

Effectiveness of Women Councilors in Local Government System

Mushtaq Ahmad Jadoon¹, Muhammad Israr², Dawood Jan³, Nafees Ahmad⁴,
Shafi M. Malik⁵ and Jamal Khalid Swati⁶

Abstract

This study was conducted with the main objectives to examine the effect of trainings on the performance of women councilors in Peshawar District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. For this primary data were collected by means of pre-tested questionnaire through face to face interview from two groups of women councilors with rural background and urban background selected randomly. A total of 37 (20%) woman councilors were interviewed. The data was analysed by using descriptive statistics and the significant were checked by using non-parametric tests. Main findings of the study showed that through getting different trainings, the women councilors have improved their knowledge about laws and the different aspects of the local government system, social, cultural and gender related issues significantly as explained by the chi-square value. Also these trainings train the respondents and they were able to attain administrative support, ability to design different developmental projects and get approved the funds for development schemes in their area. The value of the chi-square explained that the respondent's different skills like confidence; sense of responsibility, leadership and communication skills was improved significantly. There was a significant improvement in their comfort level while working collectively in groups and with male counselors. The study recommends that need based frequent training sessions at the nearest possible venue with convenient time schedules could benefit the women councilors more effectively.

Key Words: Rural-urban women councilors, training effect, women councilor performance

Introduction

The role of women as public representatives is not new to Pakistani society, but there are some pockets of resistance in every spare of life. Due to cultural constraints and the emergence of fundamentalist groups and lobbies, the participation of women either as political leaders or in some instances even as voters is being questioned in some quarters of the developing world including Pakistan.

In the Local Government (LG) elections of 2000-01, most of the political parties for the first time realized the importance of women members in their ranks. Although the LG elections were held on a non-Party basis, it is a fact that the majority of the Nazims and male councilors had political affiliations. A number of studies of women's empowerment are analyzed to make some important methodological points about the measurement of empowerment (Kabeer, 1999). Three dimensions of choice are indivisible in determining the meaning of an indicator and hence its validity as a measure of empowerment. The notion of choice is further qualified by referring to the conditions of choice, its content and consequences. These qualifications represent an attempt to incorporate the structural parameters of individual choice in the analysis of women's empowerment (Kabeer, 1999).

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Rural Sociology, University of Agriculture, Peshawar, KP-Pakistan.

² Assistant Professor, Department of Rural Development, Amir Muhammad Khan Campus, Mardan, The University of Agriculture, Peshawar, KP- Pakistan. Email: misrar@aup.edu.pk, israrids@yahoo.com, israrids@gmail.com

³ Associate Professor, Department of Agriculture and Applied Economics, University of Agriculture, KP-Pakistan.

⁴ Lecturer, Department of Economics, University of Malakand (Chakdara) Dir Lower-Pakistan

⁵ Assistant Professor, Institute of Development Studies, University of Agriculture, Peshawar, KP-Pakistan

⁶ Graduate student Institute of Development Studies, University of Agriculture, Peshawar, KP-Pakistan

Much confusion still surrounds the concept of empowerment and how it is to be translated into practice. A major limitation has been the tendency to treat empowerment as synonymous with participation in decision-making with little attention given to the ecological model of empowerment where linkages have been found between community participation and measures of psychological empowerment. Training has been suggested as a means through which careers might become empowered. It is suggested that community care agencies should focus greater energies in determining how the policy objectives of empowerment are to be achieved through training, and in so doing make far more explicit the supposed linkages between training content, design and its posited impact on individual behaviour or self-agency (Clarke, 2001). Where skills gaps are identified, the main remedy is still training. While there are a variety of perspectives on the relative value of different forms of training intervention impart by different organizations for building the capacity of the news one and further strengthen the capabilities of the already existed. It is widely accepted that training is beneficial (Thomas, 2001).

Women councilor representation in local government is the result of a strong movement from various quarters with NGOs as one of the forces behind this movement. Promoting women as effective leaders in their community was a challenge that human rights organizations and women NGOs took up and advocated at various levels. Some of these organizations also followed their initial work with training of women councilors.

