



Evaluation of the Capacity Building Training Programme for Newly Elected Gram Panchayat Members (2020–21), and the Refresher Training Programme for Elected Women Representatives of Gram Panchayats (2023–24)

Submitted By



PUBLIC AFFAIRS CENTRE
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**Evaluation of the Capacity Building Training Programme for
Newly Elected Gram Panchayat Members (2020–21), and the
Refresher Training Programme for Elected Women
Representatives of Gram Panchayats (2023–24)**

Submitted to



**Abdul Nazir Sab State Institute of
Rural Development & Panchayat Raj (ANSSIRD & PR),
Government of Karnataka**

Submitted by



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Preface

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context and Background

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 marked a transformative step in India's democratic decentralisation by institutionalising the three-tier system of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and mandating the reservation of at least one-third of all seats for women. This reform aimed to strengthen local self-governance, promote inclusive participation, and ensure responsive service delivery at the grassroots level. In this framework, Gram Panchayats (GPs) act as the foundation of local governance, responsible for planning and implementing developmental schemes, managing finances, and ensuring community welfare.

However, several studies and field experiences have highlighted that newly elected representatives, particularly women and members from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes, often assume office without prior exposure to administrative systems, development planning, or fiscal management. Their limited technical knowledge, digital literacy, and administrative understanding hinder effective functioning and weaken decentralised governance outcomes.

Recognising this, the Abdul Nazir Sab State Institute of Rural Development (ANSSIRD), Mysuru, designed and implemented two major training programmes- i) Capacity Building Training Programme for Newly Elected Gram Panchayat Members (2020–21), and ii) Refresher Training Programme for Elected Women Representatives of Gram Panchayats (2023–24). Both programmes sought to strengthen the knowledge base, leadership capacities, and functional skills of elected representatives, with a special emphasis on improving service delivery, participatory planning, and gender-responsive governance.

This evaluation study was commissioned to assess the relevance, quality, and effectiveness of these two programmes and to identify areas for improvement in design, delivery, and follow-up mechanisms.

Objectives of the Evaluation

The study aimed to achieve three core objectives:

- i) Assess the effectiveness of the training programmes in improving the functioning of Gram Panchayats and the implementation of government schemes, policies, and programmes.
- ii) Identify gaps and challenges within the existing training systems.
- iii) Formulate actionable recommendations for enhancing the future training design, delivery, and impact.

Methodology

The evaluation adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to ensure comprehensive insights and data triangulation. Structured surveys were administered to 611 GP members (237 newly elected members from the 2020–21 programme and 374 elected women members from the 2023–24 refresher training). Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted with 38 GP members (19 from each programme) and 12 Master Trainers to gather contextual understanding and nuanced perspectives.

Sampling was conducted across four administrative divisions of Karnataka including Bengaluru, Mysuru, Belagavi, and Kalaburagi to ensure geographical representation. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics for quantitative responses and thematic analysis for qualitative narratives.

Key Findings

i) Programme Relevance and Structure

Both training programmes were found to be highly relevant and well-aligned with the capacity development needs of elected representatives. The topics covered ranging from decentralised governance to leadership, and participatory planning to gender equality, child welfare, and violence prevention reflected the statutory and social responsibilities of GP members.

The findings suggest that for newly elected members, topics like Gram Panchayat Resources, Vision Plan, and Roles and Responsibilities of GP Members were rated most useful. On the

other hand, for elected women representatives, Modules on Leadership, Decision-Making, Violence Against Women, and Child Marriage Prevention received the highest engagement. Respondents appreciated that the training provided a structured orientation to the Panchayat system and improved their understanding of local administrative procedures.

ii) Effectiveness of Training Delivery

Participants across both programmes valued classroom lectures, group discussions, and case studies as the most effective training methods. Visual aids and field visits were particularly impactful in translating theoretical learning into practice. However, online training methods faced limitations due to poor internet connectivity, inadequate access to devices, and low digital literacy, especially among rural women. The use of vernacular language (Kannada) and participatory pedagogy significantly enhanced comprehension, confidence, and active engagement. However, a need was identified for greater field exposure and experiential learning through visits to model Gram Panchayats.

iii) Impact of the Training Programme

A large majority of participants (84% of newly elected members and 79% of women representatives) reported directly applying knowledge gained from the training to their Panchayat functions, that includes improving local infrastructure such as roads, drainage, toilets, and water systems, organising Mahila Gram Sabhas, forming and strengthening Self-Help Groups (SHGs), conducting awareness campaigns on women's safety, child marriage, and sanitation and enhancing participation in Gram Sabha meetings and decision-making processes. These outcomes indicate that the training was successful in significantly building up the capacities of the members that in turn would have translated into tangible improvements in governance and service delivery at the grassroots level.

iv) Challenges Identified

Despite overall success, several operational and structural challenges were also documented. Women representatives faced restrictions on mobility and participation, often requiring permission or accompaniment of male family members. Proxy representation remains a concern. Furthermore, many trainees, particularly women and members from marginalised backgrounds, lacked formal education or digital literacy, limiting their comprehension of theoretical and e-governance modules. Another challenge that was identified was inadequate

training facilities, limited sanitation amenities, and lack of transport arrangements that reduced the inclusivity of training programmes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study proposes several targeted recommendations, that includes introducing simple curriculum, pedagogical improvement, extended duration for training, gender empowerment, and infrastructural development.

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List of Abbreviations

ANSSIRD:	Abdul Nazir Sab State Institute of Rural Development
GP:	Gram Panchayat
PRI:	Panchayati Raj Institution
SC:	Scheduled Caste
ST:	Scheduled Tribes
ULB:	Local Body
RDPR:	Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department
SGH:	Self-Help Group
KDP:	Karnataka Development Programme
DTC:	District Training Centre
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation

SECTION- I : INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background

The historical roots of the idea of decentralisation can be traced back to Mahatma Gandhi's vision of 'Gram Swaraj' (village self-rule)- the self-sufficient, self-governing village republics. However, his vision of 'Gram Swaraj' was not unconditionally and absolutely adopted in the constitutional framework. Although Article 40 of the Indian Constitution directed the states to organise village panchayats endowing them with power and authority, functioning as units of self-governance; these directives were not legal mandates for the states to undeniably implement them. While certain measures like Community Development Programmes (1952) and National Extension Service (1953) were undertaken for decentralised planning, these measures failed, owing to its top-down approach. During the second half of the 1950s the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957) was constituted to evaluate the Community Development Programme and the National Extension Service, and to make recommendations to improve the existing programmes and services. The report enlisting the recommendations made by the committee was submitted on November 24, 1957, emphasising the principles of 'democratic decentralisation', which is based on the foundational idea of local communities being governed at the local grass-root level, so that their specific needs are properly addressed. While the recommendations made by the committee led to the establishment of panchayats in several states, they often lacked sufficient funds, functional autonomy, and were plagued by irregular elections, limiting their effectiveness.

The drawbacks of earlier decentralisation initiatives were finally recognised that led to the establishment of a constitutionally mandated structure of local governance. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 granted constitutional legitimacy to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in rural areas and institutionalised a three-tier governance structure comprising Gram Panchayats at the village level, Panchayat Samitis or the Taluk Panchayats as they are called in Karnataka, at the block level, and Zilla Parishads at the district level. A key feature of this institutional structure is the provision for regular, mandatory elections every five years under the supervision of an independent State Election Commission. Additionally, the Act introduced a powerful instrument of social justice by mandating the

reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and at least one-third of all positions for women. This measure empowered women and marginalised communities to step into political leadership roles and represents themselves. The 73rd Amendment Act also established the State Finance Commission that was bestowed with the responsibility of reviewing the financial position of the panchayats and make recommendations for the distribution of taxes, duties, and tolls between the state and local bodies. The Act also added the Eleventh Schedule to the Constitution, which lists 29 subjects including agriculture, primary education, health, sanitation, and social welfare to be devolved to the panchayats.

Similar to the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, in 1992 the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act was also passed to strengthen democratic governance in urban areas. A three-tier structure of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) was introduced consisting the Nagar Panchayat for transitional areas, the Municipal Council for smaller urban areas, and the Municipal Corporation for larger urban areas. On lines similar to the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act also mandated regular elections, constitutional reservation for SCs, STs, and women and emphasis on the establishment of the State Election Commission and the State Finance Commission. The Twelfth Schedule was introduced through this constitutional amendment that listed 18 subjects including urban planning, water supply, slum rehabilitation, and environmental protection to be devolved to the ULBs.

1.2 Review of Literature

Panchayati Raj Institutions constitute the foundational tier of rural local governance in India, established through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment to advance decentralised planning and citizen-responsive administration. Gram panchayats, as the frontline governance bodies, are responsible for local service delivery, preparation of development plans, budget management, social accountability, and coordination with sectoral departments (Ahmad et al., 2005; Smoke, 2015). The effective functioning of the PRIs depends significantly on the administrative and technical competencies of elected members, who manage public resources and represent community priorities (Oommen, 2010).

Existing literature across the world has emphasised that absence of, or limited decision-making autonomy leads to partial or symbolic participation rather than genuine grassroots empowerment (Agrawal & Ribot, 1999; Ahmad et al., 2005). Studies on decentralisation have indicated that devolution of powers is directly linked with the capacity and conducive institutional environment to translate statutory authority into improved service outcomes (Smoke, 2015; Sharma, 2018). Studies illustrate that low levels of education, lack of access to information, ambiguous understanding of the government procedure and functioning of the government leads to poor outcomes, lack of prior public administration experience results in uneven performance of gram panchayats across states (Ghosh & Bandyopadhyay, 2021; Pal et al., 2020; Sekhar, 2019).

Previous research works have therefore, acknowledged the importance of capacity-building as a key mechanism to equip elected representatives in fulfilling their legal mandates. A study conducted by Bhattacharya and Panda (2020) have depicted measurable improvements in knowledge of planning processes, fund utilisation norms and accountability practices for the newly elected members, who have been trained. Studies across the world have also illustrated analogous conclusions. An evaluative study by the World Bank has underlined that capacity-development combined with streamlined administrative procedures and fiscal predictability yields significant gains in budget transparency and citizen engagement (Wong & Guggenheim, 2018). A study has indicated that lack of such trainings has resulted in limited development outcomes. (Pritchett et al., 2013). Across these strands, a converging set of requirements emerges: capacity-building must be aligned with statutory functions, grounded in adult-learning methods, sustained through follow-up mechanisms, and embedded within a supportive administrative ecosystem (Patton, 2008).

On the other hand, gender, which is a crucial dimension in democratic political regimes, continues to be a neglected area. Though reservation policies have increased women's descriptive representation in panchayats, socio-cultural gendered norms reinforced by patriarchal society often restricts their substantive participation in decision-making (Beaman et al., 2012). Studies report that empowerment-focused training, safe learning environments for women, communication skills development, and leadership coaching, collectively enhance women's self-efficacy and role clarity (Mukhopadhyay, 2014; Parthasarathy & Rao, 2018). These insights together provide a context to understand the need for the training initiative by the ANSSIRD.

1.3 Need for Evaluation of the Training Programmes

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments have mostly remained impactful for enhancing democratic participation and promoting inclusive representation. The reservation for women members at the grassroots level has not only empowered them by altering the traditional notions of gendered social roles, but have also led to a shift in the policy orientations, especially on sanitation, girl-child education, and maternal and child health. Local bodies like PRIs and ULBs have been instrumental in the implementation of various development and welfare schemes that primarily addresses community-specific needs.

However, owing to the lack of functional and fiscal autonomy addressing the needs of the local communities remains partially fulfilled, thus curbing the true spirit of decentralisation. Though constitutional schedules have listed subjects that were to be devolved with the PRIs and ULBs, many states have been reluctant to relinquish control, resulting in confined autonomy and limited decision-making authority at the local level. On the other hand, the recommendations outlined by the State Finance Commission can often not be fully implemented as the local bodies predominantly rely on the State to disburse the finances to plan and execute projects independently. The local bodies, especially the smaller ones, fail to demonstrate their credit worthiness and often require assistance in financial planning to implement programmes (Singh & Singh, 2015).

