

Exploring Strategies and Outcomes of the Gender Justice Program in Sheopur, Madhya Pradesh

Process Documentation Report



About Us

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) is a global research institute, with regional hubs in Washington D.C., United States; New Delhi, India; Kampala, Uganda; and Nairobi, Kenya. Established in 1976, ICRW conducts research to identify practical, actionable solutions to advance the economic and social status of women and girls around the world.

ICRW Asia's thematic focal areas include access to education and livelihoods, adolescent empowerment, gender-based violence, masculinities, gender inequitable attitudes, HIV prevention, and violence against women and girls. For more information, please visit www.icrw.org/asia

Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy (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 (BMGF).

Suggested Citation

Uppal, R., Sengupta, N., Banerjee, S. & Laha, S. 2022. *Exploring Strategies and Outcomes of the Gender Justice Program in Sheopur, Madhya Pradesh*. New Delhi: International Center for Research on Women.

Cover Photo

ANANDI

Disclaimer

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and IWWAGE.

Publication Rights

The research reported in this publication has been conducted as part of a study undertaken by ICRW Asia, *Testing and scaling approaches and interventions to support gender transformative work with NRLM*, and supported by IWWAGE. The facts and information in this report may be reproduced/quoted/cited only for non-commercial use and with appropriate attribution.

All other images used are from Shutterstock.

Acknowledgements

The Process Documentation Report is based on an extensive process documentation, including strategies, processes, and outcomes of the Gender Justice Program (GJP) implemented by Area Networking and Development Initiatives (ANANDI) in Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh. We are deeply grateful to all research participants such as Master Trainers, Samta Sakhis, CLF Office Bearers, CLF SAC members, and MPSRLM state, district and block teams who shared their valuable time and rich experiences with us. We want to specially mention the Samta Sakhis who have been our constant source of inspiration in this research journey.

We thank the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), the Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy (IWWAGE) and ANANDI for this opportunity to engage with an extremely vital piece of work.

We thank senior members of National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), Ms. Nita Kejrewal, Ms. P. Usha Rani and Ms. Seema Bhaskaran for their guidance and inputs. We also thank officials at Madhya Pradesh State Rural Livelihoods Mission (MPSRLM) at Bhopal, Mr. L.M. Belwal, Mr. Raman Wadhwa (formerly MPSRLM*), Ms. Anita Vatsalya, Mr. Nemchand Jadav, Mr. Shailendra Bhadoria and Ms. Sushma Mishra, for their support. Our gratitude goes out to the District and Block teams of Sheopur District, MPSRLM, who extended tremendous support and cooperation during the research process, especially in helping us organize remote research activities during the COVID period.

We acknowledge with gratitude our colleagues at ICRW Asia- Perna Kumar for continuously mentoring and guiding us through this process, Ravi Verma and Pranita Achyut for their critical inputs, Sandeepa Fanda for program assistance, Nitya Agarwal and Akriti Jayant for communication support and liaising with multiple vendors. We also appreciate the transcription support provided by our interns, Soham Basu and Shalini Datta. We would like to thank Tripti Nainwal for copyediting support and Inzenius Consultancy Services for designing the infographics for the report.

We are grateful for our learnings from the work of several organizations in this space especially SWAYAM# project partners. The review meetings between the partners have been an immense source of learning and information. We also acknowledge the work of several individuals, organizations and institutes, for their free source publications and other knowledge products, which have contributed to our understanding and research.

Research Team Members

Radhika Uppal, Nilanjana Sengupta, Sunandita Banerjee and Somjita Laha

* Currently at NMMU

Through Strengthening Women's institutions for Agency and Empowerment (SWAYAM), IWWAGE is partnering with DAY-NRLM to provide technical assistance to support gender mainstreaming efforts across the Mission.

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations	05
Glossary	07
Executive Summary and Recommendations	09
Section 1 Introduction and Background	12
Section 2 Research Questions, Methodology and Limitation	17
Section 3 State of Gender Responsiveness at the Beginning of GJP: Summary of Formative Research	20
Section 4 Feminist Leadership Development	22
Section 5 Institutional Strengthening	37
Section 6 Gender Mainstreaming	55
Section 7 Potential or Estimated Budget Unlock	66
Section 8 Discussion and Conclusion	71
References	76
Annexures	
Annexure 1 Results Framework	77
Annexure 2 Details of Primary Data Collection	80
Annexure 3 Social Action Cases	81
Annexure 4 Excerpt from DAY-NRLM MIS Related to FNHW and Social Development	89

List of Abbreviations

AAP	Annual Action Plan
AAY	Antodaya Anna Yojana
ANANDI	Area Networking and Development Initiatives
APL	Above Poverty Line
ASPM	Assistant State Program Manager
BMGF	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
BMMU	Block Mission Management Unit
BPL	Below Poverty Line
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIP	Central Issue Price
CLF	Cluster Level Federation
CM	Chief Minister
CRP	Community Resource Person
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CTC	Community Training Center
DAY-NRLM	Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- National Rural Livelihoods Mission
DMMU	District Mission Management Unit
EC	Executive Committee
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FLD	Feminist Leadership Development
FNHW	Food Nutrition Health and WASH
GJP	Gender Justice Program
GM	Gender Mainstreaming
GPP	Gender Point Person
IB/CB	Institution Building/Capacity Building
ICC	Internal Complaints Committee
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Scheme
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
IDI	In-depth Interviews
IS	Institutional Strengthening
IWWAGE	Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy

List of Abbreviations

KII	Key Informant Interview
LAK	Lok Adhikar Kendra
MIS	Management Information System
MKSP	Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MP	Madhya Pradesh
MPRLP	Madhya Pradesh Rural Livelihood Project
MPSRLM	Madhya Pradesh State Rural Livelihoods Mission
NFSA	National Food Security Act
NMMU	National Mission Management Unit
NRETP	National Rural Economic Transformation Project
NRLM	National Rural Livelihoods Mission
NRLP	National Rural Livelihoods Project
OB	Office Bearer
PMAY-G	Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana- Gramin
PMJAY	Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna
SAC	Social Action Committee
SI/SD	Social Inclusion/Social Development
SHG	Self-help Group
SMMU	State Mission Management Unit
SPM	State Program Manager
SRLM	State Rural Livelihoods Mission
SS	Samta Sakhi
SWAYAM	Strengthening Women's Institution for Agency and Empowerment
TOC	Theory of Change
VO	Village Organization
WCD	Women and Child Development
YP	Young Professional

Glossary

<i>Aadhar</i>	Unique Identity Number of citizens of India
<i>Adhikarsathi App</i>	An android phone application designed to record and collate social action cases by Samta Sakhis, developed by ANANDI
<i>Adivasi</i>	Member of an indigenous tribe
<i>Anganwadi</i>	Centre providing health and nutritional care for children (up to 6 years) and their mothers in rural India - part of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS); a government program in India
<i>Antodaya Anna Yojna</i>	A public distribution system scheme of Government of India to provide highly subsidised food to the poorest families
<i>ASHA</i>	Accredited social health activist who is a community health worker instituted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare as a part of National Rural Health Mission of Government of India
<i>Avedan</i>	Application
<i>Ayushman Bharat</i>	National public health insurance scheme of Government of India that aims to provide health insurance coverage for low income earners
<i>Bank Mitra</i>	Refers to Community Resource Person creating bank linkages
<i>Beej Bank</i>	Seed Bank
<i>Didi</i>	Sister
<i>Dukh Sukh</i>	ANANDI's PALS training tool on discrimination faced by women across their life cycle
<i>Gender Samvaad</i>	Joint attempt between DAY-NRLM and IWWAGE to create a common platform for generating greater awareness on DAY-NRLM's gender related interventions and the impact of its gender operational strategy across states
<i>Ghoonghat</i>	Veil
<i>Gram Sabha</i>	General body of all villagers above 18 years of age, whose names are included in the electoral rolls for the Panchayat which meets at least four times per year
<i>Janpad</i>	Unit of local governance at the block level
<i>Jansunwai</i>	Public Hearing
<i>Karamcharis</i>	Workers
<i>Khaydyan Parchi</i>	Food Coupon
<i>Kiska Palda Bhari</i>	ANANDI's PALS training tool on gender division of work and decision making
<i>Kisan Samman Nidhi</i>	An initiative by Government of India to provide minimum income support to all farmers
<i>Krishi Sakhi</i>	Refers to Community Resource Person assisting on agriculture related issues
<i>Kuposhan se Jung</i>	Refers to a government scheme in Madhya Pradesh to fight against malnutrition among Sehariya tribals

Glossary

<i>Lok Adhikar Kendra</i>	New institution set up by Samta Sakhis through GJP at Block level for addressing women's rights and entitlements
<i>Mahila and Bal Vikas Vibhag</i>	Ministry of Women and Child Development
<i>Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana</i>	Sub-component of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) to improve status of women in agriculture
<i>Mera Haq, Meri Pehchan</i>	ANANDI's PALS training tool on women's rights and entitlements
<i>Mukhiya</i>	Customary head of village
<i>Mukhyamantri Kanyadaan Yojna / Mukhyamantri Kanya Vivah Yojna</i>	Scheme by the Madhya Pradesh government to provide financial assistance for the marriage of women from BPL families
<i>Munna Munni</i>	ANANDI's PALS training tool on gender socialization and discrimination between girl child and boy child
<i>Gram Panchayat/Panchayat</i>	Unit of local governance at the village level
<i>Panchayat Sachiv</i>	Panchayat Secretary
<i>Pashu Sakhi</i>	Refers to Community Resource Person assisting on livestock related issues
<i>Patta</i>	Land deed
<i>Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna Gramin</i>	A social welfare programme by Government of India to provide housing for the rural poor
<i>Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna</i>	Same scheme as Ayushman Bharat
<i>Prerak</i>	Bookkeeper attached to the CLFs/VOs/SHGs, responsible for maintaining records of SHG loans and repayments
<i>Salwar</i>	Light trousers, popular as women's attire in South Asia
<i>Sambal Yojna</i>	Scheme by Government of Madhya Pradesh for unorganized sector workers
<i>Samta Sakhi</i>	Community Resource Person for Gender
<i>Samta Samanvayaks</i>	Senior Gender Community Resource Person under upscaled GJP
<i>Saree</i>	Fabric elaborately draped around the body, one of the traditional attire of women in South Asia
<i>Sarpanch</i>	Elected Head of the Panchayat
<i>Sehariya</i>	An indigenous tribe in Madhya Pradesh
<i>Swar Sandesh</i>	A weekly audio messaging service in Hindi introduced by ANANDI for the communities during COVID associated lockdown
<i>Tehsil</i>	Revenue office
<i>Van Adhikar Patta</i>	Forest Rights Lease
<i>Zila</i>	District

Executive Summary

- The Gender Justice Program (GJP) was implemented by a CSO ANANDI (Area Networking and Development Initiatives), from 2019 to 2021 in collaboration with the Madhya Pradesh State Rural Livelihoods Mission (MPSRLM) with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) through the SWAYAM program, with IWWAGE (Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy) as an umbrella coordination and learning partner. This was implemented in Sheopur and Karhal blocks of the Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh (MP). The objective of the program was to empower rural women to access their rights and entitlements by raising their voices through the MPSRLM supported community institutions. The program implemented in Sheopur had a three-pronged strategy: mainstreaming gender within the systems and policies of MPSRLM; strengthening the Cluster Level Federations (CLFs) and making them gender responsive; and creating a cadre of women community leaders (Samta Sakhis) who can raise, represent and resolve rural women's concerns.
- GJP's embeddedness in the MPSRLM structures (such as CLFs and Village Organizations (VOs)), and evidence of success from earlier phases of ANANDI's work (such as in Mandla district of Madhya Pradesh in 2017) and ANANDI's continued dialogue and advocacy, have enabled an uptake and buy-in from the MPSRLM, especially the senior leadership.
- One of the most crucial achievements of the program has been MPSRLM's uptake of the GJP in 18 districts (covering 19 blocks and 60 CLFs), including Sheopur. The willingness to carry out gender work is evident at the state level and also on part of the senior district officials, but block level Nodal officials (Nodals) who are in closest touch with the program have had a mixed response. However, most Block officials have been supportive.
- The community institutions, especially CLFs and VOs, have become more gender responsive spaces where women are able to raise, discuss and act on issues concerning their lives. Unlike in the past as documented by the Formative Research conducted by ICRW, CLF office bearers are now facilitating meetings, taking decisions and holding stakeholders, including the Nodals and Preraks (book-keepers), accountable.
- Systematic mechanisms for raising, processing and resolving rights and entitlements issues have been developed, such as writing applications, negotiating with Gram Panchayats, raising issues at Gram Sabhas, escalating issues to Janpads (block level Panchayats) and Line Departments. Through such systematic social action, Samta Sakhis have enabled greater access of rural women to resources, services and entitlements. Social action has happened on a range of issues including pensions, identity cards, caste and disability certificates, ration, housing, water, roads, streetlights, MGNREGA job cards, health cards (Ayushman Bharat), land rights, caste discrimination and domestic violence. During Covid-19, Samta Sakhis worked actively with Panchayats to contain the health crisis and enable people to access relief and food security.
- Samta Sakhis who have led or facilitated the social action have leveraged existing platforms and institutions at village, block and district levels. This includes Panchayat offices, Gram Sabhas, Jansunwais (public hearings) at the village level; Janpad and Tehsil at the block level; hospitals, police stations and the District Collectorate at the district level. This has enabled convergence between members of MPSRLM supported community institutions and institutions of local governance and administration.

Executive Summary

- Participatory social action, in which CLF/VO members and Social Action Committee (SAC) members accompany the Samta Sakhis or visit government offices on their own, is slowly evolving. However, it is still limited to cases related to public services or goods that impact the whole village, such as water, roads and streetlights. There are also instances of participatory social action for cases of domestic violence.
- Lok Adhikar Kendras (LAK), which convene twice a week have been established in the Janpad offices of both Sheopur and Karhal. Block Gender Forums have also been set up and they convene once in two/three months. Both these platforms have facilitated greater access of rights and entitlements and enabled greater convergence between women's community institutions and government line departments. They have also served as escalation platforms for cases that are not resolved at the village level.
- ANANDI undertook several capacity building initiatives for Samta Sakhis, such as intensive trainings (five-day residential training on gender perspective development, training on LAK facilitation), exposure visit to Gujarat, monthly review and reflection meetings and mentoring support by Master Trainers. These continuous processes have played a pivotal role in transforming Samta Sakhis into confident, aware and spirited community leaders.
- Initial changes have been observed amongst the Samta Sakhis in the form of greater awareness, confidence, self-esteem, understanding of gender inequality, decision-making power, mobility, resourcefulness and ability to strategically negotiate difficult situations at home, community and in government offices. Some Samta Sakhis have also been able to add their names in property papers and persuaded male family members to participate in household work. There has been an increase in their own social capital as well.
- Their recognition as leaders within the community and by the administration has helped Samta Sakhis in navigating challenges at home and enhancing their status and decision-making power. Initial challenges in the community in terms of their mobility or acceptance as leaders has been overcome by demonstration of their willingness and ability to help people by ensuring their rights and entitlements.
- Finally, most of the Samta Sakhis have shown tremendous commitment to their work as change makers by continuing to work in their villages and through the LAK, despite lack of remuneration during the project break period. They see this as being on a path to social change, to bring about a difference to their own lives and to the lives of their communities.

Recommendations

- Not all staff, whether at state, district or block, have the same level of understanding of gender issues or ownership of GJP. Given that GJP has now been upscaled, it is crucial for the success of the program that all staff members receive intensive capacity building inputs to develop gender perspectives and accord equal priority to gender work. This is especially true for Nodals who are in close touch with CLFs where most of the gender work is anchored.
- There is also a lack of gender integration across verticals and most of the gender work is part of the Social Inclusion/Social Development (SI/SD) vertical. There is a need for proactive measures to integrate gender across all verticals.
- Dedicated staff for gender work is required at the district level to supervise the gender work across the district, as currently there is shortage of human resources and the workload of the existing staff is high. This would also ensure greater cooperation and support for gender work on the ground from the MPSRLM official team. During the time of Madhya Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project (MPRLP), there was a district level person responsible for carrying out gender-based activities.
- Currently, there are no funds specifically earmarked for gender work. Gender work is funded now through the SI/SD vertical which also funds the salaries of district and block staff as well as work under Food, Nutrition, Health and WASH (FNHW).

For sustained and focused gender work beyond any project cycle, dedicated funds for gender work need to be ensured.

- Gender responsive monitoring mechanism is the need of the hour to monitor gender work beyond trainings. Presently, it is largely input-based, such as number of trainings. Outcome level indicators such as the type of social action cases raised and the type of social action cases resolved need to be introduced into the MIS (Management Information System).
- Given that participatory social action is at a nascent stage, there is a need to develop capacities and handhold SACs and GPPs (Gender Point Person) to lead gender work along with Samta Sakhis. Capacity building through a cascading model of training (where Samta Sakhis conduct the training) have been initiated currently but this process needs to be strengthened and supported with closer mentoring and handholding for gender work. While it might be difficult for block officials to provide continuous mentoring, the Samta Sakhis or the Samta Samanvayaks (Senior Gender CRPs) could do it in the districts where gender strategy is upscaled. The GJP has shown that to develop community leaders, there needs to be continuous capacity building along with close mentoring. For SACs and GPPs to become really effective, a similar process needs to be followed. The capacities for CLF and VO office bearers (OBs) need to be built for facilitating and supporting social action and discussions on social and gender issues.

A stylized map of Madhya Pradesh, India, is shown in a light teal color against a darker teal background. A large, white, bold number '1' is superimposed on the right side of the map.

1

Introduction and Background

The Gender Justice Program (GJP), which is the subject of this research, was implemented by ANANDI (Area Networking and Development Initiatives)¹ in Sheopur and Karhal blocks of the Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh from April 2019 to March 2021. It was one of the four gender pilots supported by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) as part of its SWAYAM (Strengthening Women's Institution for Agency and Empowerment) initiative, with IWWAGE (Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy) as an umbrella coordination and learning partner. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation collaborated with the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) and CSOs like ANANDI to establish gender pilots within the State Rural Livelihoods Mission (SRLM) across four states: Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Jharkhand with an aim to produce evidence towards advancing women's rights and gender equality. Through SWAYAM, IWWAGE provided technical assistance to Deendayal Antyodaya

Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM) to support and build the gender strategy and institutionalize gender across all levels of the Mission.

In the role of ANANDI'S research partner, the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) conducted a process documentation study of one of these gender pilots – the GJP implemented by ANANDI in Madhya Pradesh in collaboration with the Madhya Pradesh State Rural Livelihoods Mission (MPSRLM). This report presents the findings of the process documentation study and analyzes the strategies and processes through which rural women were empowered to claim their rights and entitlements by exercising their voice and agency. This is not an evaluative report. Rather, it traces the journey of the GJP through its project tenure from April 2019 to March 2021. It analyzes the strategies and activities, the process of change, the outcomes achieved, and the challenges and limitations faced. The analysis also

¹ The Area Networking and Development Initiatives (ANANDI) is a 26-year-old organization that works towards building and strengthening rural women led community-based organizations for sustainable livelihoods, rights and entitlements and violence free society for women, youth and children from tribal, Dalit, de-notified tribes and other marginalized communities.

includes some top-line observations of the work carried out by community leaders nurtured by the project, in the period immediately after project paused², i.e., April–August 2021.

The report is divided into eight sections. Section 1 introduces the report, gives a brief description of the DAY-NRLM institutional framework within which the GJP is embedded and explains the objectives and pillars of GJP as well as the Theory of Change (TOC). Section 2 presents the key research questions, methodology, and outcome indicators guiding the research. Section 3 discusses key insights from the earlier Formative Research conducted by ICRW on the status of gender responsiveness of MPSRLM institutions at the beginning of the GJP. Sections 4, 5 and 6 analyze each of the three principal strategies of GJP—Feminist Leadership Development (FLD), Institutional Strengthening (IS) and Gender Mainstreaming (GM)—to understand the activities, outcomes, enablers, barriers and mitigation strategies. Section 7 explores the potential budget unlocks enabled through the strategies employed by the GJP. Finally, Section 8 ties the threads of the discussion across all sections together and concludes.

1.1 Introduction to DAY-NRLM

The Gender Justice Program (GJP) implemented by ANANDI is positioned within the institutional framework of the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM). The DAY-NRLM is one of the largest government programs for financial inclusion and livelihoods of rural women with a massive network of 72.6 lakh Self-Help Groups (SHGs) comprising 794.1 lakh households in 34 states and union territories of India (National Rural Livelihoods Mission, n.d.a). DAY-NRLM, also known as Ajeevika Mission,³ aims at creating efficient and effective institutional platforms of the rural poor, enabling them to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancements and improved access to financial services' (National Rural Livelihoods Mission, n.d.b). DAY-NRLM has a National Mission Management

Unit (NMMU) to coordinate efforts at the national level, followed by a State Mission Management Unit (SMMU) which implements, coordinates and monitors efforts at the state level. Similar units are available at the district level (District Mission Management Unit (DMMU)) and the block level (Block Mission Management Unit (BMMU)).

DAY-NRLM forms, nurtures and supports community institutions and their federations. The fundamental unit of a community institution is the SHG comprising 10–15 community women who make monthly savings and can access micro loans based on some criteria. Multiple SHGs in a village come together to form a village organization (VO) at the village level, and several VOs federate at the block level to form the Cluster Level Federation (CLF). Depending on the number of villages constituting a block, there could be a number of CLFs representing groups of VOs at the block level. Since the community institutions are also supposed to facilitate rural women's access to livelihoods and entitlements, certain committees and resource persons are selected from the community members to lead such functions. For example, there is a Gender Point Person (GPP) at the SHG level to discuss and address gender-related concerns of women at that level. Social Action Committees (SACs) are formed at the VO and CLF level to raise, discuss and act on social issues at that level. There are similar committees for bank linkage, livelihoods linkage and other functions. Community Resource Persons (CRPs) are also appointed by the CLFs to perform different roles, such as the Agriculture CRP (Krishi Sakhi), Bank linkage CRP (Bank Mitra), Livestock CRP (Pashu Sakhi) etc. Book-keepers (called Preraks in Madhya Pradesh) are also appointed by the CLFs to manage books of accounts across CLFs, VOs and SHGs. As part of the GJP, a new category of the CRPs, viz., the Gender CRP (known as Samta Sakhi in Madhya Pradesh) was introduced. Samta Sakhis perform the role of leading training and action around gender issues. Gender CRPs work across SHGs/VOs/CLFs to train women members on gender issues and facilitate women's access to their rights and entitlements. Figure 1 is a diagrammatic representation of the MPSRLM structure at the government and community institution level.

2 There was a gap from April 2021–August 2021 when most of the Samta Sakhis were not paid through the GJP. In this period, most Samta Sakhis continued to work in their own villages and also supported the LAK twice a week. Their regular activities across other villages were suspended due to lack of funds. Master Trainers and the Project Lead of ANANDI continued to support the Samta Sakhis and LAK in this period. This period is referred to as project gap/break/pause period across the report.

3 The report has interchangeably used the terms NRLM/DAY-NRLM, Ajeevika Mission, Mission to refer to the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission while NMMU is used to refer to the staff, systems and structures of the NRLM at the national level.

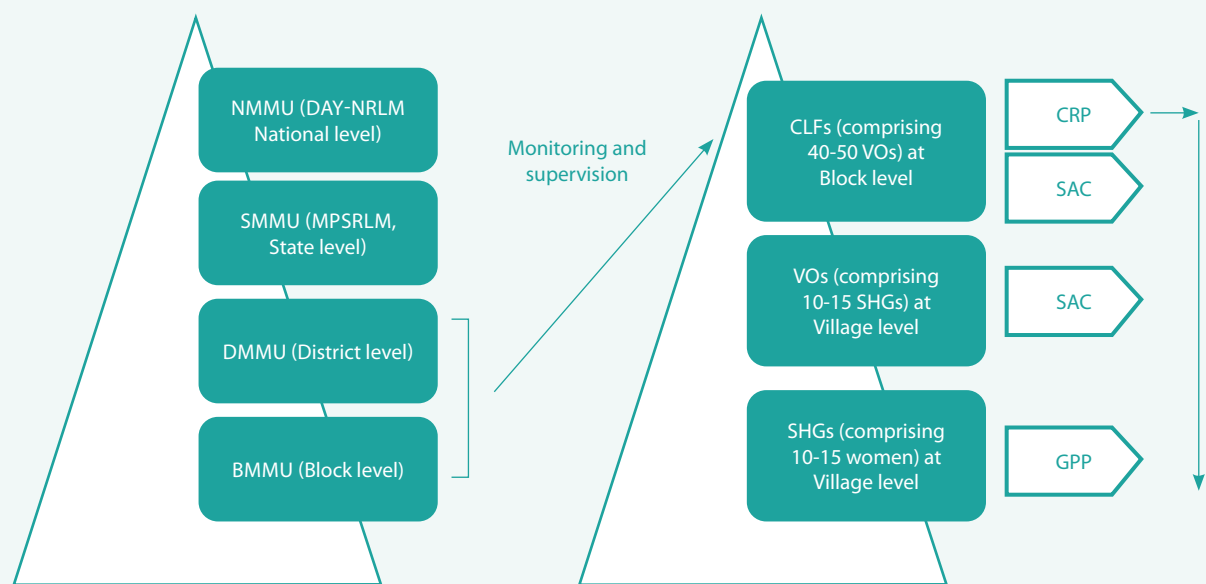


Figure 1: Government and Community Institution Level Architecture

Note: CRPs are appointed by the CLFs and work across CLFs, VOs and SHGs; Apart from SAC, there are several other committees at CLF and VO level, but the GJP engaged only with the SACs.

The CLFs, VOs and SHGs meet at least once a month and in some cases twice a month. The formal interface between the government system and the community institution system of DAY-NRLM occurs through the presence and engagement of the Block Nodal officer⁴ (official of the block team responsible for the supervision of that CLF) at the CLF meeting once a month. The book-keepers and CRPs appointed by the CLF also interact with the Nodal officer on a regular basis, helping in monitoring and supervising the functioning of the community institutions.

Even though the DAY-NRLM has been functional since the last decade, the evolution of gender focused strategies, their coverage and impact are still at a nascent stage. Since 2016, DAY-NRLM has adopted a gender integration strategy with a focus on capacity building of staff and community institutions and piloting of gender strategy in a few blocks within interested states. Madhya Pradesh emerged as one of the forerunners to respond to the call of the DAY-NRLM and adopt a gender strategy. In fact, the selection of GPPs and SACs is the result of DAY-NRLM's recent focus on gender integration and part of its gender operational strategy.

1.2 Introduction to the Gender Justice Program (GJP)

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation launched SWAYAM to showcase four gender pilot projects in four different states of India to produce evidence of models that can be implemented to advance women's rights and gender equality in collaboration with NMMU, SMMUs and CSO partners. Through the project, IWWAGE provided technical assistance to NMMU to mainstream gender at the national level while CSO partners worked closely with their respective SMMUs for the gender pilots in those states. The GJP was one such pilot implemented by ANANDI in collaboration with MPSRLM in two blocks, Karhal and Sheopur of the Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh. In each of the blocks, the program worked with three CLFs: Tulsi CLF, Sagar CLF and Pragati CLF in Sheopur Block; Annapurna CLF, Vishwas CLF and Shakti CLF in Karhal Block.

The GJP aimed to develop rural women's voice and agency to claim their rights and entitlements through a three-pronged approach:

⁴ Block Nodal officer/Nodal officer/Nodal has been used interchangeably across the report.

- Gender Mainstreaming i.e., mainstreaming gender into the mandate and structures of MPSRLM (system level change).⁵ Key strategies used by GJP for gender mainstreaming included capacity building, dialogue and advocacy and technical and human resource support for gender strategy across state, district and block MPSRLM teams.
- Institutional Strengthening i.e., leveraging and strengthening existing community-based institutions, especially CLFs (changes within community institutions). It was the process through which community institutions like CLFs became gender responsive by building capacities, institutional mechanisms and networks to respond to, represent, and carry out action pertaining to the rights and entitlements of the community in general and its members in particular. Some of the key strategies for IS included capacity building of members through a cascading model of training, social action⁶ on gender issues at the village and block level, leveraging different governance and administrative platforms for enabling women's access to rights and entitlements etc. A critical strategy was also the establishment of the Lok Adhikar Kendra (LAK) at the block level (in both Sheopur and Karhal Blocks) managed by gender CRPs (Samta Sakhis) and Master Trainers. The LAK was housed within the Block Panchayat office (Janpad) or Tehsil office and linked members of community institutions to Line Department officials at the block level for access to rights and entitlements.
- Feminist Leadership Development i.e., developing a strong cadre of community-based feminist leaders attached to CLFs, who would work as Gender CRPs or Samta Sakhis.⁷ It referred to the process of developing Samta Sakhis who can reflect, decide and take action to challenge gender relations in their own families and communities. Key strategies of FLD included selection of Samta Sakhis among CLF members and giving them the

role of gender CRPs, their capacity building and handholding for conducting training with other community members and conducting social action. In each CLF, initially two Samta Sakhis were nominated. Later, two additional Samta Sakhis were nominated, making it a total of four Samta Sakhis for each CLF. Taking the first and second batch Samta Sakhis together across six CLFs, there were a total of twenty-four Samta Sakhis working in the field. Each Samta Sakhi was in charge of eight or nine VOs attached to the CLF.

