



Women's Reservation Bill: A Mobile Vaani Network Campaign

March-April 2014



Gram Vaani Community Media Pvt. Ltd.

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1. Introduction

Jharkhand Mobile Vaani (JMV) has since the last one year emerged as a common platform for the people of Jharkhand to express their views, share their experiences and address their queries/questions/doubts on a myriad of issues they encounter on a day to day basis in their lives. In this capacity the callers and listeners of JMV have actively taken up issues pertaining to gaps in the service delivery systems of various government schemes, lack of awareness on social issues, better understanding of agricultural practices and others issues.

Gram Vaani conducted a campaign on the need for Women's Reservation Bill at the Lok Sabha level on Jharkhand Mobile Vaani, Bihar Mobile Vaani (BMV) and five Mobile Vaani partner CR stations - Henvaivani Community Radio situated in Chamba, Uttarakhand, Radio Dhadkan situated in Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh, Lalitlokvani situated in Lalitpur, Uttar Pradesh, Waqt ki Awaaz situated in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh and Radio Snehi situated in Siwan, Bihar. The campaign was organized by Oxfam India and was executed through the Mobile Vaani partnership program. The campaign started on the 15th of March 2014 and went on until 7th April 2014. The campaign aimed to highlight the dismal participation of Indian women in politics, with nine out of every ten parliamentarians being men, and educate the people about the need for having the Women's Reservation Bill passed at the Lok Sabha level. This exercise was supported by participation of people from the five states of Jharkhand, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh voicing their support for the bill, sharing their experiences with their area's locally elected women representatives and their recommendations on this issue.



2. The Rationale

Women's disadvantage on a complex set of social and economic factors effectively keeps them at the margin of political life. With nine out of ten parliamentarians in India being men, women form just 11 percent of all members in the two chambers of Parliament. Unfortunately, their representation in state level assemblies is not very different. Six decades have gone by since Independence brought hopes that democracy would equilibrate gender representation. Two decades ago, reservations opened local bodies to women. Major parties have since championed a bill that would extend reservations to the Lok Sabha, and the state legislative assemblies. The proposed law even made it through the Rajya Sabha, but the gender imbalance at higher political levels remains unaddressed.

The 11 percent of women parliamentarians in India contrast poorly with Afghanistan's 27.7 percent, Pakistan's 20.7 percent and even Saudi Arabia's 19.9 percent. The dismal statistics about the political participation of women in India reiterate the urgency to pass the Women's Reservation Bill at the Lok Sabha level. The 2014 general elections have generated momentum around the bill's immediate enactment. The agenda has a place of choice in pre-electoral discourses of representatives from all major political parties. The Civil society organizations have mobilized for the immediate passing of the Women's Reservation Bill.

Therefore, with a view to utilize the window period before the 2014 general elections, a campaign gauging people's perception about the Women's Reservation Bill was taken up by the Mobile Vaani Network in association with Oxfam India. The campaign aimed to generate awareness about the sad state of political participation of women in India, thereby understanding the need for the Women's Reservation Bill; to gauge people's support on the bill; to understand people's reaction to their area's locally elected women representatives and their recommendations on the factors that would help in maximizing the political participation of women in India.



3. Executive Summary

The specific objective of the campaign was to inform the callers of the Mobile Vaani network about the dismal state of political participation of women at the national level and the need for having the Women's Reservation Bill passed at the Lok Sabha level. At the same time, the campaign was designed such that the contextual issues of the communities were elicited and recommendations were solicited from the callers in the most participatory and bottom up manner.

