

30 Women in Local Government: Celebrating CLGF's 30th Anniversary

Featured Interviewee #5: Anita Shingade Sarpanch, Borala, Amravati District, India



Profile

Ms. Anita Shingade is the Sarpanch of **Borala Gram Panchayat**, Chandurbazar Block, Amravati District, serving her first term (2021–2026) since taking office on **February 16, 2021**.

Under her leadership, Borala has seen notable progress in infrastructure and social development. Key achievements include construction of sub-roads to assist farmers, infrastructure and employment generation under **MGNREGA** (₹5 crores), and livelihood support for widows through NGO partnerships. She has also advanced **Dalit Habitat** schemes,

housing for deprived families, and land allocation for the **VJNDT** community. Ms. Shingade prioritizes education, proposing a common study room, and health, by organizing camps and awareness sessions. Borala has achieved **100% tap water coverage** under the **Jal Jeevan Mission**, and is working toward becoming **TB-free**. She actively promotes **alkaline-free drinking water**, the **Self-Help Group movement**, and organic kitchen gardening through SHG federations.

She ensures daily office presence, conducts regular monthly meetings, and fosters solidarity among Gram Panchayat members. Her institutional innovations include establishing the **Mahila Sabha (Women's General Assembly)** and localizing **SDGs 3 and 5** under the **Savitri Gram Project**. A strong advocate for women's leadership, she encourages active participation and peer learning among elected women representatives.

Ms. Shingade's governance is rooted in service, inclusion, and sustainable rural development.

*Anita Shingade
Sarpanch, Borala-Amravati, India*

INDIA

Interview Highlights:

I. How has the role of women in local government evolved over the past three decades?

Women are now more active and independent decision-makers in various spheres. Further

Anita Shingade, India



progress
requires involving men in empowerment programs, alongside initiatives focusing on legal awareness, health, gender equality, and women's entrepreneurship.

2. What inspired your entry into local government?

Inspiration came from witnessing the power of women's self-help groups. Establishing and supporting these groups fostered financial literacy, women's organization, and increased their status within households, ultimately leading to political participation.

3. Your most rewarding experience as a woman leader in local government?

Successfully leveraging the increased reservation for women to ensure fair distribution of benefits to vulnerable individuals demonstrated women's ability to make impactful decisions and work collaboratively.

4. Challenges you faced and how you addressed them?

Initial challenges included a lack of knowledge and support. Proactive efforts to understand procedures and seek information were key to overcoming them. Formal induction and training on local governance structures are crucial for future women leaders.

5. What advice would you give women pursuing a career in local government?

Understand your rights, build confidence and skills, make independent decisions, and focus on addressing the specific needs of women in your community.

6. How can we encourage more young women to enter leadership roles?

Integrate women into the mainstream through self-help groups that foster social and political awareness. Include them in all panchayat committees with clear roles and responsibilities. Invest in young women through programs like 'Balika Panchayat,' voter registration, and digital literacy initiatives.

7. Why is increasing women's participation in local government urgent?

Women face unacknowledged challenges and opposition in governance. Increased representation allows for better articulation of women's issues, championing relevant



policies, dismantling patriarchal structures, and ensuring policies prioritize women's well-being.

8. Role of digital technology in political inclusion?

Digital literacy empowers women to access crucial information independently, increasing their confidence and effectiveness. Efforts are needed to bridge the digital divide and provide women with the necessary skills and access.

9. Innovative strategies to advance women's participation in local government?

Focusing on women's empowerment through self-help groups created a foundation for political participation. Policy interventions like reservation quotas, women's gram sabhas, and specialized training programs have been instrumental in increasing women's involvement.

10. Actions for CLGF to empower women in local government for the next 30 years?

Future efforts should focus on digital empowerment, creating a culture of recognition, providing practical experience, establishing strong support organizations, and actively encouraging young women's participation in the democratic process.

CLGF 30th Anniversary Commemoration

In celebration of CLGF's 30th Anniversary, we are honoured to spotlight the inspiring stories of 30 trailblazing women in local government from across the Commonwealth, all members of the Commonwealth Women in Local Government Network. These interviews celebrate their groundbreaking contributions to gender equality and their transformative impact on building inclusive, empowered communities.

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Thank you for being part of this important movement!

Anita Shingade, India