1.3 Theory of Change

The Theory of Change (TOC) that guided the GJP is explained in Figure 2. It presents the broad problem statement, the approach adopted to resolve the problem, the inputs invested, the intended outcomes and the underlying assumptions. This TOC was developed through a collaborative exercise between ICRW, ANANDI, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and IWWAGE and is representative of ANANDI's overall approach to gender integration within programs such as DAY-NRLM. It is important to note that when GJP was rolled out in the field in Sheopur, some of the strategies were sharpened, adjusted and modified to respond to the needs on the ground and the COVID-19 situation. These changes and modifications also had implications for outcomes and will be discussed in detail in Sections 4, 5, and 6. The research team also prepared a results framework for GJP which is provided in Annexure 1. The Theory of Change postulates that to enable rural women to claim their rights and entitlements, a shift in gender dynamics is required. This can be achieved through feminist leadership development (building a cadre of women community leaders), institutional strengthening (strengthening institutions to become more gender responsive) and gender mainstreaming (facilitating systemic and policy level changes).

5 In 1997, ECOSOC defined gender mainstreaming as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetrated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (UN Women, 1997).

6 Social action here refers to individual or group behavior that involves interaction with other individuals, groups or institutions geared towards achievement of individual or collective rights or social norm change. It involves individual accompaniment as well as collective action utilizing various platforms for realizing rights and entitlements of rural women.

7 One of the best definitions of feminist leadership can be seen in the work of Srilatha Batliwala. She writes, "Feminist leadership can be defined as women with a feminist perspective and vision for social justice, individually and collectively transforming themselves to use their power, resources and skills in non-oppressive and inclusive structures and processes to mobilize others, especially women, around a shared agenda of social, cultural, economic and political transformation for equality and realisation of human rights for all" (Batliwala, 2010, p.14)

Objective

Enable rural women to exercise voice and agency through MPSRLM platforms to overcome gender barriers and access opportunities and resources for realization of their rights and entitlements.

THEORY OF CHANGE

What is the problem?

Lack of gender integration is limiting the potential of MPSRLM institutions for advancing rural women's agency and their access to rights and entitlements

What is our approach?

By adopting a holistic gender transformative approach which addresses all three levels: individual (feminist leadership development of community leaders), community institutions (institutional strengthening by making them gender responsive) and systems (shifts in policy through gender mainstreaming), rural women are empowered to challenge gender norms and claim rights and entitlements leveraging multiple platforms of governance

What will we do?
(Input Activities)

Feminist Leadership Development

- Capacity building (PALS training & mentoring) of Gender CRPs and other community leaders (office bearers of CLF/VO/SHG) to respond to gender issues and lead social action

Institutional Strengthening

- Capacity building (PALS training) of members of community institutions (SHG/VO/CLF) to respond to gender issues and participate in social action
- Establish Lok Adhikar Kendra
- Organize activities & campaigns

Gender Mainstreaming

- Capacity building of Staff
- Support in developing Gender Responsive Budgets and Annual Action Plans
- Develop Gender Resource Group

What will we change?
(Outcome)

Feminist Leadership Development

- Women reflect, decide and take action to challenge gender relations and claim rights

Institutional Strengthening

- Community institutions become more gender responsive
- Women leverage different platforms to claim their rights and entitlements
- Convergence between MPSRLM supported community institutions and other platforms and government departments

Gender Mainstreaming

- Government system becomes gender responsive and integrates gender across all verticals and programs

What are the assumptions?

Feminist Leadership Development

- Training pedagogy, content and handholding lead to increased knowledge and build gender perspective
- Increased knowledge, awareness and gender perspective enable Gender CRPs and other community leaders to make changes in their own lives and households as well as lead changes in the community

Institutional Strengthening

- Members of community institutions actively participate in trainings and social action
- Different platforms and government departments respond positively to the social action
- Women raise issues requiring social action to their community leaders and in the community institutions

Gender Mainstreaming

- All stakeholders engage actively
- MPSRLM staff integrate the learnings in their regular activities

Figure 2: GJP's Theory of Change

2

Research Questions, Methodology and Limitations

This section presents the research objective, questions, methodology and limitations of the study.

2.1 Research Objective and Questions

Objective: To study the strategies and processes through which rural women are empowered to claim rights and entitlements by exercising their voice (through various institutions and platforms) and agency (capacity to reflect, decide and act).

The broad questions guiding this research are:

- What strategies and processes are required to mainstream gender in the Institution Building/ Capacity Building (IB/CB) pillar and existing structures of the Rural Livelihoods Mission at various levels (national, state, district and block)? (Gender Mainstreaming)
- What strategies and processes are required for strengthening women's community institutions such as CLFs so that they are able to lead, engage,

represent and carry out actions ensuring rights and entitlements of rural women? (Institutional Strengthening)

- What strategies and processes are required to build capacities of community resource persons such as Samta Sakhis to emerge as community leaders who lead, facilitate and support the work of community institutions in advancing the rights and entitlements of rural women? (Feminist Leadership Development)

2.2 Research Methodology

The research methodology consists of qualitative primary research. Literature review had been done during the formative phase to understand the connection between SHGs and women's empowerment and presented in the Formative Research Report prepared by ICRW. This phase of process documentation focused on a variety of primary research methods to understand ongoing processes and their outcomes. Qualitative data was collected

between January 2020 to September 2021, with the purpose of understanding the implementation of strategies on ground, the challenges faced, and the initial shifts being observed. However, it is important to highlight that data collection was paused between March 2020–September 2020 and April 2021–August 2021, owing to the COVID-19 crisis.

The research activities included Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs),

In-depth Interviews (IDIs), Online Consultations and Participant Observations with different stakeholders such as Mission staff at National, State, District and Block Levels, ANANDI Project team⁸ including Master Trainers, ANANDI senior staff, IWWAGE staff, CLF office bearers, CLF SAC members and Samta Sakhis. After February 2020, all research activities were converted to the telephonic/online mode owing to COVID-19 travel restrictions and other administrative contractual issues. The observations from 15 KIIs, 17 FGDs, 17 IDIs, 8 online

Table 1: Details of Primary Data Collection

Research Activity	Participant Type	Completed
KII	NMMU, SMMU, ANANDI & IWWAGE Senior/Project Staff, Samta Sakhis	15
FGD	DMMU, BMMU, CLF OBs, CLF SACs, Samta Sakhis	17
IDI	Samta Sakhis, Master Trainers, Stakeholders of Social Action	17
Online Consultations	ANANDI Project Team including Master Trainers	8
Telephonic/Online Participant Observation	Samta Sakhi huddle calls, DAY-NRLM/MPSRLM online review meetings, MPSRLM online State workshops	10
In-Person Participant Observation	CLF meetings, VO and Village level meetings	10
Total		77

consultations and participant observations/telephonic or online listening-in of 20 meetings (Table 1) have been analyzed to prepare this report. A detailed list of primary data sources is presented in Annexure 2.

The selection and recruitment of research participants across different stakeholder categories were done with support from ANANDI. The NMMU and SMMU officials with whom to conduct KIIs were decided based on their involvement in the SWAYAM project and GJP. At district and block levels, all the officials of DMMU, Sheopur district and BMMU, Sheopur and Karhal blocks were invited for FGDs. The office bearers and social action committee members of all the six CLFs which are part of the GJP were invited for FGDs.

These FGDs were held CLF-wise. The dates and time for FGDs with CLF office bearers and SAC members were facilitated through the BMMU team. All the Samta Sakhis recruited by ANANDI were invited for the FGDs, which were held block-wise and batch-wise (first and second batch). The date and time for Samta Sakhi FGDs were facilitated through ANANDI's project team. IDIs were conducted with selected Samta Sakhis. These Samta Sakhis were selected keeping in mind representativeness across blocks, CLFs, batch, caste and marital status. For in-person participant observation, the ICRW team accompanied the ANANDI project team to the scheduled/regular CLF and VO meetings. The telephonic/online listening-in was facilitated by ANANDI and IWWAGE team members. Standard

⁸ For the purpose of this report, ANANDI project team refers to project coordinator and master trainers, both. It does not include ANANDI senior staff.

procedures for recruitment, introduction and consent were followed in all cases. Given that this was human subject research, ethical practices such as informed consent, confidentiality, privacy, and voluntary participation were strictly adhered to. Due to COVID-19, when all data collection activities were moved to remote methods, extra care was taken to ensure privacy and confidentiality of research participants. In order to maintain confidentiality, all names have been changed.

2.3 Limitations of the Study

Due to COVID-19 and administrative challenges, the research team's original plan to engage in participant observation of CLF and VO meetings as well as Lok Adhikar Kendra⁹ processes, could not happen (except for a few CLFs and VOs which had been visited prior to March 2020). However, the work done by Samta Sakhis in CLFs, VOs and LAKs such as training and social action was analyzed through the insights provided by Samta Sakhis, CLF OBs and SACs (who are also members of VOs), BMMU and DMMU staff and the ANANDI project team. The observations of different stakeholders on similar questions of processes and outcomes helped the research team to cross-verify the facts and gain insights in multiple perspectives. Further, based on the scope of the study and GJP's initial design, the study focused on the changes at the level of CLFs and to a certain extent at the level of VOs. Changes at the SHG level are not captured in the study.

The research team also faced the usual challenges associated with remote methods. There were issues of rapport building, conducting online FGDs and consultations, and ensuring privacy of participants, especially during IDIs. A few things helped the research team mitigate some of these challenges. First, since the research team had met most of the research participants during field visits till February 2020, a certain level of familiarity had been established, which helped create rapport during online interviews and discussions. Second, during online FGDs and consultations, the research team took care to organize smaller groups and reach out to every participant for reflections so that everyone's voice was heard. Third, care was taken to call participants at a time suitable for them, when they could have some measure of privacy. However, if there were any signs of disruption of privacy, the research team asked the participant if she was comfortable to continue the conversation. If not, an alternative date and time was set.

Finally, as the project paused in the field by April 2021, there was a break period till the next phase of implementation started in September 2021. However, most of the Samta Sakhis did continue to work in their own villages. This study does not cover this break period in detail but does provide some topline observations about some of the activities in this period, especially through the lens of understanding the sustainability of processes in the absence of a CSO partner. The study examines in detail the strategies, processes and outcomes for the period of April 2019 to March 2021 only.

⁹ Lok Adhikar Kendra was set up as part of the GJP in both the Sheopur and Karhal blocks to enable community women's access to entitlements by connecting them with block-level line departments.

3

State of Gender Responsiveness at the Beginning of the GJP – Summary of Formative Research

ICRW undertook a Formative Research Study (Sengupta & Uppal, 2020) in the first quarter of 2020 in Sheopur and Karhal Blocks, to trace the gender mainstreaming journey of MPSRLM and to understand the gender responsiveness of community institutions supported by MPSRLM such as CLF. At this time, GJP had just been initiated with the first batch of Samta Sakhis and CLFs in Sheopur and therefore enabled a study of the ground realities at the onset of GJP. Some of the key findings of the formative research are presented below:

- MPSRLM had been actively working and collaborating with CSOs, including ANANDI, to strengthen its community institutions and for a gender responsive implementation of Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) since 2013.

Further, during the time of Madhya Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project (MPRLP),¹⁰ there was a district level person responsible for carrying out gender-based activities. All of these experiences enabled MPSRLM to come forward in responding to DAY-NRLM's call for adopting the gender strategy in 2016, much before the SWAYAM project. ANANDI had already worked with MPSRLM in an earlier phase and created a cadre of Samta Sakhis as well as the Lok Adhikar Kendra in Mandla district around 2017. This prior relationship with ANANDI, and the work since 2013 had already created a mandate and willingness for gender strategy and GJP was welcomed in Sheopur in 2019 as part of the SWAYAM gender pilots.

¹⁰ MPRLP was the state level livelihood program implemented in MP before 2012. In 2012–2013, MPRLP transitioned into MPSRLM.

- Despite the mandate for gender strategy, since the work was still at a nascent stage, there was lack of expertise, shortage of human resources, lack of a robust monitoring mechanism and absence of a well-defined gender strategy before the initiation of GJP. The Formative Research also found that there was a need to build gender perspectives and capacities of staff across SMMU, DMMU and BMMU. Some of the staff, however, had been trained earlier by ANANDI and demonstrated a much more robust understanding compared to others.
 - At the level of community institutions i.e., CLF, it was noticed that these platforms functioned primarily as spaces for financial transactions and to a limited extent, discussions on government schemes. Despite being community women's own institutions, the meetings were largely facilitated by either Block Nodal officers or Preraks (majority of both being men). Further, CLF OBs understanding of gender was limited to manifestations of gender discrimination in terms of children's education and nutrition. There was an absence of a language of rights or understanding of underlying normative structures.
 - Some social action cases were reported by CLF OBs but this was highly sporadic and dependent on support from DMMU and BMMU. SACs were inactive and there was no systematic mechanism to raise, represent and act on social or gender issues.
- The next three sections discuss how some of these issues found during the Formative Research underwent a process of change due to the implementation of GJP.



Photo Credit : Sumit Saraswat/Shutterstock

A light blue map of India is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the page. A large white number '4' is superimposed on the map, indicating the chapter number.

4

Feminist Leadership Development

This section presents the strategies and processes employed by ANANDI to build a cadre of women community leaders i.e., Samta Sakhis, who support community institutions and work towards advancing rural women's rights and entitlements. It also presents the initial changes observed within the Samta Sakhis and elaborates on the challenges they faced at multiple levels such as government, community, family and individual. Figure 3 shows the strategies and the expected outcomes of Feminist Leadership Development (FLD) under GJP.

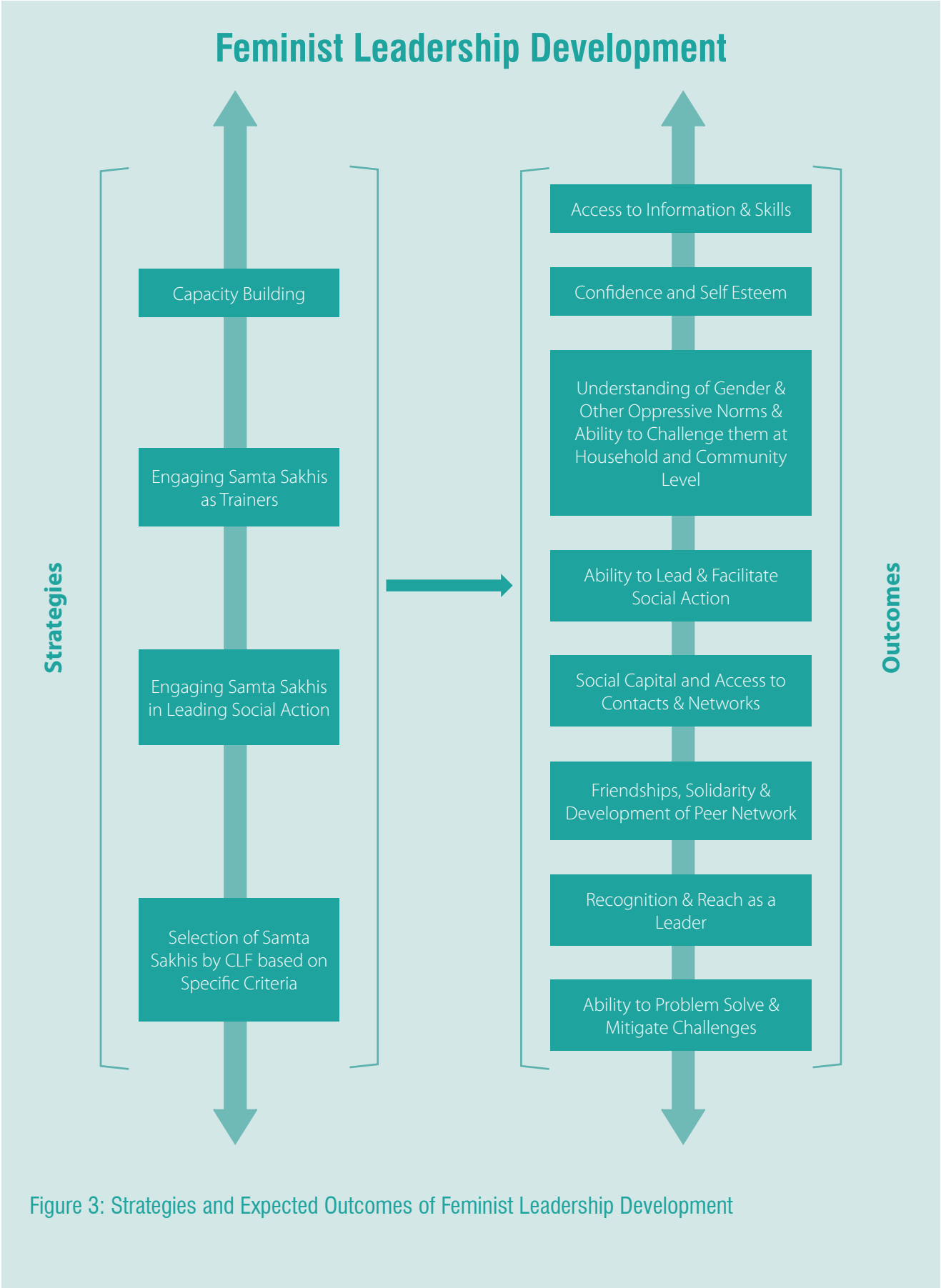
Figure 3 illustrates the interconnectedness between the key strategies adopted and the expected outcomes towards realization of Feminist Leadership Development i.e., developing a strong cadre of Samta Sakhis. These strategies reinforce each other and together contribute to the different outcomes that also impact and interact with each other. The following subsections present an in-depth analysis of the Feminist Leadership Development pillar of GJP, the challenges encountered by the Samta Sakhis and the enablers and barriers in their journey.

4.1 Strategies

The Gender Justice Program employed different strategies to build the cadre of women leaders in the community in alignment with the objective of Feminist Leadership Development. This section presents and analyzes the strategies and processes implemented by ANANDI.

4.1.1 Capacity Building

ANANDI provided capacity building support through multiple methods such as trainings, exposure visits, review reflection meetings and on-job handholding and mentoring. Due to the pandemic protocols and lockdown, exposure visits and residential trainings were suspended from March to October 2020. However, ANANDI's project team, including the Master Trainers, continued to be in touch telephonically and once restrictions were eased, provided Samta



Sakhis guidance and mentoring in the field. During the first lockdown (March–June 2020), ANANDI also recharged the mobile phones of the Samta Sakhis which enabled them to communicate with the VO/CLF leaders. This in turn helped the ANANDI team to understand the ground realities better and accordingly share information with Samta Sakhis on COVID-19 or government schemes.

4.1.1.1 Trainings

I Residential five-day gender perspective training

A five-day residential training was organized for the first batch of Samta Sakhis in November 2019 and for the second batch in November 2020. The training was conducted to build their perspective and understanding about the concepts of gender, patriarchy, socialization and discrimination among others. ANANDI conducted trainings using their Participatory Action Learning training tools. The training also introduced the participants to the concept of rights and citizenship and identity documents such as the Aadhaar and MGNREGA card. The training pedagogy was participatory and interactive. Songs, role-play and other activities were used to initiate discussions and conversations. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their own lives and the experiences of women in their community. Further, in this residential training, members of the Social Action Committee (SAC) from the six CLFs were also invited as participants. The CLF OBs also attended the training on the last day. Interestingly, for the training of the second batch, two Samta Sakhis of the first batch were also part of the training as co-trainers for a few sessions. The first batch of Samta Sakhis were included as resource persons so that they could share relevant examples from their experiences in the field. They took the session on the tool *Kiska Palda Bhari* and shared their familial and field level experiences which were relatable for the participants.

II. Orientation training of new Samta Sakhis

In July 2020, ANANDI organized a non-residential two-day orientation workshop for the new Samta Sakhis. In this workshop, the project team oriented them on the concepts of gender, patriarchy and explained the details of the GJP, its functioning and their role. Due to the hygiene protocols such as

physical distancing norms, ANANDI was unable to organize the intensive five-day residential training in July. This was later organized in November 2020.

III. Adhikar Saathi App training

In July 2020, all the Samta Sakhis were given training on the Adhikar Saathi App developed by ANANDI. This is an android phone application which was designed to record and collate social action cases. It captures the complainant's demographic information followed by specific case-related information. The idea was to develop a monthly dashboard for every CLF with indicators like the number of cases reported at village level, number of cases brought to the Jansunwai, and number of cases reported to LAK among others. After the training, Master Trainers also practically demonstrated the App to the Samta Sakhis when they accompanied them to the field. The Samta Sakhis were also provided with tablets for working with the Adhikar Saathi App.

IV. Lok Adhikar Kendra Sanchalan training

A one-day training was organized in October 2020 for all the Samta Sakhis in Sheopur. The training was undertaken by ANANDI project team members. The objective of the training was to build the capacity of the Samta Sakhis on the role, management and facilitation of the LAK. They were guided on how to handle a case, the follow-up mechanisms, how to maintain records etc. Since the LAK in Karhal has been functioning since June 2020, the Samta Sakhis from Karhal also shared in detail their experience of managing the LAK. Since the LAK in Sheopur started functioning in October 2020, the ANANDI team felt the need to organize this kind of training so that a uniformity in documentation, follow-up protocol, and escalation mechanism could be maintained.

V. Mahila and Bal Vikas Vibhag training

A one-day orientation training was organized by ANANDI in collaboration with the Mahila and Bal Vikas Vibhag (Ministry of Women and Child Development) in November 2020. The objective of the training was to orient the Samta Sakhis on all the existing schemes and programs under the department for the welfare of women and children. It also gave an opportunity to the participants to interact with the department officials and understand in detail the eligibility

criteria for schemes, clarify their doubts and raise the concerns faced by women in the community. The Samta Sakhis learnt about the one-stop Sakhi center, the role of the protection officer, programs at the Anganwadi center etc.

VI. Refresher training

The project team felt the need to conduct a refresher training on the *Mera Haq, Meri Pehchan* tool for the Samta Sakhis of Karhal Block. A one-day session was organized to take them through the tool again and reacquaint them with the concepts and approaches to be followed in the field. The refresher trainings were organized on a need basis.

4.1.1.2 Exposure Visit

In December 2020, ANANDI organized a five-day exposure visit to their field sites in Gujarat for all the Samta Sakhis. Two Block Nodal officers, one from each block and representatives from two CLFs, were also a part of the team from Sheopur visiting Gujarat. The group was divided into three sub-groups who visited three different blocks in Gujarat. The objective of the visit was to give them an experience of the different interventions in Gujarat (ongoing for the last two decades) which are similar to the interventions in Sheopur. The participants visited LAKs in Gujarat, attended meetings of the community institutions and youth groups, visited kitchen gardens, vermicompost sites and seed banks (*beej* bank). They stayed with local women in their houses, and through sessions stretching late into the night, the participants got an opportunity to interact with and learn about the journey of these women and their institutions. On the last day, a common feedback and Q&A session was organized, which gave the participants an opportunity to share their comments, learnings and ask questions. It gave the ANANDI staff a platform to reiterate the importance of the LAK at the block level and the need to claim space for and visibilize women at that level of governance.

4.1.1.3 Review and Reflection Meetings

Review and reflection meeting was an important strategy implemented by ANANDI. Monthly meetings were organized with all the Samta Sakhis and the

project team to review the work done in the past month, collectively reflect on successes, enablers and barriers in the field and plan for the next month. Often, ANANDI also used these platforms to give inputs on certain schemes or laws. For instance, in the December 2019 meeting, Samta Sakhis mentioned that the work related to registration of *Van Adhikar Pattas* (Forest Rights Lease) has already begun in their villages. At this juncture, the ANANDI team explained to the Samta Sakhis to keep in mind that single women should have a separate *patta* and a joint *patta* should be issued in the name of both husband and wife. Moreover, daughters have a legal right to the *patta*. The Samta Sakhis were encouraged to create this awareness amongst the women in their community. In the July 2020 meeting, the ANANDI project team provided a quick refresher training input on the tool *Mera Haq, Meri Pehchan* with focus on building an understanding of citizenship, rights and entitlements. These monthly meetings, which started in December 2019, served as important platforms for collective sharing. Due to COVID-19, from April 2020, these physical meetings were replaced with weekly or fortnightly huddle calls with the Samta Sakhis. In-person meetings were resumed at the block level on a monthly basis from July 2020. Overall, these review reflection meetings also provided opportunities for peer learning among the Samta Sakhis through sharing experiences, discussing challenges and debating on mitigation strategies.

4.1.1.4 Mentoring Support

Throughout the reporting period, the ANANDI project team, especially the Master Trainers, provided constant mentoring support to the Samta Sakhis, either through phone or in-person at SHG/VO/CLF trainings or at the LAK. They provided them with information about schemes, clarified their doubts, guided them in any case of social action, mentored them on documentation and use of the Adhikar Saathi App etc. Apart from building the capacities of Samta Sakhis through knowledge and information sharing, another important strategy used by ANANDI was to build their confidence and problem-solving skills. Whenever Samta Sakhis reached out to the Master Trainers with a problem, they encouraged them to think of possible solutions and motivated them to discuss this within their SHG/VO/CLF spaces to collectively decide the way forward. This was done to ensure that ANANDI does not play the role of an instructor, but rather that of a facilitator. Further, Master Trainers helped Samta Sakhis with problems in their personal lives and also counselled their families whenever required.

However, for Master Trainers to be able to provide this kind of handholding, their own capacities had to be built. ANANDI invested in on-job mentoring of the cohort of three trainers since it was seen as too small a group for a dedicated training workshop. A senior ANANDI staff visited Sheopur monthly and spent time in the field with the Master Trainers, gave them feedback and strategized with them, thereby building their skills. As a senior ANANDI member shared, *“Regular meetings and presentations with IWWAGE, ICRW, SMMU, NMMU were so many, that to prepare for these meetings, we had close internal interactions and engagements with Master Trainers. Through this, the team has also grown; their confidence, conviction and clarity has grown.”* Peer learning was also facilitated between the Master Trainers, wherein the newer ones used to accompany the experienced ones.

4.1.2 Engaging Samta Sakhis as Trainers

After Samta Sakhis received training from ANANDI, they delivered similar training in CLF and VO meetings. Thus, GJP used a cascading model of training led by Samta Sakhis to reach members of CLFs and VOs. They used tools such as *Kiska Palda Bhari, Munna Munni, Dukh Sukh and Mera Haq, Meri Pehchan* to start a discussion on gender equality and women's rights. The interactive style of training, using songs, personal examples and questions, was helpful in engaging the participants. The handholding by Master Trainers in the field during these trainings also provided valuable support and proved to be a useful strategy. Initially, the Master Trainers would deliver the training, so that Samta Sakhis could observe and learn. This was followed by the Samta Sakhis conducting a couple of sessions after which the Master Trainers shared their feedback with them. As one of the Samta Sakhis said, *“Initially, I was very unsure about whether I will be able to conduct training in the villages or not. But the Master Trainers supported me in the field, they conducted trainings through which I learnt how to deliver training, how to talk to women and explain to them.”* When the second batch of Samta Sakhis started working, they were asked to work in pairs with the first batch to promote peer learning and build their capacities as trainers.

4.1.3 Engaging Samta Sakhis in Leading Social Action

Another key strategy to build the cadre of women community leaders was to engage them in leading and facilitating social action. It was critical for these women to be seen as leaders in the community who can raise, represent women's issues and lead social action to facilitate access to rights and entitlements of rural women. Master Trainers constantly guided and gave Samta Sakhis information regarding which official to visit for a particular case, the escalation process, required documents etc. They initially visited Panchayats and Janpad offices with the Samta Sakhis so that the latter could pick up the skills to negotiate with government officials. In fact, they have constantly encouraged Samta Sakhis to lead the action on ground. After the initial handholding, Master Trainers prompted them to take this action independently and visit the different government departments on their own, so that they gained confidence in approaching public officials as well. Samta Sakhis have led action pertaining to access to public services such as water, roads, streetlights; access to rights, schemes and entitlements such as pension, ration, land etc.; the COVID-19 pandemic and also violence related cases such as domestic violence and caste-based discrimination.

4.1.4 Selection of Samta Sakhis by CLFs based on Specific Criteria

The criteria and process for selecting Samta Sakhis were carefully strategized in the program. Some of the key selection criteria were that Samta Sakhis should hail from socially marginalized communities, they should have had experience of struggle and resilience in their own lives, have the ability to invest time and move around for project work and should be CLF members. This selection criteria enabled women from marginalized backgrounds such as single women, violence survivors and Adivasi women to come to the forefront of leadership. However, for the second batch of Samta Sakhis, two new criteria were introduced – basic education (keeping in mind the need for documentation and record keeping at the village level and LAK), and geographical location, to ensure that reach is possible across all villages of the CLF. The selection criteria were carefully decided to ensure that women from the community who understood the needs and realities of

community women were chosen. As shared by a BMMU official from Karhal, *“As these Samta Sakhis are from the same community, somewhere it helps them to better understand the realities of community women and also convey the messages to them in a simple language.”*

4.2 Outcomes

These strategies have worked together to achieve the following outcomes.