Information about the campaign

Duration – 15th March – 7th April 2014

Number of items published – 204

Total number of calls – 1,15,560

Outreach population – 9,49,134 people

States where this campaign was done – Jharkhand , Bihar, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh

Community Radio partners –Henvalvani Community Radio, Uttarakhand; Radio Dhadkan, Madhya Pradesh; Radio Snehi, Bihar, Lalitlokvani, Uttar Pradesh and Waqt ki Awaaz, Uttar Pradesh

The campaign spread over three and a half weeks first informed the listeners of about the worrisome state of political participation of women and then established the need for the Women's Reservation Bill. The campaign also highlighted male dominance; patriarchal control and discrimination on the basis of religion, caste and creed were found to be major obstacles that kept women from being a part of the nation's politics. Following information dissemination, people's observations from women's reservation at Panchayat level were invited. It was found that out of the total 204 content contributions received for this campaign, 26 percent share of items was contributed by women and the remaining 74 percent share of the items was contributed by men. Maximum number of people (62 percent of the content contributors) left opinionated content such as their views on the need for the Women's Reservation Bill, why it should/shouldn't be passed and their recommendations on increasing political participation of women. This was followed by 30 percent people leaving content that was informative in nature such as the situation of their panchayats after reservation for women was granted by the 73rd and 74th Amendment. Around eight percent people contributed content of a personal nature, wherein they shared their personal experiences and stories of known women who have been elected as representatives and the positive and negative experiences of the work done by the locally elected women representatives.

4. The Campaign

The campaign was spread over a time span of three and a half weeks. As per the content plan, half a week was dedicated to spread awareness and open the discussion for each sub-topic. For every sub topic a short promo informing people about the sub topic to be discussed in the next episode was aired beforehand so that people could start sharing their views and experiences for the episode. Following the short promo, a 10-12 minute episode detailing the sub topic with more information, statistics, people's perceptions and experiences were prepared and aired on JMV, BMV and the Community Radio stations. A total of six promos and episodes were created for the campaign individually by JMV, BMV and five CR stations.

S. No.	Episodes
1.	Establishing the context of discussion on Women's Reservation Bill – Sharing some stats about the political participation of women in India and across the world; Establishing importance of women's reservation bill and why is it necessary to be passed in Lok Sabha; Ask people to provide their opinion – do they think this bill should be passed in lok sabha, if yes, then why, soliciting examples from their local settings
2.	Information to be provided about the dominance of political sphere by men
3.	Discrimination of women based on class, caste and tribe
4.	Sharing positive stories about local women representatives and the ways in which reservation at the local level has helped them and their village
5.	Need for Women's Reservation Bill – Establish the need for reservation for women from all fronts at all levels; Why women's reservations at all levels is necessary; Seeking people's support and recommendations for the cause.
6.	People responses throughout the campaign about the Women's Reservation Bill compiled and shared in a succinct manner, along with recommendations from the people on this issue.

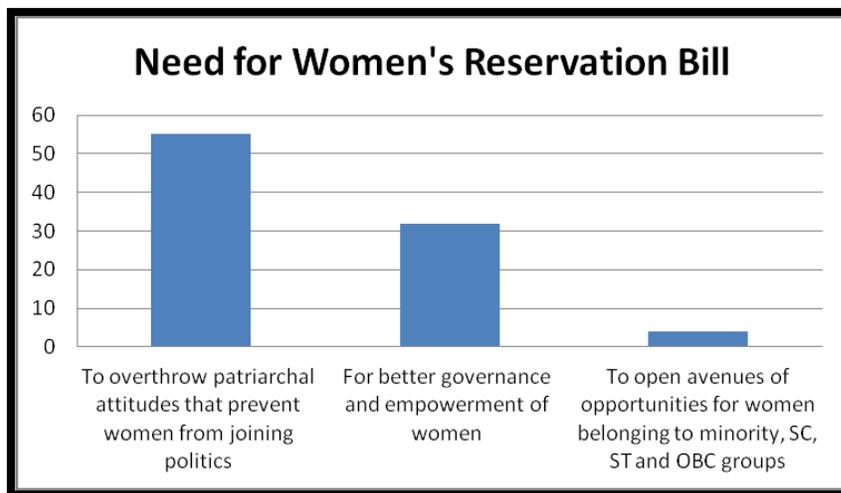
The major findings from this campaign have been categorized as –

1. Need for Women's Reservation Bill
2. Likability of Locally Elected Women Representatives
3. Feedback on ownership of Elected Women Representatives' Work
4. People's support for Women's Reservation Bill
5. People's Recommendations