Such problems mainly arise from a lack of skills and paucity of adequate training of the newly elected Gram Panchayat (GP) representatives on functioning of the GP, managing finances, planning and execution of programmes, and administering public services. While the constitutional and statutory architecture establishes a framework for local governance, the effectiveness of these institutions depends heavily on the capacity and agency of individual GP members. Without structured orientation and skills development, these members can struggle to translate electoral mandate into effective governance (UNDP, 1998). Thus, such Capacity Building Training Programme for Newly Elected Gram Panchayat Members (2020-21) conducted by the Abdul Nazir Sab State Institute of Rural Development (ANSSIRD) is indeed imperative to give an overall orientation on the functioning of GP, roles and responsibilities of the GP members, and measures to successfully implement development programmes.

On the other hand, though the participation of women members has been secured via reservation that has enhanced their numerical representation, women continue to encounter

socio-cultural barriers that curb their voices in the political representation, which impacts their decision-making capacities. While the women members hold official designations, the real decision making power is often vested with the male members of their family (Kabeer, 1999; Dahlerup, 2005). In this context, Refresher Training Programme for Elected Women Representatives of Gram Panchayats (2023-24) conducted by the Abdul Nazir Sab State Institute of Rural Development (ANSSIRD), Mysuru not just aims at refreshing technical knowledge but also addresses issues like overcoming their limited access to information, gendered time burdens, social norms that restrict mobility and the necessity of inculcating leadership to voice their opinion and bridge the gaps in their skill-set.

It is against this backdrop, that this study evaluates two training programmes conducted by the ANSSIRD, namely i) Capacity Building Training Programme for Newly Elected Gram Panchayat members, and ii) Refresher Training Programme for Gram Panchayat Women Elected members. Given the scale and importance of these initiatives, it is imperative to evaluate the benefits and impact of the training programs conducted by ANSSIRD. The study emphasises on assessing multiple aspects of the training programmes, including the relevance of the programmes (alignment of the training content with trainees' needs and statutory responsibilities), its pedagogical approach (structure, contents, methods, master trainers' competence), learning outcomes (immediate knowledge, implementation of policies and programmes at the grassroots level. Such an assessment will provide a detailed insight into the loopholes within the existing programme, that in turn, will be fruitful to improve the current training programmes, which will help the GP members to perform their statutory responsibilities and implement government schemes, policies and programmes effectively. Therefore, the evaluation is deemed to be appropriate to maximise the impact of the training programmes.

1.4 Objectives of the Evaluation Study

This evaluation study aims at achieving three primary objectives, that are as follows:

- i) To assess the effectiveness of these training programmes in the functioning of gram panchayats and implementation of governments' development schemes, policies, and programmes.

- ii) To gain an in-depth understanding of the loopholes in the existing training programmes.
- iii) To outline recommendations to mitigate such challenges and improve the training programmes that can be translated into practically achievable actionable outcomes.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This evaluation study emphasises on examining two specific training programmes conducted by ANSSIRD, namely- i) the Capacity Building Training Programme for Newly Elected Gram Panchayat Members (2020-21), and ii) the Refresher Training Programme for Women Elected Representatives of Gram Panchayats (2023-24). This study primarily aims at assessing the relevance, quality, effectiveness of the training components, pedagogical strategies, and learning outcomes among the trainees. The analysis is based on selected sample districts across all four divisions of Karnataka that are representative of the entire state, while focusing on the respondents' perspectives on policy implementation of the grassroots level, and mitigating the challenges. This study does not evaluate all decentralisation capacity initiatives within the state or examine long-term outcomes beyond the immediate and short-term impacts of the training received.

SECTION- II : EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Approach

This evaluative study assessing two training programmes conducted by the ANSSIRD titled, “Capacity Building Training Programme for Newly Elected Gram Panchayat Members” (2020-21), and “Refresher Training Programme for Elected Women Representatives of Gram Panchayats” (2023-24), designed to strengthen Panchayati Raj governance by enhancing the knowledge, skills, and institutional capacities of elected representatives for effective local self-governance, follows a structured methodological framework. Incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data, a mixed-method approach has been employed to generate both statistical evidence and interpretative insights. Quantitative data was collected by means of a survey and administering structured interview schedule with 611 GP members (including the 237 newly elected GP members who attended the Capacity Building Training Programme and 374 women GP members who attended the Refresher Training programme) to understand the demographic characteristics, trainees’ opinion about the overall training programme, course content, methods of training and other such factors. On the other hand, qualitative data has been collected by conducting in-depth interviews with 38 GP members (including the 19 newly elected GP members attending the Capacity Building Training Programme and 19 women GP members attending Refresher Training programme) and 12 Master Trainers (6 Master Trainers imparting training for Capacity Building Programme and 6 Master Trainers imparting training for Refresher Training Programme) by administering semi-structured interview guide to understand the contextual challenges, and operational limitations that were a hindrance to the effectiveness of the training programmes. These insights complement empirical findings and support triangulation.

2.2 Sampling Approach

Karnataka has a well-established decentralised governance framework with approximately 6000 Gram Panchayats functioning under the ambit of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. To ensure adequate regional representation the study includes participants from Gram Panchayats spread across the four administrative and revenue divisions of the state namely, Bengaluru Division, Mysuru Division, Belagavi Division and Kalaburagi Division. For both the training programmes, two different sampling strategies were adopted.

2.2.1 Capacity Building Training Programme for Newly Elected Gram Panchayat Members (2020–21)

For this training programme, in the first stage, 4 districts, one from each revenue division, were selected based on the number of trainee participants. From each revenue division, districts having maximum number of newly elected GP members were selected. Consequently, Tumkur from Bangalore Division was selected having 4554 newly elected GP members, Mysuru from Mysuru Division was selected having 3383 members, Belagavi from Belagavi Division was selected having 7370 members, and Kalaburagi from Kalaburagi Division was selected having 3764 newly elected GP members.

Table 1: Districts with the Numbers of Newly Elected Gram Panchayat Members

Administrative and Revenue Division	Districts	Number of Newly Elected GP Members
Bangalore Division	Bangalore Rural	1594
	Bangalore Urban	1823
	Chikkabalapura	2242
	Chitradurga	3070
	Davanagere	2707
	Kolar	2629
	Ramanagara	1841
	Tumkur	4554
	Shimoga	2505
Mysuru Division	Chamarajanagara	2040
	Chickmagalur	2114
	Dakshina kannada	3207
	Hassan	3174
	Kodagu	1136
	Mandya	3649
	Mysuru	3383
	Udupi	2352
Belagavi Division	Bagalkote	2903
	Belagavi	7370
	Dharwad	1941
	Gadag	1664
	Haveri	3005
	Uttar knnada	2689
	Vijayapura	3045
Kalaburagi Division	Ballari	4367
	Bidar	3091

	<i>Kalaburagi</i>	<i>3764</i>
	Koppal	2587
	Raichur	3371
	Yadgir	2412

During the second stage of sampling, from each of these 4 districts, 4 *talukas* (1 *taluka* of a district) were selected for conducting the primary study. For instance, Sira (Tumkur), Heggadadevanakote or H.D.Kote (Mysuru), Savadatti (Belagavi), and Kalaburagi (Kalaburagi) were selected, keeping in mind the diverse socio-demographic composition of the taluka. As one of the primary aims of the PRIs is to promote political inclusion and diversity at the grassroots level from the marginalised castes the diverse socio-demographic composition of the talukas emerged as an important indicator for selecting the sample *talukas*.

For the final stage of selecting samples, from the identified *talukas* approximately 10% of the trained newly elected GP members were selected for the survey.

Table 2: Sample Size for Capacity Building Training Programme for Newly Elected Gram Panchayat Members (2020- 2021)

Administrative Division	Selected District	Identified <i>Talukas</i>	Total Number of Trained Newly Elected GP Members	10% of the Trained Newly Elected GP Members
Bangalore Division	Tumkur	Sira	615	64
Mysuru Division	Mysuru	H.D.Kote	250	25
Belagavi Division	Belagavi	Savadatti	653	67
Kalburagi Division	Kalaburagi	Kalaburagi	814	81
KARNATAKA			2332	237

In addition to the survey conducted with 237 trained newly elected GP members, 19 in-depth interviews were also administered to the newly elected gram panchayat members of the

selected talukas who had undergone training. Furthermore, 6 Master Trainers (from the 4 selected *talukas*) were also interviewed in an attempt to triangulate the data (person triangulation) to understand the improvements required in the training programme and the challenges that are commonly encountered by the trainees. While the respondents for the survey were selected using simple random sampling method, the respondents for in-depth interviews (including 19 newly elected GP members and 6 Master Trainers) were selected using purposive sampling technique.

2.2.2 Refresher Training Programme for Elected Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat (2023-2024)

Similar to the previous training programme, for this training programme as well, in the first stage, 4 districts, one from each revenue division, were selected. The district was chosen based on the largest number of women GP members that attended the Refresher Training Programme. Maximum number of trained women GP members in Bangalore Division, who had attended the Refresher Training Programme was from Tumkur, with 422 members attending the training. Similarly, 615 from Mysuru (Mysuru Division), 2493 from Belagavi (Belagavi Division), and 753 from Kalaburagi (Kalaburagi Division) had attended the training programme. Thus, these districts were selected due to the number of trainees that attended the training. In the second stage, 4 *talukas* (1 from each of the 4 selected districts) was identified to carry out the primary data collection field work. During this process, Kunigal (Tumkur), Nanjangud (Mysuru), Gokak (Belagavi), and Jevargi (Kalaburagi) were selected. As it was observed, in the first stage of district selection the total number of women members eligible for training differed from the actual number of participants receiving the training (the number of women who attended the training was less), in the second stage, during the *taluka* selection, *talukas* were selected randomly for unbiased representation.

In the third and final stage, all the women GP members from the selected *talukas*, who had attended the Refresher Training Programme for all 3 days have been included for this study.

Table 3: Number of Participants for Refresher Training Programme for Elected Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat (2023-2024)

Administrative Division	Selected District	Total Number of Trained Women GP Members	Identified Talukas	Total Number of Trained Women GP Members
Bangalore Division	Tumkur	422	Kunigal	90
Mysuru Division	Mysuru	615	Nanjangud	45
Belagavi Division	Belagavi	2493	Gokak	198
Kalaburagi Division	Kalaburagi	753	Jevargi	41
KARNATAKA		4283		374

Additionally, 19 in-depth interviews were conducted with the selected women representatives of the GP, who attended the Refresher Training Programme. And, 6 Master Trainers (from the 4 selected *talukas*) were also interviewed in an attempt to triangulate the data (person triangulation) to understand the improvements required in the training programme and the challenges that are commonly encountered by the GP members. 19 women representatives of the GP who were interviewed using in-depth interview method and the Master Trainers were selected by using purposive sampling method.

2.3 Data Collection Methods and Tools

This study is entirely based on the findings of the primary data collected from the field, in 2 phases (Round-1 and Round-2). The data collection process initiated with developing the tools for data collection. Two structured interview schedules were developed- one for the trainees of ‘Capacity Building Training Programme for Newly Elected Gram Panchayat Members’, and the other for the attendees of the ‘Refresher Training Programme for Elected Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat’. Both the structured interview schedules emphasised on the participants’ socio-demographic profiling, their opinion on the structure of

the training programme, the methods used to impart knowledge etc. Once these 2 tools were developed, field enumerators were trained to conduct the survey in 4 different districts across Karnataka.

After the completion of the survey with 611 respondents (including the 237 newly elected GP members attending the Capacity Building Training Programme and 374 women GP members attending Refresher Training programme), a preliminary report was developed. Based on the findings from the preliminary report, two sets of semi-structured interview guides were developed to gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges experienced by the GP members (including the newly elected GP members who have attended Capacity Building Training Programme, as well as women GP members attending Refresher Training programme). Once these tools were finalised Round-2 of the primary data collection was initiated with 38 participants (including 19 newly elected GP members attending the Capacity Building Training Programme and 19 women GP members attending Refresher Training programme). Additionally, 12 Master Trainers (6 Master Trainers imparting training for Capacity Building Programme and 6 Master Trainers imparting training for Refresher Training Programme) were also interviewed. A separate semi-structured guide was developed to interview the Master Trainers.