The Aurat Foundation (AF) is an NGO working for women's empowerment in the society. Its aim is to facilitate greater women and people participation in governance as well as influence social attitudes and behavior. The AF contributes towards creating an enabling environment for women by strengthening support structures. It was a challenge for the women of Pakistan, particularly for women's rights organizations and activists, who had been struggling for this reservation since long. It also provided an opportunity for local representatives, particularly women councilors from all over the province to know each other and allow an increased interaction of local representatives among themselves as well as with community activists, nongovernmental organizations, government and the donor agencies. Resting on the importance of training in capacity building of the representative of the people the study in hand is design with the following objectives.

Objectives of the study

The main objectives of the study were to measure the effects and benefits of the trainings imparted by Aurat Foundation's Women Resource Centre for rural women councilors. This comparison will help us to find out the effects and benefits of the trainings received by the rural women councilors. The specific objectives of the study as follows:

- i. To examine the effect of the trainings on the performance of the women councilors.
- ii. To evaluate the perception of women councilors on the trainings imparted.
- iii. To suggest recommendations for further improvement.

Methods and Materials

The study was carried out in Peshawar district with the objectives to examine the effect of training on the performance of women councilors in the area. Aurat foundation was selected as the universe because it is one of the most prominent NGO, which has been working in almost all the district of the province since for the empowerment of women (Sajid & Asad, 2005). A large number of women councilors in district Peshawar have rural and rural cum urban background and are the beneficiaries of the Aurat Foundation that has helped in refined analysis of the ongoing activities. Within Peshawar women councilors from Town-1 (with urban background) and Town-4 (with rural background) were selected. The comparison between the two i.e. rural councilors and urban has helped further identification of the effects and benefits of

the imparted trainings. There was a total of 184 women councilor in the district. Taking 20% sampling, the total number of 37 respondents (20% of the universe) selected. The method of proportional allocation was used in order to select the number of sample respondents from each Town.

Total number of women councilors and sample respondents

Towns	Total Union Councils	Total number of women councilors	20% sample women councilors
Town-1	25	100	20
Town-4	21	84	17
Total	46	184	37

The data was collected from the respondents through questionnaire on the basis of simple random sampling. The questionnaire having both closed and open ended questions and were distributed among the sample respondents during the monthly meeting and were presented to them all the content of the questionnaire for their understanding. The collected data were codified, transferred to tally sheet and then entered to the computer. Microsoft Excel was used for data input and primary analysis and was analyzed by using descriptive statistics and non parametric tests for the interpretation of the results.

Results and Discussions

Improvement in the knowledge about laws and system

The data in table-I presents the respondents view about the knowledge of the respondents about the different laws of the local government system. The data shows that 70% of the rural women councilors were of the point of view that after receiving trainings there was a high level of improvement in their knowledge about laws and system while 80% of the urban women councilors think that they have benefited themselves by the trainings by improving their knowledge about laws and system. It means that trainings have affected the women councilors in a positive way in this regard but not significantly as the chi square indicated that it is not significant statistically.

Table 1: Improvement in the knowledge about laws and system

Respondents	Knowledge about laws and system of the local government		Totals
	Without Training	With Training	
Rural councilors	5*{30%}(5.1) [0]	12{70%}(11.9) [0]	17
Urban councilors	7{35%}(6.9) [0]	16{80%}(16.1) [0]	23
Totals	12{32%}	28{75%}	40

- * figure without parenthesis is the frequency. {Percent distribution}, expected cell totals), Chi-square statistic for each cell] and Chi-square value at 5% level of significance 0.0049, P value is 0.944356

Source: Field Survey, 2012.

Improvement in the ability to deal with social, cultural and gender bases issues

The data in table-II shows that respondents perceptions about the ability to solve the different issues while dealing with the process of local government. The data in table-II explains that 70% of the rural women councilors have developed an ability regarding high level of the skills to deal with social, cultural and gender biases issues by the virtue of trainings. On the other hand 80% of the urban women councilors concluded that there was a high level improvement in their ability to deal with social, cultural and gender biases issues. This means that trainings have benefited the women councilors both from rural and urban areas. The value of the chi-square

statistics suggested that the training made a significant improvement in improving the different capacities of the rural and urban women councilors in the area.