Reflection of People's reaction: An analysis of the data

Need for Women's Reservation Bill

Around 61 percent people felt that the Women's Reservation Bill is needed to help overthrow patriarchal attitudes that prevent women from joining politics, as it would bring women out of their confined private sphere of their homes to the public spheres of the constituency for which they have been elected. Another 35 percent people felt that in order to promote better governance and empowerment of women the bill is needed because if women are in the positions of power, people feel that women find women leaders to be more approachable and empathetic than men, as they can empathize the issues faced by women in their day to day lives, such as violence against women and bring necessary reforms in law and order so that the overall quality of women's lives is improved. Additionally, four percent people felt that the Women's Reservation Bill would open avenues of opportunities for women belonging to minority, SC, ST and OBC groups, by further reserving seats for these women. This, in turn, would entrust them with the power to resolve the challenges faced by the women of their community.



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Patriarchal attitudes prevent women from joining politics

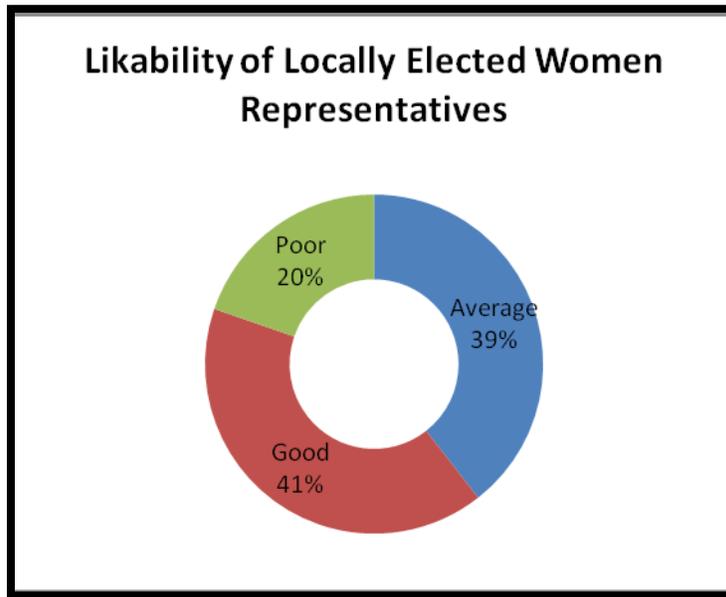
Shiela Munda from Potka village, Potka block, East Singhbhum district, Jharkhand called up to express her opinion on the passage of Women's Reservation Bill in Lok Sabha. Highlighting the stark difference in the number of men contesting elections, vis-a-vis the number of women, she says that very few women have participated or have been given the opportunity to contest in the elections. Delving more on this issue, she goes on to say that the major reason for the worrisome state of women's political participation can be attributed to the tarnished image that society portrays of politics because of which it doesn't consider venturing into politics as a prestigious vocation for women. Many families stop the womenfolk of their families from being politically active as society would look down upon women who break the stereotype and be politically active. While concluding her message, Shiela attributes patriarchy as the prime reason behind the reduced participation of women in politics and hopes that the current bill would prove to be helpful in overthrowing such attitudes.

<http://voice.gramvaani.org/vapp/mnews/10/show/detail/197841/>

Likability of Locally Elected Women Representatives

When people were asked how much they like their locally Elected Women Representatives (EWR), it was found that 41 percent people were really happy with the work done by their EWR.

They felt that the EWR of their community has done some very good and thoughtful work which has improved their quality of life. Giving examples, some people summarized their basis of rating their EWRs "good" in terms of their EWRs motivating more women to seek education and empowering them to speak up and demand their rights from various authorities. Another 39 percent people rated the performance of their EWR as an average worker, handling the roles and responsibilities of their constituency just for the sake of it. These people felt that no special efforts have been put in place by these women for the betterment of the people majorly because they lack the imagination and the will power to make changes. Further, 20 percent people rated the performance of their EWR as poor because according to them the husband and male family members of the EWR do her work and her role is reduced to a mere "rubber stamp" or signing authority on papers.