4.2.1 Access to Information and Skills

One of the most critical outcomes of the project has been an increase in the information and skills of the Samta Sakhis. The capacity building efforts, including handholding by Master Trainers during training and social action, have contributed to their increased awareness and knowledge about women's rights and entitlements. Most of these women shared that this was the first time they had received such information. Further, they also got the information and skills to negotiate with different institutions and leverage them to improve linkages with rights and entitlements. They acquired know-how about eligibility, steps and documentation required for different government schemes. Sometimes these were learnt on the job and sometimes through handholding or specific training. As community leaders, they were often the first to receive information about any new scheme of the government, especially in the context of COVID-19, since the administration and MPSRLM staff relied heavily on them for the spread of information, collection of data etc. They were the on-ground human link between the rural community and the administration. Samta Sakhi Sushma reported, *“Earlier I had no such knowledge, but in the five-day training, I learnt about what are the different women's rights and entitlements and how to take women's concerns to the Panchayat. Being a woman, I realized that I should take this knowledge forward to other women also.”*

4.2.2 Confidence and Self-esteem

Another key outcome that the program has enabled is the increase in confidence and self-esteem of the

Samta Sakhis. This has manifested in their ability to talk to power holders (government officials, police station, elected representatives), ability to raise their voice and respond to taunts by community members or their own family members and also in their confidence as trainers. Samta Sakhis have also gained the confidence and courage to respond to Nodal officers, for example, Samta Sakhi Rama shared, *“Earlier if the Nodal used to scold us, we used to stay quiet but now if the Nodal says anything, then we respond back.”*

The information about rights and entitlements and support provided by the project team have boosted the Samta Sakhis' confidence and courage to access people's forums such as Jansunwai or institutions such as Panchayat and Gram Sabhas to claim their rights. Many of them shared that from a situation where they had a fear of speaking up, now they have become fearless and confident. This confidence also translated into Samta Sakhis' ability to better transact their other roles such as a leader or a CLF office bearer.

“We never visited Jansunwai or Panchayat Ghar before this. Earlier, mostly men used to visit. But the five-day training gave us the courage to visit as we had the information which also gave us the confidence to go to the Jansunwai.”

– Samta Sakhi Meenu

This has repeatedly appeared in the narratives of the Samta Sakhis. According to Samta Sakhi Kiran, *“I did not have much experience before, I could not speak freely and confidently. The training by ANANDI gave me information and knowledge and the work has given me the courage to speak and act.”*

4.2.3 Understanding of Gender and Other Oppressive Norms and Ability to Challenge them at Household and Community Level

At the time of the Formative Research, the Samta Sakhis of the first batch had already undergone the five-day gender perspective training given by ANANDI. An emerging and evolving articulation of rights language was noticed. They were able to identify discrimination within the household as well as in public spaces. This understanding has strengthened over time and is evident from their articulation of gender norms and equality in terms of access to resources, ownership

of assets including land and houses, sharing of work, decision-making, mobility and challenge to violence. As shared by Samta Sakhi Ankita, *"My understanding of a gender equal society is one where work is divided equally between women and men, women also have title to land, houses. Women should have equal rights to assets. Decision-making should be equal between husband and wife."* Further, Samta Sakhis have started to identify discrimination not just in terms of differential access to opportunities or policies and schemes but also the different axes of discrimination such as caste, gender, disability. They have fought against caste-based discrimination within their communities as well. During the first lockdown, there was a case of hatred and enmity being spread against a minority community. The Samta Sakhis immediately discussed it with the ANANDI project team and subsequently shared scientific information with the community members to negate the false rumors. Additionally, they also reached out to the members of the minority community to assure them of the support and solidarity of the entire community.

Another important shift observed is that now the Samta Sakhis have started applying the lessons they learnt in the trainings to their personal lives and within their family. All the Samta Sakhis discussed the different changes they have been able to enable within their own households. These range from increased mobility, adding their names to the property papers or fighting for their land, redistribution of household work, speaking up against domestic violence, putting forth their opinion within their families and taking joint decisions, amongst others. As Samta Sakhi Rani shared, *"Earlier, my husband used to wait for me to come back home and do all the household work. After I took the training, I tried to make him slowly understand that if he also does some work in the house, then I can finish work quicker and he did eventually understand. Now, if I come home late from a meeting, I find my dinner ready."* In another incident, Samta Sakhi Priyanka's husband who is a drug addict and used to repeatedly physically abuse her, tried to hit her again. But she decided that 'enough is enough' and firmly resisted this violence. She asserted that she is not afraid nor does she find it shameful to share this with everyone, as it is important not to tolerate violence against oneself. Samta Sakhis have also successfully negotiated within their families about attending residential trainings and visited Gujarat for an exposure visit. In fact, one of the Samta Sakhis who has a conflictual relationship with her husband, was also able to negotiate with him and visit Gujarat. Further, Samta Sakhis have also started questioning cultural norms such as the practice of *ghoonghat* (veil). It was shared by the Master Trainers that Samta Sakhi

Kamla, who earlier used to always have a *ghoonghat*, has now stopped doing so. Another Samta Sakhi also tried wearing salwar suits when she went to Gujarat, saying, *"This change has come in me where now I feel I can also wear suits. Now sometimes if I go outside, I wear suits."*

These are critical and challenging changes that the Samta Sakhis have brought about within their own families. It is important to note that it has not been an easy journey and they faced resistance and disapproval from their families. However, as they continued with their work and their families saw the recognition they were receiving, things started to change. The Samta Sakhis have also been pragmatic in terms of challenging norms. This was evident when some Samta Sakhis shared their own experiences to reason that fights and quarrels with the husband at first instance of disagreement can create further difficulties. Rather, they felt that it was important to be patient, explain and persuade him to change his perspective. This was also true in the context of sharing household work where dialogue and discussion proved to be more effective than conflict in initiating positive changes. Given Samta Sakhis' strong articulation of rights, this pathway of change in the household through persuasion rather than open resistance seems strategic rather than submissive, and depicts their understanding of norm change as a gradual process through dialogue and mindset change.

Samta Sakhis have also fought against restrictive norms, not just at the level of their household but also at the community level. They have challenged entrenched gender norms that disapprove women's mobility or do not consider women capable of or suitable for leadership. When derided by the neighbors and villagers for going out to work, Samta Sakhis started retorting and speaking back, *"If men can be workers (Karamcharis), why can't women?"* They have shattered the norms of only men visiting the Panchayats or Gram Sabhas and have led by example. In one instance, one Samta Sakhi encouraged women to attend Gram Sabhas and accompanied them to raise the issue of old age pension. The men were initially not comfortable with the presence of women in what was perceived as 'men's space'. However, when a number of women arrived in the meeting, they were forced to listen and also responded positively. Additionally, through various forms of social action, the Samta Sakhis have challenged discrimination, deprivation and violence and proactively supported violence survivors and provided them with all the help required (some of these stories are mentioned in detail in Annexure 3). The attitude of the villagers towards the Samta Sakhis changed when they received help to access their rights and entitlements.

4.2.4

Ability to Lead and Facilitate Social Action

Samta Sakhis have gained the ability to raise, represent and lead rural women's concerns. They have led and facilitated social action through individual accompaniment and collective action at the village level and through the LAK. Through their trainings and social action, they have facilitated greater access to resources (water, land, schemes etc.) and responded to issues of violence against women as well as caste discrimination. They have also facilitated greater voice and visibility of community members in Gram Sabhas and Panchayat offices as well as Block offices, empowering some of these community members to voice their needs and get their issues resolved. In one instance, a Samta Sakhi even managed to make a sub health center functional. In Samta Sakhi Sushma's words,

"One day, after attending a meeting at Shakti CLF, I went to a nearby bank for some work, while the rest of the ANANDI project team waited for me at the CLF office. In the bank, an eight-month pregnant woman, who was from Patonda village, suddenly started having labor pains. The woman asked me to just drop her home but looking at her condition, I immediately called up the ANANDI project team as they had a car, and they quickly took her to the Karhal hospital. Within minutes of reaching there, the woman delivered her baby. Later, I followed up and found out that the baby and the mother were both healthy. However, this incident shook me and made me realize that if a sub health center opens in Patonda village, it will be very helpful for pregnant women, and they will not have to travel so far. I visited the village to find out whether they have an existing center or any building that can be used for the same purpose. That's when the Prerak of that village told me that there is a sub health center in Patonda village, which has not been functioning for many years. If it starts functioning, women will not have to travel 30 kms (one way) to the Karhal Hospital. That route is also completely like a jungle area. I also spoke to our Nodal sir about it and he agreed that if the center becomes operational, it will be very helpful."

Along with Samta Sakhi Priyanka and the Master Trainer, I went to the hospital in Karhal and spoke to the doctor about how to make the sub health center functional. Initially, I was a little hesitant to talk to the doctor, but I did it. Doctor sir was supportive and said that this will help women from nearby villages also. The doctor must

have spoken about it to higher authorities after which they opened the center. He asked me to ensure provision of water and electricity, so I introduced a resolution in the Panchayat and got it passed. With the help of the Panchayat Secretary, the water supply was ensured. Only after the five-day training given by ANANDI, did I realize the problems faced by women and what I can do as an individual. The training gave me knowledge about how to work with women.

At present, doctors and nurses from Karhal visit the center regularly. The center opens all days of the week, except Sunday. It provides services for pregnant women such as giving them vaccinations and iron and folic acid supplements. People also visit the center for fever or other primary health concerns. In fact, since the doctors have started coming to the center, even ASHAs and Anganwadi workers are working better, and women are getting their vaccines and nutrition on time. Doctor sir holds a monthly meeting with Anganwadi workers. He also calls me to these meetings and says that we all should work together. The center has been able to cater to 10–15 neighboring villages."

Thus, it is evident how the Samta Sakhis used their training, exposure and experiences to leverage different platforms and used their resourcefulness to positively affect change. Some of the Samta Sakhis' motivation to advocate for community's rights and entitlements also enabled them to continue to work despite not receiving any honorarium from their CLFs during the period this project was paused. Most of the Samta Sakhis continued to work in their own villages and some of them also ensured that the LAK in Karhal stayed open. As Samta Sakhi Ankita said, *"No matter whether I get money or not, I have to work for the betterment of my village. I thought that I have worked so far to raise awareness of women, I will continue to do so."*

4.2.5

Social Capital and Access to Contacts and Network

Through repeated visits to local governance institutions such as Panchayats, people's forums such as Gram Sabhas and Jansunwais, police stations, women and child department, government hospitals etc., Samta Sakhis have built their own identity and rapport with these institutions and institutional actors. It has led to the creation of a shared network and has

increased their social capital. This has also made them feel empowered and confident to call upon senior officials such as the Janpad CEO in case of challenges faced in resolution of cases or resistance from the Panchayats. They have been able to utilize and build upon their existing rapport with these institutions to facilitate better linkages between women's rights and entitlements.

"A team of three to four Samta Sakhis with applications went to the Collector's office. Standing inside the Collector's office and advocating for people's rights was a very big step that the Samta Sakhis had achieved, both for themselves and for the community."

– BMMU official from Sheopur

In another incident shared by Samta Sakhi Ankita from Karhal, *"My relationship with Janpad officials is very good. In fact, sometimes if any ordinary woman comes to the Janpad office, the peon turns her away saying that the officer is not there. However, if she comes to us, her work gets done. The other day, one Didi was being sent back. But she met me, and I brought her to the LAK. The moment the peon saw that she is with us, she was immediately given entry."* While Samta Sakhis have been able to build social capital and have leveraged it to enable greater convergence, it may not be true for all ordinary citizens.

The mentoring and support of the Master Trainers in the field has also guided the Samta Sakhis to build this network. More research is required to understand whether this network continues even after the program. At present, early indications from the field, based on the work done by Samta Sakhis during the project break period, suggest that Samta Sakhis are able to sustain their network. It is important to note that Master Trainers did continue to support Samta Sakhis in the project break period.

4.2.6

Friendships, Solidarity and Development of Peer Network

The two-year long journey of learning and working together created a peer network amongst Samta Sakhis and also between the Samta Sakhis and Master Trainers. This network evolved as a space of solidarity and friendships. In fact, this also helped them mitigate several challenges at household and community level

and the support of colleagues was crucial in developing a sense of collective strength. For instance, when one Samta Sakhi faced domestic abuse, other Samta Sakhis and the Master Trainer visited her house to speak to her husband and also got her a new phone with their own money so that she could be in touch at all times.

Samta Sakhi Sushma says, *"After becoming a Samta Sakhi, I talk to the Master Trainer and Samta Sakhis Priyanka Bhabhi and Ankita didi a lot. Sometimes they share their family problems, sometimes I discuss my issues. We share with each other the ups and downs of our lives and we feel lighter after this."*

The review and reflection meetings also facilitated peer learning. This contributed to the support network wherein Samta Sakhis can reflect together and reach out to each other for help and suggestions. In one incident, Samta Sakhis of other CLFs also bolstered each other in carrying out trainings at village level by accompanying them.

Samta Sakhi Rashmi says, *"Through these review meetings, we receive information and learn from each other, and we seek suggestions regarding unresolved cases as well. I feel if another Samta Sakhi is able to resolve a case in their field, then I can do that too."*

However, there were also some instances of interpersonal conflict between Samta Sakhis based on work sharing and the different levels of education. The second batch of Samta Sakhis sometimes felt that they were overburdened with work as they were assigned the responsibility of documentation. ANANDI worked to resolve this challenge by having an open conversation with them. Most of the respondents opined that through the project, a peer network has been created. As in the words of Samta Sakhi Rashmi, *"It all feels like a family."*

4.2.7

Recognition and Reach as a Leader

Over the last two years, as Samta Sakhis have worked in the field conducting trainings, leading social action and facilitating women's access to their rights and entitlements, they have created an identity for themselves. Despite facing a challenging journey, they have emerged as leaders within their communities. They have gained recognition from their own families, their communities and the State as well. Family members, including immediate family and extended family, also reach out to Samta Sakhis for guidance and support.

Initially, when Samta Sakhis started working in villages, they were subjected to ridicule and taunts by the community members who often used to comment asking, *“Why are you being such a ‘madam?’*” The term ‘madam’ was used in a sarcastic way rather than in a respectful manner. Through their continuous engagement with and support to the community members, like helping them during a crisis such as COVID-19 or facilitating their linkages with government schemes, Samta Sakhis have gained the identity of a leader. Now community members reach out to them during SHG/VO trainings or even contact them over telephone whenever they need guidance or support for any rights or entitlement-related issues. Anganwadi workers also reach out to Samta Sakhis to ask them to counsel community members about vaccination and registering their children with the nutrition program of the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS). Community members now treat the Samta Sakhis with greater respect than they did before because of the credibility and trust they have established through their work.

Greater respect and recognition are also being received from the Panchayats. Earlier, working with the Panchayats was very challenging as they used to be unsupportive or would talk rudely but this has changed over a period of time. Samta Sakhi Ankita stated, *“Earlier these officials would never listen to me. Nowadays, even in the Panchayat, if they see me, they give me a chair to sit on.”*

The state has also appreciated and recognized Samta Sakhis by inviting them for training and meetings. Case studies of some Samta Sakhis have been documented and showcased at the national level. Some Samta Sakhis have even been invited to speak at state functions. Many senior government officials such as the Janpad CEO know the Samta Sakhis by their names and show them a lot of respect when they meet them. According to Samta Sakhi Priya, government officials commended her saying, *“You are fighting for the rights of everyone and taking yourself, your community and village forward with your knowledge and efforts.”* This recognition from important public officials also led to a change in the perception of the family members regarding their work, especially when they also received respect from the community and Panchayat. One of the Master Trainers shared that during the second wave of COVID-19, despite the fact that the program was paused, *“Samta Sakhis were invited by the Zila Panchayat for a meeting on how to keep villages COVID free. Their*

names were added in the Panchayat committees and they worked very closely with the Panchayat to safeguard their villages from COVID-19.”

However, on the flip side, only one CLF paid them when the ANANDI project paused. One Samta Sakhi reported that a particular CLF president had said that GJP was ANANDI's project and once ANANDI has gone, they will not bear the expenses of Samta Sakhis. Another Samta Sakhi of the same CLF also remarked, *“CLF is like this only, since the beginning they don't want Samta Sakhis to work.”* The Nodal of this CLF has also not been very supportive or actively involved in the program.¹¹ That could be one of the reasons why such an environment exists in that CLF.

4.2.8 Ability to Problem Solve and Mitigate Challenges

As Samta Sakhis worked in the field, either with Master Trainers or other Samta Sakhis or even independently, they gained problem-solving skills. In fact, whenever Samta Sakhis used to approach Master Trainers, they were first encouraged to think of a possible solution and then discuss it with Master Trainers, so as to build their own problem-solving skills. This strategy has borne fruit as now whenever Samta Sakhis face challenges in the field such as unsupportive or rude officials/representatives, they use several tactics such as dialogue (explaining and reasoning), collective action (bringing several women to build collective pressure), escalation (calling a superior officer) and other methods to resolve the problem. They have become more strategic in their approach and have started to act independently. Since they have gained information and knowledge about the benefits of various government schemes, it has become difficult for Panchayat and line department officials to dismiss them.

4.3 Enablers

- **Selection criteria** – The selection criteria introduced by ANANDI has contributed in motivating Samta Sakhis and they have continued to work despite the myriad challenges in the field

¹¹ More discussion on the attitude of Nodals is given in Section 6 on Gender Mainstreaming.

including at different levels (at Panchayat, CLF/VO and family level) and also external challenges such as COVID-19, natural calamities, etc. The ICRW research team noticed that the Samta Sakhis repeatedly talked about being inspired by their own journey of struggle as one of the primary reasons why they wanted to continue this work. Moreover, as they were community women, they have been able to understand the contextual realities better and have emerged as role models as well.

- **Constant handholding and mentoring by Master Trainers** – The on-job mentoring and handholding by the Master Trainers have been crucial in building Samta Sakhis' confidence and ability to negotiate with different stakeholders, and in improving their skills as a trainer. They benefitted from observing the Master Trainers in action on the field and learnt from them. The Master Trainers have also been able to give concrete suggestions and feedback to the Samta Sakhis. As capacity building is not a one-time affair, the continuous mentoring support, guidance and on-job training has been helpful in building a strong cadre of community leaders who actively support and represent women's concerns.
- **Ownership of GJP among MPSRLM staff and their cooperation** – The cooperation and support extended by the MPSRLM officials at the state, district and block level (barring a few block officials) have stimulated the Samta Sakhis as they felt heard and respected. The sense of ownership developed by the staff of the state institutions also contributed to the overall success of the program and in building the motivation and increasing accountability of the Samta Sakhis.

4.4 Challenges and Mitigation Strategies

4.4.1 Engaging with Government Department Officials

Samta Sakhis had to meet officials from different departments like the Women and Child Development

department, government hospitals and police as part of their work. Most participants shared that engaging with the government officials was not very difficult. However, in some instances, officials were unable to meet at a given time and the beneficiaries who accompany the Samta Sakhis had to wait for long. Sometimes, the government officials spoke rudely and in a specific case, the government official was unresponsive and did not provide any support. In another case, officials in power tried to pressurize women to take back their cases registered with the CM Helpline. During such times, Samta Sakhis strategically handled the situation, which ranged from engaging the officials in dialogue to escalating the issue, if required.

4.4.2 Engaging with the Panchayat

As the Panchayat is the first unit of local governance, Samta Sakhis often engaged with the Panchayat members and Secretary regarding different entitlements or public services related issues. In the past, Samta Sakhis faced various challenges in dealing with Panchayat members. For instance, in some cases, the Panchayat members were not supportive and instead asked the Samta Sakhi, *"Who are you, why are you being a 'madam'?"* or said, *"You are illiterate. Who is teaching you all these things, bring them also."* Sometimes, the Panchayat itself was closed or inactive. In another case, the Panchayat Secretary felt badgered by the successive demands of the Samta Sakhis and called to 'complain' to the concerned CLF Nodal officer as well. A project team member shared that in one CLF, the Nodal officer received a couple of such calls, wherein the Secretary said that *"Women associated with the Mission keep coming regularly to raise different demands."* Initially, all this was demotivating for the Samta Sakhis who were trying their best to resolve women's concerns.

However, their persistent efforts in the field have influenced a shift in these dynamics. Repeated and continuous engagement with the Panchayats and successful resolution of cases from the community have helped in building rapport and trust between the two parties. Additionally, the Panchayats themselves saw the Samta Sakhis supporting them with relief and recovery work during COVID-19. This helped in creating visibility and familiarity of the Samta Sakhis with both the Panchayat and the

community members. In some cases, the Samta Sakhis started inviting the Sarpanch, Secretary or other Panchayat members to the SHG/VO meetings as well, to resolve their concerns immediately. With the opening of LAK at the block level, the fear of escalation to higher authorities has also elicited a better response from the Panchayat. Due to these various strategies and processes, the challenges in dealing with the Panchayats considerably reduced. To illustrate this, the ANANDI Project Team narrated an incident, *“There was an incident in Tulsi CLF, wherein Samta Sakhi Priya visited a Panchayat to raise an issue related to ration. The Sarpanch behaved rudely with her and dismissed her by saying that who are you, why are you raising these issues, etc. During a meeting at the Janpad office, Priya raised this issue with the Janpad CEO, who then immediately called up the Sarpanch and reprimanded him. After this, the Sarpanch himself called up Priya, apologized to her and also extended every kind of support that she required.”*

4.4.3 Relationship with MPSRLM Block Officials

The cadre of Samta Sakhis has been institutionalized within the MPSRLM as Community Resource Persons (CRPs) for Gender; they are also members and leaders of their SHGs/VOs/CLFs. In these capacities, they worked very closely with the MPSRLM block officials, mainly their CLF Nodal officer (Nodal).

In most cases, Samta Sakhis received the support and cooperation of the Nodal officers. However, in some CLFs, there was lesser support and lesser recognition of Samta Sakhis' work by Nodals. Moreover, when the project paused after March 2021, barring one Nodal, no other Nodal actively advocated for payment of Samta Sakhis' honorarium through the CLFs.

To mitigate these challenges, the Samta Sakhis and the Master Trainers have in the past explained to the Nodals that they were part of the MPSRLM structure and their work resonated with the priorities of MPSRLM. Additionally, ANANDI employed another strategy to familiarize Nodals with ANANDI's work and its impact through an exposure visit to Gujarat. However, some challenges continued to persist.

4.4.4 Engaging with Community Institutions – Leaders and Preraks

The Gender Justice Program is embedded within the Mission structure and is closely integrated with the functioning of the community institutions at the CLF/VO/SHG level. One of the biggest challenges faced by the Samta Sakhis was the low and inactive participation of members in the SHG/VO meetings. Further, the members of these institutions also used to question the Samta Sakhis about why they should attend meetings or participate in social action when they were not getting paid while the Samta Sakhis were getting a salary. For instance, one of the CLF OBs commented that Samta Sakhis are being paid to do this work therefore they are working so actively, but the office bearers are not being paid at all. An emerging sense of competition was also noticed in some cases, between Samta Sakhis and CLF OBs or members, wherein the latter felt that they were not given equal opportunities as Samta Sakhis. Another challenge faced at the level of community institutions was low participation of VO SAC members in any kind of social action. However, as the Samta Sakhis repeatedly visited SHG/VO meetings and discussed issues relevant to women's lives and helped them access their rights and entitlements, a relationship of trust slowly developed.

The other main challenge faced by the Samta Sakhis was their relationship with the book-keepers (Preraks), who are mandated to be present in each meeting of their respective SHG/VO/CLF. The main problem was the irregular attendance of Preraks in these meetings. Often, they were unable to attend SHG/VO meetings since they were given the responsibility of survey work by the CLF. Moreover, there was a lack of coordination between Preraks and Samta Sakhis and sometimes Preraks cancelled or postponed meetings without informing the Samta Sakhis. The implication of a Prerak's absence was that the Samta Sakhis' work did not get recorded in official registers since it is the Prerak's job to maintain registers. In a few incidents, Preraks refused to write an application (*Avedan*), fearing the repercussions of such an action on them, especially the souring of their own relationship with the Panchayat or the Secretary. Additionally, an incident of harassment of a Samta Sakhi by a Prerak was reported from a CLF in Sheopur Block. The Prerak used to send her inappropriate messages on the

phone. The Samta Sakhi raised this issue in the CLF meeting and the CLF OBs issued a strong warning to the miscreant. All these concerns increased the challenges faced by Samta Sakhis in engaging with the CLF/VO/SHG spaces.

An improvement was noticed since July 2020 due to efforts of Samta Sakhis who pushed their CLFs to hold the Preraks accountable. A monthly meeting between Preraks, CLF OBs, Nodals and Samta Sakhis was started to monitor and plan the Prerak's work. These meetings were discontinued after three months, but many of the challenges with Preraks were resolved through Samta Sakhis' efforts and these monthly meetings. Lastly, Samta Sakhis also faced a workload-related challenge with respect to the CLFs. Since they have been working actively in the field, CLFs tend to give them additional responsibilities such as survey work, work related to activating SHGs etc. The project team reported that this sometimes led to mental stress amongst the Samta Sakhis, resulting in fights within their own household, wherein family members complained that they were never present in the house. This also led to misunderstandings and minor disputes between the first and second batch of Samta Sakhis. Given their higher level of education, the second batch was assigned the duty of documentation, which made them feel that they have to shoulder a disproportionate share of the work. The Master Trainers intervened in such cases to explain the rationale behind pairing Samta Sakhis where the cadre of the first batch bring in their experience and social network to mostly lead discussions and social action. Thus, the roles of the first and second batch of Samta Sakhis were complementary.

4.4.5 Resistance from Community Members

One of the major challenges faced by the Samta Sakhis was the ridicule and taunts of their own community members. Being a woman in a society which severely restricts and questions a woman's mobility, Samta Sakhis often encountered insinuations such as, *"She just goes out every day."* People also mocked them by saying, *"You are being a madam/leader"* or *"You are leaving with bags and all now."* Leadership is still looked at from a gendered lens wherein women have to repeatedly prove their leadership in a society where being a '*neta*' (leader) is

largely considered to be a man's prerogative. Often the Samta Sakhi ignored such remarks but if someone directly spoke to her, she told them the kind of work she had done to support people, after which those people stopped commenting. One Samta Sakhi reported how she stood by an ailing villager who had earlier taunted and mocked her. When nobody helped the man, she, along with the other SHG women, used their SHG savings to treat the man in a hospital. The villager was extremely grateful, thanked the women and also stopped other men from insulting them. Thus, the Samta Sakhis adopted different strategies; sometimes explaining, supporting, persuading and at other times retorting, questioning and challenging hostile community members.

4.4.6 Constraints in the Domain of the Household

In a society which controls women's movements and choices, often the first point of conflict is her own family. In many cases, Samta Sakhis had to fight for their decision to work, they were questioned about their frequent movement outside the village and in some instances, their husbands accompanied them to meetings. Further, they were asked to finish their 'household duties' before they could leave for work. The perceived violation of such norms by the in-laws or husbands also led to cases of domestic violence including physical, verbal and mental.

ANANDI has in the past and continues to proactively communicate with the family members to inform them about the work that the Samta Sakhis undertake and to display solidarity and strength behind the affected Samta Sakhi. Through repeated trainings by ANANDI and through their work in the field, Samta Sakhis gained the courage and confidence to stand up for themselves. They realized that if they do not speak against violence in their own lives, they cannot encourage other women to do the same. Further, when family members themselves saw the work of Samta Sakhis and the recognition they received from the community and administration, they also became less restrictive. Even with respect to household work, incremental shifts have been observed in some cases, where Samta Sakhis have negotiated within their families towards redistribution of work. However, in certain cases, challenges continue to persist and the change is not observed across all households. The

ANANDI Project Team narrated an incident where the Samta Sakhi was successful in standing up for herself, *"Once a meeting finished late in Sheopur, so a Samta Sakhi decided to stay back with her brother and informed her husband. Next day, when she went to her house, her in-laws started harassing her with questions such as, 'Where were you for two days? What is this kind of work that you do?'. People gathered around her house but she put her foot down and told her in-laws, 'I am working to help others. I am working for a better future for my children. I had already informed my husband about my whereabouts.' Her husband also supported her in front of his parents and then the in-laws did not say anything else."*

4.4.7 Interpersonal Conflicts between Samta Sakhis

At present, some of the Samta Sakhis are educated and some are not. In the last few months, differences arose amongst the Samta Sakhis, especially in Sheopur Block. Those who are not educated expressed that their word is not given as

much importance, and they were not given equal opportunities as compared to the educated Samta Sakhis. In these situations, the project team tried to have an open conversation with all of them to hear them out and assuage their fears. The team assured them that everybody has been given the same set of trainings and have the same work responsibilities including working for their respective CLFs, so nobody is being treated unfairly based on their education levels.

4.4.8 Lack of Public Transport Services

Another critical challenge that the Samta Sakhis faced was lack of public transport, which was exacerbated post COVID-19. This became a major impediment in reaching different villages for trainings, or even going back home after meetings or trainings in Sheopur district. Initially, Samta Sakhis were also encouraged to go as a pair to distant and remote villages, for each other's safety. Keeping this challenge in mind, in the second round of Samta Sakhi selection, geographical reach and representation was also a criterion so that Samta Sakhis do not have to travel long distances.