Table-II: Improvement in the ability to deal with social, cultural and gender biases issues

Respondents	Ability to deal with social, cultural and gender issues				
	Without training	With training	Mean	variance	Total
Rural councilors	4* {24%} (4.21) [0.01]	12 {70%} (11.79) [0]	8	32	16
Urban councilors	6 {30%}(5.79) [0.01]	16 {80%} (16.21) [0]	11	50	22
Total	10{25%}	28{75%}			38

- * figure without parenthesis is the frequency, {Percent distribution}, expected cell totals), Chi-square statistic for each cell].
 - Chi-square statistic at 5% level of significance is 0.2047 and P value is 0.875179.
- Source: Field Survey, 2012

Training help to attain necessary administrative support

The data in table-III showed the respondents views about that the training helped in improvement in skills to attain necessary administrative support. It is evident from the data that 59% of the respondents from rural areas got an improvement in their skills to attain necessary administrative support. On the other hand 70% of the urban women councilors called a positive effect on their skills to attain necessary administrative support. This implies that the training got by the respondents were beneficial to them in getting a skill for dealing the administrative problems in the local government system but this was not statistically significant as explained by the chi-square value.

Table-III: Empowerment to attain necessary administrative support

Respondents	Empowerment to attain necessary administrative support				
	Without training	With training	Mean	Variance	Total
Rural councilors	5* {18} (5.62) [0.07]	11{59} (10.38) [0.04]	6.5	24.5	16
Urban councilors	8 {25} (7.38) [0.05]	13 {70} (13.62) [0.03]	9.5	40.5	21
Totals	13{22}	24{65}			37

- * figure without parenthesis is the frequency {Percent distribution}, expected cell totals), Chi-square statistic for each cell].
 - Chi-square statistic at 5% level of significance is 0.1867 and P value is 0.665671.
- Source: Field Survey, 2012

Ability to get approved the funds for women councilor's development schemes

The data presented in Table-IV showed the respondents perceptions about the training which enhance the capacities of the respondents to get funds for development activities in their areas. That data in the table shows that 65% of the rural women councilors agreed that there was an improvement in their ability to get approved the funds for women councilor's development schemes. On the other hand, 65% of the urban women councilors too stated that there was an improvement in their skills to get approved the funds for women councilor's development schemes. It means that trainings have benefited the women councilors both from rural and urban areas to improve the ability to get approved the funds to women councilor's development schemes in their respective areas but the p-value suggest that this was not statistically significant.

Table-IV: Improvement in the ability to get approved funds for women councilors development schemes

Respondents	Ability to get approved the funds				
	Without training	With training	Mean	Variance	Total
Rural councilors	5* {29%} (5.62) [0.07]	11 {65} (10.38) [0.04]	8	18	16
Urban councilors	8 {40%} (7.38) [0.05]	13{65} (13.62) [0.03]	10.5	12.5	21
Totals	13{35%}	24{65}			37

- * figure without parenthesis is the frequency {Percent distribution}, expected cell totals), Chi-square statistic for each cell].
 - Chi-square statistic at 5% level of significance is 0.1867 and P value is 0.665671.
- Source: Field Survey, 2012

Improvement in the overall performance as a councilor

The data in table-IV depicts the respondent's views about the overall satisfaction and performance in the local government system. It is evident for the data that 70% of the rural women councilors admitted that there was an overall improvement in the performance as a councilor after receiving training while 30% of the women councilors said that there was no substantial improvement in the overall performance as a councilor after receiving training. On the other hand 80% of the urban women councilors stated that there was an improvement in their overall performance as a councilor after receiving the training. The value of the chi-square suggested that the training significantly improve the respondents overall performance in the local government system.

Table-IV: Improvement in the overall performance as a councilor

Respondents	Satisfaction from the membership as a local bodies				Total
	Yes	No.	Mean	Variance	
Rural councilors	12* {70%} (12.86) [0.06]	5 {30%} (4.14) [0.18]	8.5	24.5	17
Urban Councilors	16 {80%} (15.14) [0.05]	4 {20%} (4.86) [0.15]	10	72	20
Totals	28{75%}	9{25%}			37

- * figure without parenthesis is the frequency {Percent distribution}, expected cell totals), Chi-square statistic for each cell].
 - Chi-square statistic at 5% level of significance is 0.6422 and P value is 0.506061.
- Source: Field Survey, 2012

Improvement in understanding ethics and values

The data given in Table V (a) showed that 94% of the rural women councilors have improved their confidence, 100% of the rural women councilors sighted improvement in the sense of responsibility at high level. Likewise 94% of the rural women councilors said that there was a high level of improvement in their behavior as a result of trainings while 88% of the councilors from rural areas stated that trainings have improved their patience. It means that trainings have been beneficial for the rural women councilors for the improvement in understanding ethics and values. The values of the variance indicate that the confidence and patience of the rural women councilor were significantly different from the mean after the training they received. The value of the chi-square explain that there is significant improvement in the in the sense of responsibility, confidence and patience of the rural women councilors when they get formal training for this purpose.