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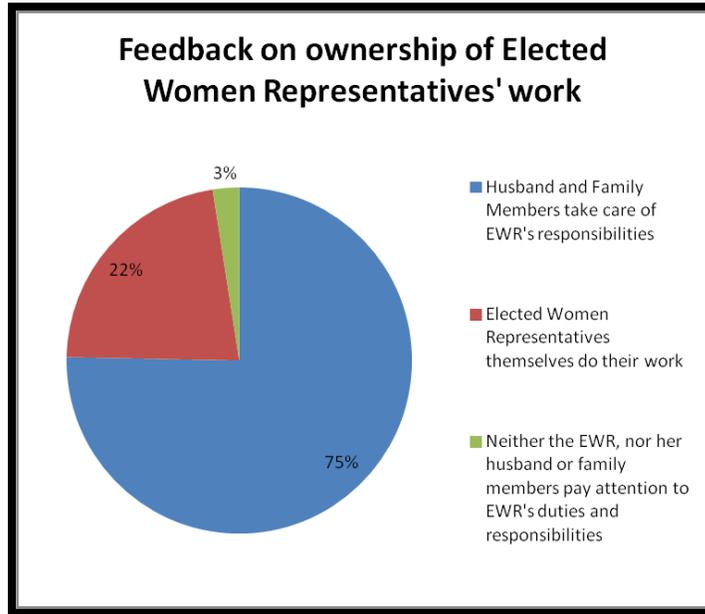
Elected Women Representative leads her way in Jhapa Panchayat

Ranju Singh from Itkhor block, Chatra district called up to say that in Jharkhand, a lot of women who are elected women representatives of Panchayat want to work for the welfare of their area, however, they face immense pressure from their families due to which they look after household work and their husbands perform their roles and responsibilities of being an elected representative. Talking about her own panchayat, Jhapa Panchayat, Ranju says that the Mukhiya or the village head is a lady named Purnima Devi, presents evidence to the contrary. She says that she is very happy with Purnima Devi's work, because since she came back after completing her training she has formed a Mahila Manch and she herself resolves the issues of her panchayat. Taking inspiration from the 73rd and 74th Amendment for reservation of women at Panchayat level, the Women's Reservation Bill must be passed in the Lok Sabha.

<http://voice.gramvaani.org/vapp/mnews/10/show/detail/186246/>

Feedback on Ownership of Elected Women Representatives' Work

Following the rating, people were asked to provide the feedback on the ownership of EWRs work, which means people were asked who works on the behalf of the EWR and a whopping 75 percent people reported that in major number of constituencies, especially in the villages, it has been observed that the husband and male family members of the EWR take ownership of the roles and responsibilities ought to be performed by the EWR. All of them reported that this is because women are bound by the patriarchal rules that don't allow them to be decision makers hence they entrust their husbands with the power to act as they deem fit. Additionally women in the villages are not allowed to speak with



other men and don't have the required mobility to go for the meetings, hence it doesn't come as a surprise to them when on papers EWR are shown doing their work, while actually it is their husband and family members who are running the show for them. However, 22 percent people reported that the EWRs in their areas are taking care of their work all by themselves. Only three percent people reported that neither the EWR nor her husband and family members do the work the EWR is supposed to do.

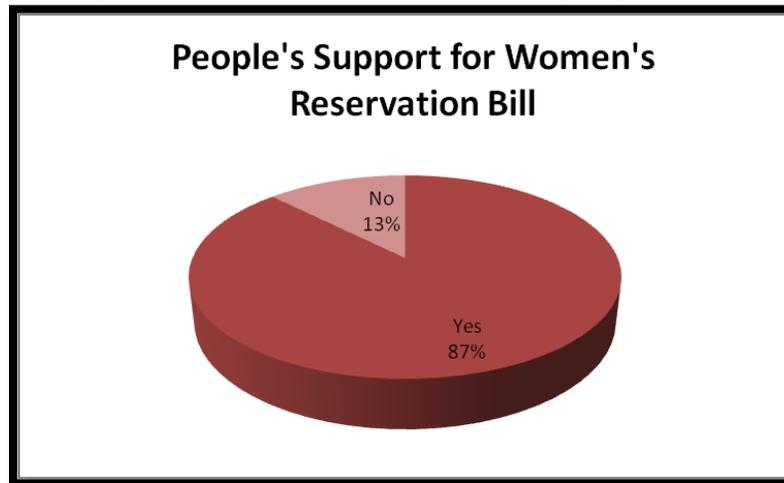
EWRs merely puppets in hands of their husbands and family

