are trained to draw and execute panchayat level development plans. Protection of natural resources is one of the important duties of panchayat presidents. After attending the training programme, 97 percent of the respondents said that the learnt the importance of protecting the natural resources of the panchayat. Support of community based organizations is very much useful in carrying out development activities at the panchayat level. All the respondents (100 %) said that they are very clear about the meaning of panchayat and 80 percent said that they also learned about the Indian Constitution. The 73\textsuperscript{rd} Amendment is the base for a more decentralized Panchayat Raj system and it is a prerequisite for people’s representatives to be aware of the 73\textsuperscript{rd} Amendment and its three tier setup. After attending the training programme, 77 percent of the respondents said that they have knowledge of the 73\textsuperscript{rd} Amendment and 81 percent of the respondents said that they have understood the three-tier system. 84 percent of the respondents said that they are well informed about the provisions in the Tamil Nadu State Panchayat Act 1994 and, with this knowledge support, they are able to carry out their functions effectively. 91 percent of the respondents also have knowledge of the reservation for women after the training programme.
and 94 percent have knowledge of the existing status of women. Liaison with the government officers is an art and each of the panchayat representatives should be trained to create contact and liaison with them. 95 percent of the women said that they have knowledge of liaison with government officials after attending the training programme. Knowledge of social behaviour helps any one to work for the people and almost all the respondents (99 %) said that they have knowledge of social behaviour after attending the training programme. Their ability to speak in public is also well-improved, said 92 percent of the respondents. 98 percent of the respondents said that they have gained knowledge of conducting Gram Sabha/panchayat meeting after attending the training programme. All the respondents (100 %) said that they have knowledge of administering the panchayat office and, 98 percent of the respondents said that they have knowledge of maintenance of the panchayat records and registers after attending the training programme.

4.4. Development Outcome

Performance

The performance of the women panchayat presidents who attended the training programme was also studied. The performance on activities such as supervision and verification of food supply in anganwadies and noon meal centers, frequent meetings with village health nurse, provision of water and toilet facilities, participation in public meetings and festivals, frequent contact with the people, assistance to Self Help Groups, participation in the activities of Self Help Groups, maintenance of sanitation in the village, implementation
of total sanitation programme, special attention to women and child welfare, general medical camp, implementation and supervision of government schemes, common property resources maintenance, tree plantation, provision of building facilities for anganwadies and schools, efforts for increasing the income of the panchayat, level of women participation in Gram Sabha meetings, level of dalit participation in Gram Sabha meetings, contacts with various supportive organizations, augmentation of panchayat revenue, proper implementation of government orders, collection and maintenance of statistics relevant to panchayat administration, planning and preparation of project reports, undertaking of development activities based on the financial position of the panchayat, attention to women development programmes, attention to women’s health, attention to pre- and post-natal care, practice of discussing the problems of women with women, enrollment of all eligible children in the school, reenrollment of dropped out children in the school and prevention of child labour etc. were taken for studying the performance of the women panchayat presidents.

Knowledge of foundation works for social development was claimed by 92 percent of the respondents. It is found that 64 percent of the respondents are able to carry out foundation works for social development in the village panchayat. The majority of the respondents were able to cope up with the panchayat administration. Leadership quality could be observed among 89 percent of the respondents after the training programme, as mentioned by the respondents. But the remaining 11 percent did not develop any leadership quality after the training programme. As high as 95 percent said that they acquired
knowledge of the requirements for the development of women and said that they will concentrate on women development programmes. 98 percent of the women said that they are aware of the role of women’s health in the development of the nation. All the respondents said that they will attend to pre- and post-natal care for women since women and child health is very important for national development. 96 percent of the respondents said that they used to discuss the problems of women with women. 96 percent of the women said that they enrolled all five year old children in the school. 97 percent of the respondents said that they have enrolled the dropped out children again in the school. Child labour has been prevented in the village panchayats said 95 percent of the respondents. 96 percent of respondents said that they are supervising the anganwadies and noon meal centers.

All the respondents said that they ensured proper food supply in the anganwadies and noon meal centers. All the respondents said that they held frequent meetings with the Village Health Nurse and monitored the health problems and status in the village panchayat. 99 percent of the respondents said that they provided water and toilet facilities in the schools in their respective village panchayats. 98 percent of the respondents said that they always participated in public meetings and festivals. 90 percent of the respondents said that they have close contact with the people in the village panchayat. 90 percent of the respondents said that they provided assistance to the SHGs in the village panchayat. 93 percent of the respondents participated in the activities of the SHGs in their village panchayats. 98
percent of the respondents said that they are taking care of their village panchayat’s sanitation. 98 percent of the respondents said that they are cooperating in the Total Sanitation Programme of the Government in making their village panchayat open air defecation free.

All the respondents said that they paid special attention to the education of the girl children in their village panchayats. 93 percent of the respondents said that they conducted General Medical Camps in their village panchayats. All the respondents except one are supervising the government schemes and ensuring that the benefit reach the right beneficiaries. 83 percent of the respondents attend the panchayat office daily. 76 percent of the respondents said that they have allotted a fixed time and visit the village panchayat Office regularly and the remaining 24 percent of the respondents said that they visit whenever they find time. 85 percent of the respondents said that they are carefully maintaining the common property resources such as irrigation tanks and canals. 82 percent of the respondents said that they are practicing tree plantation on the rivers banks, tank bunds and waste lands to improve the ecology of their village panchayat. 95 percent of the respondents said that they provide building facilities for the anganwadies and schools in their village panchayats. 94 percent of the respondents said that they are taking efforts for developing the income of their panchayats. 94 percent of the respondents said that the women participation in the Gram Sabha meetings has increased. 91 percent of the respondents said that the dalit participation in the Gram Sabha meetings has increased. 97 percent of the respondents said that they have close contact with the community-based
organizations serving in the village panchayat. 97 percent of the respondents said that they are implementing and maintaining the government orders. 98 percent of the respondents said that they are collecting and maintaining the statistics and records. 93 percent of the respondents said that they are planning, preparing and keeping the development project reports in the village panchayats. 94 percent of the respondents said that they undertake development activities based on the financial position of their village panchayats.