Photo Credit : Neeraz Chaturvedi/Shutterstock

Summary of Outcomes

Over the last two years, Samta Sakhis have evolved into leaders within their communities who have successfully raised, represented, and resolved women's concerns and facilitated their access to rights and entitlements. They have led from the front, fighting not just for the rights of the community but their own rights and the rights of their family. The primary observations from the lives and work of Samta Sakhis are summarized here.

- Through the various capacity building efforts, Samta Sakhis have gained access to information, tools and skills. An increase in their confidence, self-esteem and courage to talk across power is observed.
- They have added their names in property papers, successfully redistributed household work and raised their voice against violence.
- However, with regard to housework, some Samta Sakhis have been able to initiate changes through discussion, but it is still an ongoing process of dialogue for others. Their awareness that men and women should equally partake in decision-making and household chores has been noted.
- They have earned the respect of their family, community and officials at multiple levels of governance through their ability to lead and facilitate social action. They have escalated cases whenever required through LAK and their network with state officials.
- They have developed social capital through their continuous engagement with various government officials and derived collective strength and a sense of solidarity through a peer network of supportive colleagues.
- They have successfully negotiated with and navigated various government institutions and institutional actors. This has also led to the creation of their own independent identity as Samta Sakhis, as women leaders who fight for women's rights and gender equality.
- They have encountered various challenges in their life and work and adopted mitigation strategies independently, or through consultation with Master Trainers and other Samta Sakhis.
- The struggles in their own lives, continuous mentoring by Master Trainers and support and cooperation from most MPSRLM officials have been crucial enablers in their journey of change.

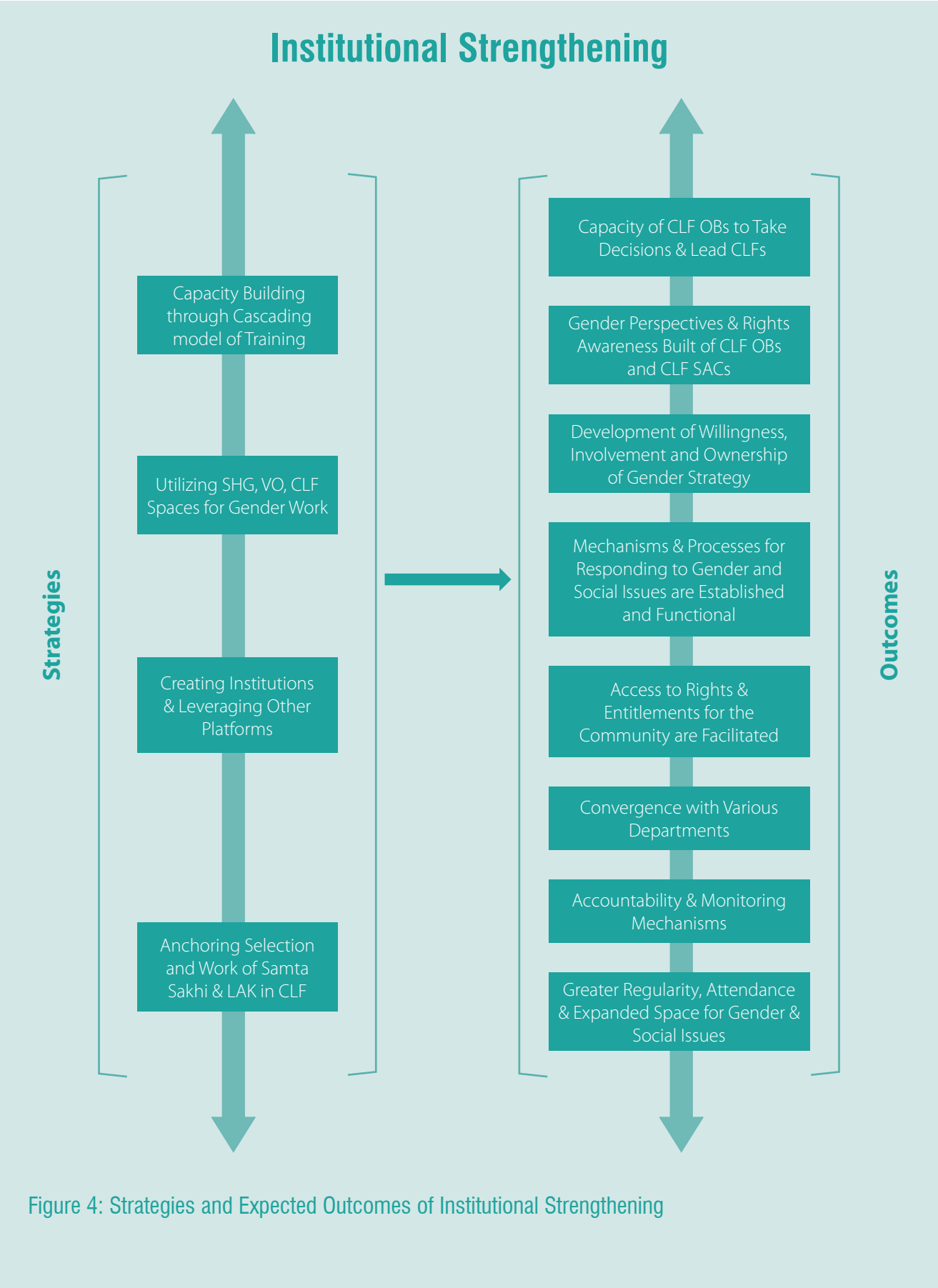
5

Institutional Strengthening

Institutional Strengthening (IS) in the context of the GJP has been referred to as the process of establishing processes and systems which lead to the deepening of the gender understanding of the community institutions and the ability of its members to reflect and act towards making these institutions more gender responsive. This section presents the strategies implemented by the GJP to enable community institutions to become more gender responsive, the challenges faced in the journey and the initial changes observed within the space of women's community institutions and institutional actors, mainly the CLF. Figure 4 depicts the key strategies and expected outcomes of the Institutional Strengthening pillar of GJP. It is important to note that these strategies and outcomes are not separate, instead they interact with and strengthen each other.



Photo Credit : Arun Sambhu Mishra/Shutterstock



5.1 Strategies

The strategies and processes that have gone into strengthening institutions have been categorized into the following thematics for ease of analysis, while they are actually continuous processes, influencing each other.

5.1.1 Capacity Building through the Cascading Model of Training

One of the key strategies of this program was the cascading model of training. The Samta Sakhis, after receiving intensive gender training from ANANDI, in turn trained the members of community institutions such as CLFs and VOs. Samta Sakhis used various training tools of ANANDI, in which they had themselves been trained for this purpose. These training sessions were often followed up with discussions on schemes and entitlements. The purpose of these trainings was to create understanding and perspectives among members of community institutions on gender equality, act as a trigger for participatory discussions on lived experiences of gender, as well as sharing cases of rights denial.

CLF/VO/SHG leaders and members

The initial trainings started at the level of CLF and VO. Samta Sakhis took the session on the designated CLF/VO meeting day. At the VO level, usually the day before the meeting, the Samta Sakhis visited the village and went door-to-door to inform members about the meeting and training. This was expected to ensure greater attendance.

At the onset of the program, the GJP was focused largely on CLFs followed by VOs. In case a VO meeting was not being held that month, the Samta Sakhis would gather members of several SHGs together in one place to conduct the training. However, the effort was to regularize VO meetings and introduce gender training and discussion in those meetings. With the onset of COVID-19, mobility restrictions were put in place, and physical distancing measures had to be followed, restricting the number of people who could

attend a meeting. At this time, GJP started focusing on SHG meetings and conducting trainings therein.

After receiving a five-day gender perspective training in November 2019, the first batch of Samta Sakhis started conducting trainings using tools such as *Munna Munni* (discrimination between girls and boys), *Dukh Sukh* (the cycle of discrimination and oppression faced by women from the womb till death) and *Kiska Palda Bhari* (to talk about gender division of labor and inequality in decision making). *Dukh Sukh* was a great conversation starter and *Kiska Palda Bhari* also created resonances among women. Once the pandemic hit and physical meetings stopped from April 2020, Samta Sakhis ensured that they stayed in touch telephonically with VO/CLF leaders and disseminated information on government schemes and circulars related to COVID-19. Once the meetings started reconvening, from June/July 2020, meetings were conducted with a twin focus; first, to create awareness on COVID-19 through handwash demos and sharing of scientific information, and second, to create awareness of government schemes that would help women cope with the economic and social impacts of the pandemic. Thus, the training tool *Mera Haq, Meri Pehchan* became the most widely used for trainings. This particular tool focuses on access to citizenship, human rights and entitlements. The aim was to create awareness about the various entitlement schemes and facilitate better linkages. Follow-up meetings were also conducted to take stock of the concerns that were raised in the previous meeting and process the cases by leveraging different platforms. In fact, Samta Sakhis shared that this tool was the most useful as it responded to the needs of the community and helped in strengthening their identity as leaders. Instead of using a lecture mode, Samta Sakhis used songs, personal anecdotes and reflections from the field to connect with the participants. Samta Sakhis also shared the information they had received from their one-day orientation training with the Mahila and Bal Vikas Vibhag (Ministry of Women and Child Development), wherein they discussed the one-stop Sakhi center (for dealing with domestic violence cases), different schemes of the department, their benefits and eligibility criteria.

Additionally, Samta Sakhis and Master Trainers utilized this opportunity to go beyond perspective building training and conduct discussions on the roles and responsibilities of office bearers (OBs)¹² so that they could better deliver their roles. As shared by a Master

¹² The terms officer bearers (OBs) and leaders have been interchangeably used in the report to refer to the elected officer bearers of CLFs/VOs and SHGs

Trainer, *“During CLF trainings, we started to discuss the role of CLF OBs and of the different CLF committees. We clarified and explained to them their own role and responsibilities and the kinds of decision-making powers they have. We also had similar discussions during VO trainings at the VO level.”* Master Trainers also conducted a session on gender in the trainings organized by MPSRLM at the block level at the Community Training Centers (CTCs). These trainings were organized for all kinds of stakeholders including SHG/VO/CLF members and leaders.

SAC members and GPP

DAY-NRLM and MPSRLM mandate that Social Action Committees (SACs) at VOs and CLFs and Gender Point Persons (GPPs) at SHGs should lead discussions and actions on gender and social issues. In line with this strategy, from December 2020, Samta Sakhis requested members and leaders of these community institutions to identify GPPs and members of SACs. It was stipulated that the same person should not hold multiple positions; for example, the President of the SHG should not simultaneously hold the position of GPP. The objective was to give more women opportunities for leadership and ensure that one person does not get burdened with too many responsibilities. This process of identification took a long time, after which the GPP and VO SAC members were given training at the village level. In some cases, VO OBs also attended these trainings. A new training module was developed for this purpose by ANANDI in consultation with the Master Trainers and Samta Sakhis, focusing on the understanding of gender, moving beyond binary genders to understand the issues and rights of transgender persons, gender norms, stereotyping, gender based violence, gender discrimination and role and function of SAC/GPP. It was a one-day training which lasted for about three hours and was conducted by the Samta Sakhis with support from Master Trainers.

For CLF SAC members, no special gender training session was conducted. Instead, they were invited to be part of the five-day residential training on gender perspective building organized for the first batch of Samta Sakhis in November 2019, and the second batch in November 2020. This training was conducted mainly by senior members of ANANDI and some Master Trainers.

Book-keepers (Preraks)

Even though no specific and separate gender perspective building training was conducted for

the Preraks, they were present during the trainings conducted by Samta Sakhis at the VOs and CLFs since these trainings happened during the regular CLF and VO meetings which Preraks attended. Further, in March 2021, the project team also conducted a joint training for Preraks and Samta Sakhis across all CLFs on keeping records in VO SAC registers. This was an important step to ensure that all discussions and actions pertaining to social or gender issues get officially recorded in these registers. Subsequently, Samta Sakhis and Preraks have together filled registers in some of the VOs. The primary responsibility of keeping the records rests with the Preraks.

5.1.2

Utilizing SHG, VO, CLF Spaces for Gender Work

One major goal of the GJP was to transform these women's community institutions into spaces which go beyond financial intermediation and respond to issues related to gender. Various strategies were employed to utilize and leverage these existing platforms and enable them to become more gender responsive.

The most important strategy was to conduct trainings and discussions on social/gender issues on the designated day for SHG/VO/CLF meetings. The frequency of these meetings was weekly for SHGs, monthly for VOs and bi-monthly for CLFs in Sheopur Block. Karhal Block had monthly CLF meetings. Initially, when the Samta Sakhis started working, they found that in many VOs of both blocks, the meetings were not happening regularly. VOs were non-functional due to non-repayment of loans, caste issues or even due to the absence of Preraks. In order to ensure attendance for gender trainings, the VO meetings had to be regularized. Thus, Samta Sakhis decided to visit the VOs a day prior to the designated meeting day to remind women about the meeting scheduled for the next day and inform them about some of the discussion points. Even on the day of the meeting, Samta Sakhis used to reach early and mobilize women to attend the meetings. Further, Samta Sakhis utilized these meeting forums to encourage women to raise the issues and challenges they were facing in their lives. Subsequently, the members and leaders of these forums along with the SAC members, were encouraged to respond to the issues raised and to take action at the village level through the Panchayat, Jansunwais and Gram Sabhas. They were given guidance regarding how to write an application, the documents required,

which department to approach and how matters could be escalated to the Janpad through the LAK. Samta Sakhis did not just provide information, but in most cases accompanied the complainant to the relevant authority, thereby handholding the process. Participatory social action was promoted through both accompaniment and collective action, such as raising a demand at the Gram Sabha or going in a group to submit an application to the Panchayat Secretary and creating collective pressure on him to respond.

Additionally, on the request of CLFs, Samta Sakhis worked to form new SHGs or reactivate defunct ones. They have tried to revive the SHG space and motivated women to initiate discussions beyond financial intermediation. In collaboration with the Preraks, they also worked to activate some dormant VOs. Samta Sakhis encouraged VO members to demand an office space wherever they did not have a dedicated space. They also supported Preraks in the different surveys

being undertaken with the aim of improving access to rights and entitlements of the community.

5.1.3 Creating Institutions and Leveraging Other Platforms

Along with the cascading model of training, another important strategy of the program was to create systems and institutions for facilitation of rights and entitlements. An intensive effort was made to link the community institutions with existing platforms at both village and block levels. To begin with, ANANDI built Samta Sakhis' own capacity to lead and facilitate social action. Subsequently, at the village level, Samta Sakhis actively utilized and encouraged women to leverage platforms such as the Gram Sabha and Jansunwais

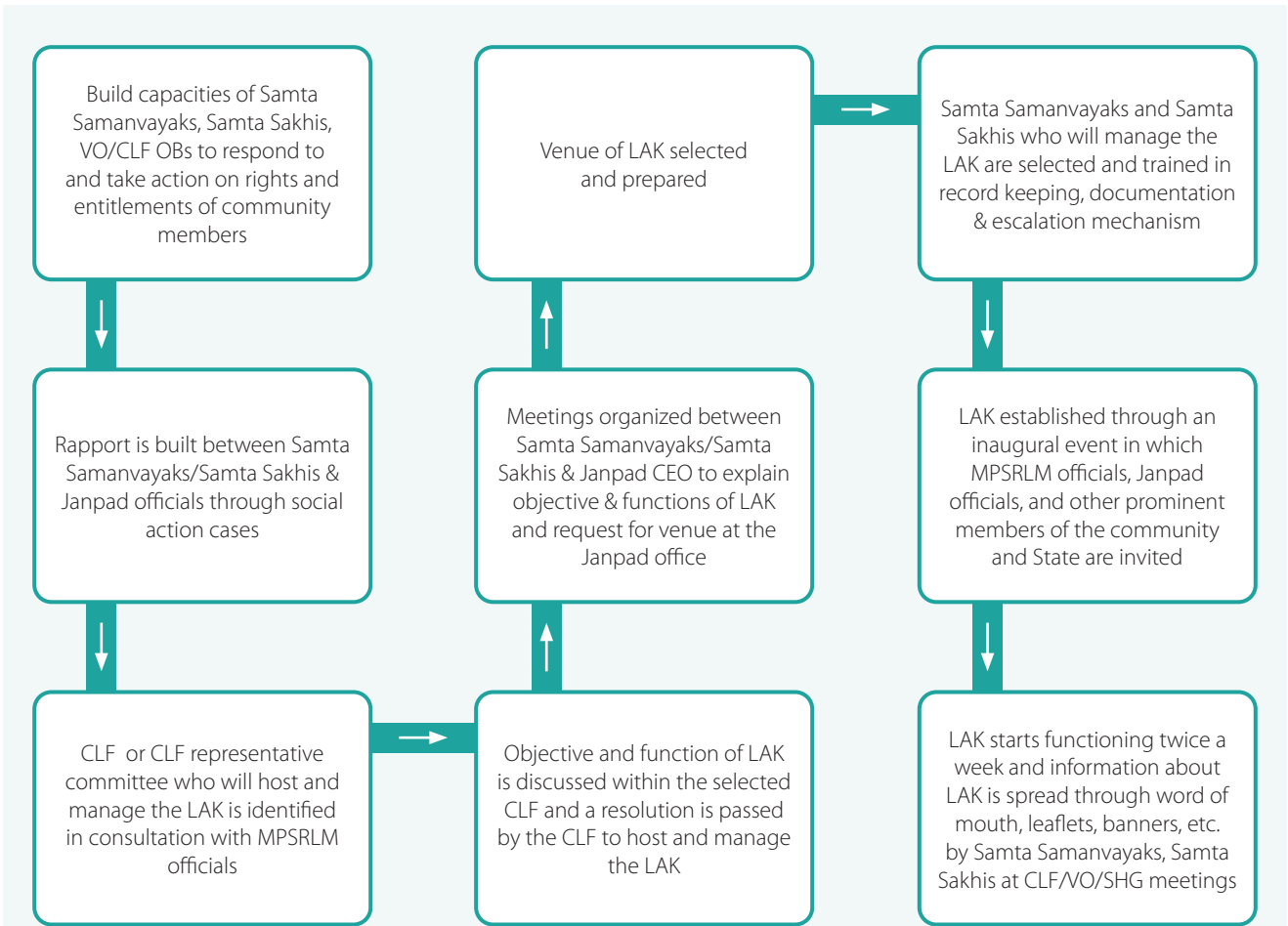


Figure 5: LAK Establishment Process

to raise their concerns. Samta Sakhis often led this social action and asked women to accompany them so that the women would get confidence to access public spaces and forums. Escalation processes and mechanisms were also shared with women during trainings and meetings.

Another key strategy of the GJP was to establish the Lok Adhikar Kendra (LAK) and Block Gender Forum (BGF) to strengthen convergence and facilitate access to rights and entitlements. The LAK was established as a bi-weekly center (Tuesday and Friday) in Karhal in June 2020 and in Sheopur in October 2020. The aim was to establish a platform owned and managed by CLFs at the block level through which rights and concerns of community members could be raised with the respective line departments. The LAK also helped in visibilizing and legitimizing women's presence and their issues in public or official spaces. LAK is managed by the Samta Sakhis and Master Trainers and is a physical center situated within the Janpad premises in both the blocks. Samta Sakhis and Master Trainers also had to negotiate with the Janpad officials to open the LAK within their premises. This was made possible because of their familiarity with Janpad officials in the course of social action, especially during the COVID-19 period when they worked very closely with the administration. In Karhal Block, Samta Sakhis also opened another center at the Tehsil office in January 2021 because they received many cases related to land rights, which could only be resolved at the Tehsil office. They also visited various government offices and departments including hospitals and police stations to familiarize themselves with the officials and introduce the LAK to them. The LAK also serves as an escalation platform that receives cases which could not be resolved through village level social action. However, it also receives direct walk-in cases without any history of prior village level accompaniment or social action. Figure 5 shows the detailed process of establishing an LAK.

After the establishment of the LAK, the Block Gender Forum was also convened in both the blocks. The first meeting in Karhal Block was organized in October 2020. In Sheopur Block, it was organized in January 2021. The main objective of the Forum is to create a space for citizen interface with the state administration and also serve as an escalation mechanism for pending cases at the LAK. The Forum was formed with representatives of different line departments, Janpad, CLF OBs, Samta Sakhis and MPSRLM Nodals amongst others. It was envisaged to meet once in two months to discuss the concerns of LAKs and CLFs, problems faced in resolving pending cases at the LAK, etc. Through such mechanisms, the program aimed to achieve better convergence between community institutions,

government departments and elected representatives. Further, it expected to establish mechanisms to enable social action and better linkages to rights and entitlements.

5.1.4

Anchoring Selection and Work of Samta Sakhis and LAK in CLF

A key program strategy to promote ownership and involvement of the CLFs in the GJP was to anchor critical activities of the program within the CLF itself. First and foremost, before the implementation of the program, the ANANDI team visited each CLF and discussed in detail the objectives and activities of the GJP. Each CLF then passed a resolution to implement GJP within its area. Subsequently, CLFs were asked to nominate two of their members as Samta Sakhis based on a set of criteria. It was expected that the CLF's role in selection of Samta Sakhis would enable better cooperation between Samta Sakhis and CLF OBs and also encourage ownership development over the program. While this was the practice followed for the first batch of Samta Sakhis, for the second batch it was often the Master Trainers who identified and selected them.

Another important process that was introduced to enable greater ownership at the CLF level was that Samta Sakhis reported their work (training and social action) to the CLF members during the monthly meeting. Plans were also made for the next month in consultation with CLF OBs, Preraks and the Nodal. Samta Sakhis' monthly remuneration by ANANDI was made only after CLF OBs signed off on these monthly reports presented by Samta Sakhis. These processes were introduced to ensure that Samta Sakhis were accountable to the CLF and were seen as CRPs of the CLF itself.

Further, one CLF in each block was made the Nodal CLF for managing the LAK. This was also done to facilitate higher uptake and involvement of the CLF and its leaders in key program activities and build ownership of LAK among the CLF members. Before the convening of a Block Gender Forum meeting, CLF OBs sent letters of invitation to government officials. This was expected to build visibility of the CLF within the block administration and ensure that both the LAK and Block Gender Forum are seen as the CLF's own platforms. These processes have been critical in enabling CLF's ownership in the program and also in positioning Samta Sakhis as CLF leaders.

5.2 Outcomes

This section presents the initial shifts that have been observed at the level of community institutions.

5.2.1 Capacity of CLF OBs to take Decisions and Lead CLFs

During the Formative Research, the research team found that most of the CLF meetings were led either by Nodals or by Preraks, most of whom were men. However, now an evolving change is being noticed amongst the CLF OBs, wherein they are leading and facilitating meetings. As these are women's institutions, it is critical for women leaders to themselves own the space and lead meetings. This change was visible in most CLFs across Sheopur and Karhal blocks.

"In our CLF, now even when the Nodal is absent, the OBs conduct the meeting."

– CLF OB

This change has been brought about by the enabling conditions built through anchoring gender work in CLFs and by enhancing capacities of CLF OBs through the cascading model of training. It was also observed that those CLFs where the Nodals played a proactive role in encouraging CLF OBs to take on a leading role, showed the maximum positive change.

Another change noticed at the level of CLF OBs, was that they were not just facilitating meetings, but were also holding both Samta Sakhis and Preraks accountable for their work. In some instances, they have also started taking on other roles earlier performed by the Nodals. As shared by Samta Sakhi Rama from Karhal Block, *"A year ago, the Nodal used to hold the meetings but now I am seeing a change. In a recent CLF meeting, one of the OBs said that as they are office bearers, they don't need to wait for the Nodal, they can themselves also run their CLF. When refreshments came, OBs immediately asked for a bill, when sarees for CLF members came, then also they asked for the bill. Earlier all these payments were being done by the Nodal but now the OBs are paying the bills. In my CLF, OBs have become more responsible and hold everyone accountable."*

5.2.2 Gender Perspective and Awareness of Rights and Entitlements are Built of CLF OBs and CLF SACs

Shifts in gender perspectives and awareness of rights are at the core of any empowerment process. At the beginning of the program, the ICRW research team explored the perspectives on gender equality amongst CLF OBs (of the six CLFs in which GJP was implemented) and found that their understanding was largely focused on manifestations of gender inequality in terms of education, health and nutrition. There was an absence of a language of rights. However, by the end of the program, a shift was observed. Now, there is an emerging language of rights, especially related to land rights, as can be seen in the following comment by a CLF OB from Sheopur, *"Boys and girls should be given the same status. All the land is given to the boy, but girls should also be given half of it."* In the words of another CLF OB from Karhal, *"Women and men should have equal land rights. Women should have the right to visit wherever they want to. Women should also have equal right to decide about their work."* Claiming mobility, decision-making and equality in land rights indicate a questioning of entrenched gender norms and assertion of rights. Another CLF OB shared that she has stopped keeping *ghoonghat* after the training given by Samta Sakhis. CLF OBs in both the blocks also spoke about addressing caste-based discrimination in the context of gender equality. Another issue that was addressed by CLF OBs of both blocks was that of household division of labor as women had to bear the sole burden of all the household work. They also pointed to the fact that while women often did more work than men inside and outside the home, they had no share in decision-making and this needed to change. This understanding was the outcome of the training tool *Kiska Palda Bhari* run by the Samta Sakhis in all the CLFs.

However, it is important to point out that though this rights language was found among CLF OBs in all the CLFs in Sheopur, the same was not true for Karhal. OBs from only one CLF in Karhal displayed this level of awareness and perspective shift. Further, within any one CLF, not all the OBs shared the same level of understanding. For example, a CLF OB from Sheopur refused to accept that there was any gender discrimination at all. In her words, *"There is no discrimination between boys and girls, now both are treated equally."* This indicates the need to conduct

intensive discussions regarding underlying structural barriers, power dynamics and normative frameworks impacting men and women.

Nevertheless, the most common thread echoed across all CLFs, was that since the Samta Sakhis have started working, awareness amongst CLF/VO members about their rights and entitlements has increased. The tools with most recall among OBs, and which, in their view, were most effective in raising awareness, were *Kiska Palda Bhari* and *Mera Haq, Meri Pehchan*. Members are now aware not just about the schemes or entitlements they are eligible for, but also which department to visit for which complaint, what are the escalation measures, the role played by the LAK, etc. They are also raising their concerns in VO and CLF meetings. This increased knowledge and awareness has also given them the confidence to visit platforms such as Gram Sabhas and institutions such as Panchayats, unlike earlier when they did not visit any such platform. This increased awareness has also enabled better convergence between women and other government administrative or electoral institutions. As shared by a CLF OB from Karhal Block, *“Women have started to fight their own battles. Earlier, women were not able to do it because they did not have information. Women’s mobility was also restricted, so they did not have enough exposure. But as we made our SHGs and VOs and Samta Sakhis started coming to these spaces, they shared a lot of information with us. As women received this information, they became more aware. Now they also visit the Panchayat and Tehsil.”* Similar thoughts were shared by a BMMU official from Sheopur who said, *“Earlier, if there were any issues faced by women such as drinking water, roads, or ration, women used to seek help from their husbands. They used to just tell their husbands and feel that resolving such issues is the husband’s job. However, now things have changed. Now women are independent and they solve their own problems. They don’t wait for their husbands. They know that the Samta Sakhis have the information (how to resolve such cases). Samta Sakhis also share in the meetings that if you have a water related problem, go to the water department or if you have problem with ration, go to the food department and also tell them how to respond to these cases. Samta Sakhis share this kind of information in the meetings and they (women) act on it.”*

The ICRW research team did not engage with CLF SACs at the stage of the Formative Research. Some CLFs in Sheopur Block have also changed their SAC members recently, making it difficult to ascertain whether a shift has been observed since the beginning of the program. However, a common thread that was observed across both the blocks during the process documentation,

was the increase in awareness of rights, schemes and entitlements as well as an understanding of the working of governance and administrative mechanisms. Only two CLF SAC members reported attending the five-day gender perspective building residential training organized by ANANDI. However, all the SAC members said that they had learnt from the presence, guidance and trainings of the Samta Sakhis in the CLFs, VOs and during social action. A CLF SAC member from Karhal shared, *“Earlier, I did not know anything, but since Samta Sakhis have started working, I have gained information about schemes, and also about which government office I need to visit.”* One SAC member shared that she had personally requested the Samta Sakhi to visit her village soon so that this kind of information could be shared with other members as well.

5.2.3 Development of Willingness, Involvement and Ownership of Gender Strategy

As the project progressed, there was a gradual increase in the interest and involvement of the CLF OBs and members. The capacity building trainings at CLF level, social action by the Samta Sakhis and their active involvement in CLF work helped to enable this shift. The CLF and VO spaces expanded from being purely economic entities to forums of social action, reflection and dialogue. Women, including OBs who earlier did not pay attention to trainings and discussions, became more attentive and participative during discussions and raised concerns from their own lives and villages. In fact, many CLF members invited Samta Sakhis to visit and conduct trainings in their VOs. Some CLF OBs, especially of the CLF hosting the LAK, have also started taking interest in the LAK functioning. For example, a CLF OB who was visiting the bank for her personal work dropped in at the LAK to see how it is functioning. At the LAK, she enquired about the number of cases that had come that day, what kind of cases had come, whether any cases had come from her CLF, whether any domestic violence case had been registered etc. When she was informed that for the Block Gender Forum meeting, an invitation letter will be sent through her CLF to the Janpad CO, she asked about the letter’s content and then went with the Samta Sakhis to his office to invite him. This shows that some CLF OBs are not working as passive recipients but are taking an active role in the program.