Shyampad Das from Chandankiyari block, Bokaro district, Jharkhand says that his panchayat has ten wards out of which six wards only have women representatives. However, none of these women representatives work out of their own will or participate in the meetings that happen at the panchayat level. Their work is always done by their male counterparts or family members. He compares the situation of the women representatives to that of mere puppets in the hands of their husbands or family members who are just made to sign papers. Shyampad concludes by saying that although he understands the need for Women's Reservation Bill, however, he says that whenever the bill is passed in Lok Sabha, it should be ensured that only those women who really want to compete or participate come forward or women should be trained to think politically, then only providing women with reservation would truly solve the purpose of this bill.

<http://voice.gramvaani.org/vapp/mnews/10/show/detail/184484/>

People's support for Women's Reservation Bill

The analysis of comments received during campaign revealed that 87 percent people support and want the Lok Sabha to pass Women's Reservation Bill as per the need for the Bill identified and shared previously in the report. However, 13 percent people have decided against the Bill, because these people feel that reservation is not going to do any good to women, unless the women understand the significance of the reservation being provided to them. Otherwise they feel, things at the Lok Sabha level wouldn't be very different from the way it is being run at the Village and Panchayat level, with men being actual in-charge and women reduced to a mere signing authority.



Women feel empowered and inspired in the leadership of an EWR

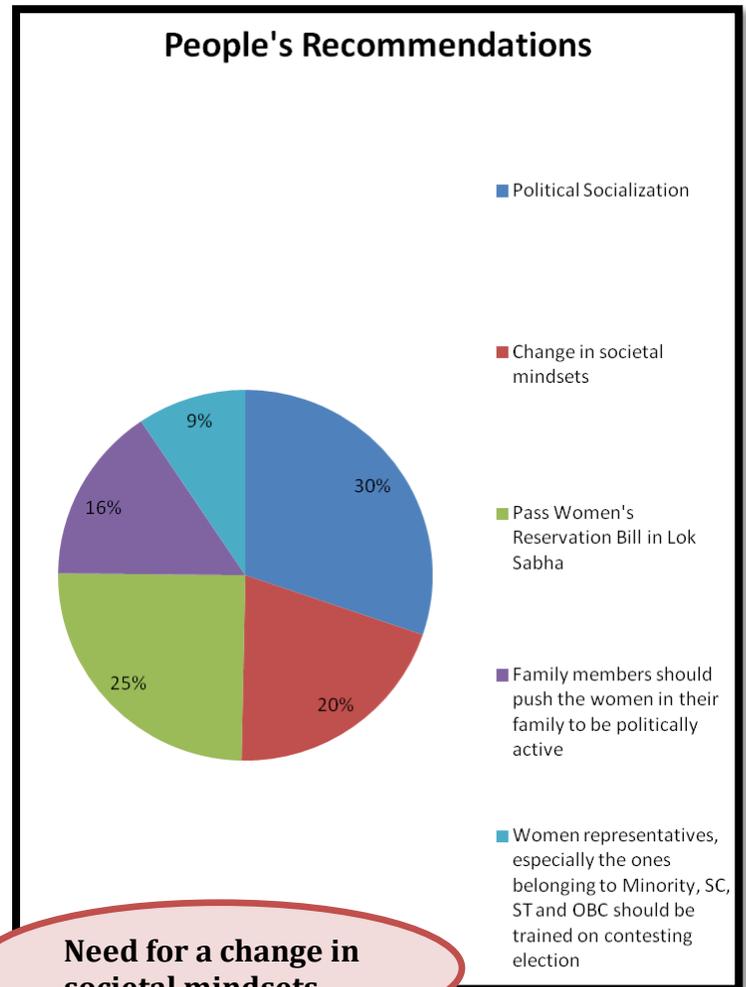
Bina Kumari from Kotwa block, East Champaran district, Bihar called up to extend her support towards the passage of Women's Reservation Bill in Lok Sabha. She says that her reason for supporting this bill lies in the fact that since the time the women in their village have got reservation at the panchayat level for becoming ward members, it has been observed that having an elected women representative certainly has its advantages over having an elected male representative because other women look up to the women in leadership roles, they find these women representatives to be very approachable. They can ask the elected women representatives all sorts of questions, get information from them and feel free in front of them, which is not the case with elected representatives who are men. In Bina's opinion reservation has also provided inspiration to other women who in their own time want to pursue such leadership roles and become something. She concludes by saying that women should get reservation at the Lok Sabha level on similar lines, because in our society women feel free to talk to women in positions of power than talking to men who are at powerful positions.