Table-V(a): Improvement in understanding of ethics and values of rural women councilors

Skills/Ethics	Expertise among rural women councilors			
	Without	With	Variance	Mean
Confidence	6* {55%}(6.70) [0.07]	16 {94%} (15.30) [0.03]	50	11
Sense of responsibility	8 {47%} (7.61) [0.02]	17 {100%} (17.39) [0.01]	40.5	12.5
Behavior	9 {53%} (7.61) [0.25]	16 {94%} (17.39) [0.11]	24.5	12.5
Patience	5 {29%} (6.09) [0.19]	15 {88%} (13.91) [0.08]	50	10

- * figure without parenthesis is the frequency {Percent distribution}, expected cell totals), Chi-square statistic for each cell].
 - Chi-square statistic at 5% level of significance is 0.98776 and P value is 0.854827.
- Source: Field Survey, 2012

On the other hand the data in table-V (b) explains the perceptions of the urban women about the different statement. The data in the table shows that 90% of the urban women councilors as a whole agreed that the trainings have improved their confidence but at high level, 95% of the urban women councilors sighted improvement in the sense of responsibility at high level. Also 85% of the urban women councilors said that there was a high level of improvement in their behavior as a result of trainings while 80% of the councilors from urban areas stated that trainings have improved their patience but at high level. It means that trainings have been also beneficial for the urban women councilors for the improvement in understanding ethics and values as explained by the chi-square value. The variance value indicates the training of the Aurat foundation having effect on the behavior and patience of the urban women councilors in the area.

Table-V(b):Improvement in understanding ethics and values of urban women councilors

Skill/Ethics	Expertise among urban women councilors				
	Without tanning	With tanning	Mean	Variance	Total
Confidence	*7 {35%} (8.17) [0.17]	*18 {90%} (16.83) [0.08]	12.5	60.5	25
Sense of responsibility	8 {40%} (8.83) [0.08]	19 {95%} (18.17) [0.04]	13.5	60.5	27
Behavior	11 {55%}(9.15) [0.37]	17 {85%} (18.85) [0.18]	14	18	28
Patience	8 {40%} (7.85) [0.00]	16 {80%} (16.15) [0.00]	12	32	24

- * figure without parenthesis is the frequency {Percent distribution}, expected cell totals), Chi-square statistic for each cell].
 - Chi-square statistic at 5% level of significance is 0.9229 and P value is 0.819896.
- Source: Field Survey, 2012

Improvement in communication skills

The data in table-VI (a) illustrates the different communication skills of the respondents improved as a result of the training they achieved while they were associated with the local government system in the district. The data in the table shows that 88% of the rural women councilors as a whole stated that the trainings have improved their negotiation ability but at high level, 76% of the rural women councilors sighted improvement in the convincing power at high level, another 71% of the rural women councilors said that there was a high level of improvement in the exchange of information as a result of trainings. About 88% of the rural respondents said that there was a high level of improvement in their self-explanation ability and 100% of the rural women councilors sighted improvement in the listening ability at high level. This implies that there is a significant effect on trainings on the rural women councilors with respect to the improvement in communication skills. The value of the variance indicates that the

training greatly affect the negotiation skills of the rural women councilors in the area. The highly significant value of the chi square indicate that the training made a significant contribution in enhancing the different communication skills of the rural women councilors involved in the local government system.

Table-VI (a): Improvement in communication skills of rural women councilors

Expertise among rural women councilors				
	Without	With	Mean	Variance
Negotiation	4* {23%} (5.85) [0.58]	15 {88%} (13.15) [0.26]	9.5	60.5
Convincing power	6 {35%} (5.85) [0.00]	13 {76%} (13.15) [0.00]	9.5	24.5
Exchange of information	5 {29%} (5.23) [0.01]	12 {71%} (11.77) [0.00]	8.5	24.5
Self explanation	7 {41%} (6.77) [0.01]	15 {88%} (15.23) [0.00]	11	32
Listening ability	10 {59%} (8.31) [0.34]	17 {100%} (18.69) [0.15]	13.5	24.5

➤ * figure without parenthesis is the frequency {Percent distribution}, expected cell totals), Chi-square statistic for each cell].

