



TESTING APPROACHES TO STRENGTHEN GENDER WITHIN NRLM

Background •

The National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) India, is the largest government programme working exclusively with rural women. NRLM focuses on creating groups and institutions of poor women and building their social capital, so they have better bargaining power to claim their rights and entitlements and to compete in markets. Implemented across 34 states and union territories, NRLM has so far mobilised nearly 6 million Self-Help Groups (SHGs) of women covering nearly 65 million households across villages in India.

Global evidence shows that women's empowerment collectives can have a transformative effect by leading women from a position of limited power and voice to having skills, resources and opportunities to access markets and public spaces on an equal footing. SHGs can have significant positive impacts on economic and political empowerment, women's mobility, and women's control over family planning. However, these effects can be accelerated further through gender transformative interventions with group-based programs which help expand women's agency.

Recognising this, NRLM is anchoring a program that would actively work towards strengthening women's agency, decision making and leadership skills. The goal is to build strong women-led, self-driven groups and federations that are capable of representing women's interests, helping them control decisions about their social and economic well-being, and addressing existing social and gender inequalities. NRLM is committed to ensuring that such a gender transformative approach is integrated in all its institutions, and its programming, resources, and measurement reflect this intent. The Mission's new Gender Operational Strategy is one such mechanism.

IWWAGE's Partnership with NRLM

Supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, IWWAGE - an initiative of LEAD at Krea University, with its mandate to support gender equality through economic empowerment of women has partnered with NRLM to provide a Technical Assistance (TA) programme to institutionalise gender across all levels of the Mission. Specifically, the partnership will:

Build gender capabilities of NRLM staff at all levels through training.

Redesign the existing gender training curriculum.

Test innovative ways of delivering training (including through technological aids).

Build institutions such as Gender Resource Centres (GRCs) that can help address gender equality concerns and help women claim their entitlements.

Build performance indicators and knowledge management mechanisms to inform programme design.

The Technical Assistance provided by IWWAGE proposes to provide proof of concept on what works to effectively institutionalise gender and build women's agency within SHGs and their federations.

Partnership with State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs)

IWWAGE is developing and testing four scalable institutional models for SHG federations to serve as gender resource centres, which can be taken to scale. These four models are being piloted in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha, and will serve in future as resource federations to learn from and replicate. Pilot partners include well-known organisations who have worked on gender-integrated/entitlements-based models in their own groups or with SRLMs in the past.

























Illustrative Theory of Change for the four pilots and overall support offered to NRLM and select SRLMs

Pathways

Pathways envisioned at system level

Capacity building and training across all levels of SRLMs.

System level need-based and strategic support by partners at the state level. Meetings and workshops with SRLMs.

Dissemination of findings/learnings/recommendations from four pilots.

Direct technical support to states to enhance their gender integration strategy

Capacity building support to states in the form of staff and community resources.

Strategies and inputs

Gender Action Plans

Increased capacity of NRLM/SRLM staff and community members

Proof of Concept of what works

Outputs

Pathways envisioned at individual community level

Standardisation and adaptation of gender training modules.

Convergence across NRLM verticals at the community level.

Capacity building of community leaders.

Development of women's critical consciousness.

Module development/refinement

Setting up and strengthening of Gender Resource Centres

> Training of CRP, Samatha Sakhis, Badlao Sakhi, and Jaankars

Campaigns and community level events

Strategies and inputs

Gender sensitisation and increased capacity of SHG/federation leaders to respond to women's rights and demands.

Increased capacity of SHG members for governance and financial management of SHG institutions.

Greater access to services/entitlements; increased demand for services.

Greater awareness in the community around women's concerns.

Outputs

Projected Outcomes

Pathways of Change

System Level

Enhance capacities of SRLMs/NRLM to respond to women and their institutions.

Catalyse systems and mechanisms that enable women to claim rights and entitlements across schemes and line departments.

Integrate a gender lens across all NRLM activities, strategies and verticals.

Community Level

Build capacities of institutions so that they become women's institutions representing, and driven by, women's concerns, needs and priorities.

Facilitate convergence between different government programmes and line departments to enable women's access to various opportunities and entitlements.

Individual Level

Increase women's voice, choice and agency.

Help women assert their rights at public decision-making platforms.

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Strengthened women's federations through enhanced mobility, decision making, reduced violence, agency and political participation.

IWWAGE is an initiative of LEAD, an action-oriented research centre of IFMR Society (a not-for-profit society registered under the Societies Act). LEAD has strategic oversight and brand support from Krea University (sponsored by IFMR Society) to enable synergies between academia and the research centre. IWWAGE is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.