<http://voice.gramvaani.org/vapp/mnews/137/show/detail/195338/>

5. Recommendations

People advised following solutions to increase women's political participation in the country -

1. Political Socialization of women – Women should be socialized and brought up to be politically informed so that they compete to win and that they aren't given reservation just for the sake of it.
2. Need for a change in the societal mindsets that consider politics as public spaces where women shouldn't venture.
3. Pass Women's Reservation Bill in Lok Sabha – For a stronger message to be sent to the people and for the dream of increased political participation of women to come true, women must be given reservation.
4. Family members should push the women in their family to be politically active.
5. Women representatives, especially the ones belonging to Minority, SC, ST and OBC should be trained on contesting elections.



Chandreshwar Ram from Madhubani district of Bihar called up to say that the societal attitudes towards women in politics must change. Giving an example of his area he says that there are many EWRs who are ward members but they are prevented from attending the meetings as their husbands and family members are always on the go to do their work. The EWRs remain alienated from their work responsibilities since their husbands don't share any information with them. He further goes on to say that the way government has given women reservation in villages and panchayats, women have no idea about their rights and responsibilities. Therefore they end up holding posts but due to the fear of what people will talk about them and observing the people talk all sorts of things about them, these women end up not exercising their right to political participation.

<http://voice.gramvaani.org/vapp/mnews/137/show/detail/208094/>

6. Conclusion

This campaign running across five states, five Community Radio Stations, Jharkhand Mobile Vaani and Bihar Mobile Vaani shared insights into the dwindling political participation of women at the national level. Perspectives across the board highlighted the need for the Women's Reservation Bill for providing equitable opportunities for women at the Lok Sabha level. Since a larger chunk of the people participating in the campaign belonged to the rural areas, they shared their experiences of implementation of the 73rd and 74th Amendment that reserves 33 percent seats for women at the Panchayat level. While some people appreciated the concept by saying that it has initiated the entry of the women into the political sphere and inspired more women to take part in the political revolution, there were many instances highlighted where women's reservation has come across to be a completely meaningless process as the elected women representatives have become puppets in the hands of their husbands and family members who do the work on their behalf reducing the elected women into mere signing authorities. Therefore, taking all the pros and cons of the reservation debate into account, people have strongly recommended the need for a change in the societal mindsets and grooming women politically so that they participate in the elections wholeheartedly to compete and win and not merely as a formality otherwise the ideology behind providing women reservation at the Lok Sabha level would not fulfill its purpose of increased political participation of women in nation building.

Mobile Vaani Network Partnership

Along with being active on Jharkhand Mobile Vaani and Bihar Mobile Vaani, this campaign was also taken up by five Mobile Vaani partner CR stations - Hervalvani Community Radio situated in Chamba, Uttarakhand; Radio Dhadkan situated in Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh; Radio Snehi situated in Siwan, Bihar; Lalitlokvani situated in Lalitpur Uttar Pradesh; and Waqt ki Awaaz situated in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh. These CR stations produced and played promos and programs around this issue to solicit people's opinion and initiate a discussion in the community about the need for Women's Reservation Bill.

