

## ANNEXTURE 1

### CASE STUDIES

#### Case Study no. 1.

Dakshin Bara Haldibari GP – about 2 K.M from Haldibari town – had the unique distinction of having one of the two GP Chairpersons in the district. SS , a widow of 40 years had one daughter(17 years) and one son (11 years), had School Final degree and she belonged to AIFB(S) party. Her living father- in - law owned a big chunk of fertile land with irrigation facilities. Her elevation to and exercise of panchayat role would divulge women's position in the context of political configuration.

This GP had total 12 seats and party strength was – Congress 5, AIFB(S) 2, CPM 2, BJP 2, independent (rebel Congress) 1. Consequently coalition of CPM/AIFB(S) /BJP was formed. mainly, it was alleged, to keep Congress out of power. Selection of Chairperson became very contentious as each party stuck to its own candidate and each refused to accept candidates of others thus causing a stalemate. As a last resort the present incumbent was brought in as possible consensus not because she was the most suitable but to ensure that rivals did not make it to the top. Tacit agreement was also there that she would be assisted/guided by all parties of the coalition. (There is another version as one GP member GD narrated – just when she was about to join Congress thus making its prospect brighter, left combination decided to lure her by dangling the chair)

Candidly she confessed that she was not prepared for the PR post and it was the AIFB(S) party that forced her to contest election.

Regarding her stewardship, GP members concurred that she was streaming the ship not unilaterally but by the guidance of other (male) members and as such no acute problem had surfaced. She herself conformed that she had deputed Vice Chairperson (male) to look after village disputes/problems. Being an area with international boarder, cow stealing, pilferage etc. were daily affairs. Border Security Forces very often confiscated such person/articles including harassment of innocent people. It was agreed upon that with the undertaking of the GP Chairperson Security Forces would dispose those. In this respect she delegated other male members to supervise all those on her behalf.

Moreover, the political composition of the GP had made her role somewhat redundant and she expressed frustration in the interview. Also she acquiesced that the panchayat role was taking heavy toll for her domestic responsibilities. She yielded that she would be engrossed with own family in future and would not contest next election as 'enough is enough'. Tersely she may be regarded, to use constitutional citation, as magnificent cipher.

#### Case Study no 2

Other GP Chairperson could be found in Golanerhati GP about 5 K.M. away from Sitalkuchi Block town of Mathabangha Sub-division. Here domineering role of husband was simply absolute. Mrs. KBM. the Chairperson, had School Final degree, was of 45 years of age and belonged to CPM party. Her husband had been Chairperson of Sitalkuchi PS for last 15 years and 'undisputed' dominant leader of the block politics during the time of interview (1995). Her only son was also seen active in block politics and about to follow the footsteps of his father. Though she had been taking active interest in Mahila Samity affairs and commanded respect in the village by virtue of being the wife of the leader, it was not possible for her to unshackle the influence of husband. Right from the selection of her candidature to daily accomplishment of PR roles reign of husband was sharply noticeable. She was managing GP affairs with the dictation of husband and with the active workforce consisted of her son and few other male members. She also authorised her son to supervise village disputes. Confidence required for leadership seemed lacking during our talks with her.