2.4 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis process began with data cleansing of the survey that was conducted with 611 respondents including the 237 newly elected GP members attending the Capacity Building Training Programme and 374 women GP members attending Refresher Training programme. After the data cleansing process, data was translated from Kannada to English. This was followed by data analysis, using descriptive statistics including percentage, frequency calculation, and graphical representation administering Microsoft Excel. The responses of the open-ended questions were analysed using Python to identify patterns in the response of the participants.

Data analysis process for 50 in-depth interviews (including 19 interviews of the newly elected GP members attending the Capacity Building Training Programme, 19 interviews of the women GP members attending Refresher Training programme, and 12 Master Trainers) started with translation of the data from Kannada to English. This process was followed by

back-translation to check the accuracy of the translation. These responses were analysed through manual Open Coding to identify recurring themes administering thematic analysis method. The qualitative findings have helped to deepen the interpretations drawn from quantitative analysis and highlighted contextual barriers.

Through its comprehensive approach, the methodology ensures that the forthcoming findings section present reliable insights into the effectiveness of ANSSIRD's training programmes.

SECTION- III : Evaluation of the Capacity Building Training Programme for Newly Elected Gram Panchayat Members (2020-21)

3.1 Context

Gram Panchayats have been entrusted with several functions, including planning and implementation of development works, management of funds, implementation of government policies, programmes and schemes, delivery of essential services, and ensuring public welfare, as per the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. Thus, the elected members are expected to possess adequate knowledge, administrative skills, and an understanding of their constitutional powers and responsibilities to perform their duties. Hailing from diverse socio-cultural and economic backgrounds, many of the newly elected representatives assume public office for the first time lacking prior exposure to administrative procedures, rural development programmes, financial management and implementation of public policies and schemes. Therefore, without proper orientation and capacity building, there is a risk of gaps in governance, inefficient utilisation of funds, and limited citizen participation in local decision-making. Therefore, it becomes imperative to provide training to the newly elected GP members to enable them to understand and execute their constitutional, financial, and developmental responsibilities effectively.

Acknowledging the need of this training, ANSSIRD has designed a structured training programme to build their capacity for effective governance for the newly elected GP members. Equipping the newly elected GP members with such a training programme has helped them to enhance awareness of their legal powers and responsibilities in the Panchayati Raj institutions, and strengthen their knowledge of policies, schemes, programmes, budgeting, and financial management. Therefore, the training programme is not just an orientation exercise, rather is a critical intervention for enabling effective decentralisation, fostering good governance practices, and ensuring that development initiatives at the grassroots level are people-centric, inclusive, and responsive to local needs.

This section (Section III) presents a detailed analysis of the data collected from 237 respondents using survey method for obtaining quantitative data and in-depth interviews of 19 respondents to obtain qualitative data. While the analysis of the data collected by survey of 237 respondents, provides an overall understanding of the structure including content and modules of the training, the most impactful methods of the providing the training

programme, the insights drawn from the 19 in-depth interviews provides an understanding of the impact of the training programme on the respondents in terms of fulfilling their responsibilities as GP members, the problems in the existing system and ways to improve the training.

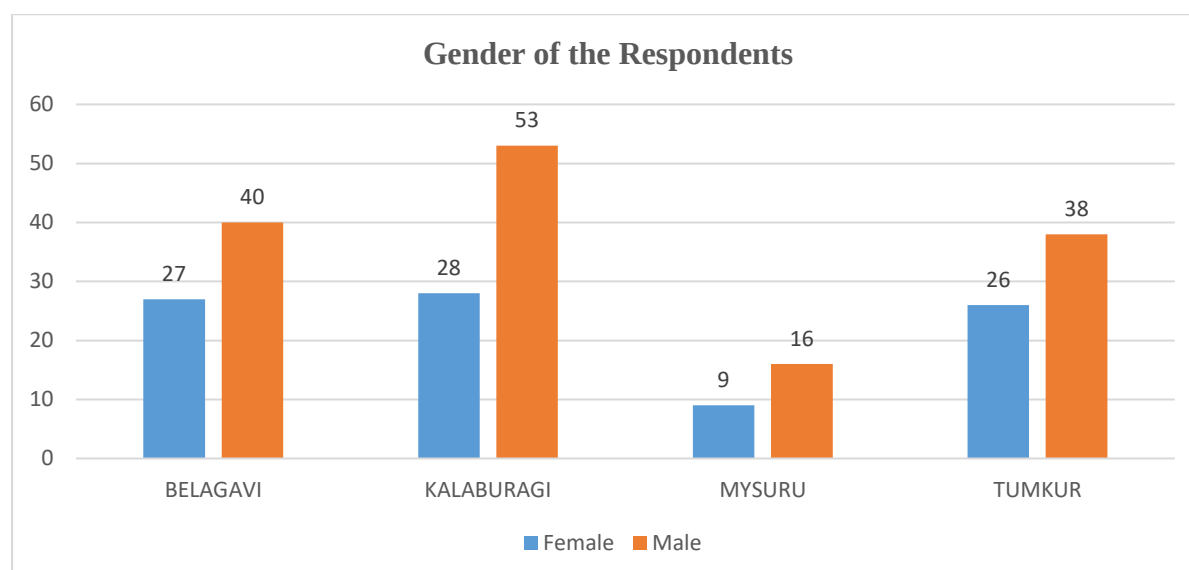
3.2 Socio-demographic Details of Respondents Participated in Survey

The socio-demographic profiling of the 237 respondents (sample group for survey) includes gender, age, education and occupation primarily before being elected as GP member who were interviewed during Round-1 of the primary data collection process.

3.2.1 Gender of the Respondents

Out of 237 respondents, 27 female GP members are from Belagavi, while 28 females are from Kalaburagi, and 9 female members and 26 female members are from Mysuru and Tumkur respectively. On the other hand, 40 males are from Belagavi, 53 are from Kalaburagi, 16 are from Mysuru and 38 are from Tumkur.

Figure 1: Gender-wise Sample Size in Each Selected Districts



3.2.2 Age of the Respondents

Considering all the four selected districts, a majority of the respondents, comprising 41.77%, are between the ages of 34 and 43 years, followed by 28.27%, who are between 44 and 53 years. Out of the 237 respondents, 13.5% fall within the age group of 54 to 63 years, while 11.39% are within the age group of 24 to 33 years. A small percentage, i.e., 5.06% falls in the age group of 64 to 73 years.

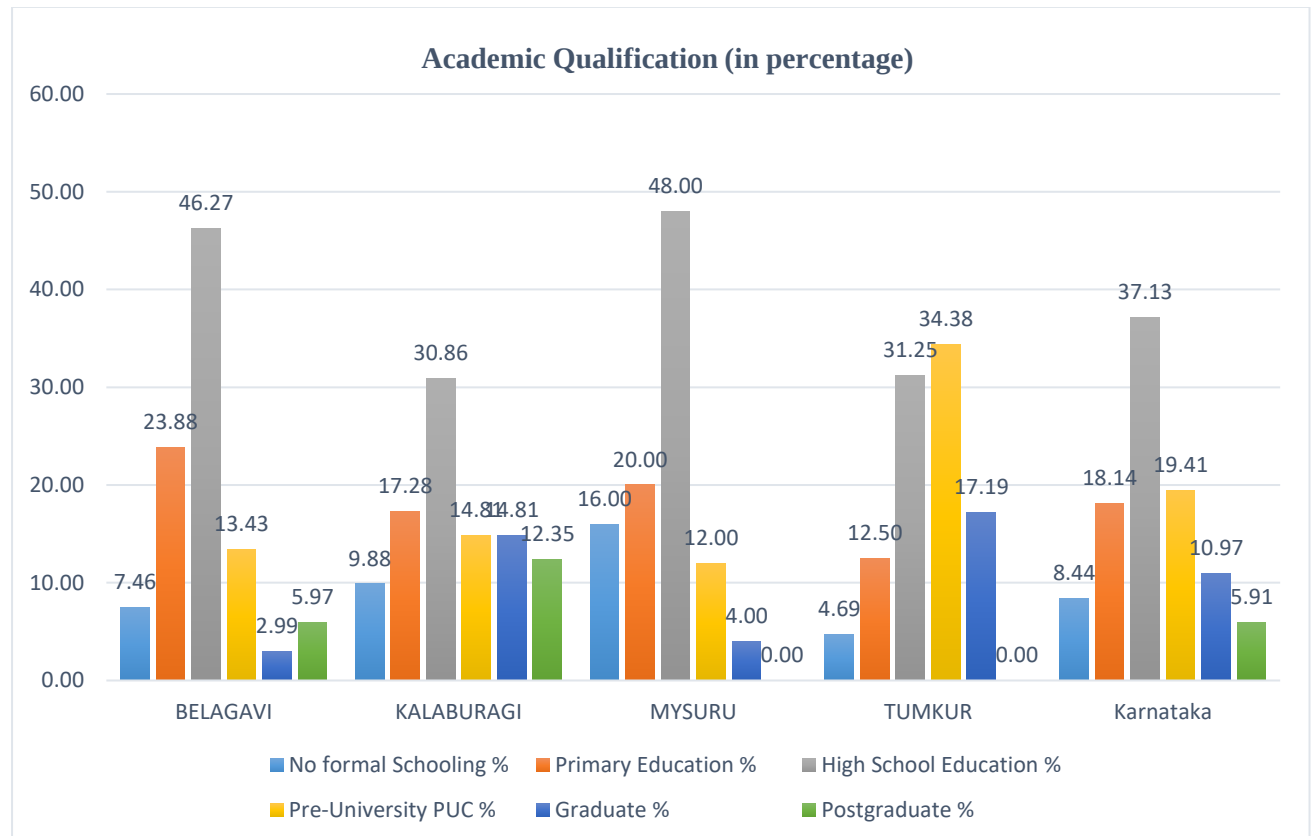
Table 4: Age-wise Sample Size Distribution from Each of the Selected Districts

District	Age	Frequency	Percentage
Belagavi	24-33	5	2.11
Belagavi	34-43	28	11.81
Belagavi	44-53	20	8.44
Belagavi	54-63	11	4.64
Belagavi	64-73	3	1.27
Kalaburagi	24-33	10	4.22
Kalaburagi	34-43	32	13.50
Kalaburagi	44-53	22	9.28
Kalaburagi	54-63	12	5.06
Kalaburagi	64-73	5	2.11
Mysuru	24-33	2	0.84
Mysuru	34-43	6	2.53
Mysuru	44-53	8	3.38
Mysuru	54-63	6	2.53
Mysuru	64-73	3	1.27
Tumkur	24-33	10	4.22
Tumkur	34-43	33	13.92
Tumkur	44-53	17	7.17
Tumkur	54-63	3	1.27
Tumkur	64-73	1	0.42
KARNATAKA		237	100

3.2.3 Educational Qualification of the Respondents

Out of 237 respondents a majority of them i.e., 37% have completed their high-school education, while 19% have finished pre-university PUC and 18% have completed primary education. 11% of the respondents are graduates, while only 6% are postgraduates. And, 9% of total sample size have not attained any formal schooling.