Community Radio Hervalvani 90.4MHz

Locale – Chamba, Tehri Garhwal, Uttarakhand; **Outreach** – Around 20,096 people

Language of Broadcast – Garhwali and Hindi; **Duration of Broadcast** – 6 and a half hours

Summary of activities taken up during the course of the campaign –

- **Promos** – Hervalvani put up six promos to inform people about this campaign. The promos followed the same content plan as Jharkhand and Bihar Mobile Vaani. These promos were broadcasted on the FM channel as well as on their mobile vaani number.

- **Mobile Vaani** – While the promos were played out only during slotted times on the FM, the station was also given their own Mobile Vaani number where people could call and be a part of the discussion 24x7. People frequently called to record their views and listen to the opinions left by others. The calls received on the Mobile Vaani platform were regularly moderated by the station staff.
- **Program** – During the campaign duration, six perspective sharing programs providing information to the community and sharing the views of people were produced by the Henvaani team. Those programs were aired on their FM channel as well as on their Mobile Vaani platform.

People's speak – Mukesh from Tehri Garhwal shared his views in support of women reservation on the Mobile Vaani platform of Henvaani Community Radio. On the question of whether a woman should enter in politics or not, he said women must get political opportunities because whenever women have been provided any opportunity they have proven themselves. In this manner, the women who are not able to work in politics, he encourages them to do their best just like they take care of their families, they should similarly serve the country as well. For this cause men should support them. He further said that women have proven their competencies in every field. Therefore he thinks that it's time women start actively participating in politics, and for this, the Women's Reservation Bill at the Lok Sabha must be passed.

<http://voice.gramvaani.org/vapp/mnews/80/show/detail/223736/>

Community Radio Dhadkan 107.8MHz

Locale – Shivpuri District, Madhya Pradesh; **Outreach** – Around 42,955 people

Language of Broadcast – Hindi; **Duration of Broadcast** – 12 hours

Summary of activities taken up during the course of the campaign –

- **Promos** – To inform their community about this campaign, Radio Dhadkan prepared and played six promos. The content of the promos was similar to the ones aired on Jharkhand and Bihar Mobile Vaani. These promos were put up for broadcast on the FM channel as well as on their Mobile Vaani number.
- **Mobile Vaani** – While the promos were played out only during slotted times on the FM, the station was also given their own Mobile Vaani number where people could call and be a part of the discussion 24x7. People frequently called to record their views and listen to the opinions left by others. The calls received on the Mobile Vaani platform were regularly moderated by the station staff.

- **Program** – Radio Dhadkan produced six comprehensive programs by stitching together people's opinion on the different aspects of this issue. The programs were broadcasted by Radio Dhadkan on their FM channel as well as aired on their Mobile Vaani platform as well.

People's speak – Ashok Sharma from Shivpuri shared his views in support of the Women's Reservation Bill. He said that women should definitely get reservation. In this patriarchal society of ours, men have always reaped the benefits of opportunities provided to them since time immemorial. Although there are examples of some women who have played significant role in their areas, but the equation still tilts in the favour of men. Hence, in Ashok's opinion, if equity is to be achieved, then Women Reservation Bill must be passed in Lok Sabha so that women are able to secure political participation for themselves.

<http://voice.gramvaani.org/vapp/mnews/26/show/detail/223363/>

Community Radio Snehi 90.4MHz

Locale – Siwan, Bihar; **Outreach** – Around 3,77,051 people

Language of Broadcast – Hindi; **Duration of Broadcast** – 16 hours

Summary of activities taken up during the course of the campaign –

- **Promos** – To inform their community about this campaign, Radio Snehi played six promos. The content of the promos was similar to the ones aired on Jharkhand and Bihar Mobile Vaani. These promos were put up for broadcast on the FM channel as well as on their Mobile Vaani number.
- **Mobile Vaani** – While the promos were played out only during slotted times on the FM, the station was also given their own Mobile Vaani number where people could call and be a part of the discussion 24x7. People frequently called to record their views and listen to the opinions left by others. The calls received on the Mobile Vaani platform were regularly moderated by the station staff.
- **Program** – Radio Snehi produced six programs for the entire duration of the campaign. These programs were broadcasted by them on their FM channel and also aired on their Mobile Vaani number.

