Rajkala Devi, Sarpanch

Gram Panchayat Hingwara, Block Tijara, District Alwar, Rajasthan
Year of Election: 2010 and 2005 for the post of Sarpanch

Rajkala, like many other women in Rajasthan, covered her face with a veil, adhering to the patriarchal traditions laid out by society. But after she was elected as a Sarpanch, Rajkala decided to change a few things for herself and other women in the Panchayat.

She has encouraged other women to participate in the functioning of the Panchayat, bringing their voice and needs into the public domain. The women in her village are glad that now they can enter the Panchayat building and see for themselves the functioning of the Panchayat. The women are also encouraged to interact with men in the Panchayat. No longer is the functioning of the Panchayat an opaque process. This is a major change initiated under the leadership of Rajkala.

A great leader, Rajkala takes everyone’s opinion before taking a decision. Working closely with the members of the Mahila Jagruk Manch, Rajkala encourages women to voice their problems and take an active part in Gram Sabhas. This way the women update her with the needs of the villagers and help prioritize her work. She visits the Anganwadis regularly to check that children get proper meals. She also ensures that girls are attending schools and monitors the attendance of the teacher and children. Rajkala believes that the Panchayat can progress only if education is given pivotal importance and if girls are not left out.

Rajkala mastered her leadership skills in her two tenures and efficiently handles issues in the Panchayat. She has chalked out a plan for the overall development. She has identified areas which need focus, some being: old age pension, widow pension, cards for BPL families, education and roads. She has taken other members and has visited the office of the Block Development Officer, Zilla Parishad President and the Collector to get her proposals approved. Her dynamic leadership has helped the people of her village acknowledge the contribution of women in the PRI.

She says, “For five years I will stay the Sarpanch. During this period, I will ensure that women in my Panchayat can claim their rights and get justice”. While acknowledging The Hunger Project in developing her leadership skills, she admits that it has been an evolving process for her to be gender sensitive, committed and responsive.