➤ Chi-square statistic at 5% level of significance is 1.3729229 and P value is 0.849053.

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Also the data in table-VI (b) explain the urban women perception about the improvement in the communication skill in the local government process. It is evident from the data that 75% of the urban women councilors have improved their negotiation ability but at high level. 80% of the urban women councilors sighted improvement in convincing power at high level, 85% of the urban women councilors said that there was a high level of improvement in exchange of information as a result of trainings. Also 80% of the councilors from urban areas stated that trainings have improved their ability of self explanation but at high level and 90% of the urban women councilors sighted improvement in the listening ability at high level. This means that there is a significant effect of trainings on the urban women councilors with respect to the improvement in communication skills. The training of the Aurat foundation also brings changes in the negotiation skill, increased convincing power and self explanation of the urban women councilor significantly as explained by the chi-square value.

Table-VI (b): Improvement in communication skills of the urban women councilors

Expertise of communication skills				
	Without training	With training	Mean	Variance
Negotiation	5* {25%} (6.45) [0.32]	15 {75%} (13.55) [0.15]	10	50
Convincing power	7 {35%} (7.41) [0.02]	16 {80%} (15.59) [0.01]	11.5	40.5
Exchange of information	9 {45%} (8.38) [0.05]	17 {85%} (17.62) [0.02]	13	32
Self explanation	7 {35%} (7.41) [0.02]	16 {80%} (15.59) [0.01]	11.5	40.5
Listening ability	11 {55%} (9.35) [0.29]	18 {90%} (19.65) [0.14]	14.5	24.5

➤ *figure without parenthesis is the frequency, {Percent distribution}, (expected cell totals), [Chi-square statistic for each cell].

➤ Chi-square statistic at 5% level of significance is 1.0457 and P value is 0.902782.

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Improvement in leadership skills

Data presented in table-VII (a) demonstrates the views of the rural women councilors with respect to the improvement in leadership skills. The data in the table pointed that 76% of the rural women councilors as a whole stated that the trainings have improved their mediation skills but at high level, while 71% of the rural women councilors sighted improvement in the policy making and planning at high level, another 82% of the rural women councilors said that there was a high level of improvement in the resource utilization as a result of trainings. Also 94% of the rural respondents said that there was a high level of improvement in the team work. 76% of the rural women councilors sighted improvement in the initiative taking ability at high level and 82% of the councilors from rural areas stated that trainings have improved their risk taking ability but at high level. It suggests that there is a significant effect of trainings on the rural women councilors with respect to the improvement in leadership skills.

Table-VII (a): Improvement in leadership skills of rural women councilors

Expertise among rural women councilors				
	Without training	With training	Mean	Variance
Mediation skills	7* (5.74) [0.28]	13 (14.26) [0.11]	10	18
Policy making/planning	6 (5.17) [0.13]	12 (12.83) [0.05]	9	18
Resource utilization	5 (5.45) [0.04]	14 (13.55) [0.02]	9.5	40.5
Teamwork	4 (5.74) [0.53]	16 (14.26) [0.21]	10	72
Taking initiative/risk	11 (10.90) [0.00]	27 (27.10) [0.00]	19	86

- *figure without parenthesis is the frequency, {Percent distribution}, (expected cell totals), [Chi-square statistic for each cell].
 - Chi-square statistic at 5% level of significance is 1.3706 and P value is 0.849294.
- Source: Field Survey, 2012

The data in table-VII (b) explained the respondent's perceptions about the urban women councilors with respect to the improvement in leadership skills. The data shows that 75% of the urban women councilors as a whole stated that the trainings have improved their mediation skills but at high level. 70% of the urban women councilors sighted improvement in the policy making and planning at high level, another 75% of the urban women councilors said that there was a high level of improvement in the resource utilization as a result of trainings and 85% of the urban women councilors sighted improvement in the teamwork at high level. Another 70% of the councilors from urban areas stated that trainings have improved their initiative taking ability but at high level while 75% of the urban women councilors sighted improvement in the risk taking ability at high level. Chi-square test were used to check the significant of the tanning for leadership on the urban women councilor performance and it suggests that there is not a significant effect of trainings on the urban women councilors with respect to the improvement in leadership skills.