People's speak – Preety Kumari Tiwari, from Laxmi Nagar, Siwan shared her views in favor of the Women's Reservation Bill. She said Women's Reservation Bill must be passed in Lok Sabha. If women get opportunities in Lok Sabha, they will understand

women and their domestic problems better. Reservation is not important only at local level, it is important at all governance levels such as central, district and local level.

<http://voice.gramvaani.org/vapp/mnews/215/show/detail/205920/>



Community Radio Lalitlokvani 90.4MHz

Locale – Lalitpur, Uttar Pradesh; **Outreach** – Around 60,790 people

Language of Broadcast – Hindi; **Duration of Broadcast** – 12 hours

Summary of activities taken up during the course of the campaign –

- **Promos** – To inform their community about this campaign, Lalitlokvani played six promos. The content of the promos was similar to the ones aired on Jharkhand and Bihar Mobile Vaani. These promos were put up for broadcast on the FM channel as well as on their Mobile Vaani number.
- **Mobile Vaani** – While the promos were played out only during slotted times on the FM, the station was also given their own Mobile Vaani number where people could call and be a part of the discussion 24x7. People frequently called to record their views and listen to the opinions left by others. The calls received on the Mobile Vaani platform were regularly moderated by the station staff.
- **Program** – Lalitlokvani produced six programs for the entire duration of the campaign. The programs incorporated information, discussion, poetry and songs on this issue. These programs were broadcasted by them on their FM channel and also aired on their Mobile Vaani number.

People's speak – Kundan from Lalitpur shared his views through Mobile Vaani. In his message he says that he is in favor of the Women's Reservation Bill. Elaborating on the matter he states that the Bill must be passed in Lok Sabha so that women are able to secure reservation for their political participation, which in turn would lead them to implement schemes for betterment and empowerment of women.

<http://voice.gramvaani.org/vapp/mnews/27/show/detail/204995/>

Community Radio Waqt ki Awaaz 91.2MHz

Locale – Kanpur Dehat, Uttar Pradesh; **Outreach** – 3,64,742 people

Language of Broadcast – Hindi; **Duration of Broadcast** – 5 hours

Summary of activities taken up during the course of the campaign –

- **Promos** – To inform their community about this campaign, Waqt ki Awaaz played a total of six promos. The content of the promos was similar to the ones aired on Jharkhand and Bihar Mobile Vaani. These promos were put up for broadcast on the FM channel as well as on their Mobile Vaani number.
- **Mobile Vaani** – While the promos were played out only during slotted times on the FM, the station was also given their own Mobile Vaani number where people

could call and be a part of the discussion 24x7. People frequently called to record their views and listen to the opinions left by others. The calls received on the Mobile Vaani platform were regularly moderated by the station staff.

- **Program** – Waqt ki Awaaz produced six programs during the entire duration of the campaign. These programs were broadcasted by Waqt ki Awaaz on their FM channel.

People's speak – Fifth in line episode of Women's Reservation Campaign on Waqt ki Awaaz recaps the points of discussion from the previous episode which include the debate whether reservation within reservation should be provided to women, that is, reservation on the basis of being a religious minority, SC, ST and OBC. This episode intends to discuss the developmental works led by elected women representatives in Kanpur Dehat, where the Community Radio Waqt ki Aawaaz is situated. People agree on this perspective that women have not been provided with equitable opportunities. Women have often been stereotyped to do jobs such as being a teacher or homemaker, however women are no less competent when it comes to leading a constituency. Therefore, the people support the Women's Reservation Bill and feel very strongly that such a bill should definitely be passed in Lok Sabha.

<http://voice.gramvaani.org/vapp/mnews/81/show/detail/195625/>

7. Abbreviations

CR – Community Radio

CRS – Community Radio Station

BMV – Bihar Mobile Vaani

EWR – Elected Women Representatives

JMV – Jharkhand Mobile Vaani

MV – Mobile Vaani

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