As Samta Sakhis participated in a wide variety of work of the CLF and integrated gender in all these functions, this helped develop willingness and ownership. For example, when Samta Sakhis helped in reactivating defunct SHGs and also integrated dimensions of gender training and rights while doing so, gender work did not remain a separate or additional piece of work but became a part of the everyday functioning of the community institution.

Unfortunately, this increased interest and involvement did not translate into support for the Samta Sakhis' honorariums during the period of April–August 2021, when the GJP went through a break period. The exception was Sagar CLF in Sheopur. This CLF was also the host for the LAK and paid three of its Samta Sakhis who managed the LAK. In a few CLFs, OBs appreciated the work done by Samta Sakhis but cited a fund crunch as an impediment to paying their honorariums. In one particular CLF however, OBs were completely unsympathetic as reported by Samta Sakhi Ankita. In Ankita's words, *"CLF OBs said that this was ANANDI's work and now ANANDI is over, so why should we give you money? At this point, the Nodal also did not say anything."* This raised concerns over the extent of genuine ownership the GJP was able to generate. However, it is true that CLFs do not have unlimited money, and in the absence of monetary support from the state on this issue, it became difficult for them to make payments to Samta Sakhis, even if they wished to.

5.2.4 Mechanisms and Processes for Responding to Gender and Social Issues are Established and Functional

At the onset of the program, the research team found that social action was largely sporadic, SACs were inactive and there was an absence of a systematic mechanism for social action. Over the last couple of years, as Samta Sakhis have conducted trainings and led social action in the villages, a systematic mechanism has been established for social action. For instance, women now know and are utilizing SHG/VO/CLF spaces to raise their concerns, these concerns are acted upon by the Samta Sakhis or the women are guided to take up these issues with the relevant government department. SACs are also being trained to support these women. Processes that have been put in place include aspects such as passing resolutions at VO/

CLFs, writing *avedans* (applications) and presenting them to the Panchayat Secretary/Sarpanch or at Gram Sabhas and Jansunwais. Additionally, clear escalation channels in the form of the LAK and Block Gender Forum have been established. Through repeated interactions with line department officials and other government functionaries, Samta Sakhis have been able to create and leverage their network successfully towards establishing LAK at Janpad offices. The LAK works as a facilitation and escalation platform that helps in creating linkages and access of women to their rights and entitlements. The Block Gender Forum too works as an escalation platform for cases not resolved at the LAK level and creates further linkages with various line departments. For example, if a case related to the Panchayat does not get resolved, it is escalated to the LAK at the block level. If it still continues to be unresolved, it is brought to the Block Gender Forum, where department representatives discuss it further. It is important to note however, that while efforts to train SAC members are ongoing, it remains to be seen how far and how soon they become active in supporting women's rights and entitlements in a systematic way.

5.2.5 Access to Rights and Entitlements for the Community are Facilitated

One of the core mandates of the GJP has been to facilitate women's access to rights and entitlements. This was achieved by Samta Sakhis supporting and leading social action at the village level and through the LAK. The trainings conducted by the Samta Sakhis at SHG/VO/CLF levels are the main platform through which women raise their concerns. There have also been instances of women members directly reaching out to Samta Sakhis outside meetings for guidance. Samta Sakhis either guided them regarding what action needs to be taken or led the action themselves. So far, in most cases, Samta Sakhis have led the action accompanied by the rights holders. There have been instances of participatory action, in which CLF/VO/SHG members also participated but these are mostly issues of public services affecting the entire village, such as water or roads. However there have been a few cases of domestic violence where a large number of members have participated. Thus, even though the Samta Sakhis encourage other members to participate in social action, participatory social action is at an early stage and still evolving. As the capacities of SAC members and GPPs are built, it is expected that they will be leading and participating more in social action in the future.

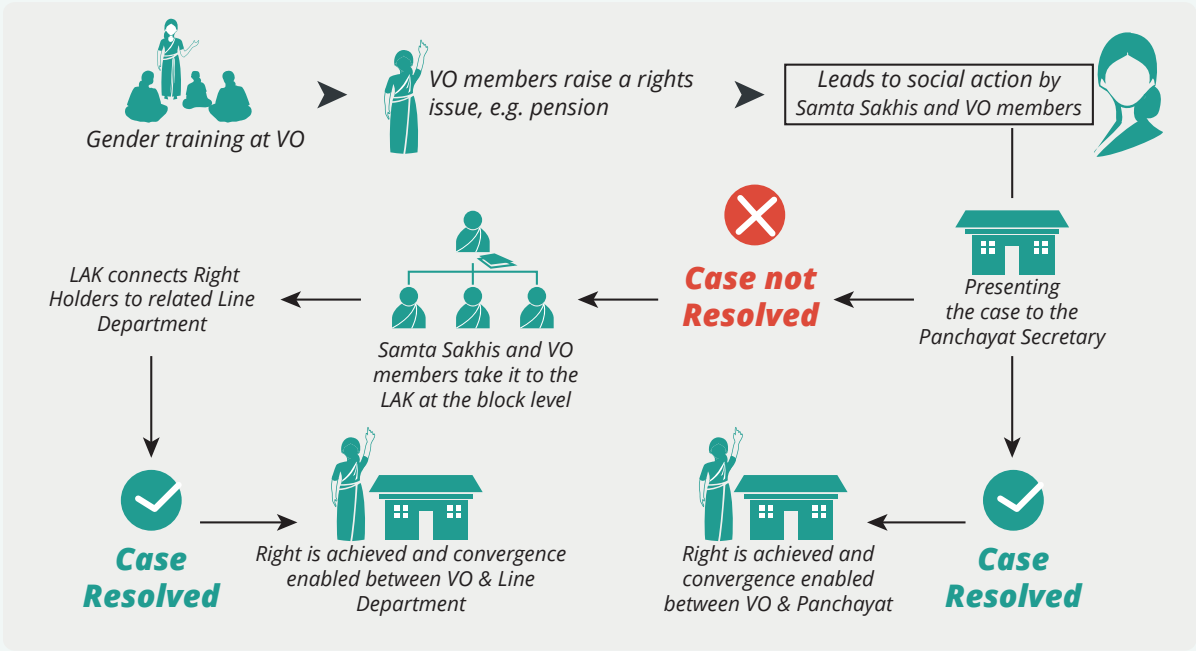
The investment in Samta Sakhis' capacity building, including training and handholding by Master Trainers, has been critical in generating the necessary confidence, perspective, skills and information among Samta Sakhis to lead social action. This has played an important role in advancing women's rights and entitlements. This has also helped Samta Sakhis overcome the challenges they faced in the community at the Panchayat level or even while engaging with government officials, who in some cases were unsupportive or non-cooperative. As Samta Sakhis gained negotiation skills and social networks, they leveraged their networks and proved to be resourceful in facilitating access to rights and entitlements. Over a period of time, the Panchayats have also become more cooperative. The work Samta Sakhis did with the Panchayats to keep the villages COVID free also played a pivotal role in creating this social network and enlisting the support of various stakeholders.

Samta Sakhis have worked on a wide range of issues for social action, both at the village level and at the LAK. They have worked on cases of widow pension, disability pension, old age pension, ration cards, Ayushman

Bharat cards, Aadhar cards, caste certificates, access to public goods such as water and roads, and have also supported survivors of violence. Further, they have also raised their voice against caste or community-based discrimination. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Samta Sakhis worked with Panchayats, CLFs, block and district administration to respond to the crisis. There is a danger in this context of Samta Sakhis becoming service delivery agents and an extended arm of the government. However, as some of the social action stories below depict, Samta Sakhis, while enabling improved service delivery, have also challenged gender norms in communities and public offices, negotiated with government officials, and talked across power. Given below are some social action stories supported and/or led by the Samta Sakhis categorized by their type. They elucidate the steps taken for social action and some of the key strategies followed by Samta Sakhis. A detailed list of social action stories shared is presented in Annexure 3. It is an indicative listing.

Figure 6 below shows how Samta Sakhis help women access their rights and enable convergence.

Process of Achieving Rights and Convergence



VO: Village Organization, LAK: Lok Adhikar Kendra

Figure 6: Process of Achieving Rights and Convergence

Stories of Social Action

Case 1 Response to COVID-19

“In Samta Sakhi Preeti’s village, after disbursing the cash to a few customers, the Panchayat Secretary said that for better efficiency, he will withdraw all the cash amount of the remaining people and distribute it to them later. However, after a few days when 40 people did not receive their cash amounting to a total of Rs 28,000, they approached the Samta Sakhi. She informed the VO leader as well as the Sarpanch. The VO members decided to escalate the complaint to the Block CEO and Collector. Realizing that people were collectivized on this issue, and fearing official action against him, the Panchayat Secretary immediately spoke to the VO members and Prerak, apologized for his mistake and disbursed the rest of the cash.”

– Master Trainer, ANANDI

The case highlights how the Samta Sakhi emerged as a community leader in her village. She utilized the VO space and collectivized the VO members and leaders to create collective pressure and also used the threat of escalation to elicit a quick response and resolution from the Panchayat.

Case 2 Access to Services – Water, Waste Disposal, Medical Facilities

“For the last two years, we had issues with the public water supply because there was no public tubewell. We had to request someone with a private tubewell for water, but he was not very helpful. We used to travel to another village to get water. Earlier, we never went to the Panchayat with our problem because we did not have the information about what could be done. In our VO meeting, we discussed this problem with Sushma didi (Samta Sakhi). She told us that we should submit an application to the Panchayat. We took the help of our Prerak to write the application. Sushma didi had also spoken to the Prerak to help us. Then, as suggested by her, two of us from our VO went to the Panchayat. This was the first time I visited the Panchayat to meet the Sarpanch. I gave him the application and discussed the issue. I was very scared talking to him, but the Sarpanch spoke to us nicely and said he will resolve the problem. Within the next ten days, public tubewells were dug and now it is very convenient for all of us to get water. We do not need to go to another village to get water. Now, I have also gained the confidence to talk to the Sarpanch. I feel our didis (Samta Sakhis) are also with us.”

– VO OB, Karhal

This is an important case where the Samta Sakhi did not lead the action by herself but instead encouraged and guided the members on how to take the case forward by themselves. It is an important indication of how a leader can create capacities and confidence in others to conduct participatory social action.

Case 3 Access to Schemes and Entitlements

“During the August VO meeting in one of the villages under Sagar CLF, Samta Sakhi Meenu conducted training on Mera Haq, Meri Pehchan. During the discussion on ration cards, five women mentioned that they did not have ration cards. These women shared that they have not received any benefits of free ration or any other ration-related scheme and requested Meenu to help them. In order to confirm whether they do not have ration cards at all or their name was missing, Meenu decided to visit each household. Upon further enquiry across the village, she found out that there were 17 such Muslim families who did not have ration cards. Meenu herself cannot read or write but she took help from an educated girl in the village and prepared a list of these families. She asked the families whether they were willing to go to the Sheopur Janpad office with their complaint. The families agreed, and on 21st August 2020, Meenu took all of them to the Janpad office and told the officials about the problem. She encouraged the women to speak themselves and share their concern. On hearing the case, the Janpad official immediately called up the Sarpanch, Sarpanch Sachiv and ration shop owner and told them that so many families were unable to receive any benefit due to the lack of ration card. The ration shop owner said that he did not know about these families and requested the Janpad official to send these women to the Panchayat, where their ration cards will be made. On 24th August, the Sarpanch called Meenu and asked her to bring these families to the Panchayat for the form-filling process. On that day, Meenu went along with 13 families and their forms for ration cards were filled. Meenu further ensured that the ration cards were made in the names of the women of the household. The next day Meenu took the remaining families for form filling. In the meantime, since ration cards take some time to come, these families were registered for Khadyan Parchi. Till they receive their ration cards, they will be able to get ration from the ration shop through these Khadyan Parchis.”

– Master Trainer, ANANDI

This case elucidates the process through which women raise their concerns and how the Samta Sakhi acts on them. It shows that social action is not a one-time action but involves several steps. It also shows how the Samta Sakhi leveraged other platforms such as the Janpad office to help women get access to ration cards. Further, it shows the Samta Sakhi's efforts to encourage women to participate and accompany her to the government office, which is useful in familiarizing women with these platforms and building their self-confidence.

Case 4 Domestic Violence

“A woman whose marital house is in Masavani village, was physically abused by her husband and father-in-law. She came back to her maternal house in Khirkhiri village, along with her one-year-old child. She has been staying in Khirkhiri for the last year and a half. She used to be an Anganwadi worker in Masavani. Unfortunately, all her documents like Aadhar card, PAN card, etc. were left behind in Masavani and the husband was not willing to give these back. When she went along with her family members to get her documents, he abused and mistreated them. The family was scared of filing a police complaint, so the police could not get involved. One day, someone from the village told this woman about the LAK and how one can approach the LAK with any kind of problem. Then she met Samta Sakhi Ankita who took her to the

LAK. The LAK decided to give Ankita the responsibility of leading the case. Ankita decided that it will be better to involve the Mukhiya (village head)¹³ of the village and take him along, since he holds a position of power and influence in the Adivasi village. Following this, the family members of the woman and the Mukhiya from Khirkhiri along with Ankita got on a tractor and visited Masavani village. Given Ankita's knowledge of how to handle such cases, she suggested that they first stop by the police station. Following her advice, the group first went to the police station and lodged a complaint. Then they took the police along with them to the husband's house. Seeing the police and the Mukhiya, the husband got scared and gave back all the documents. He also agreed to give back all the things the woman had got as dowry."

– Master Trainer, ANANDI

This is an important case as it shows how Samta Sakhis involved local influential leaders as well as the police in solving critical and sensitive cases. It also reflects the way the LAK is being perceived and utilized by the community women for raising and solving different kinds of problems.

Case 5 Caste-based Discrimination

"In a school in my village, there was an Adivasi cook who cooked mid-day meals. Only the Adivasi children had their meals in the school. The other children went home to eat. I have been seeing this happen for the last ten years. So, one day, I went to the school and spoke to the teacher and the children. I explained that if the children go to Sheopur city and eat at a restaurant or stay at the hostel, or if they have to visit the hospital, they will eat whatever food is served to them, no matter the caste of the cook. In fact, they will probably not even know the caste of the cook. Then why are they not eating food in the school just because an Adivasi woman has cooked it? I also said that an Adivasi woman is no different from any other human. The same blood is flowing through her veins, she washes and cleans herself with the same soap. So, she is as clean as any other person. The children and teacher said that it was the children's parents who had objected to children eating food cooked by an Adivasi woman. But they understood what I was saying and said that they too want to eat at school with the rest of the children. That day all the children ate together and they enjoyed the food. After a few days, I visited the school again and saw that all the children were eating together. I asked about how their parents had reacted to this. The children said that their parents had understood when they explained that the food was really good and shared with them everything that I had told them. The parents were still not comfortable about letting an Adivasi woman cook in their homes but had agreed to let children eat outside, no matter what the caste of the cook was. So, since that day, Adivasi and non-Adivasi children have all sat together and eaten the food prepared in school."

– Samta Sakhi, Ankita

First and foremost, this case points towards the development of the Samta Sakhi's own understanding of caste-based discrimination. It shows how this awareness and their role as Samta Sakhi has given them the courage and articulation to address an injustice that has been persisting for a long time. The case also shows that the mandate of access to rights and entitlements is not limited to government schemes but includes disrupting the established status quo and social norms.

¹³ The Mukhiya is the village head and is different from the elected Panchayat representative. In tribal (Adivasi) villages, the Mukhiya is informally the head of the village and all important decisions of the village are passed by him.

5.2.6

Convergence with Various Departments

Convergence is a key approach for the DAY-NRLM. The GJP has actively worked to build synergies between women's community institutions and other government departments and platforms to ensure women's access to rights and entitlements. Samta Sakhis have actively engaged with and leveraged various government departments, elected offices and people's forums such as Panchayats, Janpad offices, Tehsil office, Collectorate, schools, Anganwadis and police departments among others. This has led to better convergence between these different governance structures and women's community institutions. This kind of leveraging not only helps community women remain informed and aware, but also builds the visibility and bargaining power of women's community institutions. The LAK has also played a crucial role in establishing a bridge between women's community institutions and various line departments. Given that Samta Sakhis are Gender CRPs of the CLF, their reach among different stakeholders has represented the reach of community institutions among other institutional and governance structures. This has not only eased the process of claiming individual rights and entitlements for community women but has also brought about critical synergies required for a holistic response to crisis situations like COVID-19. For example, during the second wave of COVID-19 (April–June 2021), Panchayats took the support of Samta Sakhis to conduct surveys and vaccination drives, counsel people for medical check-ups, distribute free ration, ensure home quarantine etc.

5.2.7

Accountability and Monitoring Mechanisms for Gender Strategy are Established

Through the GJP, ANANDI also tried to strengthen the existing accountability, record keeping and monitoring mechanisms and establish new systems to improve these mechanisms. The most successful and consistent monitoring mechanism was the monthly reporting by Samta Sakhis at the CLF meetings. Samta Sakhis also had their own review reflection meetings with the project team on a monthly basis. Apart from this, none of the other measures, especially for record

keeping, were very successful. For example, initially the Master Trainers were asked to record the discussions on social/gender issues during CLF meetings and incorporate these in the CLF registers. However, this practice did not continue for long. At the CLF level, another initiative was the development of an Android mobile-based application known as the Adhikar Saathi App. It was developed to record and monitor social action cases. Samta Sakhis who could operate a mobile phone and could read and write were entrusted with the responsibility of recording information in this App. However, the App experienced technical challenges. Further, Samta Sakhis, across both first and second batches, were not comfortable using a digital application despite an initial training. All this led to inadequate and sporadic data entry into the App and it was later discontinued.

At the VO level, Preraks and Samta Sakhis were given training in March 2021 on documenting discussions and actions on gender and social issues in the VO SAC registers. The responsibility of filling the registers was with the Preraks, though Samta Sakhis were to support Preraks initially. Unfortunately, once the GJP paused from April 2021, not much has happened on this front. Record keeping was most successfully maintained at the LAK level through registers containing details of the cases, including who raised it, steps taken and status of resolution.

Given that GJP has been upscaled to 18 districts, it is critical to build and strengthen record keeping and regular monitoring of gender work at the village level as well as LAK. Proper registers should be maintained to record discussion and action on social/gender issues at village level. A gender responsive monitoring mechanism should be adopted at the state level which could encourage data collection at CLF level as well.

5.2.8

Greater Regularity, Attendance and Expanded Space for Gender and Social Issues

At the beginning of the GJP, it was observed that some VO members were not meeting. Samta Sakhis had to go a day prior to the VO meeting to inform VO members of the meeting next day. On the day of the meeting, Samta Sakhis had to go door-to-door to mobilize women for the meeting and convince them to stay for the entire duration. Members were also observed to be leaving

in the middle of the meeting, citing household or farm-related work. It was difficult to hold their attention. However, over time, as Samta Sakhis shared relevant information and worked to enable women's access to rights and entitlements, women found value in these meetings and attendance increased. Social action built a relationship of trust between VO members and Samta Sakhis and enlisted greater participation at meetings. Not just VO members, but other villagers, including men, also realized that these meetings do indeed help the village as a whole and encouraged the members to fully participate in the meetings. This contributed to VO meetings happening more regularly and with higher attendance. Further, the presence of the Samta Sakhis, gender trainings and social action have made VO spaces much more than spaces for financial transactions. Women have been raising various issues during these meetings and seeking resolution through social action.

However, as a Master Trainer noted, when the project paused in April 2021 and Samta Sakhis were not able to travel to VO meetings in villages other than their own, the regularity of some VO meetings was impacted. However, it is important to highlight that the time period when the project was on a pause also coincided with the second wave of COVID-19 (April–June 2021) and devastating floods (July–August 2021) in Sheopur, which could have also affected the functioning of the VOs.

5.3 Enablers

The key enablers for Institutional Strengthening were:

- A dedicated team to lead and facilitate gender work such as Samta Sakhis and Master Trainers.
- The criteria and process through which Samta Sakhis were selected. This ensured: 1) Greater cooperation from the CLF since they had themselves nominated many Samta Sakhis (especially the first batch), and 2) Creation of a cadre of leaders who had experienced struggle and demonstrated resilience in their own life, which helped them empathize with other women going through similar struggles.
- Embeddedness of the program within the usual functioning of community institutions. This made it easier for community members to work with Samta Sakhis since the meetings and trainings happened

during the usual CLF/VO meetings. Further, community members did not have to use new structures, but leverage existing ones for advancing gender issues and rights cases.

- The combination of awareness and action as a key strategy of the GJP. Trainings conducted by Samta Sakhis were intended to not only build awareness, but also raise pertinent issues of rights denial followed by social action to ensure those entitlements. This approach enabled greater interest and involvement because people saw change happening on the ground. This also reinforced people's faith in GJP and the system and helped in strengthening institutions.
- The positive response of Janpad and government line departments strengthened the process of convergence and access to rights.
- The enabling environment at the level of MPSRLM. The state, district and to a limited extent, block offices were extremely supportive and invested in the GJP, thereby enabling institutional strengthening. Some Block Nodal officers were however not so supportive and this created some challenges.

5.4 Challenges and Mitigation Strategies

The key challenges and mitigation strategies for Institutional Strengthening are discussed below.

5.4.1 Regularity of VO Meetings

One of the initial challenges faced by Samta Sakhis in strengthening institutions was that in both the blocks, VO meetings were not being held regularly. By program design, Samta Sakhis were supposed to conduct trainings within VO spaces, and thus this proved to be a big challenge. To mitigate this challenge, they started visiting the village a day prior to the meeting to remind members about the meeting. On the day of the meeting, they went door-to-door to mobilize women to attend. Over a period of time, this changed and as VO members started realizing the importance of the information and social action led by Samta Sakhis, their attendance and regularity in VO meetings grew.

5.4.2

Issues of Regularity, Participation and Competition

Another difficulty faced by Samta Sakhis pertained to the attentiveness and participation of leaders and members of CLFs and VOs. Often, when Samta Sakhis would conduct trainings, women would not pay attention, would engage in conversations with women next to them, discuss loans and savings with the Preraks, not participate in the discussions or dismiss Samta Sakhis completely saying, "*Many women have come in the past, but nothing changes.*" This was also discouraging for the Samta Sakhis. Nevertheless, as they continued to work in the field, especially in the space of rights and entitlements, their credibility grew and community women started paying greater attention to their training and discussions. However, given women's multiple work burdens and resultant time poverty, ensuring their attendance all through a long meeting is always a challenge.

Another challenge was an emerging sense of competition in a few cases between Samta Sakhis and CLF OBs. Observing the Samta Sakhis' reach, recognition and remuneration, a few CLF OBs expressed that they themselves or their family members would like to perform this role. This made them dismissive of the present Samta Sakhi and throw some challenges her way. However, such cases are very few and overall, CLF OBs have been very supportive of Samta Sakhis' work, at least till the project was ongoing.

Finally, while community women's participation and attendance in meetings and trainings has increased, their participation in social action is still limited. Participatory social action is observed only in a few cases and largely around issues of public services and goods such as water, and in some instances, domestic violence. Social action continues to be largely led by Samta Sakhis.

5.4.3

Engaging with Preraks

Another challenge faced by Samta Sakhis pertained to their working relationship with the Preraks. Initially, Preraks were not very cooperative, and a lack of coordination and communication was observed. For example, Preraks would cancel VO meetings or not come for them without informing the Samta Sakhis. The Prerak's attendance is critical to ensure that the discussions conducted by the Samta Sakhis in these

forums are recorded in the VO registers. To mitigate this challenge, on the advice of the project team and Samta Sakhis, a monthly meeting was organized between CLF OBs, Samta Sakhis, Preraks and Nodals to report on the previous month's work and plan the next month's work. However, after a few months, these meetings were discontinued but many of these tensions were resolved.

5.4.4

Inactive SACs

As per the DAY-NRLM mandate, the SAC members at the CLF and VO levels are expected to lead discussions and act on social issues. During the Formative Research, the SACs were found to be inactive. Through the GJP, efforts were made to build the capacities of the SAC members. However, they have not yet started participating fully in discussions and social action. In some cases, they have accompanied Samta Sakhis to the relevant government offices, but this too has happened after some persuasion. To mitigate this, Samta Sakhis started conducting targeted training of VO SACs from January 2021 on perspectives, issues and the role and responsibilities of SACs. However, due to project pause in April 2021, this work had to be stalled.

5.4.5

Geography and Lack of Public Transport

The Karhal block is a big area with far flung villages without adequate public transport services. This impacted the Samta Sakhis' ability to reach distant villages. To mitigate this challenge, during the selection of the second batch of Samta Sakhis, care was taken to appoint them from villages that were difficult to reach, so that they could carry out the GJP work easily and with limited need for travel.

5.4.6

COVID-19 and the Associated Lockdown

The pandemic posed a big challenge in strengthening institutions. Once the lockdown was announced in March 2020, in-person meetings were stopped. These resumed in June/July 2020. Initially, the attendance

was low, as people had a fear of infection and public transport services were limited. Since the GJP was situated within VO/CLF spaces, the pace of the program also got affected. Residential trainings for the second batch of Samta Sakhis too could not happen. Instead, they were given a one-day orientation and paired with a Samta Sakhi of the first batch, so that they could be handheld and given on-the-job training. In all the trainings conducted by the Samta Sakhis, COVID-19 related awareness became a priority. As a result, some of the original action plans of the GJP could not be implemented. However, ANANDI responded promptly to adjust and reprioritize their strategies to respond to the needs of the community. First, the Samta Sakhis continued to stay in touch with CLF and VO OBs telephonically. ANANDI also recharged the phones of the Samta Sakhis during the first lockdown so that they could stay in contact. This helped in understanding the needs of the community and responding to it accordingly. Second, when mobility restrictions were eased, Samta Sakhis started attending SHG meetings in their villages, since it was a smaller group and COVID-19 protocols could be followed. In these meetings, Samta Sakhis started disseminating information about health protocols as well as schemes, entitlements and relief measures by the government. Third, Samta Sakhis worked closely with their Panchayats and Preraks to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within their villages through various measures including identification, quarantining, etc. Finally, they also worked with their CLFs to manufacture masks and soaps and distribute these in their community. Such responses also helped in strengthening their position and visibility as leaders within the CLF and within their own villages.

5.4.7 Unsupportive Line Department Officials

A major challenge has been the case of an unsupportive line department official in Sheopur.

Though the line department official was initially supportive, later the official refused to work on any *avedan* (application) submitted through the LAK. Upon enquiry by the Samta Sakhis, the official said that s/he was not there to respond to requests coming from staff of ANANDI. The Samta Sakhis explained that they were Gender CRPs working within the DAY-NRLM system and were representing the interests of the members of community institutions. When these negotiations failed, the Samta Sakhis raised this issue with a senior district official, who spoke to the official and explained how the Samta Sakhis were a part of the CLFs. The line department official agreed to cooperate with the Samta Sakhis, but in practice nothing changed. As things did not improve, the Samta Sakhis decided to visit the District Collector's office. The Collector called in the concerned official for an explanation. Since then, the situation has improved and s/he has started cooperating with the LAK. Thus, Samta Sakhis strategically leveraged their network and other platforms to resolve the challenge and obtain the necessary cooperation.

In another case from Karhal, a senior administrative officer asked everyone including Samta Sakhis who manage LAK Karhal, to not report any case to the Chief Minister's (CM) Helpline and retract the existing cases. Given that the CM Helpline was a citizens' forum, the Samta Sakhis did not agree. However, the official further stated that this was a temporary measure and after a few months, cases could be reported again. It is not known whether the Samta Sakhis stopped spreading awareness about the CM Helpline during this period. However, in their conversations with the research team, Samta Sakhis expressed their disapproval of this pressure by that particular senior official.

It is important to highlight that apart from these two cases, by and large, Samta Sakhis and Master Trainers have reported support and cooperation by all line department and Janpad officials.