Table-VII (b): Improvement in leadership skills of urban women councilors

Leadership skills of urban women councilors				
	Without training	With training	Mean	Variance
Mediation skills	8* {40%} (7.08) [0.12]	15 {75%} (15.92) [0.05]	11.5	24.5
Policy making/planning	7 {35%} (6.46) [0.04]	14 {70%} (14.54) [0.02]	10.5	24.5
Resource utilization	7 {35%} (6.77) [0.01]	15 {75%} (15.23) [0.00]	11	32
Team work	6 {30%} (7.08) [0.16]	17 {85%} (15.92) [0.07]	11.5	60.5
Taking initiative/risk	12 {60%} (12.62) [0.03]	29 {100%} (28.38) [0.01]	20.5	74.5

- *figure without parenthesis is the frequency, {Percent distribution}, (expected cell

totals), [Chi-square statistic for each cell].

- Chi-square statistic at 5% level of significance is 0.5302 and P value is 0.970499.
Source: Field Survey, 2012

Improvement in comfort level while working with male councilors

The data given in table-VIII explained the respondents comfort level while working with the male councilors at the local government system. The data in the table explain that 76% of the rural women councilors declared that there was an improvement in comfort level while working with male councilors after receiving training. On the other hand 80% of the urban women councilors stated that there was an improvement in their comfort level while working with male councilors. The chi-square suggests that there is no significant effect of trainings on the women councilors with respect to the improvement in comfort level while working with male councilors in the local government system.

Table-VIII: Improvement in comfort level while working with male councilor

Respondents	Comfort level while working with male councilors				
	Without training	With training	Mean	Variance	Total
Rural councilors	3* {18%} (3.46) [0.06]	13 {76%} (12.54) [0.02]	8	50	16
Urban Councilors	5 {25%} (4.54) [0.05]	16 {80%} (16.46) [0.01]	10.5	60.5	21
Total	8{22%}	29{78%}			37

- *figure without parenthesis is the frequency, {Percent distribution}, (expected cell totals), [Chi-square statistic for each cell].
- Chi-square statistic at 5% level of significance is 0.1372 and P value is 0.711107.
Source: Field Survey, 2012

Working collectively in groups

The data in table-IX depicted the respondent's perceptions about the collective work in a group in the local government system at the district level. The data pointed that 82% of the rural women councilors noticed an improvement in the ability to work collectively in groups after receiving training. On the other hand 90% of the urban women councilors stated that there was an improvement in working collectively in groups after receiving trainings. The non-parametric chi-square test suggests that there is no significant effect of trainings on the women councilors with respect to the improvement in comfort level while working collectively in groups. The value of variance indicates the urban women councilor was helping each others in the collective work.

Table-IX: Respondents perceptions about working collectively in groups

Respondents	Have trainings helped you to work collectively in groups				
	Without training	With training	Mean	Variance	Total
Rural councilors	4* {24%} (4.29) [0.02]	14 {82%} (13.71) [0.01]	9	50	18
Urban councilors	6 {30%} (5.71) [0.01]	18 {90%} (18.29) [0]	12	72	24
Total	10{27%}	32{86%}			42

- *figure without parenthesis is the frequency, {Percent distribution}, (expected cell totals), [Chi-square statistic for each cell].
- Chi-square statistic at 5% level of significance is 0.0437 and P value is 0.834319.
Source: Field Survey, 2012

Conclusion and Recommendations

It was concluded from the main findings of the study that different trainings played its role in offering the women councilors orientation about the complex problems of gigantic magnitude. The training program for women councilors reveals that this training program did give particular attention to the issues of democracy and women political representation, local government structure and their duties and powers, project, designing planning and development, law and strategy making for conflict resolution. Women councilors benefited themselves from the trainings; still they also admitted that there is a lot more need to be done in this regard. A sustainable long-term training program could transform them into knowledgeable and effective component of the local bodies system. The study forwarded the following recommendations:

- i. The timings for training and venues should be according to the needs and accessibility of the women councilors.
- ii. Training sessions with pictorial, graphical, audio and video material should be used frequently and role-play methodology should be used in presenting important topics.
- iii. Training should be conducted within the union councils so that women councilors can easily attend them and the timings of the training sessions should not coincide with the household activities of women councilors.

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