



Centre for
Catalyzing
Change

EveryGirl EveryWoman EveryWhere

Centre for Catalyzing Change (C3)

PAHEL

Women Leading Change

Gender Equity and Governance (GEG)

Initiation: 2007 Project area: Bihar, 4 districts, 10 blocks

Supported by:

the David &
Lucile Packard
FOUNDATION



Women's presence in political decision-making bodies is critical to ensure a gender perspective into policies and programs. However, women's legitimate and constitutional presence at different levels of governance does not increase their visibility in political decision making. Their entry into the political arena does not guarantee gender equitable social transformation, nor does it transform them into effective leaders. Women candidates for political office still face multiple challenges of not having access to information and lack of experience among newly elected women representatives (EWR) -- women struggle to understand what constitutes a meeting, how to conduct meetings and what people expect of them as elected members. Gender discrimination, poor literacy, restricted mobility, and domestic responsibilities are additional barriers to their functioning.

Our reach

Elected Women
Representatives (EWRs)

1700

Robust evidence shows that reservation for women at the Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) level significantly increases their influence on policy decisions of local government, and that investment decisions made by reserved and unreserved village councils are attributable to differences in the Mukhiya/Pradhan's (village council head) gender. Importantly, women elected under reservation invest more in public goods that are more reflective of women's policy priorities, such as drinking water. The mechanism seems to be that women leaders have the same kind of preferences and development priorities as the people in their communities (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004).

Our Objectives

Our aim is to empower EWRs in Bihar by strengthening their voice, participation, leadership, and influence within the Panchayati Raj system in order to ensure more accountable women led local governance and bring about a transformation in the delivery of services; especially family planning, reproductive health and related issues like girls' education and age of marriage.



Key facts

13%

Members of the Indian Parliament are women

50%

Seats reserved for women in local government in Bihar since 2006

59.7 %

Turnout of female voter in Bihar, surpassing male voters in 2020

How does Pahal work

Bihar was one of the first states in India to reserve 50% seats for women in three tiers of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. C3's program Pahal supports the EWRs in understanding and delivering their role and responsibilities better, but also to help them be leaders in voicing atrocities against women and girls. Our program bridges the gap, and mainstreams EWRs in political and personal decision making processes. We do this by building leadership skills, specifically to strengthen their voice, participation, leadership and influence within the Panchayat, with focus on family planning/ reproductive health issues. Further, these EWRs also work on issues of early marriage, low education completion rates as well as poor nutritional status of girls and women. This initiative is based on the belief that enhancing capacities of EWRs can pay large dividends and lead to positive social change. Because of this intervention, EWR's decision making in the Panchayat has increased and they are able to contribute to improved services at village, block, and district levels. Specifically, EWRs monitor the quality of services at the Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Day (VHSND), Health Sub-Centre (HSC), Primary Health Centre (PHC), and District Hospital (DH), Forum of Panchayat and Gram Sabha (meetings), and raise issues related to delivery and efficacy of health services.



Highlights

Impact monitoring was done by independent external research agencies. C3 designed comprehensive studies to assess and understand the impacts

- We have mentored three cohorts of EWRs since 2007. Starting from 200 women, today we are mentoring over 2000 women leaders through Pahal and other programmes adapted from the Pahal model
- Increase in Knowledge, Awareness and Participation: Increase of 74 percentage points in the proportion of ERs who said that their knowledge of MH/ RH aspects after becoming PRI member has improved. A rise of 41 percentage points in the proportion of ERs who report an improved ability to raise issues during meetings is observed. At endline, 83% said improving MH/ RH in their community is their responsibility, compared to just 3% who said so at baseline. Participation in Panchayat level meetings and Gram Sabha meetings increased from 14% in baseline to 85% & 88% respectively in endline.

While at baseline, 53% ERs had not attended any Village Health Sanitation Nutrition Days (VHSNDs) organized in their village in the last 6 months, 95% in endline had attended at least one.

Case Study

Kapoor Devi, ward member of Sonsa Panchayat, Hisua Block, believes that rights and responsibilities go hand in hand for duty bearers and for right holders. She facilitated the procedure for obtaining PMAY (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana) in her ward. The beneficiaries thought their task was done once the finance had been credited to their account, and they happily went back to their original habitation at the brick kiln. Annoyed, Kapoor Devi raised the issue with the village council head. Ultimately, she told the beneficiaries - either construct the house or be prepared to face the charge of cheating by the government. This worked! Her pro-activeness gained her much appreciation from government officers.

- Active Leaders during Pandemic: 52% feel that they have become more confident to solve local problems after COVID, 43% said their family members are proud of them, and 32% feel they are able to raise their voice in meetings.
- Need for system level buy to scale up engagement: 43% said they shared gaps in services during panchayat meetings, 41% said shared during VHSNC meetings but, only 3% said they used untied funds to resolve the issues discussed

(Pahal evaluation in Aurangabad and Nawada)

We are C3. Centre for Catalyzing Change. We are for EveryGirl. EveryWoman. EveryWhere.

We are a committed organization working in India to make sure no woman or girl is denied her basic rights. We design and implement interventions that work with the existing systems to deliver solutions at scale