Summary of Outcomes

- CLF OBs have started to lead and facilitate CLF meetings, which is a change over an earlier period when Nodal Officers or Preraks led the meetings. The OBs have also started assuming their roles of leadership by holding Preraks, Samta Sakhis and others accountable for their work.
- In terms of gender perspectives, an emerging language of rights is observed amongst CLF OBs, which was absent in the beginning of the program. However, it is not uniform across all CLFs or among all CLF OBs.
- Most OBs have shown an evolving ownership and involvement in the program. However, the non-payment of Samta Sakhis' honorarium by CLFs (except Sagar CLF) during the time when ANANDI's implementation had been paused (April–August 2021), may be indicative of limits to that ownership. However, this may also have been the result of lack of funds rather than lack of willingness to pay. In fact, most OBs, barring a few, acknowledged Samta Sakhis' work even when they could not give them their due remuneration.
- The GJP has successfully established mechanisms and processes to respond to social and gender issues including how and where to raise a complaint, how to write an application, how to escalate an issue, and the steps involved in resolution of a case. LAK and Block Gender Forums have also been established and are functional. In fact, even during the period when the project was paused, Samta Sakhis continued to manage the LAK, despite not receiving any honorarium.
- The GJP has improved communities' access to their rights and entitlements through social action led by the Samta Sakhis. The range of issues that Samta Sakhis have worked on include pensions; identity cards; disability certificates; caste certificates; access to public goods like water, roads and streetlights; access to ration; housing; MGNREGA job cards etc. They have also addressed issues of caste-based discrimination and supported survivors of domestic violence. During COVID-19, the GJP adjusted its strategies and training component to increase awareness, facilitate access to government relief and health services, and prevent the spread of infection through identification and quarantining. All of these activities were done in close collaboration with the Panchayat. These issues have been handled through social action both at the village level and through the LAK.
- Most social actions have been led by the Samta Sakhis, but some participatory action at the village level has been observed especially for cases related to public goods and services such as water and also in cases of domestic violence.
- Social action at the village level and establishment of the LAK and Block Gender Forum have facilitated better synergies and convergence between women's community institutions and other governance and administrative platforms to advance women's rights and entitlements.
- There has been an improvement in regularity and attendance in VO meetings. Some SHGs have also been formed and activated using the interventions of Samta Sakhis.
- Most importantly, due to the trainings, discussions and social action, VO/CLF spaces are moving beyond financial transactions and emerging as platforms where women are able to voice and visibilize their concerns and claim their rights.
- Monitoring mechanisms to record and monitor gender work have not been very effective and need to be strengthened.



6

Gender Mainstreaming

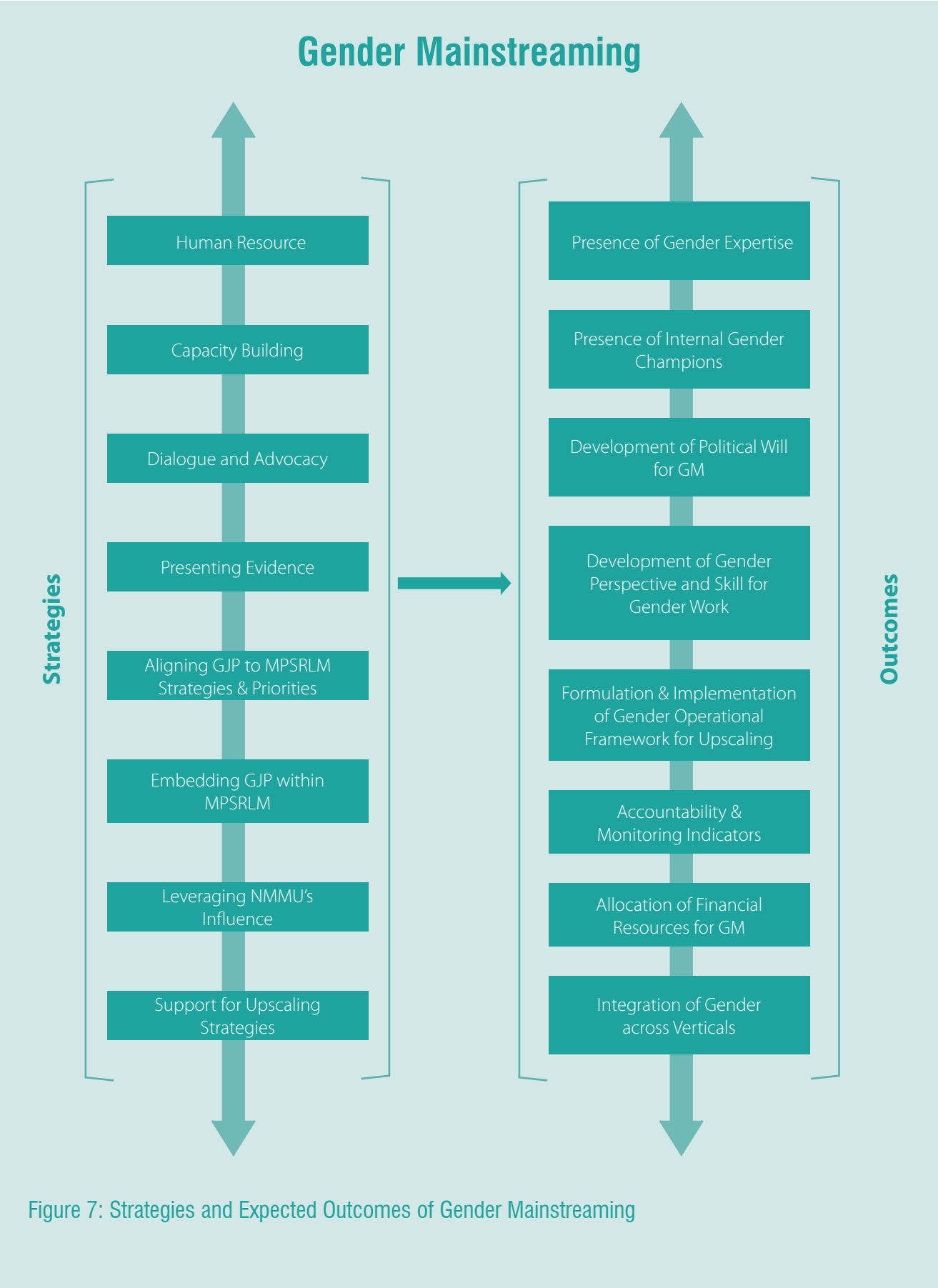
This section presents the varied strategies and processes employed by ANANDI through the Gender Justice Program to mainstream gender within the systems and structures of Madhya Pradesh State Rural Livelihoods Mission at state, district and block level. It also presents the initial outcomes of the program and the challenges faced in the process. Figure 7 represents the strategies and expected outcomes envisaged by GJP under the Gender Mainstreaming (GM) pillar. These strategies and outcomes are not disjointed pieces but are interconnected and influence each other in different ways.

6.1 Strategies

The GJP employed different strategies to mainstream gender within the MPSRLM in order to make it more gender responsive. This section presents and analyzes these strategies and processes.

6.1.1 Human Resource

One of the important strategies of the GJP was to provide human resource support to MPSRLM for its gender work. This was in response to an expressed need by the State Mission Management Unit (SMMU) as well as an analysis of lack of expertise for gender work at the state level. ICRW's Formative Research had also pointed towards shortage of staff. As a result, ANANDI appointed a Senior Gender Trainer and IWWAGE appointed a Gender Technical Expert at the MPSRLM state office in Bhopal. They were part of the SI/SD (Social Inclusion/Social Development) team at MPSRLM. These two gender experts were placed to provide technical expertise and support to gender work within the SMMU. They worked on an array of assignments including data coordination, documentation, proposal writing, training and strategic support amongst others. They also tried to initiate gender integration across different verticals of MPSRLM. They sometimes provided support to the SI/SD team on non-gender related work as well.



ANANDI had advocated for a dedicated staff for gender at the state level within the SMMU organizational structure during their earlier phases of work with MPSRLM. This position was thus created but had remained vacant since 2016. It was filled again in 2020 through the appointment of an Assistant State Program Manager (ASPM)-Gender. Additionally, the State Program Manager (SPM), SI/SD also supervises the gender work led by the SMMU.

6.1.2 Capacity Building

While it was important to position gender experts within the organization, it was also crucial to build the capacities and perspectives of existing staff across the State, District and Block Mission Management Units (SMMU, DMMU, BMMU), to carry out the gender agenda. However, due to COVID-19, limited initiatives for capacity building of staff could be undertaken.

In December 2020, ANANDI organized an exposure visit to their intervention areas in Gujarat where Samta Sakhis and LAK have been operational for several years. Two Block Nodal officers, one from each block, were also invited to be a part of this visit, to give them an opportunity to observe and experience the long-term impact of similar interventions in other geographies. They visited LAKs in Gujarat, attended meetings of the community institutions and youth groups and visited kitchen gardens and vermicompost sites etc. MPSRLM also invited ANANDI for a two-day workshop for District/Block Managers and members of the districts which were part of the GJP upscaling phase. The workshop was organized in January 2021 and comprised a perspective building training on gender and operational strategies for GJP implementation. BMMU representatives from Sheopur and Karhal also joined this training workshop. Lastly, SPMs at the state level were given training regarding the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, also known as POSH Act, by the IWWAGE-appointed Gender Expert.

6.1.3 Dialogue and Advocacy

Continuous communication has been a key strategy of the program. In order to create uptake for the program, enable support and involvement of the staff

and to keep them abreast of the program activities and outcomes, the ANANDI project team regularly coordinated with the staff at state, district and block level. These conversations included informal communication channels, for example through WhatsApp messages or discussions during CLF meetings, as well as formal meetings. There were multiple phone calls and e-mail exchanges before these formal meetings to coordinate, have preliminary discussions and set the agenda. Due to COVID-19 and the associated lockdown, some of these meetings were held remotely either through online platforms or telephonically.

At the State level, the ASPM, along with the ANANDI appointed Senior Gender Trainer, gave weekly updates about the GJP to the CEO. Additionally, senior ANANDI officials had regular meetings with the CEO and SPM SI/SD regarding GJP's upscaling and its implementation. At the district and block level, meetings were organized to review and reflect on program implementation, share progress and plan for future activities in alignment with MPSRLM's own priorities such as strengthening of the GPP/SAC. Regular and frequent interactions also took place during the first COVID-19 lockdown to share updates of the work being done by Samta Sakhis in the field in response to COVID-19 and to align these activities with MPSRLM's own mandate during this period.

6.1.4 Presenting Evidence

ANANDI has had a long-standing relationship with MPSRLM which spans multiple phases of work, beginning 2013. Through this period, ANANDI has ensured continuous sharing of evidence and lessons from the field with MPSRLM. One of the most effective earlier phases of work by ANANDI included the setting up of a LAK in Niwas Block of Mandla District in 2017. During the initial phase of the GJP in June 2019, ANANDI invited a few Samta Sakhis from this block to share their experience and learnings during a meeting between the DAY-NRLM, MPSRLM, IWWAGE, ICRW and ANANDI. The presentation by these Samta Sakhis left a strong impression and gave a stamp of approval to ANANDI's plan for GJP in Sheopur. Even during the GJP implementation at Sheopur, ANANDI continuously shared case studies and evidence from Sheopur with MPSRLM, especially with respect to social action and LAK. ANANDI had also planned exposure visits of DMMU/BMMU officials from other districts to Mandla and Sheopur districts to showcase the LAK model.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 and related restrictions, these could not be organized. However, the CEO of MPSRLM visited Sheopur in February 2021 to observe the GJP operations on the ground. The evidence of strong institutions and empowered Samta Sakhis helped convince him about the effectiveness of the GJP.

ANANDI also supported MPSRLM in showcasing Sheopur and Mandla's models at national forums organized by the NMMU. Samta Sakhis and Master Trainers from these places spoke at these forums to share their experiences of LAK, training and social action.

6.1.5

Aligning GJP to MPSRLM Strategies and Priorities

One of the most important strategies of the program has been to align itself with the priorities of the MPSRLM, whether during a crisis situation such as COVID-19 or with respect to MPSRLM's existing gender strategy. The program has been flexible and adaptable to the changing needs and times. Some examples of alignment are described below:

SHG activation and formation

Samta Sakhis were not initially mandated under the GJP to play any active role in SHG formation or activation. However, on the request of the Block Nodal officer and CLF OBs, they worked with Preraks to activate dormant SHGs and form new ones. In this process, they integrated a gender lens, such as encouraging SHG members to utilize SHG platforms for access to social and economic entitlements, and not just for financial transactions.

Conducting surveys

Samta Sakhis were asked by Nodals to assist in identifying and listing potential people who could register themselves as street vendors to gain benefits (INR 10,000) from the Atmanirbhar Bharat policy. Similarly, after an event in Sheopur by the Chief Minister, the district administration was asked to prepare a list of community members who do not have access to government schemes and entitlements. Samta Sakhis assisted in carrying out these surveys as well.

Response to COVID-19

During the pandemic and its associated lockdown, Samta Sakhis worked closely with the district and block administration. Based on the mandate of MPSRLM, they produced and distributed masks and soaps, created awareness about the disease, disseminated information related to government relief efforts and enabled better linkages to the same. The ANANDI project team closely mentored the Samta Sakhis through the entire process. The Samta Sakhis conducted these activities through door-to-door campaigns, telephonic communication and also in SHG meetings wherever they were being held. During the lockdown, as physical meetings could not happen, ANANDI introduced *Swar Sandesh*, a weekly audio messaging service for the communities with messages in Hindi on different topics such as agriculture and COVID-19 prevention. The content for *Swar Sandesh* was prepared in consultation with the DMMU and shared widely amongst all SHG members in Sheopur district. These audio messages were also shared with SMMU so that they could further disseminate them in other districts.

Support and resources for plans, policies and trainings

ANANDI provided support to MPSRLM whenever they sought advice on developing their Annual Action Plans (AAPs). They also contributed to the gender operational strategy focusing on upscaling of GJP to 18 districts. Further, ANANDI actively contributed to the CRP Policy Document of MPSRLM, which institutionalized the position and roles of Gender CRPs, i.e., Samta Sakhis.

ANANDI's senior staff members also conducted online trainings at the state level with different participants (DMMU and BMMU members of non-upscaling districts) on understanding of gender, socialization, patriarchy, etc. They also connected MPSRLM with other gender resource persons such as from UN Women, so that MPSRLM had a bigger pool of resources to draw from. ANANDI's project team on the ground, including Master Trainers, took gender sessions during regular MPSRLM training activities with SHG/CLF/VO members in Community Training Centers (CTC) in Sheopur and Karhal Blocks.

ANANDI has also prepared a gender repository which is hosted on the MPSRLM website under the name 'Training Material'. This contains all the training materials that they have used, including the modules specially

developed during this phase of the work for SAC and GPP training. It contains training modules including Participatory Action Learning Tools, links of video films, *Swar Sandesh*, guidelines on GJP etc. It was launched in January 2021 and serves as a single window access for all gender training material.

Keeping in mind MPSRLM's gender strategy (upscaling strategy), ANANDI also developed a new module for training GPPs and SACs and conducted intensive trainings across the two blocks to strengthen these mechanisms. While these were not part of the original plan for GJP, they were incorporated to be in alignment with MPSRLM's priorities and plans.

6.1.6 Embedding GJP within MPSRLM

By design, the program was intended to be integrated within the existing structures of MPSRLM instead of creating a parallel system. The Samta Sakhis who led the GJP through the cascading model of training as well as social action on gender issues, were selected from the pool of CLF members and CRPs. These Samta Sakhis conducted gender training and discussion during regular CLF and VO meetings and also conducted social action by involving existing members of CLFs, VOs and SHGs. Even the LAK was hosted by a CLF at the block Janpad or Tehsil and became a representation of community institutions at the Janpad office. This means that all the strategies and operations of GJP leveraged current institutional structures and functions of CLFs and VOs, making uptake easier for community and staff.

6.1.7 Leveraging NMMU's Influence

The policies at NMMU are important influencers for the SMMU. Thus, the thrust on gender integration spearheaded by the IB/CB team at NMMU in collaboration with Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's SWAYAM project created an important push for building gender strategy within the MPSRLM. As a CSO partner of the SWAYAM project, ANANDI was able to showcase GJP at NMMU, which helped in creating an enabling environment for its upscaling at MPSRLM. SWAYAM project has been providing human resource and technical assistance to DAY-NRLM, including reviewing their training modules and curriculum through a gender lens, establishing *Gender Samvaad* as a learning exchange platform to present and discuss gender work

across states, ongoing work on national MIS for gender etc. The NMMU had encouraged capacity building on gender as well as the development of gender action plans from 2016 onwards, which also influenced MPSRLM to focus on building a gender strategy. ANANDI leveraged this enabling environment created through DAY-NRLM's own focus to create uptake of GJP and its upscaling.

6.1.8 Support for Upscaling Strategy

MPSRLM had decided to upscale the GJP program to 16 additional districts, apart from Mandla and Sheopur in 2019 itself. The final approval came in March 2020. The decision to upscale was guided by the evidence generated at Mandla as well as the emerging evidence from Sheopur. MPSRLM decided to upscale GJP to the National Rural Economic Transformation Project (NRETP) districts. Since the community institutions (CLFs and VOs) are stronger in the NRETP geographies, layering two programs (NRETP and GJP) is expected to result in a holistic development for women. It is also expected that these districts and CLFs, where both NRETP and GJP are implemented, will become resource districts and model CLFs for the state. Under the upscaled strategy, one Samta Samanvayak (Senior Gender CRP) along with five or six Samta Sakhis (Gender CRPs) are to be appointed per CLF to supervise gender work and the setting up of LAK at the block level. In total, across 18 districts, 19 blocks and 60 CLFs will be covered.

ANANDI has invested heavily in the upscaling of the GJP, including human resource, technical and financial support. For example, in September 2020, a one-day state workshop was organized with the DMMUs of the upscaling districts to introduce them to the objectives and strategies of the GJP. Subsequently, a state-level training was organized for the Samta Samanvayaks in Bhopal in December 2020. The training included perspective building around gender, along with aspects of program implementation, including the role and management of the LAK. One of the Master Trainers from Sheopur who manages the LAK was also part of the training to share her learnings and experience from the ground. In December 2020, a two-day workshop was organized with CLF leaders for them to understand GJP and gender and human rights work. MPSRLM also invited ANANDI for a two-day workshop for District/Block Managers of the districts which are part of the GJP upscaling phase. The workshop was organized in January 2021 and consisted of a perspective building training on gender and operational strategies for

GJP implementation. From August 2021, ANANDI, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) has started implementing the upscaled gender strategy in Sheopur as well.

6.2 Outcomes

Presented here are some of the key outcomes of the strategies followed by the GJP under the Gender Mainstreaming pillar. It is important to note that these outcomes are interconnected and influence each other.

6.2.1 Presence of Gender Expertise

The appointment of gender focal points within the MPSRLM by ANANDI and IWWAGE enabled the creation of gender expertise within the organization. These experts assisted MPSRLM in coordinating the gender strategy in Sheopur and also supported the implementation of the strategy in GJP upscaling districts as well as in some of the non-GJP districts of MPSRLM. They also enabled some initial conversations on gender integration across verticals, through capacity building activities such as holding hour-long sessions on gender during trainings organized by other verticals such as farm livelihood.

6.2.2 Presence of Internal Gender Champions

ANANDI, through its past and present work, has identified, created and nurtured gender champions within the MPSRLM who have supported and advocated for gender work. It has identified and built capacities of staff who have emerged as gender champions and supported the gender work in the current phase. For example, despite successive changes in the position of CEO, MPSRLM, some of the other staff at SMMU have been instrumental in pushing for the institutionalization of Gender CRPs i.e., Samta Sakhis within the CRP guidelines prepared by the state, even before the decision to upscale GJP was taken. When finally, after several changes in the CEO position, an official who was familiar with ANANDI's earlier work in Madhya Pradesh was appointed as the

CEO, the upscaling project took off much faster. Gender champions at the DMMU and BMMU levels also helped in the work at Sheopur. For example, a senior district official of Sheopur emerged as a gender champion and gave full support to the GJP. When dealing with issues such as a non-cooperative line department official, or a backlash from a Gram Panchayat office, senior officials supported Samta Sakhis and spoke to the relevant officers. Gender champions also showcased Sheopur's work to the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh during his visit to Sheopur or during programs organized by NMMU. Across district, block and state, gender champions helped in the smooth uptake of GJP and the recognition that Samta Sakhis received for their work. As shared by an MPSRLM official, *"ANANDI's presence has enabled an uptake for gender work in MPSRLM, and the staff who have worked closely with ANANDI, do have an understanding of gender and want to work on it."*

However, during the project gap period from April–August 2021, some of the gender champions, especially at the BMMU level, did not support Samta Sakhis, who continued to work despite not receiving payment. ANANDI had requested the state to arrange for the payment of Samta Sakhis during the gap period through funds available for CLFs. However, most of the Nodals did not show much interest and all but one CLF refused payment to the Samta Sakhis.

6.2.3 Development of Political Will for Gender Mainstreaming

The different strategies employed by the GJP have created a political will within the MPSRLM to carry out the gender agenda. At the state level, this manifests itself in different ways such as in MPSRLM's decision to upscale GJP to 16 additional districts, organize training workshops for district and block staff of these districts, and issue official circulars with GJP guidelines. Further, at a state workshop, the leadership encouraged the district and block teams to own the GJP as their own program. Subsequently, the CEO himself visited Sheopur district to experience the change on-ground and observe the functioning of the LAK. At the state level, there is also recognition and appreciation of the critical work being done by the Samta Sakhis as Gender CRPs. The CEO also called upon the Mission staff to *"take a proactive and positive role in the program"* showing full ownership. As an ANANDI team member stated, *"MPSRLM has grown beyond the token 'women empowerment'. It understands the realities and interconnections and dynamics women go*

through. It is convinced that GJP should be seen as MPSRLM's project, and that ownership should be there from the district and block teams."

"There is a willingness amongst the leadership team; they give priority to gender mainstreaming work. This kind of team makes it easier to work despite the other challenges."

– MPSRLM official

However, all the gender work is happening through the SI/SD pillar of MPSRLM. There is no integration yet across MPSRLM's other verticals and programs. The political will for gender integration across verticals is yet to emerge.

At the district and block level also, an evolving sense of willingness and ownership of GJP can be seen. However, this is not uniform for all staff members. As mentioned earlier, a senior district official has been a staunch supporter and even requested ANANDI to implement the program in a third block of the district. This official also personally visited LAK many times to observe its functioning. He also helped Samta Sakhis when they faced difficulties with line departments. At the block level, the support to Samta Sakhis was not uniform. While most block officials (Nodals) were very involved and supportive of the gender work carried out by Samta Sakhis, some of the Nodals focused more on employing the services of Samta Sakhis for SHG activation or survey work. Perhaps this could be due to lesser priority given to gender work, which points towards the need to strengthen their understanding of gender and gender work within the Mission. In some instances, Panchayat Secretaries complained to Nodals about the increased demands imposed on them due to the continuous applications for different entitlements brought up by Samta Sakhis. Most of the Nodals supported the Samta Sakhis and requested the Panchayat Secretaries to cooperate since these were legitimate demands. However, in one instance, a Nodal pulled up the Samta Sakhi and blamed her for spoiling the relationship between DAY-NRLM and Panchayats.

However, during GJP's gap period between April–August 2021, none of the Nodals, except one, supported the payment of Samta Sakhis' honorarium from the CLF funds. Only the Nodal at Sagar CLF facilitated payment to Samta Sakhis for the work they did, based on CRP guidelines issued by the state. This puts some doubt over the depth and extent of political will in the absence of a CSO and the financial support provided through the CSO. However, one of the reasons for non-payment could also be a real fund crunch faced by the CLFs. According to a project team member, one of the Nodals said, *"Already the CLF is paying for 11–12*

CRPs, how will it pay for more? Where will the funds come from?" However, this also indicated a prioritization of which CRPs were to be paid from the limited funds and Samta Sakhis' work was clearly not perceived as a priority. In fact, in a couple of CLFs, the Samta Sakhis were told that they will be paid but they should prioritize SHG formation/activation and loan repayment instead of only gender training or social action. The Sagar CLF that paid its Samta Sakhis is also the CLF in Sheopur Block that hosts the LAK at the Janpad office. But even here, only three of the four Samta Sakhis were paid since these three were educated and could manage the documentation work at the LAK. Further, the honorarium paid was lesser than stipulated in the CRP guidelines. This creates some questions again about which actions of Samta Sakhis are prioritized and how far the political will translates into active cooperation for sustaining the program beyond a project cycle.

6.2.4 Development of Gender Perspective and Skill for Gender Work

Capacities and perspectives at state, district and block levels have improved because of their association with the GJP and gender upscaling work. There is an emerging understanding of rights and gender equality, for example, in terms of women's role in decision-making, access to entitlements and resources etc. However, not all staff members are at the same level of understanding of gender issues and pathways to gender equality and more perspective building exercises need to be done.

At the state level, there is a growing understanding of the need for holistic development of women, moving beyond the economic realm. An MPSRLM official stated, *"Social and economic empowerment need to happen together. By taking gender strategy to NRETP districts, we are trying to do exactly that."* Articulations about gender inequality also included issues of burden of unpaid work, invisibilized farm labor of women and differential access to schemes and entitlements between women and men. Some of the SMMU officials seemed to appreciate the need, relevance and importance of gender integration within MPSRLM as a means to enable women's empowerment. As a senior leader of MPSRLM shared during one of the meetings, *"Gender work is important to strengthen livelihoods with dignity."*

Among the district staff, an understanding of gender and patriarchy was visible during the Formative Research itself. However, this understanding was not uniform and the Formative Research recommended dedicated capacity building of district and block staff for gender work and gender understanding. Unfortunately, this did not happen. However, through association with the GJP, some of their understanding has deepened. This is evident in their articulations on gender division of labor, restricted mobility, lack of educational opportunities for women and girls, problems of domestic violence and the need for land and property rights for women. However, a more nuanced understanding of gender is needed. One district officer shared, *“Gender equality means that any person should be able to do what they want, and their gender should not come in the way. If a woman is interested in driving a truck, the woman should drive a truck, no objections to that. But we shouldn’t push her to drive a truck. If she was interested, we could encourage her to drive one and share the necessary details that she should need.”* While this narrative does point to cognizance of the fact that women can enter non-traditional livelihood spaces like driving, it does not acknowledge the role played by socialization and gender norms in shaping what women want or do not want. Another staff member shared, *“Gender equality is working for the weaker section. It can mean working for the Sehariya Adivasi community.”* It is good to see that the officer recognizes that gender equality must address all forms of marginalization. However, there is a need to deepen that understanding by acknowledging that even between women and men from a marginalized community, oppression and marginalization are experienced differently.

As in the case of the district staff, there is a difference in levels of understanding about gender among the block staff. While most of the block officials showed a distinct enhancement (from the period of the Formative Research) of their understanding of gender (moving beyond issues of nutrition and education to include issues like decision-making), some of them were also wary of disturbing gender relations in the household. For example, one of the block officials reflected, *“The government can bring in equality in terms of land, ration card and other identity cards, but we need to change people’s thinking, their mindset.”* However, the same person further said, *“Change should be brought in slowly, otherwise we (BMMU officials) will be blamed for causing disharmony in the family.”* Both Sheopur and Karhal staff mentioned the need to engage with men for bringing about gender equality. In another instance, the social hierarchy between a Nodal from a privileged background and CLF OBs from Adivasi

backgrounds became a challenge. The project team shared that owing to differences in education and social background, a Nodal could sometimes be dismissive about a CLF OB’s ability to lead. Thus, more capacity and perspective building is needed to enable a better understanding of how gender and caste operate together to create power structures, and pathways to questioning one’s own privilege and power as well.

6.2.5 Formulation and Implementation of a Gender Operational Framework for Upscaling

The most notable gender mainstreaming outcome of the program has been the upscaling of GJP to 18 districts including Mandla and Sheopur. Since 2020, MPSRLM has actively organized state level workshops and trainings with district and block staff. They have issued circulars which contain GJP guidelines and strategies, based on the evidence created in Mandla and Sheopur. These circulars and the call by senior leadership of MPSRLM to own the GJP, has further legitimized and given impetus to the program. Samta Samanvayaks have been appointed in most of the districts and capacity building activities have also begun. A detailed discussion on the GJP upscaling activities and strategies has been provided in Section 6.1.8.

Even before the decision to upscale was formally passed by MPSRLM, the CRP guidelines of MPSRLM included the Samta Sakhis along with other CRPs like Pashu Sakhis and Bank Sakhis etc. This indicated an institutionalization of their position and role directly in MPSRLM policy. The guidelines carried details about their selection criteria, honorarium, budgeting, roles and responsibilities. The active role played by internal gender champions was instrumental in seeing this policy through.

6.2.6 Accountability Created through Gender Performance Targets and Monitoring Indicators

A robust and gender responsive MIS system was one of the expected outcomes of the GJP. Unfortunately, despite ANANDI, IWWAGE and ICRW’s suggestions for

outcome level indicators, the MPSRLM MIS as well as the DAY-NRLM MIS reflect only input level indicators such as number of trainings, number of participants, number of gender forums formed, number of Gender CRPs identified, etc. A detailed list of indicators which are the most closely related to gender and part of the DAY-NRLM MIS on Food, Nutrition, Health and WASH (FNHW) and Social Development is given in Annexure 4. However, the GJP project team reported to BMMU, DMMU and SMMU on some gender outcomes, such as number of cases raised at the LAK, types of cases, number of cases resolved etc. on a monthly basis. This information did not find its way into the MIS.

ANANDI had also tried to record outcome level indicators at the CLF level through a mobile-based application called the Adhikar Saathi App, designed to record social action cases. Unfortunately, this was not very successful due to some technical issues as well as a lack of digital literacy skills of the Samta Sakhis. With GJP upscaling to 18 districts, it has become critical for MPSRLM to upgrade its MIS to include outcome level gender data, not only to record the important work done, but also to signal the priority of such work among all staff and community members.