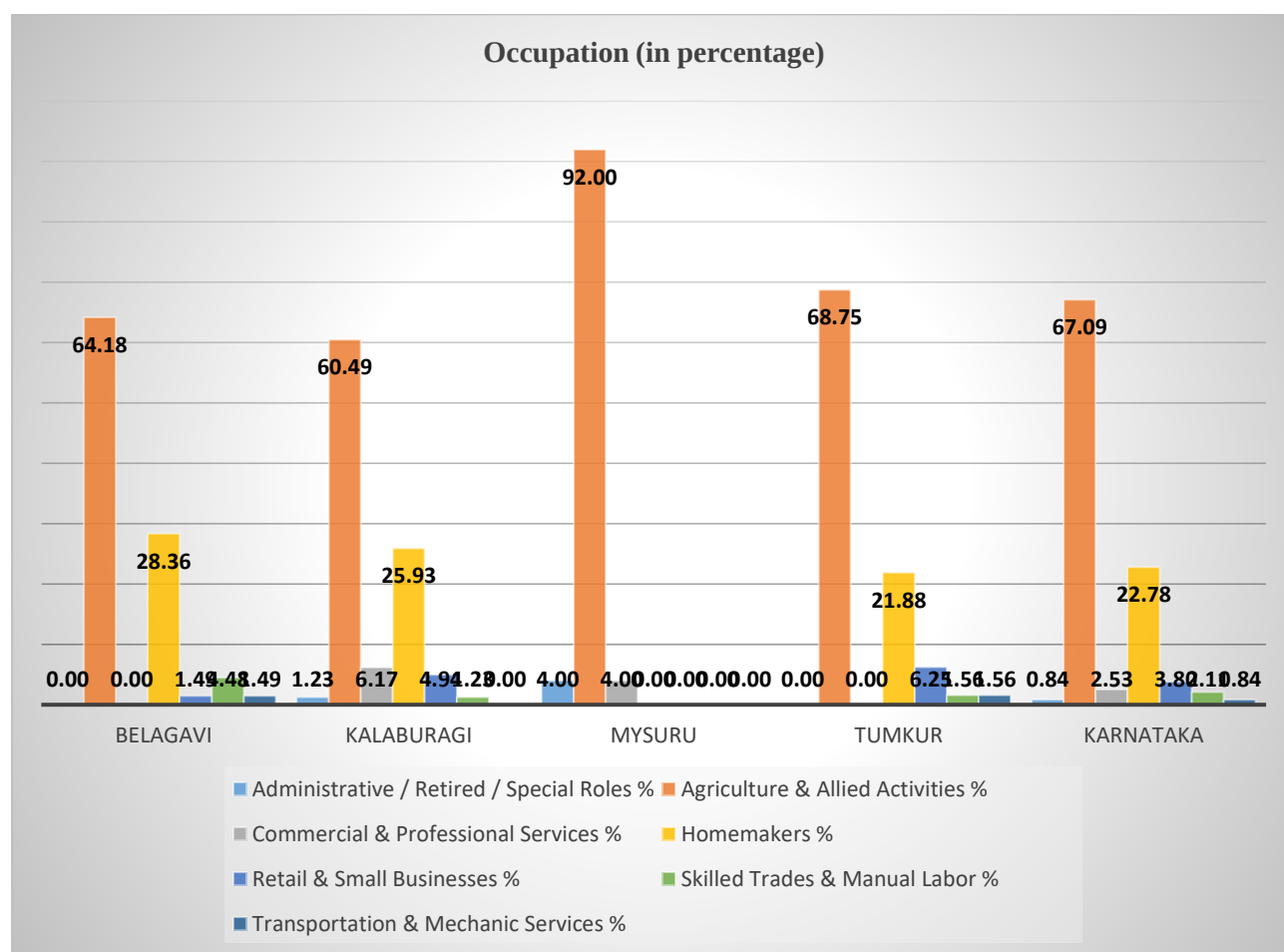
Figure 2: Educational Qualification of the Respondents from Each Districts



3.2.4 Primary Occupation of the Respondents

Majority of the respondents from the sample group, that is 67% are engaged in agriculture and allied activities, while 23% are homemakers. 4% of the respondents are in retail and small business. Only 2% of the respondents are skilled traders and manual labourers, while the same percentage of the respondents are engaged in commercial and professional services. Only 1% of the total sample size is in administrative and special roles (either in-service or retired) and 1% is engaged in transportation and mechanic services.

Figure 3: Primary Occupation of the Respondents from each District



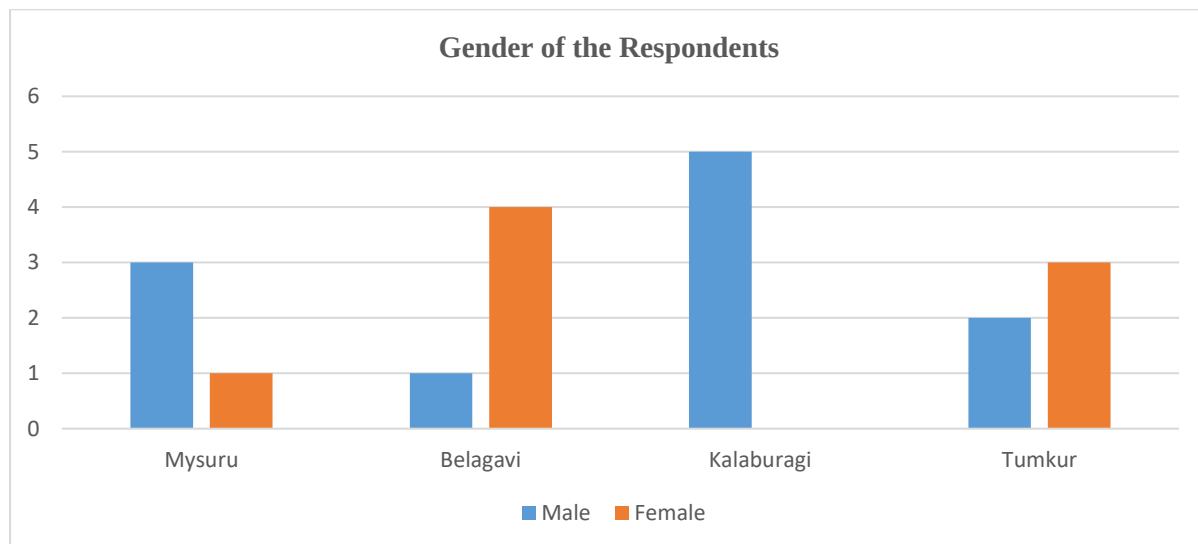
3.3 Socio-demographic Details of Respondents Participated in In-depth Interviews

The socio-demographic profiling of 19 respondents who were interviewed during Round-2 of the primary data collection process. (sample group for in-depth interviews) includes gender, caste, age, educational qualification and occupation, primarily before being elected as GP members.

3.3.1 Gender of the Respondents

Of the 19 respondents, 8 GP members are female, while the remaining 11 members are male.

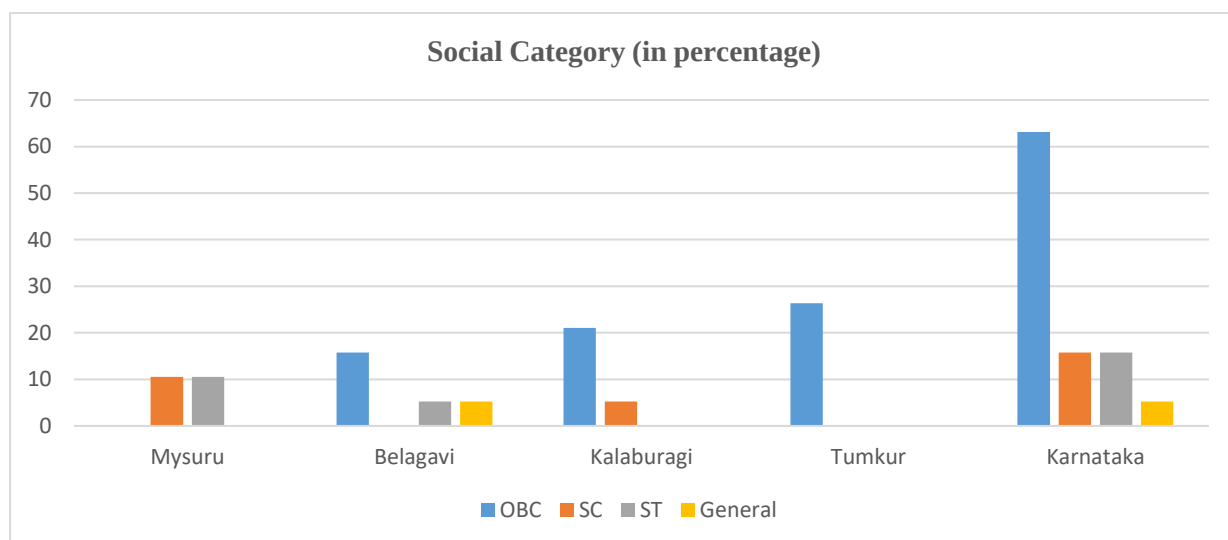
Figure 4: Gender-wise Sample Size in Each Selected District



3.3.2 Social Category (Caste) of the Respondents

Considering all the four selected districts, majority of the respondents, that is 12 out of 19 respondents are OBC, while only 1 respondent is from the General category. Among the remaining 6 respondents, 3 are STs and 3 are SCs.

Figure 5: Social Category (Caste) Wise Distribution (in percentage)



3.3.3 Age of the Respondents

Out of 19 respondents identified and selected for in-depth interviews, the majority of the participants, that is 42.11% (approximately) fall within the age group of 31 to 40 years, followed by 31.58% falling within the age group of 41 to 50 years and 21.05% are within the age group of 51 to 60 years. 5.26%, i.e., only 1 respondent, falls in the age group of 21 to 30 years.

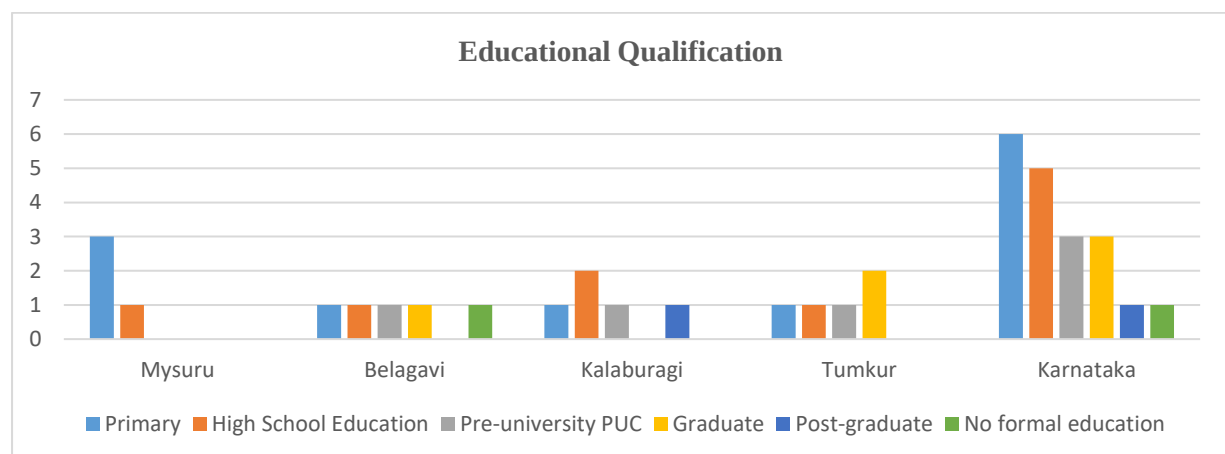
Table 5: Age (in years) Distribution of the Respondents

Districts	Age (in years)			
	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60
Mysuru	0	3	1	0
Belagavi	0	3	1	1
Kalaburagi	0	0	3	2
Tumkur	1	2	1	1
Karnataka	1	8	6	4

3.3.4 Academic Qualification of the Respondents

Out of 19 respondents, 6 of them have completed their primary education, while 5 have completed high-school. 3 of the respondents have completed their pre-university PUC and 3 have completed bachelor's degree. Only 1 respondent has a master's degree and 1 respondent does not have any formal educational qualification.

Figure 6: Academic Qualification of the Respondents



3.3.5 Primary Occupation of the Respondents

Of the 19 respondents, 31.58% are farmers, while 31.58% are housewives. 15.79% of the respondents pursued their political career even before being elected as GP members. 5.26% of the respondents are engaged in each of the following categories of professions; teacher, retired personnel, private organisation employee and tailor.

