INVESTING IN WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

#ElectedToLead
My journey as President is very special in my life. It has enabled me to take actions to help improve the lives of the poor, women and children. I knew I was never alone, the training programs, as well as support from other elected women representatives in Jagriti federation, has been constant. I am recognised and feted by others as a Sarpanch leader who not only makes roads and buildings, but also works for malnourished children, survivors of violence against women, and for the marginalised peoples’ right to dignity.

Ratia Meravi,
President, Koylikhapa Panchayat,
Balaghat district, Madhya Pradesh

Who we are

The Hunger Project (THP) is a global, non-profit, strategic organisation running programmes across 12 countries in Africa, Latin America and South Asia. It is committed to ending hunger and poverty through a holistic approach that is sustainable, rooted in lived realities, and women-centric.

THP in India strives to address this issue by encouraging women’s transformative leadership at the grassroots level. Foregrounded in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992, THP India started working with elected women representatives at the local self-governance level in 2001. Over the years, THP India’s strategies have consistently aimed at empowering elected women representatives in Gram Panchayats to be effective leaders.

We firmly believe that when more women occupy decision-making positions, a process of engendering development is unleashed and women’s rights, needs and concerns are less likely to be ignored or silenced. Equipped with the right skills, knowledge of local governance systems, and support to develop and strengthen their leadership, elected women leaders become empowered to articulate their rights as citizens. They advocate for, and drive inclusive and equitable development, tackling the issue of extreme hunger and poverty in their communities, villages, and Panchayats.

With this vision, THP India continues to build and nurture the potential of elected women leaders in reimagining their role and participation in local governance. With their finer understanding of issues and determined efforts, they mindfully negotiate through the complex socio-political landscape of rural India.
Till now, we have successfully engaged with **1,83,000 elected women representatives**. Currently, we work in the 6 states of Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Uttarakhand.

Creating equitable society, Improving government service delivery, Enhancing community assets.

*This map is only representational, and not to scale.*
What we do

THP India’s core programme focus involves:

» **Strengthen capacities and leadership skills of elected women representatives** so that they can step out as confident, well informed and capable public office holders.

» **Foster an enabling environment**, through multi-stakeholder engagement, so that elected women leaders can effectively exercise their role and influence policy outcomes on issues pertaining to local governance.

» Through key initiatives such as **federation building and jagruk manch platform**, a safe space is created for co-learning, co-sharing, coalition-building, and collective action.

» **Advocate for responsive policies and a larger dialogue** that would promote and support women’s political empowerment. This involves engagement with decision-makers and forging alliances with like-minded organisations, civil society networks, and engaging with the media.

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**Key Acronyms**

- **WLW**: Women’s Leadership Workshop
- **FW**: Follow-up Workshop
- **NBW**: Needs Based Workshop
- **GSM**: Gram Sabha Mobilisation
- **FedMet**: Federation Meeting
- **SWEEP**: Strengthening Women’s Empowerment Through Electoral Processes
Elected Women Representatives Empower Adolescent Girls

In 2015, THP India embarked upon a critical intervention with regards to empowering adolescent girls. It stemmed out of a constructive dialogue with relevant stakeholders. Spotlight was put on the needs and challenges faced by the adolescent girls in Rajasthan, Karnataka and Bihar. It is here that elected women representatives have played a significant role in addressing several issues impacting lives of adolescent girls.

The strategy designed situates the specific interventions within THP India’s core local governance framework, which is to facilitate an inter-generational dialogue between elected women representatives and adolescent girls. Trainings aim to develop a nuanced understanding of the distinct needs of adolescent girls, especially looking at the harmful practice of child marriage.

Shakuntala Devi, a ward member from Malipokhar Bhinda Panchayat, Bihar, shares that ‘the biggest focus for me is education. I was married at 13 but I have ensured that my daughters are educated. My aim is to educate all the girls in my village. This is the only way we can truly stop Child Marriage, if we educate and empower adolescent girls.’

14-year-old Afrina travelled across India by train on an exciting peer-to-peer learning adventure as part of the #GirlsChangeTrack journey. Thanks to the training she has received from THP India, she succeeded in stopping her cousin’s forced marriage. She is more determined to make a difference now that she understands that she has equal rights.
Key Highlights

1,83,000 elected women representatives’ capacities built and enhanced through multiple innovative programmatic interventions since 2001

124 million people in the village communities reached

750 community mobilisers trained

25 SWEEP (Strengthening Women’s Empowerment Through Electoral Processes) campaigns conducted

5 block level federations initiated; 1 state level federation SUGRAMA registered in Karnataka

From ‘I cannot’ to ‘We can’; We witness enhanced confidence, improved perception towards women’s right to voice and agency, knowledge of rights, asserting and leveraging their public office to demand accountability. These aspects are integral to understanding how women leaders have evolved as leaders

24 baseline and end-line surveys reinforce the importance of measuring, documenting and disseminating the impact of expansive work undertaken by the elected women representatives

Diverse range of learning materials including manuals, guidelines, posters, workbooks, films, etc.

Evolving regional presence with THP India emerging as a technical resource support to like-minded organisations in South Asia, working to enhance women’s political agency and leadership capacities in those countries. THP India-BNEW (Bhutan Network for Empowering Women) chapter is an integral part of this peer learning initiative
Pura Grama Panchayat comes under Chickballapur assembly constituency, the issue of Bagar Hukum* applications have remained unresolved for over many years. The issue was taken up by the SUGRAMA federation as there were many other panchayats also grappling with it. We then approached the MLA. It is currently under consideration for immediate action. This wouldn’t have been possible if I had no information and guidance of SUGRAMA. I am happy to have found a platform to resolve such major concerns which the men couldn’t.

Lakshmi,
President, Pura Grama Panchayat,
Chickballapura District, Karnataka

*Bagar Hukum cultivators are farmers with no formal and documented ownership rights to government land they have been cultivating for decades.
Support the Vision and the Mission

We are grateful to our diverse range of donors/investors for their support and solidarity. However, as our programmes grow we need sustained access to resources to bolster our systems for a wider and deeper change. Your contributions will directly impact and amplify the voices and identities of elected women leaders as critical agents of change in rural India. THP India’s interventions will ensure that the elected women representatives become capable to make informed choices and utilise resources in a manner that will prioritise basic survival issues affecting the most marginalised, while engendering development which is both just and equal.

We are fully registered as an NGO and authorised to issue 80G Income Tax exemption certificate for all donations made by Indian tax payers.

So DONATE NOW and play a vital role in strengthening and sustaining elected women’s leadership in rural governance.

It is only because of ALIBHA federation that I have been able to muster the courage to take a stand against ills like domestic violence and other issues that affect women in our Panchayat. I was also a child bride, married to an older man. I joined ALIBHA, found other women like me... Now I have an opportunity to participate in the political public space and be heard.

Shantilata,
Ward Member, Baladiyabandha Panchayat,
Dhenkanal District, Odisha
Looking forward, I want to bring all women together and march ahead, leaving nobody behind.

Stronger the voices of women, lesser the violence against our mobility.

Rajni Devi,
President, Panchdeval Panchayat, Sirohi District, Rajasthan
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