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## Module to empower women who represent local bodies

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Pune: A move of the state election commission empower women in local self government bodies to function with more confidence and remove their “rubber stamp” tag, kicked off in Pune on Tuesday.

It's part of the training module designed for 76,585 women from the total 2.29 lakh representatives in local self government bodies in the state. With a budget outlay of Rs 2.75 crore, a three-tier plan for training women representatives has been rolled out through the programme, Kranti Jyoti.

“I want these women not just empowered by position but also with knowledge to carry out their duties effectively,” says Neela Satyanarayan, state election commissioner and the brain behind the initiative.

Ten districts, including Pune, will participate. Training of core trainers kicked off in Pune on Tuesday. A pilot run carried out in Wardha and Thane formed the base of the programme. “Of the 11,529

representatives in the district, 4258 are women and all of them are set to undergo training. The first phase will include training for master trainers,” said Pune Zilla Parishad CEO Sanjeev Kumar.

Thane, Sindhudurg, Nashik, Solapur, Kolhapur, Nanded, Amravati, Wardha and Satara, besides Pune, are participating. Around 70 women from each will train as master or core trainers and they in turn will reach out to others in their districts.

With 50 per cent reservation expected soon, Satyanarayan wants all women representatives to take up the responsibility more efficiently.

Satyanarayan stresses capacity building, improving self confidence, leadership skills, gender equality, administrative efficiency and participation in governance as prime focus areas of the programme.

The aim, she adds, is to make training simple, interesting and effective. “Through dramas, pictorial representations as well as participation we want women representatives armed with all rules and regulations,” she adds.

The women tend to shy away from handling functioning of gram panchayats, making the minutes and budget allocations, leaving most of it to their husbands, says panchayat samiti member Vaishali Nagude

who attends all meetings. She says training will help women representatives to use their positions appropriately and execute perform their duties well.

Sayana Singh of the Research and Support Centre for Development, who is coordinating the project, says the core trainers will train 50-100 women from their districts. “The training will be conducted with the help of the government machinery,” she says. The schedule which is also supported by the UNICEF.