Table 6: Primary Occupation of the Respondents from Each District

Districts	Occupation						
	Farmer	Housewife	Polictical Career	Teacher	Retired personnel	Private organisation employee	Tailor
Mysuru	3	1	0	0	0	0	0
Belagavi	0	3	1	1	0	0	0
Kalaburagi	3	0	0	0	1	1	0
Tumkur	0	2	2	0	0	0	1
Karnataka	6	6	3	1	1	1	1

As illustrated above, the respondents hail from diverse socio-economic background, and thus, a common orientation training programme was indeed necessary to bring a parity in their understanding of the administrative responsibilities and functions as newly elected GP members. The following sub-section explores their perception about the training programme that will be helpful in understanding the gaps within the existing training programme and will help ANSSIRD to improve its programmes.

3.4 Perspectives of the Respondents on the Training Programme

The Capacity Building Training Programme for Newly Elected Gram Panchayat Members (2020-21) is a five-day long training programme conducted from 10 AM in the morning to 4:30 PM in the afternoon at the ANSSIRD Campus, Mysore. The course covered multiple topics including- i) Decentralized governance and Karnataka Panchayat Raj system; ii) Establishment of Gram panchayat, administrative structure, office and their responsibilities;

iii) Model gram panchayat and importance of Acts iv) Activities of gram panchayat v) What the GP member can do vi) Leadership vii) Resources of gram panchayat viii) Perspective plan and our village and our work ix) Gram Swaraj units x) Gram Meeting, Gram panchayat and Sthayi samithigalu and activities xi) Gram panchayat sub-committees xii) Gram panchayat and KDP meetings xiii) Role of gram panchayat in the development of women xiv) Our dream gram panchayat xv) Role of E- governance in rural development and panchayat raj system. The training was imparted via lectures, group discussion, short films, case studies, online discussions and providing exposures via field visits.

From the analysis of the data collected through the survey from 237 respondents, a few of the topics have been observed to be the most commonly liked by the respondents. Out of the 15 topics covered during the training programme, the respondents were asked to select 5 topics from a multiple-option selection method. From the analysis of the data, it emerged that Gram Panchayat Resources was selected by 150 participants, followed by Vision Plan and Concept of Our Gram Panchayat- that was selected by 140 respondents. 130 respondents have selected the topic ‘What should we do as GP members?’ as one of the most liked topics that was closely followed by the topic “Grama Sabha”, selected by 120 respondents. From the responses recorded during the survey, it can be discerned that the topics like Gram Panchayat Resources and Vision Plan were valued for their direct applicability to participants’ roles as Gram Panchayat members. According to the respondents’ narratives, such topics have helped them to understand their responsibilities as GP members and have boosted their confidence to voice their opinions in meetings.

On the other hand, Role of E-Governance in Rural Development and Panchayat Raj System has been selected as the least liked topic by 180 participants owing to its complex theoretical orientation. It has been identified that respondents with comparatively lower educational level have found such theoretical topics as more challenging as compared to highly educated respondents. Low digital literacy among the respondents can also be attributed as one of the main reasons for such challenges.

An analysis of another multiple selection option question depicts that the most preferred method of imparting training is class lecture, which is preferred by 140 respondents. Similarly, 120 respondents have selected group discussion as another impactful medium of conducting the training. Participants who have selected class lecture and group discussion as preferred methods have explained that lectures delivered in the local language made the

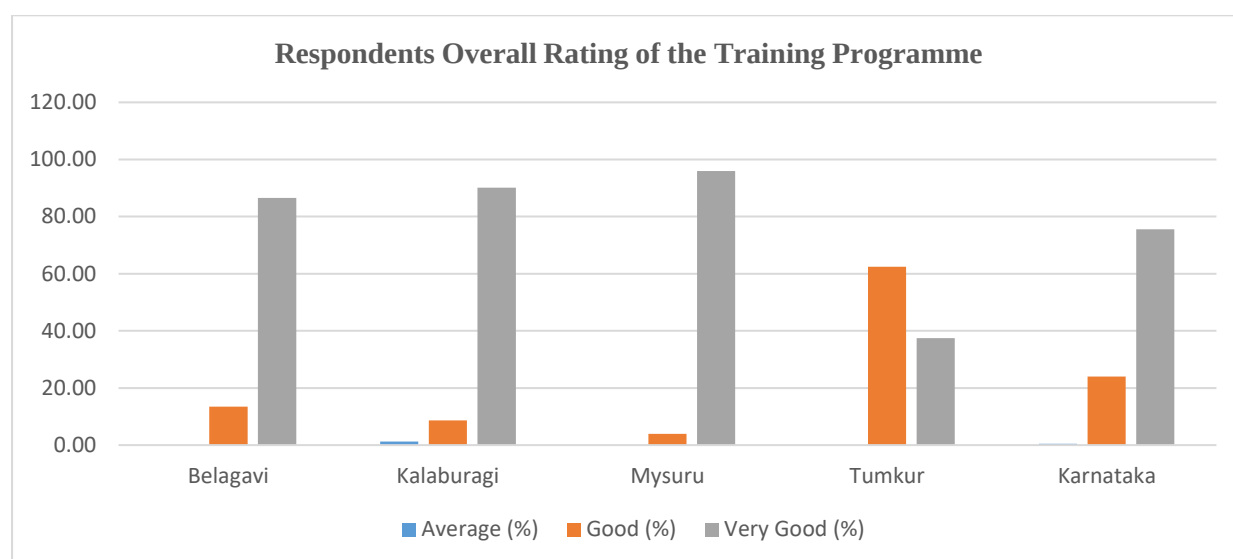
topics easily understandable and provided a focused learning experience. Similarly, interactive sessions have also helped them exchange their ideas, improving their communication skills. On the other hand, 80 participants have also stated short films as a preferred medium owing to the visual engagement making learning process easier and memorable. Though field visits have been identified as a preferred method of learning by only 30 participants, the method has been highly valued by those who experienced them due to its practical exposure.

On the other hand, online discussion and case study methods have emerged to be unpopular methods among the participants. Two primary reasons have been identified for the same. Firstly, due to lack of wider digital access, especially in remote areas, online discussions have proved to be less effective; with 80% of the respondents participating in the survey listing multiple barriers to online training such as network issues or lack of access to smartphones. And secondly, online discussion requires the possession of digital knowledge, which many of the participants lacked, especially those who have comparatively lesser academic qualification. The same reason has been identified to be true for case studies, as participants with lower educational qualification considered it to be complex.

Out of 237 participants, 220 participants (92.4%) described the programme as convenient, well-structured and effective. 230 respondents have rated the trainers as knowledgeable with sound understanding of the topic. 63% of the respondents have suggested that topics having practical impact like Employment Guarantee Scheme or topics like 15th Finance Commission, utilisation of government funds, scheme operationalisation should be discussed in detail. They have also expressed the requirement of more field visits as it provides practical knowledge. While the training programme has received overall praise from 237 respondents and 6 Master Trainers, a majority of the Master Trainers and 16% of respondents that participated in the survey have opined that the infrastructure of the training venue should be improved in terms of providing better digital facilities and cleanliness.

During the first round of data collection (Round-1), when the respondents were asked to rate the training programme, 179 out of 237 have described the training programme to be 'very good', while 57 respondents have described the capacity-building training programme as 'good'.

Figure 7: Respondents Rating about the Training Programme



3.5 Effect of the Training Programme on the Functioning of Gram Panchayat

One of the primary aims of the capacity-building training programme was to enhance the functionality of the GPIs, by providing adequate knowledge to the newly elected GP members about panchayat administration, including their roles and responsibilities in terms of improving the overall infrastructure, developing access to public services like healthcare and education, mitigating discrimination and promoting inclusivity, especially among the socio marginalised groups, so that the newly elected members without any prior experience can also function credibly. The underlying agenda of these kinds of training programmes are not to simply engage in theoretical exchange of knowledge but to transform this knowledge into practical outcomes. From the data collected via survey with 237 respondents and in-depth interviews with 19 respondents, it can be discerned that the training programme had a positive impact on the respondents as a majority of them, i.e., 84% reported applying the knowledge attained in the training to their Gram Panchayat duties.

From the narratives of the respondents, two major themes have been identified that reflects the learnings from the training programme being translated into actionable outcomes. The first theme that has emerged from the commonalities in the narratives of the respondents have revealed that they have used their training for the improvement in service delivery like roads construction, installing bore-wells, erecting street lights, solar lights, improving sewage facilities, constructing waste management units, arranging health camps, developing *Koosina*

Mane centres and upgrading facilities in local schools. Such responses indicate that the training programmes conducted for the newly elected members have resulted positively in terms of understanding the roles of the PRIs as a GP member and enhancing the functionality of the system.

Secondly, it can be discerned from the analysis of the 19 in-depth interviews that many *Mahila Grama Sabhas* have been organised by the participants, along with initiating Self Help Groups (SGHs). Additionally, the respondents have reported of conducting awareness campaigns on prevention of child marriage and safety of women. It has also been identified that such programmes are commonly organised by the female GP members, as opposed to male GP members, whose emphasis is more on financial disbursement and funding allocation. Though not as common as the welfare of women and children, 2 respondents out of 19 have mentioned of taking actionable steps to improve the conditions of the tribal population that included prevention of child marriage among the tribal populace, conducting health camps in tribal areas, constructing toilets in the tribal areas and providing financial assistance for ST and SC children for their education. From the thematic analysis of 19 in-depth interviews, it emerges that the training programme has been able to raise sensitivity to group-targeted interventions.

3.6 Challenges Identified from the Training Programme

The analysis of responses collected from 237 GP members during the survey and the in-depth interviews conducted with 19 GP members has brought out a few challenges. The primary challenge that has been identified is the difference in the participation of male and female GP members. Based on the data analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency distribution) from the responses of 237 respondents participating in the survey, it can be observed that 84.44% of women participants attended the training on all five days, as compared to 91.84% male participants. 3.85% of the women attended the training only on two days. Though the percentage among the sample group is insignificant, such absence is not observed among the males.

Table 7: Attendance Rate (in percentage) of the Respondents

Districts	Female				Male		
	Two days %	Three days %	Four Days %	All Five Days %	Three days %	Four Days %	All Five Days %
Belagavi	0.00	3.70	11.11	85.19	2.50	2.50	95.00
Kalaburagi	0.00	14.29	7.14	78.57	7.55	5.66	86.79
Mysuru	0.00	0.00	11.11	88.89	6.25	0.00	93.75
Tumkur	3.85	7.69	0.00	88.46	2.63	2.63	94.74
KARNATAKA	1.11	7.78	6.67	84.44	4.76	3.40	91.84

Based on the findings of 237 surveys, another round (Round-2) of in-depth interviews were conducted with 19 participants to gather insights about the same. The thematic analysis drawn from the 19 in-depth interview, along with the 6 interviews conducted with the Master Trainers reveal that social and cultural practices is a major contributing factor in the participation rate. These participants have reasoned that since the female GP members hail from a socio-culturally male dominated society, they are unable to make their own decisions. The analysis illustrates that in many of the families, women are expected to seek permission from their male spouses, and only if they are permitted by their spouses they are able to attend the training programmes. Similarly, some of the respondents have also identified that lack of transportation service can be another major contributing factor in the same. As women from the rural areas may not be comfortable travelling alone, they have to depend on other male members of the family to escort them to the training venue. Therefore, these women were not able to attend the training on all five days. Even the response of the 6 Master Trainers reinforce these factors. The Master Trainers have mentioned that they have observed a significant difference in the approach to clarify any doubts or voice their opinions, among the male and female members. According to the Master Trainers, while a significant

number of the female members have been observed to be fearful of rebuke from the male members, such inhibitions do not exist among male members. Such narratives of the respondents illustrate that though 73rd Constitutional Amendment has been able to provide a platform to women to participate in the political realm at the grassroots level, it has not been able to empower these ‘politically active’ women who represent a larger population, in its true sense and aligns with the existing academic literature.

To gain an in-depth understanding of combating this problem, the Master Trainers, who are constantly engaging with the GP members for trainings, were asked how these issues can be mitigated that will promote active participation of female members. The recorded responses from the Master Trainers emphasises on continuous engagement with women at the grassroots level to encourage them to actively participate, along with arranging transportation system for the women so that they do not have to depend on any male family members and can commute independently.