6.2.7 Allocation of Financial Resources for Gender Mainstreaming

Budgetary commitment on the part of the government is crucial for the success of any Gender Mainstreaming program. This is necessary to ensure the sustainability of an intervention beyond the CSO funded project cycle. At present, there are no specific funds earmarked for gender work either at NMMU or SMMU. At NMMU, funds for gender work are part of the overall Institution Building/Capacity Building (IB/CB) pillar and at SMMU, they are part of the overall Social Inclusion/Social Development (SI/SD) pillar. The SI/SD pillar covers the salaries of all DMMU and BMMU staff as well as trainings across all verticals along with FNHW work and gender. A senior MPSRLM officer shared that it would be good to have specific funds earmarked for gender work because currently the same funds service competing priorities. Further, the funds under SI/SD have been limited in the current year 2021–2022. Generally, SMMU funds are shared between the Center and the State in a 60:40 ratio. A research participant stated that there had been no scarcity or delay from NMMU's side in allocating funds. However, other research participants reported that the amount of funds received from the

State, i.e., the Madhya Pradesh Government, was less than usual because some of these funds had been diverted to MGNREGA in the light of COVID-19 related reprioritization. This created an overall fund crunch at the SMMU, reducing the amount available under SI/SD and therefore for gender work. This perhaps explains why the State was unable to come forward to support Samta Sakhis during the project gap period between April and August 2021.

Under the gender upscaling model, ANANDI will be funding the Samta Samanvayaks' honorariums in 18 districts and the Samta Sakhis' honorarium in Sheopur and Mandla. The rest of the Samta Sakhis across 16 districts will be funded either through the MPSRLM or through the CLFs. Given the recent experience of the project gap period, there are concerns about the feasibility of Samta Sakhis' payment through CLFs. A senior MPSRLM official shared that they will be ensuring funds for Samta Sakhis' honorariums in case the CLFs could not support them. However, currently the MPSRLM has funds to cover only three months of Samta Sakhis' honorariums. On the bright side, SMMU has committed some funds for appointing Young Professionals (YPs) at the state and district levels including the upscaling districts. These YPs would be located within the SI/SD vertical, which includes gender work. While it would have been better to have YPs exclusively looking after gender work, this is an important step in recognizing the need for dedicated state and district level officials to supervise and monitor gender work.

6.2.8 Integration of Gender Across Verticals

As seen from the discussion above, gender work is subsumed within the pillar of SI/SD at MPSRLM. Except for the SI/SD vertical, there is no other vertical showing sufficient interest in integrating gender in its operations. Some initial discussions and conversations have been started on this by the ANANDI and IWWAGE appointed technical experts but these are still at a very nascent stage. There was one session on gender in a training organized by another vertical, but beyond that, no inroads have yet been made. However, at the NMMU level, work is ongoing on a gender audit of curricula across verticals. Once NMMU completes this task and sends a signal for gender integration across all trainings of all verticals, it is expected that MPSRLM will follow suit. *Gender Samvaads* which are organized by IWWAGE at the NMMU level, also create an enabling ground on

which gender integration work across verticals can take off. As shared by an official, *“Modules across verticals should have a gender component; gender lens and gender budgeting is required, every vertical should earmark funds for gender trainings as well.”* This is the hope for the future.

6.3 Enablers

Some of the key enablers for the Gender Mainstreaming journey pursued by ANANDI through the GJP were:

- ANANDI's long standing relationship with MPSRLM, since 2013, across multiple phases of work has been instrumental in creating buy-in and uptake for gender work. Over the years, ANANDI has created credibility for its work and especially for the program through the Mandla model and the way it could be embedded within the existing institutional framework. The Mandla model had created interest and the Sheopur GJP model deepened that interest and political will. Further, through its earlier phases of work, ANANDI also created and nurtured gender champions who enabled Gender Mainstreaming under GJP and led to its upscaling.
- The continuous support provided by ANANDI to all kinds of gender initiatives of MPSRLM over the years, including in the current phase of work, has been pivotal in creating trust and mutuality between the two organizations. ANANDI has been able to build that credibility for itself which goes beyond a particular project.
- The embeddedness of the GJP within the existing structures of the MPSRLM, wherein the program aims at strengthening existing institutions and mechanisms such as CLF, VO, SAC, GPP, etc., has facilitated a higher uptake for this work. This is because the work can be fitted within the existing frameworks and operations of the state, therefore increasing its feasibility and acceptance.
- Lastly, as gender work is not one of the top priorities or objectives of the Mission, the willingness of leadership to institutionalize and upscale the program has been critical to the success of the program.

6.4 Challenges and Mitigation Strategies

Gender Mainstreaming is a difficult political exercise and the project faced multiple challenges at the level of systems and structures.

6.4.1 Human Resources

Staff shortage was cited as one of the major impediments in carrying out gender work. During the Madhya Pradesh Rural Livelihood Project (MPRLP), there was a district level person for gender work, but the same does not exist now. Further, as gender initiatives are housed within SI/SD, at times even the gender experts have to work on other initiatives of SI/SD such as FNHW. Additionally, existing staff has a high workload due to which they are unable to give focused time to gender work. The district and block level staff also have the same limitations. To mitigate this, IWWAGE and ANANDI appointed Technical Experts at SMMU to oversee gender work.

6.4.2 Financial Resources

Paucity of funds is a critical challenge, and unless there are sufficient and exclusive funds earmarked for this work, it would be difficult to carry out the interventions on a sustained basis. This financial year (2021–2022), the overall MPSRLM budget was reduced as some funds were diverted towards MGNREGA. Additionally, all funds have to be taken from the SI/SD pillar which comprises several heads apart from gender work, such as salaries of district and block staff, FNHW etc., leading to competing priorities and mandates for the same set of funds. Further, lack of gender budgeting amongst all verticals is also impacting gender integration work. Currently, this challenge is being managed through funding support by ANANDI, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. However, this support is for the upscaled GJP and does not cover all the dimensions of gender work including the work done in districts not chosen for GJP upscaling, and integration across verticals.

6.4.3 Competing Priorities

While the leadership at MPSRLM has shown a commitment for gender work and its upscaling, it still appears to be low in priority compared to livelihoods or financial inclusion. As a research participant shared, *“The work of Bank Sakhis, Pashu Sakhis, Krishi Sakhis is seen differently because they are reaching out to so many farmers and bringing in so much money as savings. It is possible to quantify their contribution. As a result, there is greater willingness to convert their CRP days into some form of remuneration.”* ANANDI, as well as the technical experts appointed by ANANDI and IWWAGE, are currently advocating strongly for prioritization of gender work.

6.4.4 Lack of Uniform Capacities and Gender Perspectives among Staff

There is no uniformity of gender perspectives among staff at all levels; SMMU, DMMU and BMMU. This also created differences in approach to gender work and the GJP. At district and block levels, Nodals did not give uniform support to Samta Sakhis and GJP. Staff across verticals are yet to initiate gender integration. All this points to the need for more capacity and perspective building among the staff of SMMU, DMMU and BMMU.

6.4.5 Changes at Leadership Level

Frequent changes at the senior leadership level impacted the pace of work as individuals have different perspectives and alignments. A lot of time and effort need to be put in to build a relationship and rapport from scratch, and even then, there is no guarantee of the same level of support as earlier. For instance, ANANDI was able to get the MoU for the upscaling signed much faster after a new CEO joined since his tenure was longer and he also had prior exposure to ANANDI's work and the Lok Adhikar Kendra at Mandla. Before he joined, even the CRP policy which institutionalizes the role of Samta Sakhis took a long time to be passed due to frequent changes in leadership.

6.4.6 Lack of an Effective Gender Monitoring Mechanism

At present, there is a lack of gender monitoring indicators that can track outcomes. Indicators to track outcomes such as number and type of social action cases undertaken and number and type of social action cases resolved should be added. It is crucial to get this data to monitor the quality and impact of work. There needs to be stronger advocacy and technical support to develop such monitoring indicators at NMMU and SMMU. Handholding of districts and blocks also needs to be done to collect and monitor this data.

6.4.7 Lack of Active Participation from Nodals

Lack of active participation from Nodals was a critical challenge for the GJP, especially during the project gap phase. Even during the project phase, this meant that some of the Samta Sakhis did not feel supported in their work. ANANDI tried to address this by holding dialogue with the block staff and an invitation to Gujarat for an exposure visit. However, the challenge was not fully mitigated.

Summary of Outcomes

- Upscaling of the program to 18 districts of Madhya Pradesh.
- Institutionalization of Samta Sakhis within the SMMU's CRP guidelines applicable across the state.
- Creation and nurturing of gender champions across state, district and block.
- Overall buy-in, uptake and support for the program by Sheopur DMMU and the BMMUs.
- Deepening of gender perspectives among most DMMU and BMMU staff, though some staff require more capacity and perspective building.
- Absence of gender outcome indicators in MIS.
- Lack of sufficient and exclusive funds for gender work.

7

Potential or Estimated Budget Unlock

This section estimates the potential budget unlock due to linkages to different schemes enabled by the Lok Adhikar Kendra (LAK) functioning at Sheopur and Karhal Blocks. As of June 2021, LAKs had been operational for a year in Karhal and eight months in Sheopur. The ICRW research team has taken the consolidated figures for both LAKs up to June 2021. These are potential budgets that may have been unlocked on an annual basis and assume that all the beneficiaries will avail the maximum benefit under each entitlement and will be paid the full amount. They do not represent the actual amount of what people have actually received since that data is not available with the research team. Further, different people were connected to different schemes at different points of time, therefore, a 'year' for each person could mean a different chronological period. Given the absence of information on any of these heads (who got connected, when, and if the money has been received etc.), this estimation is a potential figure for the amount of

government funds that may be unlocked in the span of a year based on the entitlements that have been enabled by the LAK till June 2021. There are also several people who have accessed entitlements through social action by the Samta Sakhis at the village level but are not recorded here and are not part of the calculation of the estimated budget unlock. Given the absence of information on the actual numbers of these village level entitlement cases, the ICRW research team could not calculate budget unlock estimations for the same. Therefore, this section presents the indicative budget unlock over a year enabled by the LAK operations, assuming that the beneficiaries have successfully received the maximum benefit promised by these government schemes upon resolution of the cases.

Table 2 displays the list of cases registered and resolved between June 2020 to June 2021 at LAK Karhal and October 2020 to June 2021 at LAK Sheopur.¹⁴

¹⁴ The Sheopur LAK was established in October 2020 and the Karhal LAK was established in June 2020.

Table 2: LAK Cases

Serial no.	Type of entitlement	Cases registered till June 2021 (consolidated figures)		Cases resolved till June 2021 (consolidated figures)		
		Sheopur	Karhal	Sheopur	Karhal	Total
A	Food security and ration					
1	Not getting ration	88	2	14	2	16
2	New ration card	94	6	0	6	6
3	Khadyan Parchi	43	12	43	0	43
4	Including name in ration card	2	0	0	0	0
5	Including new name in BPL ration card	0	3	0	3	3
B	Nutrition					
6	Kuposhan se Jung	75	78	75	77	152
C	Social security					
7	Widow, old age and disability pension	50	19	47	17	64
8	Kisan Samman Nidhi	17	0	16	0	16
9	Mukhyamantri Kanyadaan & Sambal Yojna	2	2	0	2	2
D	Violence against women and children					
10	Violence against women	17	5	6	4	10
11	Violence against children	1	0	0	0	0
E	ID and proofs					
12	All ID and proofs	13	4	12	3	15
13	Caste certificate	27	2	20	2	22
14	Including name in BPL list	12	0	0	0	0
15	Job card/MGNREGA	15	3	15	3	18
16	Ayushman Bharat card	0	58	0	58	58
F	Land and housing					
17	Housing right	62	30	44	0	44
18	Land right	2	14	1	14	15
19	Toilet	1	15	0	0	0
G	Collective issues					
20	Drinking water, road and school	8	2	4	2	6
Total		529	255	297	193	490

Source: Based on information provided by the ANANDI project team from Sheopur.

To estimate the potential budget unlock, the ICRW research team has considered only the cases that were resolved. Further, cases leading to direct transfer of funds were related to pension for old age, widows and disability. For the rest, a few types of cases were selected on the basis of their potential for monetization. For example, job card cases were monetized based on the estimated funds transferred through the MGNREGA work, ration cases were monetized using potential government subsidy amounts, Ayushman Bharat card cases were monetized using potential transfers in case of illness and hospitalization and housing cases were monetized using potential transfers if people started building houses. Certain cases could not be monetized at all, such as cases of violence against women and children. Land right cases could also not be monetized because these were mainly cases of including names in land papers or resolving a dispute, neither of which entailed monetary benefit under a government scheme. In some other cases, the exact number of beneficiaries was not available and so left out of calculation. For example, the exact number of beneficiaries under the Mukhyamantri Kanyadaan Yojna or the Mukhyamantri Kanya Vivah Yojna was not available. In the Table 2 computed by the ANANDI project team, the number of beneficiaries under the Kanyadaan Yojna was clubbed with the number of beneficiaries under the Sambal Yojna, which is a different scheme meant for workers. Cases involving ID proofs, caste certificates and including name in the BPL list have also been left out of the calculation because it was not clear whether such people were linked to specific schemes or which schemes they were linked to. Finally, since not one of the cases of access to toilets was resolved, they were left out of the budget unlock calculation. The following is the step-by-step calculation of the potential budget unlock.

Access to Ration

The first category is access to ration which is a consolidated category including 'getting ration', 'getting a new ration card', and 'khadyan parchi'. The total number of beneficiaries in Sheopur and Karhal Blocks whose cases have been resolved under these three categories is 65 (refer to Table 2). 'Getting name included in BPL ration card' has not been included since this does not imply greater spending for the government as the ration is given per family instead of per individual. The provisions of 35kg per family per month as per the Antyodaya Anna Yojna (AAY) were considered for estimating the potential budget unlock,

since it is the maximum government subsidy given as per the National Food Security Act (National Food Security Act, 2013; Department of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection, n.d.). Further, the Central Issue Price (CIP) at which beneficiaries get rice and wheat is INR 3 per kg of rice and INR 2 per kg of wheat respectively while the corresponding economic cost to the government (including procurement, stocking, distribution) is INR 37 per kg of rice and INR 27 per kg of wheat as of February 2020 (Department of Food and Public Distribution, n.d.).

In order to calculate the maximum possible budget unlock due to access to ration cards, the following assumptions are made:

1. All families hold AAY cards. This assumption is made to see the potential for maximum budget unlock because government subsidy is maximum for AAY cardholders.
2. All families draw up to the full limit i.e., 35kgs of food grain provided under AAY.
3. Out of the 35kg food grain allotted, all families draw full 35kgs of rice per month. This assumption is made keeping in mind that the subsidy for rice is maximum, i.e., INR 37-3 = INR 34 per kg as against INR 27-2 = INR 25 per kg for wheat.
4. There is continuous provision round the year and there are no gaps and delays.

Potential budget unlock for ration per year:

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{No. of beneficiaries} \times \text{Amount of rice per person per} \\ &\text{month in kgs} \times \text{Government subsidy per kg of rice} \times 12 \\ &\text{months} \\ &= 65 \times 35 \times 34 \times 12 = \text{INR } 928,200 \end{aligned}$$

Kuposhan se Jung

Tribal women are given INR 1,000 per month by the state to fight against malnutrition (ANI, 2020).

Assumptions:

1. Every month all the women beneficiaries will receive the designated amount of INR 1,000 in their bank accounts and there will be no gaps and delays on the part of the government.

Potential budget unlock per year:

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{Total number of women beneficiaries} \times \text{Amount of} \\ &\text{benefit per month} \times 12 \text{ months} \\ &= 152 \times 1000 \times 12 = \text{INR } 1,824,000 \end{aligned}$$

Widow, Old Age and Disability Pensions

As per the Madhya Pradesh State Pension Portal, the Indira Gandhi Old Age pension amount is INR 300 per month (for BPL and old age), Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension is INR 300 per month (BPL and widow of age 40–79 years), Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension is INR 300 per month (BPL and up to 80 percent disability from age 18–79 years) (Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, n.d.).

Assumption for calculating the potential annual budget unlock:

1. All the beneficiaries get uninterrupted pension after getting linked to the schemes.

Potential annual budget unlock:

Total number of beneficiaries (pensioners linked through old age, widow and disability pension) x Amount of pension x 12 months
= $64 \times 300 \times 12$ = **INR 230,400**

PM Kisan Samman Nidhi

Under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, INR 6,000 is paid in three instalments in a year to all land holding farming families (PM Kisan Samman Nidhi, 2021).

Assumption for calculating potential annual budget unlock:

1. There are no delays or gaps in payment to the beneficiaries.

Potential annual budget unlock:

Total number of beneficiaries x Amount of annual benefit = 16×6000 = **INR 96,000**

Job Card and/or Access to MGNREGA Work

Under the MGNREGA, every job card holder (individual and not family) can access maximum 100 days of employment. The minimum wage rate for unskilled work under MGNREGA in Madhya Pradesh is INR 190 per day (The Gazette of India, 2020).

Assumption for calculating potential annual budget unlock:

1. All the job card holders access full 100 days of work in a year.
2. All the job card holders do unskilled work under MGNREGA.
3. All the job card holders get paid minimum wages for unskilled work under MGNREGA for 100 days of work.
4. There are no delays or gaps in this payment.

Potential annual budget unlock:

Total number of beneficiaries linked to MGNREGA through job card x 100 days of work x Minimum wages for unskilled work
= $18 \times 100 \times 190$ = **INR 342,000**

Ayushman Bharat Card

The Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna (PMJAY) under Ayushman Bharat provides health insurance coverage up to INR 500,000 to each beneficiary family. All members of the family can be covered under the scheme (PM Jan Arogya Yojna, n.d.).

Assumption for calculating potential annual budget unlock:

1. All beneficiaries having the Ayushman Bharat card avail the full value i.e., INR 500,000 in a year.
2. There are no delays or gaps in this payment.

Potential annual budget unlock:

Total number of beneficiaries x Full insurance amount = $58 \times 500,000$ = **INR 29,000,000**

Housing – Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna (Gramin)

Under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna – Gramin (PMAY-G), a beneficiary can get up to a maximum of INR 120,000 (in the plains and Sheopur is a plain) and can also claim up to 95 person days of unskilled work for building her house under the MGNREGA (PM Awas Yojna – Gramin, n.d.).

Assumption for calculating potential annual budget unlock:

- 1. The beneficiaries claim maximum amount of INR 120,000 and also the 95 person days of unskilled work under MGNREGA at the rate of INR 190 per day.
- 2. There are no delays or gaps in this payment.

Potential annual budget unlock:
Total number of beneficiaries x (Total amount of payment for building construction to a single beneficiary + (Minimum wages for unskilled labor under MGNREGA x 95 person days of work))
= 44x(120,000+(190x95)) = **INR 6,074,200**

Total Estimated Potential Budget Unlock

Aggregating budget unlocks across all the above mentioned schemes, the LAKs, in a few months of functioning, have been able to potentially unlock INR (928,200 + 1,824,000 + 230,400 + 96,000 + 342,000 + 29,000,000 + 6,074,200) = **INR 38,494,800**

Table 3 below encapsulates the above discussion.

Table 3: Potential Budget Unlock Estimates

Type of entitlement	No. of beneficiaries linked through LAK	Potential amount of benefit per person	Potential annual budget unlock (INR)
Access to ration	65	35kg of rice @ subsidy of INR 34/kg p.m.	928,200
Kuposhan se Jung	152	INR 1,000 p.m.	1,824,000
Widow, old age and disability pension	64	INR 300 p.m.	230,400
Kisan Samman Nidhi	16	INR 6,000 p.a.	96,000
Job card/MGNREGA	18	100 days of work @INR 190 per day	342,000
Ayushman Bharat card	58	INR 5,00,000 p.a.	29,000,000
Housing right (PMAY-G)	44	INR 1,20,000 + 95 days of MGNREGA@ INR 190 per day	6,074,200
Total			38,494,800



8

Discussion and Conclusion

Before concluding, it would be interesting to discuss the observations of the Process Documentation of GJP in the context of the findings of some recent reports on DAY-NRLM. For example, a recent Impact Evaluation Report (Kochar et al., 2020) published by 3ie in 2020, found compelling evidence of the role of VOs in enhancing women's confidence in engaging with members of the community. 3ie had studied the impact of NRLP (implementation of DAY-NRLM in intensive blocks with a focus on livelihoods and federation building) in nine of the poorest states of India, including Madhya Pradesh. Additional years of NRLP and presence of strong federations led to greater access to social schemes and enhancement of women's confidence. However, there was no impact on women's decision making in the household. A World Bank study of the Jeevika model in Bihar indicated a positive impact of the program on women's decision-making power within the household and a process of collective arbitration where more women entered spheres of activity outside the household and participated in civic, political and financial institutions (Sanyal et al., 2015). The Gender Justice Program in Sheopur too

showed a clear understanding of the role of community institutions and collective arbitration. GJP utilized institutional spaces such as VOs and CLFs to create awareness and engage the community in collective arbitration and action, whether for social schemes or for rights issues such as right to land and right to a violence free life. In creating gender responsive community institutions, GJP actually strengthened these forums and created capacities of its members and leaders to facilitate discussion and action. It also enabled members of these spaces to interact with different stakeholders and institutions, be they Panchayat representatives or government officials. While observation of changes at the household or individual level amongst the CLF/VO members was beyond the scope of the ICRW research, the research did focus on changes exhibited by the Gender CRPs (Samta Sakhis) at household and individual level. As shared by the Samta Sakhis, SHG membership alone had not enabled greater decision-making power, confidence or the ability to challenge gender norms. Rather, it was their own capacity building and mentoring by Master Trainers, as well as their role as community leaders who were required to train others and conduct social

action, that brought about a great change in their own perspectives and ability to challenge gender norms in their households. What the ICRW research also brings out is that CLF leaders show a significant shift in decision making and leadership abilities within the institutional space.

Another interesting point raised by the 3ie study was that amongst the sampled SHGs, Madhya Pradesh had a higher proportion of defunct SHGs. One of the reasons mentioned for members' exit from SHGs was that husbands and other family members did not allow women to continue as SHG members. In the GJP experience, Samta Sakhis worked very closely with VOs and here too they saw that many husbands and family members were unwilling to let the women attend or sit through the VO meeting. To address the issue, Samta Sakhis undertook concerted mobilization efforts (visiting the village one day prior to the meeting and even going door-to-door on the day of the meeting) and demonstrated how such meeting spaces could become grounds for discussion and action on rights and entitlements. In fact, on many occasions, Samta Sakhis talked to men and helped families access rights and entitlements, all of which brought about a shift in attitude and ensured regularity of meetings and increased attendance. As mentioned earlier in the report, many MPSRLM officials also observed that VO meetings had become much more regular after Samta Sakhis started working. Samta Sakhis were also asked to activate some of the defunct SHGs. Some of the Samta Sakhis reported that while motivating SHG members to come to SHG meetings, they talked about how SHG membership helped not only financial and livelihoods linkage but also redressal of various social issues and rights claims. This integration of gender and social issues with financial and livelihood issues created a stronger motivation for women to reactivate their SHGs.

Another important report that needs to be mentioned is by IDinsight (2021), which conducted the first round of SWAYAM's process evaluation in January–March 2021. The IDinsight report showed that in MP, women have the highest recall rate for the training tool on household decision, followed by financial inclusion. In the ICRW Process Documentation of GJP, it was observed that the tool *Kiska Palda Bhari*, which focused on both division of labor and decision-making had been run extensively across many VOs and was very popular. Another equally effective tool, which became very popular was the *Mera Haq, Meri Pehchan* tool which was used to trigger discussions on schemes and entitlements during the COVID-19 period. Financial inclusion was

not part of the training repertoire of Samta Sakhis. The IDinsight report also found that 57.7 percent of women in Madhya Pradesh were aware of gender resource centers (LAKs) and 35.5 percent had visited the LAK. 50.5 percent women reported attending the Gram Sabha meeting in December 2020 and 72.4 percent women felt confident about speaking at a community meeting. ICRW's study also reflected on the important role played by the LAK. Both Sheopur and Karhal are geographically large blocks and not all VOs have been covered under the GJP. Given that the LAK started only recently (less than a year ago), it is possible that women from some villages are still unaware of its presence. To create awareness about the LAK, the GJP conducted a poster campaign and also talked about it in all the VO and CLF meetings. What is very heartening to see is that a significant proportion of respondents of the IDinsight study talk about attending Gram Sabhas and feel confident about speaking at them. In fact, the social action stories cited earlier in this report demonstrated how in several instances, Samta Sakhis supported VO/SHG members in raising their issues at Gram Sabhas. The visibility and voice of women in Gram Sabhas and Panchayat offices has definitely gone up because of the GJP and the role played by Samta Sakhis. Finally, the IDinsight report observed that 89 percent gender champions (Samta Sakhis) felt confident in speaking at a community meeting. The report cited some community level issues such as around COVID-19, water issues, land disputes on which Samta Sakhis have worked. ICRW's Process Documentation has shown that all the Samta Sakhis have increased confidence about addressing community meetings and have actually spoken at community meetings such as Gram Sabhas. Social action by Samta Sakhis during COVID-19 and beyond has been a critical part of GJP and they have worked on a range of issues including water and land but also ration, pensions, housing, identity documents, MGNREGA job cards, domestic violence and caste discrimination.

To summarize, the GJP took a multipronged approach to integrating gender within MPSRLM. It addressed the systemic level (policy change through gender mainstreaming), the institutional level (making institutions gender responsive through institutional strengthening) and the individual level (creating a cadre of strong women community leaders through feminist leadership building). Through this approach, the GJP was able to strengthen institutions, individuals and policies to address rural women's concerns on the ground. The infographic Figure 8 depicts the key strategies and outcomes of the GJP.

Strategies and Outcomes of the Gender Justice Program (GJP)

at Sheopur, Madhya Pradesh



Strategies

GM

System level change (state, district & block) through advocacy & technical support for policy, capacity building, HR support, alignment with MPSRLM priorities & embedding GJP in existing MPSRLM institutions.



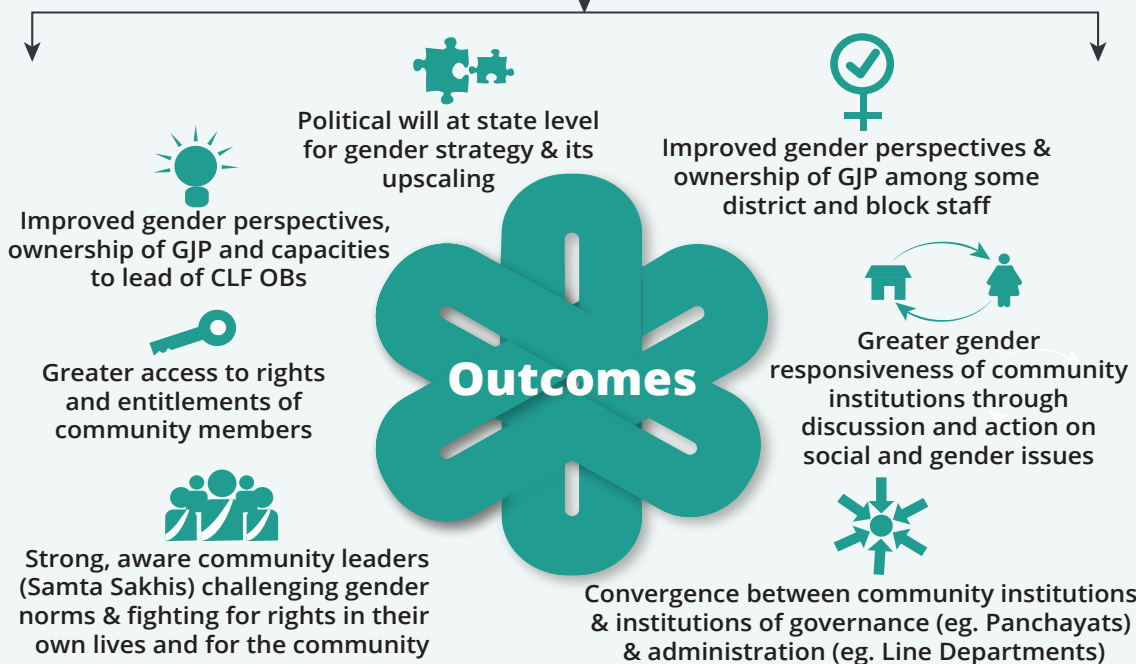
IS

Engendering community institutions through anchoring GJP in CLFs, cascading gender training model at CLF & VO, participatory social action at village & block levels leveraging different institutions, creation of LAK and BGF for access to rights & entitlements.



FLD

Appointment, capacity development & mentoring of Samta Sakhis (Gender CRPs) in each CLF so that they can lead gender work in community institutions & through LAK.



a. Community institutions mean CLF, VO, SHG b. LAK: Lok Adhikar Kendra set up at Janpad/Tehsil office
c. BGF: Block Gender Forum comprising representatives of community institutions and line departments
d. GM: Gender Mainstreaming e. IS: Institutional Strengthening f. FLD: Feminist Leadership Development

Figure 8: Key Strategies and Outcomes of the GJP

The journey to mainstream gender within a national program of the scale of DAY-NRLM is not an easy one. However, through the GJP, ANANDI has been able to enable certain shifts at the level of MPSRLM. One of the most critical shifts that is observed is the development of political willingness and buy-in to upscale the model to 18 districts. This shows MPSRLM’s commitment towards gender work. ANANDI’s relationship with the MPSRLM since 2013, the embeddedness of the program within the structures of the MPSRLM and the evidence of change have all enabled a greater uptake

for the program. The program’s ability to adapt to the priorities of the MPSRLM as well as continuous dialogue and advocacy with MPSRLM have also helped in building a relationship of trust and credibility. Another critical aspect was that the GJP did not create a parallel system of change, but rather embedded the change within existing structures and systems. Figure 9 shows how training and social action within the community institutions expanded the scope of these institutions and enabled greater access to rights and entitlements leveraging existing institutions and structures.