Another challenge that has been identified from the narratives and has been illustrated in the previous sub-sections is the lack of digital literacy among the participants. As many of the GP members do not possess knowledge of digital medium or are not highly educated, and also do not have smartphones or other gadgets to access online course materials, these trainings should emphasise on providing offline modules that are easily accessible. Additionally, to equip the respondents with better understanding of the online training, digital literacy support system can be established.

Another major observation that can be inferred from the respondents’ exposition is that some absence of formal education of the trainees and the low level of academic qualifications is a barrier in understanding the training content. There is a felt need for simplified explanation of complex topics, particularly of theoretical topics. Therefore, the course modules should be prepared considering the diverse socio-demographic background of the participants of the training programme and the trainings should also be provided in the local language, preferably using local dialects and simple words.

3.7 Summary of the Key Findings

The evaluation of the Capacity Building Training Programme for Newly Elected Gram Panchayat Members (2020-21) reveals that the programme was largely effective in enhancing the knowledge, confidence and practical governance abilities of the elected representatives that participated in the training.

All 237 respondents, who participated in the survey, and 19 respondents that participated in the interviews, have expressed positive views about the programme structure, quality of training content and delivery by well-informed Master Trainers. From the analysis of the data it can be ascertained that highly impactful training topics were those with direct applicability to their responsibilities, particularly Gram Panchayat Resources and Vision Plan. The training has helped the respondents to understand their roles and facilitated them to effectively discharge their duties so as to achieve actionable outcomes in the local governance processes. 84% of respondents reported applying the knowledge gained in their respective Gram Panchayat activities, including infrastructure improvements, provision of sanitation facilities, health initiatives and educational services. The training has also helped the participants to operationalise inclusivity in the local governance, as many of them have organised *Mahila Grama Sabhas*, promoted SHGs, and created awareness activities related to women and children's rights, and marginalised population, especially the tribal communities. Conversely, theoretical and digitally oriented modules like E-Governance were identified as challenging, especially by members with lower levels of education and digital literacy.

Regarding pedagogy, conventional methods such as lectures and group discussions have been favoured by the respondents due to their accessibility and use of local language, while field visits, though selected by fewer participants, were regarded as highly impactful for practical learning.

However, several challenges were also identified. Gender disparities were evident in training attendance and participation, shaped by socio-cultural norms, fear of judgement and mobility constraints faced by women members. Limited digital literacy, inadequate access to devices and varying educational levels among respondents also has hindered comprehension of certain topics, particularly theoretical and online modules. Suggestions from respondents and Master Trainers emphasised that there is an increasing need for improved digital infrastructure, training material that is simple and in the local language and logistical support such as transportation for women trainees.

Overall, the findings indicate that the programme contributed significantly to improving the functional capabilities and developmental engagement of elected GP members. However, it also highlights the challenges of the female elected representatives and the partial failure of the system to empower women politically at the grassroots level. Hence, it is important to strengthen the programme design to ensure inclusivity, accessibility and sustained participation.

SECTION- IV : Refresher Training Programme for Elected Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat (2023-2024)

4.1 Context

The introduction of women's reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) represents one of the most significant milestones in India's democratic decentralisation process. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, mandated the reservation of not less than one-third of all seats for women in rural local bodies, including positions of chairpersons at all levels. This landmark reform was initiated to include women in the decision-making process ensuring their meaningful participation in local governance. Its aim is not only to transform the political landscape of rural India but to also generated a ripple effect in promoting gender equality, social inclusion, and community development.

Firstly, the reservation of women in PRIs has enhanced political empowerment at the grassroots level. Before the constitutional amendment, women were largely invisible in governance structures, often confined to domestic roles due to socio-cultural barriers and patriarchal norms. The reservation policy created an institutional space for women to engage in public decision-making, express their opinions, and influence development priorities. By occupying elected positions, women began to assert their rights and challenge long-standing gender stereotypes. Studies have shown that women leaders are more likely to prioritise issues related to health, education, water supply and sanitation- sectors directly affecting family and community welfare.

Secondly, women's reservation has played a pivotal role in promoting inclusive governance and social justice, as women from marginalised communities including, Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) have gained political visibility and representation through intersectional quotas. This has ensured that diverse voices are heard in local development planning, contributing to a more equitable distribution of resources. The presence of women leaders in PRIs has also encouraged greater transparency and accountability, as they are often perceived as more approachable and community-oriented in their leadership style.

Despite the passage of three decades, after the bill has been implemented, the reservation policy has faced challenges such as proxy representation, where elected women function

under the influence of male relatives, limited administrative exposure, and inadequate capacity-building opportunities. However, continuous training, awareness programmes, and institutional support have begun to mitigate these issues. Therefore, the Refresher Training for Elected Women Representatives of the Gram Panchayat designed and implemented by ANSSIRD has remained a crucial intervention to ensure women's participation in the political system.

This section (Section IV) presents a detailed analysis of the data collected from 374 women respondents by survey method and 19 respondents by in-depth interview method. While the analysis of the data collected by survey (374 respondents) provides an overall understanding of the structure (including content and module), the most impactful methods of providing the training programme and the insights drawn from the 19 in-depth interviews provide an understanding of the impact of the training programmes on the respondents in terms of encouraging them to participate in the decision-making process as a GP member, identifying the problems in the existing system and the ways to improve the training.

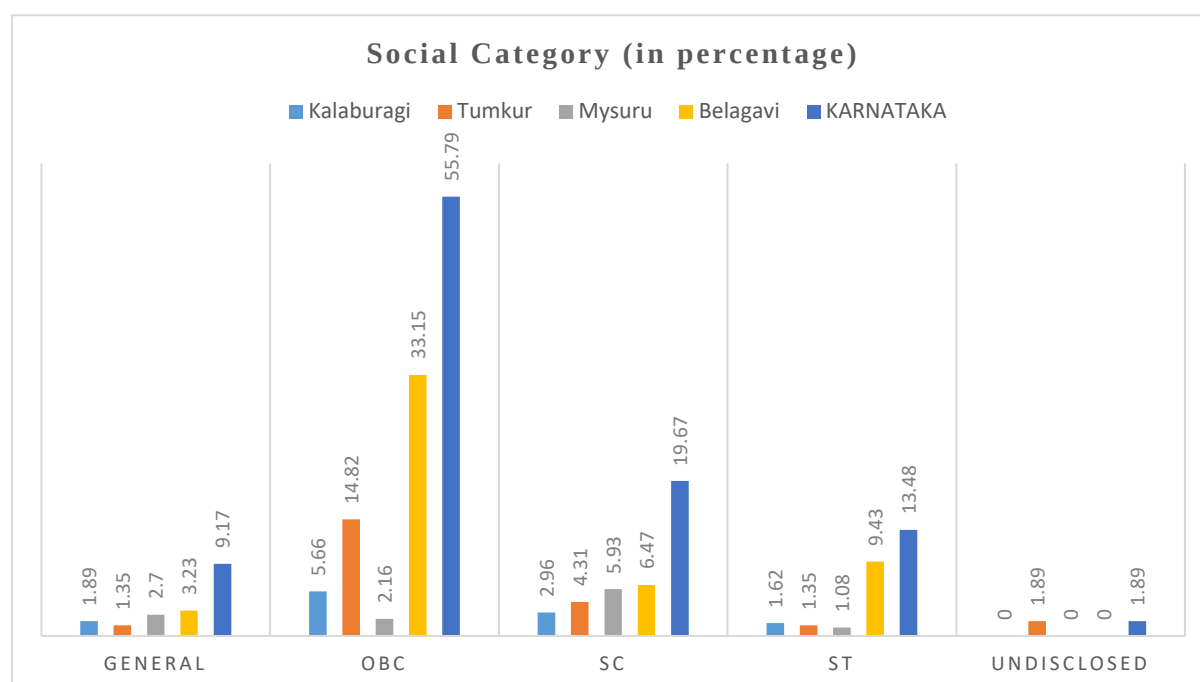
4.2 Socio-demographic Details of Respondents Participated in the Survey

The socio-demographic profiling of the 374 respondents (sample group for survey) includes age, educational and social category (caste), who were interviewed during Round-1 of the primary data collection process. The demographic profiling of the respondents of the survey depicts that 90 elected women representatives are from Tumkur, 44 are from Mysuru, 194 are from Belagavi and 41 women representatives are from Kalaburagi.

4.2.1 Social Category of the Respondents

From all the four selected districts a majority of the respondents, i.e., 55.79%% of the respondents are OBC, while 19.67% respondents are from the SC communities, and 13.48% of the respondents are ST. A comparatively small proportion is from the General category constituting 9.17%. Along with these categories, 1.89% of the respondents have not disclosed their social category. Such socio-demographic composition reflects that the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act has been able to ensure representation of all socially deprived sectors, at least at the policy level.

Figure 8: Social Category (Caste) of the Respondents



4.2.2 Age of the Respondents

From the socio-demographic profiling of the respondents, it emerges that majority of the respondents, i.e., 45.99%, fall within the age group of 32-44 years, closely followed by the age group of 45-57 years constituting 28.88% of the sample profile. On the other hand, 12.38% of the respondents are within the age group of 58 -70 years, while 11.76% fall within the age group of 19-31 years. And, only 1 participant is above 70 years and 1 is just 18 years¹.

¹ This is a self-reported survey and while collecting the data, field team has not conducted any verification of the age of the participants by checking their birth certificate or any other similar documents.

Table 8: Age of the Respondents

District	Age	Frequency	Percentage
Belagavi	6-18	1	0.27
Belagavi	19-31	25	6.68
Belagavi	32-44	88	23.53
Belagavi	45-57	48	12.83
Belagavi	58-70	35	9.36
Belagavi	71-83	1	0.27
Kalaburagi	19-31	6	1.60
Kalaburagi	32-44	22	5.88
Kalaburagi	45-57	10	2.67
Kalaburagi	58-70	3	0.80
Mysuru	19-31	5	1.34
Mysuru	32-44	19	5.08
Mysuru	45-57	17	4.55
Mysuru	58-70	4	1.07
Tumkur	19-31	8	2.14
Tumkur	32-44	43	11.50
Tumkur	45-57	33	8.82
Tumkur	58-70	6	1.60
KARNATAKA		374	100

4.2.3 Educational Qualification of the Respondents

Of the 374 respondents a majority of the respondents, i.e., 140 of the respondents had completed primary education, followed by 117 participants who have completed their high-school education. While 42 of the respondents have received their Pre-university PUC, only 8 are Graduates and 4 are Postgraduates. And, a large number of respondents, i.e., 63, do not possess any formal educational degree or certificate.

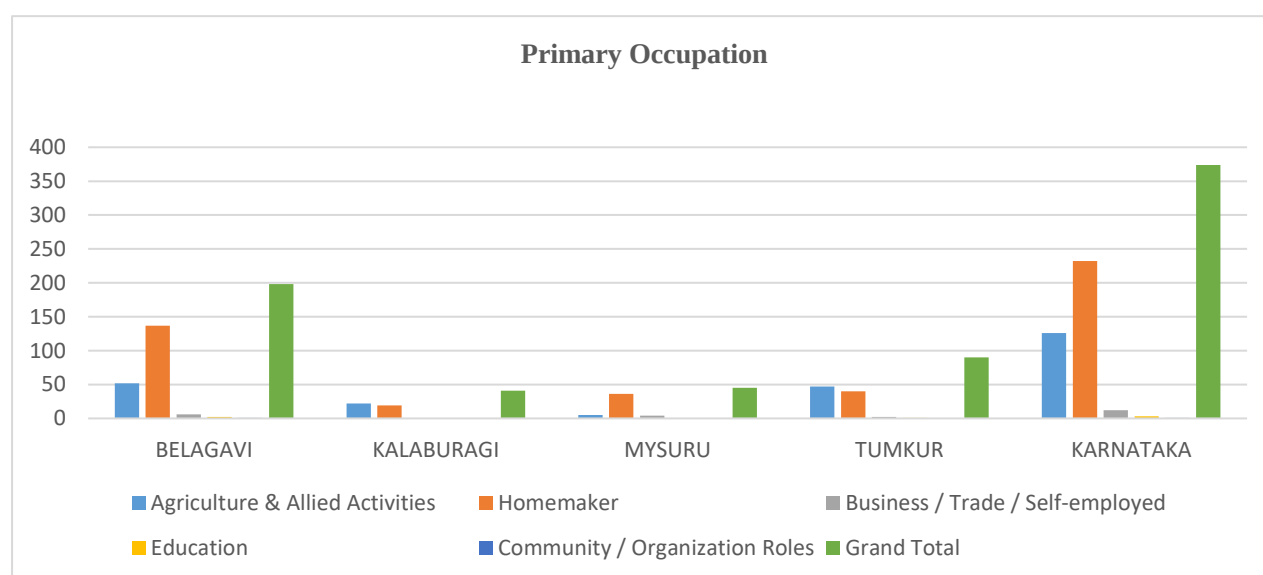
Table 9: Educational Qualification of the Respondents

District	No Formal Education	Primary Education	High School Education	Pre-University PUC	Graduate	Post-graduate	Grand Total
Belagavi	42	73	63	15	1	4	198
Kalaburagi	7	33	1	0	0	0	41
Mysuru	5	12	22	6	0	0	45
Tumkur	9	22	31	21	7	0	90
KARNATAKA	63	140	117	42	8	4	374

4.2.4 Primary Occupation of the Respondents

From the socio-demographic profiling of the respondents of the survey, it emerges that 126 respondents are engaged in agriculture and allied activities as their primary occupation, 232 are home-makers, while 12 are engaged in business or trade related activities or are self-employed. Out of the remaining 4 respondents, 3 are working in the education sector and 1 is involved in community related activities.

Figure 9: Primary Occupation of the Respondents



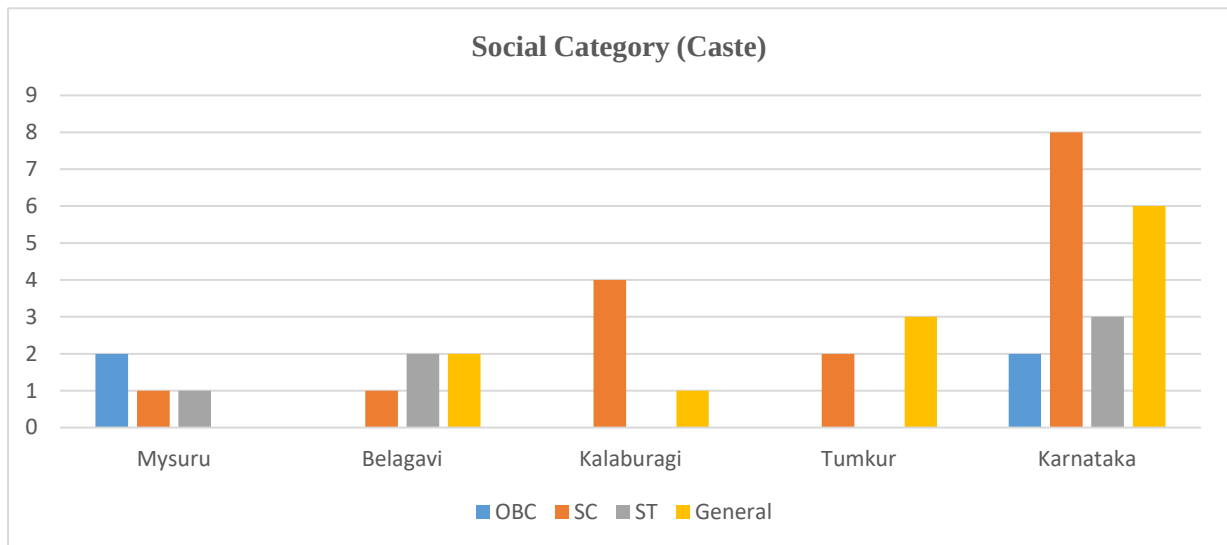
4.3 Socio-demographic Details of Respondents Participated in In-depth Interviews

The socio-demographic profiling of the 19 respondents (sample group for in-depth interviews) whose data was collected during Round-2 of the primary data collection process. includes caste, age, and educational qualification. Out of the 19 respondents, 4 are from Mysuru, 5 each from Belagavi, Kalaburagi, and Tumkur.

4.3.1 Social Category (Caste) of the Respondents

Of the 19 respondents selected for in-depth interviews, the majority of the participants are SCs constituting 42.11% of the sample group, while 31.58% are from the General category, 15.79% belong to ST community, and 10.53% are OBCs.

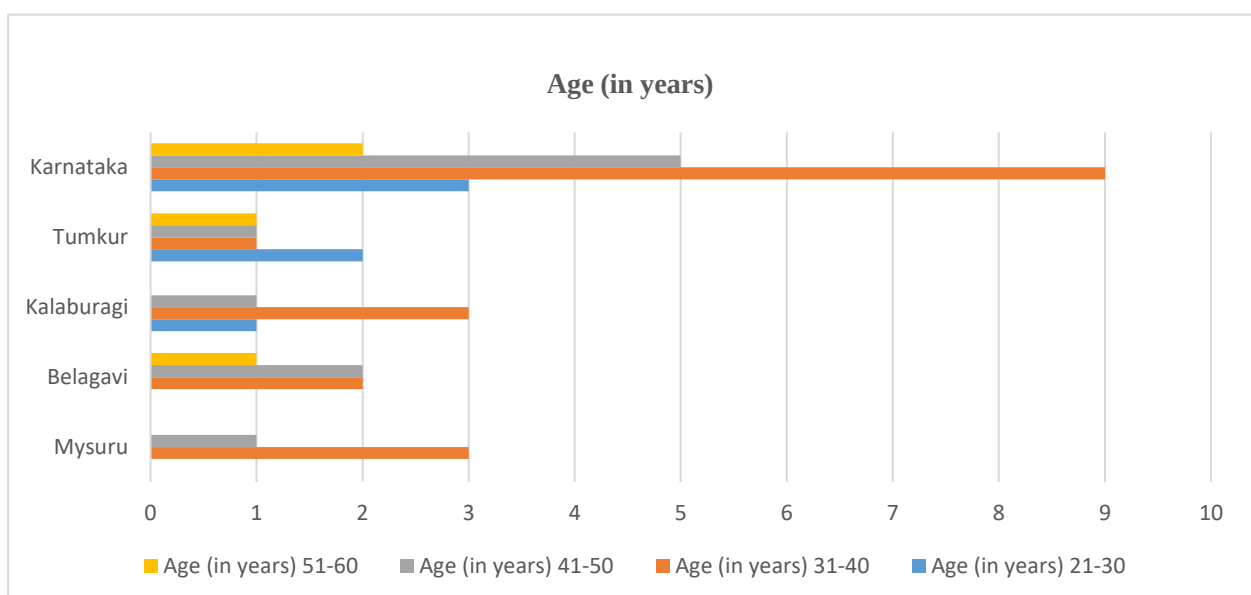
Figure 10: Social Category (Caste) of the Respondents



4.3.2 Age of the Respondents

The age of the 19 respondents has been classified into multiple categories. 9 out of 19 respondents are within the age group of 31-40 years, while 5 are within the age group of 41-50 years. 3 respondents are within the age group of 21-30 years and 2 respondents fall between 51-60 years.

Figure 11: Age (in years) of the Respondents



4.3.3 Academic Qualification of the Respondents

47.37%, of the respondents from this group have completed their primary education. 21.05% have completed their pre-university PUC, 15.79% have completed their high-school education, while 5.26% possess a Graduate degree and 10.53% had no formal academic degrees or certification.

Table 10: Academic Qualification of the Respondents

Districts	Primary	High School Education	Pre-university PUC	Graduate	No formal education
Mysuru	1	2	0	1	0
Belagavi	3	0	1	0	1
Kalaburagi	4	0	0	0	1
Tumkur	1	1	3	0	0
KARNATAKA	9	3	4	1	2

As presented in the above-mentioned table, with comparatively low educational qualifications, 17 out of 19 respondents are housewives, while only 1 respondent reported to be engaged in a small-scale business and 1 respondent works as a daily wage labourer (*coolie*).

4.4 Perspective of the Respondents on the Training Programme

The primary aim of the 3-days long Refresher Training Programme was not only to encourage the political participation of elected women representatives in the GP, but also mitigate the problems of women and marginalised sections through these women representatives at the grassroots level. This training programme broadly covered 20 important topics including- i) Decentralised governance and Karnataka Panchayat Raj system ii) As Gram Panchayat Woman Member, your responsibilities towards GP iii) Achievements as Women GP member and President of GP iv) What are the opportunities provided by GP for women members to speak, and your views v) What types of atrocities on women have you noticed in rural areas? vi) What are atrocities on women at the family level? vii) Is child marriage, a crime? viii) The role of Sthayi Samithis in the development of women ix) Importance of communications x) Acts in favour of Women (Child Marriage Abolition Act,

Act against domestic violence, Sexual Harassment at Work Places Act, Equal pay for equal work Act; xi) Women Protection and Empowerment sub-Committees (Women and Children Protection Committee, Bala Vikas Samithi, Rural Education Workforce (Karyapadey), Water and sanitation Samiti) xii) Participation of Women in GP meetings xiii) Programmes taken up by GP for Women Empowerment (Planning for water supply, Increasing women participation to 50 %, Sanjeevini Yojane) xiv) About Leadership xv) Government schemes for women empowerment and development (Shakthi Yojane, Grahalexmi, Grahajyothi, Koosina Mane) xvi) Decision Making xvii) Women Organisations xviii) Role of gram panchayat in the development of women xix) Our dream gram panchayat xx) Role of E- governance in rural development and Panchayat Raj system. While the capacity-building training programme conducted for the newly elected members primarily focuses on the effective functioning of PRIs, refresher training programme for elected women representative focuses predominantly on gender issues, development of children and issues of the marginalised communities. While the training includes social and developmental issues like WaSH, Education, Employment, the targeted focus of the training is to resolve the problems of women, children and marginalised communities related to sanitation, lack of access to education, health facilities and employment opportunities.

Based on the data collected from 374 elected women GP members, who attended the Refresher Training Programme (2023-2024), few key patterns have been identified regarding the participants' perspective on the training programme. Descriptive statistical analysis of the responses from 374 participants of the survey illustrate that practical and leadership-oriented sessions received the highest engagement. The most frequently selected topics from the training programme are on- Leadership, selected by 83.2%, followed by Decision Making that is preferred by 79.7%, Violence Against Women – Family 79.4%, Violence Against Women – Rural Areas 73.3%, and Child Marriage 69.0%. Many of the participants have noted that such topics were relevant as opposed to the topics like Karnataka Panchayat Raj System and Women's Participation in GP meetings, as these topics are more theoretical and abstract in nature. The respondents have revealed that such topics have helped them in enhancing their confidence and decision-making capacity. Many participants appreciated learning about leadership and women's empowerment, noting that the sessions helped them understand their responsibilities in Gram Panchayat functioning. For example, one participant stated, "Sessions on what decisions should be taken helped us understand our responsibilities in GP work." On the other hand, respondents with limited education have encountered

difficulties in understanding the governance structure and e-governance concepts. They expressed a need for simplification through visual aids and local examples.

The second thematic analysis that emerged from the 374 responses gathered from the survey revealed that Case Studies were the most widely used and preferred method (87.4%), followed by Online Discussions (23.0%) and Field Visits (4.3%). Case studies were consistently praised for their realism and relatability, allowing participants to understand and apply governance principles in actual village contexts. As one participant noted, “Case studies showed real village situations we could relate to and learn from.” Field visits, though limited, had a notably strong impact. Participants expressed a unanimous demand for increasing such experiential components, emphasising that exposure to functioning Panchayats deepened their understanding of best practices. Online discussions, on the other hand, has emerged as one of the most poorly received method of training, due to poor internet connectivity, low digital literacy, and lack of smartphones. Out of 374 respondents, only 86 participants (23%) attended online sessions, and very few reported using digital tools in their Panchayat-related work. Although a few respondents have acknowledged the convenience of online learning, most of the respondents have found it difficult to engage fully due to these technological limitations. Overall, the findings indicate that online training is not inclusive for the majority of rural participants. Therefore, offline or blended approaches combining both in-person and digital methods are more appropriate and effective for training Panchayat representatives in rural Karnataka.

The final theme, elaborating the respondents’ experience on the training programme, highlights on their perception of the training programme and the Master trainers. The analysis of the data illustrates that 91% of the respondents have rated the trainers’ knowledge positively, 89% appreciated their clarity in delivery, 85% found the programme relevant to their Panchayat work, and 825 were satisfied with the flow of the sessions. In-depth insights from 374 survey and 19 in-depth interviews further underscores the Master Trainers’ knowledge, with participants commending their clarity. The use of visual aids, such as pictures and charts, along with slow and clear explanations, was also praised for enhancing comprehension. Overall, participants viewed the trainers as one of the programme’s strongest assets. The findings suggest that clear, patient, and example-based teaching methods, supported by appropriate training materials, should be continued and strengthened in future programmes.

4.5 Practical Implications of the Training Programme on the Functioning of Gram Panchayat

Much like the outcomes of the capacity-building training programme for the newly elected GP members, this particular refresher training programme with the elected women representatives of the GPs has also succeeded in translating into practical actionable outcomes. The findings from the survey reveals that 112 participants have reported to have applied their knowledge to improve local infrastructure such as toilets, drainage systems, and water supply networks; 98 participants self-reported to be actively engage in Gram Sabha meetings by speaking up and proposing development ideas; and 77 participants indicated that the training contributed to the formation of new women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) or strengthened existing ones.

Table 11: Practical Implications of the Training Programme on Infrastructural and Developmental Issues

Application Area	Examples	Frequency
Infrastructure	Toilets, drains, water systems	112
Gram Sabha participation	Speaking, proposing ideas	98
Women's groups	New SHGs formed, stronger SHGs	77

Qualitative insights from the survey and in-depth interviews further illustrate that several participants reported initiating sanitation and infrastructure projects, including construction of school toilets and cleaning village drains, reflecting enhanced community-oriented leadership. Many also shared that the training encouraged them to participate more confidently and meaningfully in Gram Sabha discussions, voicing local concerns and contributing to decision-making processes. Additionally, the programme played a pivotal role in women's empowerment, as participants used the skills and confidence gained to establish and lead SHGs, fostering collective economic and social advancement. Furthermore, though the participants have not reported cases of domestic violence or violence against women and children in their respective panchayats, they narrated that the training programme has provided them with a better understanding of how to deal with such situations, involving the police.

Overall, the findings indicate that the training had a significant and measurable impact at the grassroots level by improving community infrastructure, strengthening democratic participation, and promoting women's leadership in rural governance.

4.6 Challenges Identified from the Training Programme

Analogous to the findings of the capacity-building training programme, the main challenge that the participants have encountered is though the reservation of seats for women candidates at the GP has increased the number of women in political participation, representation in its true essence is yet to be achieved. The narratives of the elected women representatives interviewed for survey and in-depth interviews have acknowledged that attending the training programmes is comparatively difficult for women as compared to men. As women in rural areas have been forced to inculcate socio-cultural norms and patriarchal ideas, they are often not allowed to join the meetings without the supervision of any male members. Additionally, their decision-making power is socio-culturally challenged as they often fail to voice their opinions among other GP members. This issue has also been substantiated by the narratives of 6 Master Trainers, who have agreed that women members often encounter challenges from male GP members.

Another issue that has emerged from the narratives of the participants and the Master Trainers is that occasionally, male family members of the elected women representatives try to attend the meetings reflecting that the decision-making power is vested with them.

Additionally, some of the respondents of the in-depth interviews have claimed that some of the representatives do not actually reside in their GPs and stay in urban areas. Such women members lack the knowledge of the actual problems in the GPs and are unable to represent the marginalised sections appropriately. When the respondents were asked about their suggestions to mitigate such challenges, they opined that rigorous, extensive (probably 5-days or 10-days) face-to-face training will help everyone to combat such situations and will also help the elected representatives to understand the grassroots level problems.

4.7 Summary of the Key Findings

The evaluation of the Refresher Training Programme for Elected Women Representatives of Gram Panchayat (2023–2024) reveals that the initiative has played a significant role in strengthening women's political participation, enhancing leadership capacities, and translating training inputs into tangible developmental outcomes at the grassroots level. The socio-demographic analysis of 374 respondents demonstrates that women from diverse social groups, particularly from OBC (55.79%), SC (19.67%), and ST (13.48%) communities,

actively participated in the training. This reflects the effectiveness of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in ensuring representation of marginalised social categories within PRIs. A majority of the elected women representatives (45.99%) belong to the 32-44 years' age group, indicating the emergence of a relatively young and active leadership base capable of engaging in long-term community development and governance processes.

Among the twenty modules covered, sessions on Leadership (83.2%), Decision-Making (79.7%), Violence Against Women (Family and Rural) (79.4% and 73.3%), and Child Marriage (69.0%) were the most appreciated by participants. Respondents found these topics to be practical, relatable, and directly applicable to their Panchayat roles, in contrast to abstract, theory-based modules on administrative structures. Case Studies emerged as the most effective and engaging learning tool (87.4%), followed by Online Discussions (23%) and Field Visits (4.3%). Participants valued the realism and contextual relevance of case studies, which facilitated application of learning to village-level governance. They also expressed strong preference for increasing the number of field visits for experiential learning. Only 23% of participants attended online sessions. Poor internet connectivity, low digital literacy, and lack of smartphones significantly limited access. This indicates that online training remains largely non-inclusive for rural women, necessitating a continued focus on offline or blended training models to ensure equitable participation.

Despite quantitative gains in women's participation, qualitative barriers persist. Many participants continue to face social and cultural restrictions on mobility and public speaking. Some women experience indirect control or "proxy" representation by male relatives, while others are constrained by family responsibilities that limit their participation in training or meetings.

Both participants and Master Trainers suggested that future refresher programmes should be of a longer duration (5–10 days) and primarily face-to-face. Such extended formats would allow deeper engagement with complex governance topics, peer learning, and confidence-building exercises essential for women's independent leadership.

The Refresher Training Programme has made significant progress in promoting women's leadership, democratic participation, and gender-sensitive governance at the grassroots level. It effectively combined practical learning with motivational content, leading to measurable outcomes in community projects, Gram Sabha participation, and SHG formation. However,

structural and socio-cultural barriers continue to limit women's full representation and autonomy. Strengthening face-to-face training formats, enhancing digital inclusion, and providing continuous mentoring support are critical for sustaining the gains achieved through this initiative.

SECTION- V: Recommendations and Conclusion

5.1 Recommendations

The evaluation of two major training initiatives conducted by the Abdul Nazir Sab State Institute of Rural Development (ANSSIRD), Mysuru- the Capacity Building Training Programme for Newly Elected Gram Panchayat Members (2020–21), and the Refresher Training Programme for Elected Women Representatives of Gram Panchayats (2023–24) has revealed significant achievements in building the capacities of the elected GP members in performing their duties but also highlighted the areas requiring systemic improvement. The recommendations outlined below aim to strengthen future training cycles by enhancing programme design, delivery mechanisms, gender inclusion, institutional coordination, and sustainability.

5.1.1 Programme Design and Curriculum Development

The training modules should be customised to reflect the diverse socio-economic, educational, and cultural backgrounds of Gram Panchayat (GP) members. Many newly elected representatives, particularly women and members from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, possess limited formal education and administrative exposure. Therefore, simplified learning materials in vernacular languages using local idioms, illustrations, and visual aids should be prioritised. Complex theoretical subjects such as fiscal decentralisation, e-governance, and statutory frameworks should be explained through practical examples and community-based scenarios. Specialised modules may be designed for members with higher educational backgrounds or prior governance experience to avoid redundancy and promote peer learning.

5.1.2 Integration of Local Case Studies and Best Practices

Incorporating district-specific and state-level case studies highlighting successful Panchayat initiatives in sanitation, education, livelihoods, and social welfare can make the content more relatable. Documentation of best practices should be attempted for replication across regions. Collaboration with Zilla Panchayats and Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department (RDPR) can facilitate this process.

5.1.3 Duration and Frequency of Trainings

Both the training programmes including, five days for new members and three days for women members, were perceived as too short to internalise complex governance concepts. Therefore, it is recommended that the duration of the Capacity Building Training Programme be extended to seven to ten days, with sufficient time for participatory exercises and field exposure, while the Refresher Training Programme for women representatives to be conducted over five days, ensuring adequate engagement with gender issues and leadership skills. Follow-up refresher sessions be held annually to reinforce learning and address emerging challenges.

5.1.4 Training Methods and Pedagogical Approaches

The evaluation illustrated that participants responded most positively to interactive and experiential learning methods such as group discussions, case studies, and field visits. Future training delivery should therefore focus on these areas, as well as lectures that are preferred by the GP members who are not highly educated. Integrating simulation exercises, mock Gram Sabha sessions might strengthen decision-making and leadership capacities.

5.1.5 Language and Communication

Training should be conducted entirely in Kannada, incorporating local dialects where appropriate. Audio-visual materials should include subtitles or voice-overs in local language for ease of comprehension. Trainers should be trained in adult-learning pedagogy to ensure effective communication with low-literacy participants.

5.1.6 Using Hybrid Models for Training

While online training modules were introduced, limited internet access and low digital literacy have reduced their inclusivity. Therefore, offline digital learning modules (on tablets or USB drives) should be developed in local language. Blended learning models combining classroom instruction with guided online sessions can be adopted in semi-urban areas. Establishment of Digital Learning Support Cells at District Training Centres (DTCs) is recommended to help trainees access online materials post-training, as well as to work online for PRIs documentation.

5.1.7 Gender Inclusion and Empowerment Strategies

The findings highlighted that despite reservation for women, socio-cultural barriers such as limited mobility, dependency on male relatives, and proxy representation persist. Therefore, trainings should integrate gender-sensitisation sessions for both male and female members, promoting equitable participation. Provision of transport facilities and safe accommodation should be ensured to improve attendance and participation of women trainees. Collaboration with Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and NGOs working on women's empowerment can provide post-training mentoring support. ANSSIRD should institutionalise a Gender Resource Cell to integrate gender perspectives into all training modules, even the trainings provided to male GP members.

5.1.8 Infrastructure and Resource Enhancement

Training venues should be equipped with adequate digital infrastructure, sanitation facilities, and accessible transport connectivity. Inadequate facilities were a recurring concern among trainees. It is recommended that ANSSIRD coordinate with RDPR Department to allocate specific funds for upgrading infrastructure in regional training centres. Each district-level centre should maintain audio-visual libraries, case study archives, and interactive displays to support experiential learning.

5.2 Conclusion

This evaluation study assessing 2 training programmes conducted by the ANSSIRD demonstrates that the Capacity Building Training Programme (2020–21) and Refresher Training Programme (2023–24) have significantly contributed to enhancing local governance capabilities, improving service delivery, and promoting participatory decision-making within Panchayati Raj Institutions in Karnataka.

The findings affirm that these programmes have enabled elected GP members to acquire essential administrative knowledge, understand their statutory roles, and initiate community development actions. The participants' application of training knowledge in improving infrastructure, organising *Gram Sabhas*, initiating Self-Help Groups, and implementing welfare schemes underscores the practical relevance of the trainings.

However, the study also reveals critical structural and socio-cultural challenges, such as low digital literacy, educational disparities, infrastructural limitations, and persistent gender biases, that constrain the full realisation of decentralised governance objectives. Women representatives, despite improved numerical representation, continue to face barriers to substantive participation due to patriarchal norms, limited mobility, and lack of institutional support mechanisms.

The evaluation concludes that capacity-building interventions must evolve from being event-based exercises to continuous, institutionalised learning systems embedded within the Panchayati Raj framework. Finally, the study reiterates that ANSSIRD, as the nodal state institution for capacity-building, holds a pivotal role in fostering responsive, inclusive, and accountable rural governance. By institutionalising the recommendations outlined in this report, especially regarding programme redesign, gender inclusion, and monitoring, ANSSIRD can further strengthen the Panchayati Raj system in Karnataka and set a benchmark for other states.

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