GJP's Embeddedness Creating Ownership of Gender Strategy and Gender Responsive Community Institutions

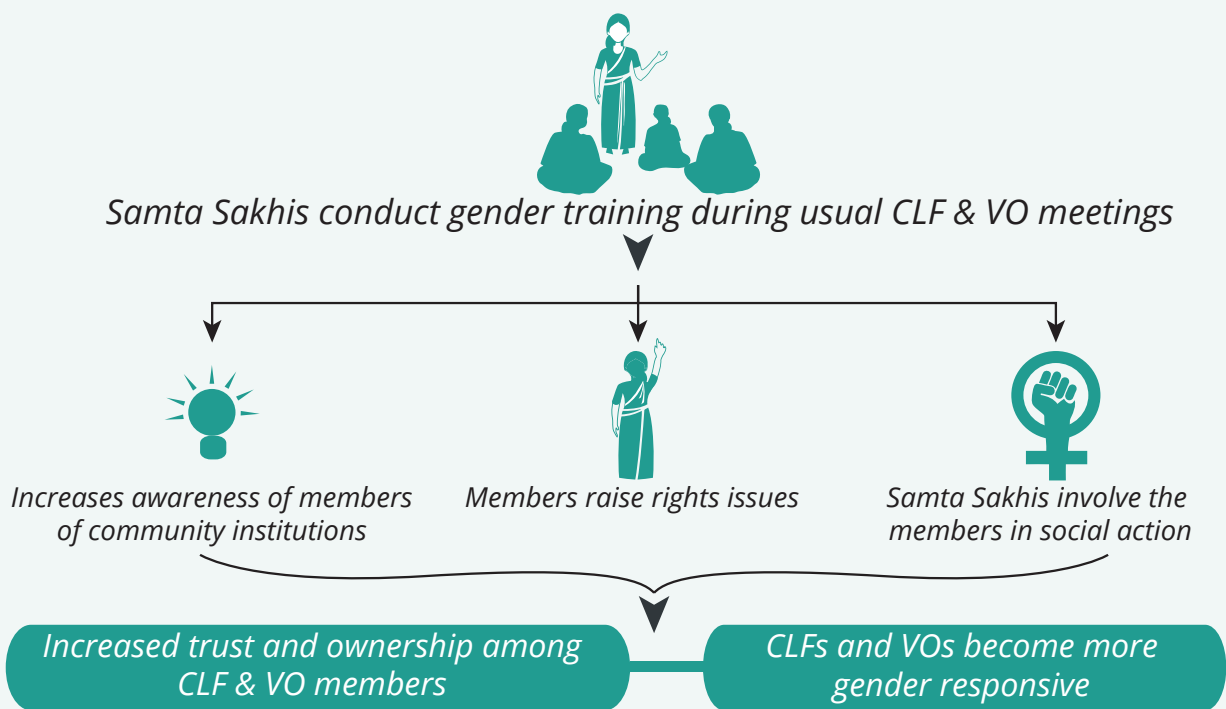


Figure 9: GJP’s Embeddedness Creating Ownership of Gender Strategy and Gender Responsive Community Institutions

However, it needs to be mentioned that while political willingness is evident at the state level, greater involvement and gender perspectives needs to be built at the block level to enable ownership and sustainability of the program. Funding and human resource shortage continue to be a critical challenge impacting mentoring and monitoring of gender work at the level of community institutions.

At the onset of the program, community institutions were largely platforms for financial transactions with some discussions on government schemes. Following the cascading model of training, Samta Sakhis provided training at the level of VOs and CLFs, building capacities of the leaders and members of these institutions in the process. Samta Sakhis also facilitated and led social action. The outcomes of such training and social action were manifold. First, it created awareness and built capacities among community members about how to raise an issue and how to engage with different platforms to resolve the issue. Although in most cases Samta Sakhis led the social action, they were accompanied by the direct beneficiaries or rightsholders. In some instances, though limited, the community itself took up the issue and initiated action with the guidance of the Samta Sakhis. Second, such social action led to greater visibility and voice of rural women across various platforms including government offices, thereby upstaging gender norms which traditionally invisibilized women and did not allow their voices to be heard. Third, it enabled rights and entitlements across a wide range of issues, such as water, roads, pensions, MGNREGA job cards, ration, housing, domestic violence, COVID-19 relief and vaccination. Fourth, social action by leveraging different institutions and platforms led to better convergence between MPSRLM supported institutions and

institutions of governance and administration such as Panchayats, Janpads, police stations and hospitals. This was even more consolidated after the establishment of LAK which enabled immediate linkage of community women with line departments. Finally, it expanded the scope of the community institutional space beyond the domain of finance and livelihoods into platforms where gender and social issues were raised, discussed and resolved.

Given this shift in the scope of the community institutional spaces, many of the CLF OBs also showed increasing ability to lead meetings and set agenda. Office bearers also started asserting their role and demanding accountability from the Preraks and Samta Sakhis in reviewing the work done in the past month and in planning activities for the coming month. The best success stories in terms of individual empowerment have been that of Samta Sakhis. One of the key strategies of the program had been to invest in community leadership who would steer gender work through community institutional spaces. This strategy has certainly worked and Samta Sakhis i.e., the Gender CRPs have utilized CLF and VO spaces effectively to raise, discuss and act upon gender and social issues. Samta Sakhis have shown exemplary will, determination, courage and confidence in challenging gender norms and enabling rights and entitlements in their own lives and that of the community. They have been able to effect significant changes in their own lives such as decision making, sharing of household work, right to mobility, and right to property and land. They continued their work amidst the pandemic and even after project paused (April–August 2021). This shows their commitment and ownership of GJP and social change beyond the bounds of the project.

References

- ANI. (2020, August 21). 'Women of Sahariya, Bharia, Baiga tribes to get Rs 1,000 per month: Madhya Pradesh CM,' The Times of India. Retrieved November 6, 2021, from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhopal/women-of-sahariya-bharia-baiga-tribes-to-get-rs-1000-per-month-madhya-pradesh-cm/articleshow/77678159.cms>
- Batliwala, S. (2010). *Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud*. CREA.
- Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances. (n.d.). Madhya Pradesh State Pension Portal, Government of India. Retrieved November 6, 2021, from https://darp.gov.in/sites/default/files/MP%20State%20Pension%20Portal_0.pdf
- Department of Food and Public Distribution. (n.d.). Central Issue Price under NFSA, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India. Retrieved November 6, 2021, from <https://dfpd.gov.in/pds-cipunfsa.htm>
- Department of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection. (n.d.). Targetted Public Distribution System, Government of Madhya Pradesh. Retrieved November 6, 2021, from <http://food.mp.gov.in/en/targetted-public-distribution-system>
- IDinsight. (2021). *SWAYAM Process Evaluation, Round 1 Report, March 2021*. IDinsight and IWWAGE.
- Kochar, A., Barooah, B., Jain, C., Singh, G., Closepet, N., Narayanan, R., Sarkar, R. and Shah, R. (2020). *Impact Evaluation of the National Rural Livelihoods Project*, 3ie Impact Evaluation Report 128. New Delhi: International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.23846/NRLMIE128>
- National Food Security Act. (2013). Department of Food and Public Distribution, Government of India. Retrieved November 6, 2021, from <https://nfsa.gov.in/portal/NFSA-Act>
- National Rural Livelihoods Mission. (n.d.a). Dashboard, Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-NRLM, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. Retrieved October 29, 2021, from <https://nrlm.gov.in/dashboardForOuter.do?methodName=dashboard>
- National Rural Livelihoods Mission. (n.d.b). Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-NRLM, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. Retrieved October 29, 2021, from <https://aajeevika.gov.in/>
- PM Awas Yojana – Gramin. (n.d.). Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. Retrieved November 7, 2021, from <https://pmayg.nic.in/netiay/home.aspx#content>
- PM Jan Arogya Yojana. (n.d.). National Health Authority, Government of India. Retrieved November 7, 2021, from <https://pmjay.gov.in/about/pmjay>
- PM Kisan Samman Nidhi. (2021). Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India. Retrieved November 7, 2021, from <https://pmkisan.gov.in/#About>
- Sanyal, P, Rao, V., Majumdar, S. (2015). *Recasting Culture to Undo Gender: A Sociological Analysis of Jeevika in Rural Bihar, India*. Policy Research Working Paper; No. 7411. World Bank, Washington, DC. Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/22667>.
- Sengupta, N., & Uppal, R. (2020). *Exploring Gender Responsiveness of MPSRLM Institutions: A Formative Research Report*. New Delhi: International Center for Research on Women. Available at: <https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Exploring-Gender-Responsiveness-of-MPSRLM-Institutions-Formative-Research-Report.pdf>
- The Gazette of India. (2020, March 24). MGNREGA- State wise wage rate, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. Retrieved November 7, 2021, from https://nrega.nic.in/netnrega/writereaddata/Circulars/2410Wage_rate_notification_for_FY2020-21.pdf
- UN Women. (1997). *Gender Mainstreaming, Extract from Report of the Economic and Social Council, 1997*. Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs. Retrieved October 29, 2021, from <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/GMS.PDF>

Annexure 1

Results Framework

Activity	Output	Intermediary Outcome	Final Outcome	Underlying Assumption	Changes in COVID-19 Situation
Samta Sakhi training and Handholding by Master trainers	Number of Samta Sakhis trained	Samta Sakhis' knowledge and awareness about gender equality, rights and entitlements increase.		The training pedagogy and content as well as the handholding will lead to increased knowledge & awareness about these issues.	In the light of social distancing, the training pedagogy and frequency may change which may have effect on Samta Sakhis knowledge and awareness.
			Samta Sakhis use the increased knowledge and awareness to make positive changes in their own lives.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.The increased knowledge and awareness of Samta Sakhis will enable them to make changes in their own lives and households, irrespective of other circumstances. 2. A common characteristic of Samta Sakhis which is also a criterion of their selection, i.e., they are women who have experienced struggle and demonstrated resilience, will enable them to use this knowledge to make changes in their own lives. 	
		Samta Sakhis train other women as well as lead discussions through CLFs and VOs on the issues related to gender equality, rights and entitlements.	CLF and VO spaces become more gender responsive.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The training and hand holding received by Samta Sakhis build their capacities to effectively engage with CLF & VO members and conduct trainings. 2. Members of CLF and VOs will actively participate in these trainings and discussions and become sensitized through the process. 	The outcome of training of other women during CLF & VO may change depending on whether CLF & VO meetings happen regularly or face to face. The training might shift to smaller groups such as at the SHG level.

Activity	Output	Intermediary Outcome	Final Outcome	Underlying Assumption	Changes in COVID-19 Situation
		Samta Sakhis support and facilitate social action through individual accompaniment and collective action	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CLF and VO spaces become more gender responsive because of involvement in social action. 2. Convergence is achieved between collectives such as VO and CLF and other platforms such as Jansunwai, Gram Sabhas. 3. Community Women are able to access rights and entitlements. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CLF and VO members especially office bearers will actively participate in social action or at the least show interest in social action when it is undertaken. 2. Social action will involve and see positive response from other platforms such as Jansunwai and Gram Sabhas. 3. Women will raise issues requiring social action in VOs and CLF meetings or individually with Samta Sakhis. 4. The social action will lead to better access in terms of successful cases. 	The nature and modality of social action may undergo change. For instance: -Face to face interaction may reduce -Newer channels of communication may have to be established - Jansunvais/Gram Sabha meetings may become less frequent or there may be restriction on number of attendees
Samta Sakhi Review Reflection meeting	Number of Samta Sakhi review reflection meetings held		Samta Sakhis are able to reflect on work done and actively plan for future work.	The review reflection meetings provide a space to Samta Sakhis and ANANDI to engage in a facilitative reflection process that enables the Samta Sakhis to reflect, analyze and plan rather than just report.	
Samta Sakhi reporting and work plan discussion at CLF Meetings as well as signing of their monthly work reports by CLF OBs.	Number of work reports presented at CLF Meetings and signed off by CLF OBs		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establishing Samta Sakhis accountability (as CLF CRPs) to the CLF. 2. Increased ownership, involvement and responsiveness of the CLF office bearers towards the activities conducted by Samta Sakhis. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CLF office bearers will actively participate and respond to the Samta Sakhis during their monthly reporting. 	Assumption may change because method of reporting may change in the absence of face-to-face meeting
Discussion sessions with CLF Office Bearers (OBs) by ANANDI Project Team	Number of CLF OBs attended the discussion		CLF OBs begin to lead and facilitate discussions such as in CLF meetings and become more responsive to women's issues.	Discussion with CLF OBs will lead to capacity building of OBs to become gender responsive and lead discussions in meetings.	
Establishing Lok Adhikar Kendras (LAK)	Number of LAK established in Sheopur district		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LAK is utilized by women to demand their rights and entitlements. 2. LAK helps in creating a convergence between MPSRLM supported collectives and Block level Line Departments 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rural women are aware of LAK. 2. Rural women will directly approach the LAK to access their rights and entitlements. 3. The Line department officials will positively respond to the issues raised through the LAK. 	

Activity	Output	Intermediary Outcome	Final Outcome	Underlying Assumption	Changes in COVID-19 Situation
Regular meetings with DAY-NRLM & MPSRLM	Number of review meetings held with DAY-NRLM & MPSRLM		The mandate is built for the program and there is an increased ownership, involvement and responsiveness of DAY-NRLM & MPSRLM towards the project activities.	Active engagement of all stakeholders.	
Regular review and reflection meetings with DMMU & PFT	Number of review and reflection meetings held with DMMU & PFT		Increased ownership, involvement and responsiveness of DMMU & PFT toward project activities.	Active engagement of all stakeholders.	
Gender Training of MPSRLM Staff	Number of MPSRLM staff trained		Increased knowledge, improved perspectives and gender responsiveness of the MPSRLM staff.	MPSRLM staff will integrate their learnings in their regular activities.	State priorities will differ in the COVID-19 situation. Training schedule and pedagogy may undergo change.
Gender training of CLF & VO members during MPSRLM organized trainings at CTC	1.Number of trainings conducted at CTC 2.Number of CLF & VO members trained in the CTC trainings		1. Trust, visibility, mutuality and sustainability are created and strengthened by supporting MPSRLM in their other activities. 2. Increased awareness and knowledge of CLF & VO members on issues of gender equality, women's rights & entitlements.	The DMMU & PFT team will support ANANDI to conduct sessions during the CTC training.	CTC training may be stalled for some time or organized with lesser number of participants.
ANANDI's contribution to MPSRLM SOPs, Protocols and Gender Action Plans	ANANDI contributes to number of MPSRLM SOPs, Protocols and Gender Action Plans		1. Integrating gender lens in the processes and protocols of the MPSRLM. 2. Trust, visibility and mutuality are strengthened by supporting MPSRLM in their other activities. 3. Capacity building of MPSRLM staff to systematically respond to women's concerns/ gender issues.	Active engagement of all stakeholders.	

Annexure 2

Details of Primary Data Collection

Tools for Data Collection	DAY-NRLM/ MPS-RLM Officials	ANANDI/ IWWAGE Senior/Project Staff	Samta Sakhi	Leaders & Members of Community Institution	Total
KIs	DAY-NRLM-1 IWWAGE-3	ANANDI-5 MPSRLM-1	Samta Sakhi-5		15
FGDs	DMMU-1 BMMU (Sheopur Block and Karhal Block) -2		Samta Sakhi-4	CLF Office Bearers (Sheopur Block and Karhal Block)-6 CLF (SAC)- 4	17
IDIs		ANANDI Master Trainer-2	Samta Sakhi-11	Stakeholder Social Action-4	17
Online consultations		ANANDI Project Team-8			8
Telephonic /Online Participant Observations	DAY-NRLM/ MPSRLM Review Meetings-5 MPSRLM State Workshops-1			Samta Sakhi Huddle calls- 4	10
Total					67

Details of Primary Data Collection

Participant Observation- VO/CLF Meeting Attended in Person						
S.No	Date	VO/Village/CLF Meeting	VO Name	Village Name	CLF Name	Block
1	28-Jan-20	VO	Balaji	Basond	Pragati	Sheopur
2	29-Jan-20	Village		Bardha Khurd	Annapurna	Karhal
3	30-Jan-20	CLF			Sagar	Sheopur
4	01-Feb-20	VO/Village	Jal Jivan	Gurunavda	Sagar	Sheopur
5	03-Feb-20	VO	Shakti	Pandadi	Tulsi	Sheopur
6	05-Feb-20	CLF			Pragati	Sheopur
7	17-Feb-20	Village	Parvati	Kalmunda	Pragati	Sheopur
8	19-Feb-20	Village	Silpuri	Silpuri	Vishwas	Karhal
9	19-Feb-20	Village	Ameth	Ameth	Vishwas	Karhal
10	20-Feb-20	CLF			Tulsi	Sheopur

Annexure 3

Social Action Cases

The Annexure presents a detailed list of some of the social action cases supported and/or led by Samta Sakhis. These are arranged by type and all names have been changed for confidentiality purposes.

1. Response to COVID-19

- I **Reporting on stranded migrants:** A Samta Sakhi informed the Sarpanch about 42 agricultural migrant workers stranded in Jaipur which was then reported to the MLA. The MLA arranged for their transport. Another Samta Sakhi informed ANANDI about a group of 90 migrant workers stranded in different parts of Rajasthan and ANANDI contacted the Right to Food Campaign and arranged food kits for the workers.
- II **Support to Returnee Migrants:** A Samta Sakhi informed ASHA workers about a group of migrant workers who had returned and sent them to PHC for medical examination. In another instance, seven families had walked from Jaipur and did not have any food supplies. The neighbours helped for the first week and then a Samta Sakhi reported their problem to a PDS shop. The next day itself, the PDS shop got the supplies and distributed these to the families.
- III. **Medical screening and quarantine for migrants:** A Samta Sakhi ensured that her own relative who travelled back on foot to her village got a medical check-up and stayed in quarantine for 14 days. A master trainer narrated that along with the bookkeeper and the PHC staff, a Samta Sakhi conducted a door-to-door survey in her own village to find out if anyone has come back from the cities and has COVID 19 symptoms. They shared this list of migrant workers with the VO leaders and Panchayat members.
- IV. **Health cards:** In a meeting of Shakti CLF, Samta Sakhis stressed the need of Swasthya (health) card, especially in the context of COVID-19. When they realized that many women did not have a health card, the Samta Sakhis and CLF President decided that this should be taken up in a campaign mode and every member should prepare a list of people without cards in their village. After the meeting, the Samta Sakhis assigned a computer operator to help the people in filling up forms in their villages. The process is currently underway.
- V. **Ensuring people have Job Cards and work under MGNREGA:** As some of the lockdown restrictions were eased in Lockdown (04-17th May) and MGNREGA work was permitted, some Samta Sakhis helped in enlisting the people who did not have Job Cards, especially the returnee migrants and shared the list with their Panchayats and helped them avail it. Samta Sakhis also submitted written applications to the Panchayat demanding work under MGNREGA in villages where the MGNREGA work had not started.
- VI. **Monitoring safety and sanitization:** One of the Samta Sakhis who is also a Sarpanch, did *naka-bandi* at all the entry/exit points to her village. She took help of SHG/VO members and two women sat at each checkpoint and enquired the purpose of visit of any person coming into the village. If the person was a returnee migrant, then he/she was asked to go to the Panchayat Bhavan for a 14-day quarantine. The quarantined persons were also provided food during their stay. She also bought sanitizer machines and whenever a vehicle entered the village, it was disinfected at the point of entry point.
- VII. **COVID Vaccination and Awareness:** Samta Sakhis have actively worked in both the Blocks and across CLFs to counsel eligible people to get vaccinated. There were a lot of apprehensions among the people regarding the vaccine and the Samta Sakhis guided the community members. In

one instance, one Samta Sakhi took the vaccine herself to demonstrate to others that it is not unsafe. In Tulsi CLF, two Samta Sakhis successfully counselled 29 people to get the first dose of COVID vaccine. Many Samta Sakhis were involved in a variety of activities like getting medical support for the patients, giving duty at the vaccination centres, conducted survey and played an important role in raising awareness about preventive measures. One Samta Sakhi got women together to make 500 masks and distributed them in the villages.

VIII. Responding to growing domestic violence

cases: Samta Sakhis played a critical role in responding to growing domestic violence cases and also reported cases where women attempted suicides. Women from the village also approached Samta Sakhis for their help. In turn, Samta Sakhis informed VO leaders and Panchayat members in order to support the survivors. Sometimes they spoke directly to the family members of survivors. They stayed in constant touch with the survivors to support their recovery and monitor a violence free environment. The ANANDI project team shared an incident when a Samta Sakhi stood by her relative who was stuck in Rajasthan with her abusive in-laws due to COVID. She helped the woman's natal family to bring her back from Rajasthan. Currently, the survivor is living with her parents and the family has filed a police complaint.

IX. Dispelling rumors and ensuring communal harmony:

During COVID, messages with communal overtones were being circulated in the villages creating a situation of fear and animosity between communities. A few Samta Sakhis were approached by VO leaders, and they countered these fake messages and dispelled the rumors that held a specific community accountable for spreading the virus. They explained to villagers that there is no relation between religion and disease and that it can happen to any human being. They also reassured members from the minority community that the village is home to all people, and each will support the other.

X. Support at PDS Shops and Access and Distribution of Ration:

The Samta Sakhis have played a pivotal role regarding food security in their villages. They have supported the distribution of ration and have also highlighted the plight of families without access to ration. In such cases, Samta Sakhis along with VO leaders have expedited

the process through which these families could access ration. They have also accompanied women for ration collection and organized queues for distribution following physical distancing measures.

XI. Support at Banks and disbursement of cash transfer:

Samta Sakhis have also helped in organizing queues in front of banks with the help of different methods such as using ropes, making circles on the ground and by asking people to keep a distance between themselves. In Karhal, some people had set up a Kiosk to disburse cash transfers to people and were charging Rs.100-200 per transaction. The Samta Sakhis came to know about it and the issue was reported to the CEO immediately. In a village in Sheopur, the Gram Panchayat Secretary arranged for the Bank Correspondent to come with a micro-ATM to help people get the cash they had received under Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) schemes of the government. The Secretary did not disburse funds to all the villagers, who then approached the Samta Sakhi. The Samta Sakhi and the VO leaders talked to the Panchayat and through their collective effort, the money was disbursed to everyone. In a similar case, after disbursing cash to a few customers, the Panchayat Secretary withdrew all the cash amount of the remaining people and promised to distribute the money later. When 40 people did not receive their cash transfer, they sought the help of Samta Sakhi. Together with the VO members, she talked to the Sarpanch and decided to escalate the complaint to the Block CEO and Collector. Fearing official action against him, the Panchayat Secretary apologised for his mistake and disbursed the rest of the cash.

2. Access to Services- Water, Roads and Street lights, Medical Services, Waste Disposal

A. Water

- I. In the first VO meeting in Mujari, a remote village in Karhal Block, women complained of low water level in the hand pump. They had to travel far to the river to get water and the water was not even clean or potable. This problem was raised at the Janpad office by the Samta Sakhis but is yet to be resolved and is being following up by the Samta Sakhis.

- II. In Karhal Block, during the VO meeting of Nimaniya village, the problem of water supply was raised by women. The Samta Sakhi guided the members to write an application and submit it to the Panchayat. She spoke to the Sachiv and shared the problems faced by the women. Subsequently, the Panchayat started the work on borewells. Later, the women called up the Samta Sakhi to thank her and tell her that the water situation has improved. The Sachiv of Nimaniya village also visited the LAK and told the Samta Sakhis and Master Trainer that he had resolved the issue in the village.
- III. In Khirkhiri village of Karhal block, women were facing issues with water supply. The Samta Sakhi who belonged to the same village advised the members to write an application and it was submitted to the Panchayat and the problem was resolved.
- IV. In Bijarpur village of Sheopur Block, water supply problems plagued the women continuously. The Samta Sakhi visited the Panchayat on her own, but the officials did not listen to her. Later, she mobilized more women and then looking at the group, the Panchayat decided to initiate action and solved the water problem.
- V. In Silori village in Karhal Block, women raised concern of water constraint during the VO meeting under Viswas CLF. The women had to travel to the nearest village to fetch water. Samta Sakhis advised members to take the Preraks' help in writing an application and submit it to the Sarpanch. However, the Prerak refused to help the women. Even when the Samta Sakhis and Master Trainer discussed this with the Prerak, he refused in fear of souring his relation with the Sarpanch and Secretary. Then the Samta Sakhis suggested the VO members to visit the Panchayat without the application to raise their complaint. The case will be followed up in the next month's VO meeting.
- VI. In Sahpura village in Sheopur Block, during a VO meeting under the Pragati CLF, women raised the issue of drinking water in the adivasi basti. The VO members took the Preraks' help in writing the application and submitted it to the Panchayat. The Samta Sakhi followed-up the case in the next VO meeting, but the borewell repair work was still incomplete. The VO members were advised to check with the Secretary and Sarpanch who informed them that they can send the borewell machine the same day and asked the members to select a location for it. The Samta Sakhi along with VO members selected a site for the borewell and the work was done. Once the motor is installed, it will become functional.
- VII. In Jedda village in Sheopur Block, women raised the problem of drinking water during the VO meeting under the Sagar CLF. The village had two tubewells provided by the Panchayat but one was not functional. The other one had been taken over by a man who resided near the tubewell and did not allow women from Adivasi and Bairwa community to collect water from there. Women had to pay Rs. 250 every time to take water from a private tubewell. The Samta Sakhis suggested a visit to the Panchayat and the VO members shared their problem with the Panchayat Secretary. The latter promised that he will initiate the repair work for the faulty tubewell and also accompanied the women to the man's house who had taken over the tubewell. He reprimanded the man for capturing Panchayat's property and made it clear that everyone in the village has access to water from this tubewell. The repair work on the faulty tubewell is currently underway.
- VIII. One Samta Sakhi reported that her village was suffering from water problems for four long years since the government provided tap was dysfunctional and the villagers had to rely on someone else's borewell. Even the river was too far away, and it was really difficult to get drinking water, water for the animals and other purposes. She spoke to the Sarpanch but nothing happened. Then she called the women from the village for a meeting at the Panchayat Bhavan. She mobilized around 10-20 women and prepared an application with the help of the Prerak and they submitted the application in the Jansunvai.
- IX. In Kanderkheda village, there was no public tubewell and women had to go another village to get water. When this was raised in a VO meeting, the Samta Sakhi guided the women to write an application with the help of the book-keeper and submit it in the Panchayat. Within 10 days, public tubewells were dug in the village and the women got access to water.

B. Roads and Street Lights

- I. A Samta Sakhi was travelling to village Mudavla Pada in Sheopur Block in her car and saw the poor condition of the road. During the VO meeting, she asked the members if they had approached the

Panchayat with the problem, since it was very risky during emergencies. The members told her that the Panchayat officials dismissed their complaint. The Samta Sakhi went to speak to the Panchayat officials along with the VO members. When she visited the village the next time, the Panchayat had resolved the issue and a pakka (concrete) road was in place.

- II. In Dalarna Khurd village, there was a serious concern about the lack of streetlights in the village corner where there was an alcohol shop. There was fear about the safety of young girls and women who had to pass through the area at night in complete darkness. The Samta Sakhi and VO members together decided to go to the Panchayat with their demand for a streetlight. The Panchayat members agreed to this request and now a streetlight pole has been erected in the area and the area is well-lit.

C. Medical Facilities

- I. A Samta Sakhi was told about a woman who was experiencing labour pains and was completely alone at home. Upon hearing this, the Samta Sakhi immediately visited her and called the ambulance. She took the pregnant woman to the hospital and stayed with her till she delivered her child.
- II. In Ranipura village of Karhal Block, an Anganwadi worker identified two severely malnourished children but their parents were not ready to admit them at the Nutrition Rehabilitation Centre (NRC). The Anganwadi worker reached out to the Samta Sakhi and requested her to convince the family members. The Samta Sakhi visited the families and convinced them to send their children to NRC. She also gave them Rs. 100 for transportation to the Anganwadi.
- III. During discussion on Swasthya card in a VO meeting, two women from Amalda village of Sheopur Block shared their medical problems. They had to incur heavy expenses for any treatment which they were unable to afford. On the advice of the Samta Sakhi, the VO President gave the women loans for their medical needs.
- IV. In Karhal Block, Shakti CLF, a Samta Sakhi counselled a family to send their child to the NRC. During a meeting at the Anganwadi, she heard about a child who was malnourished, but the family had reservations about sending the child to the NRC. After the Samta Sakhi explained the importance of nutrition, the family agreed to send their child.

- V. In Chainpura village of Karhal Block, Annapurna CLF, a Samta Sakhi took two women to the hospital for their delivery as they did not have any family member to accompany them.
- VI. After attending a meeting at Shakti CLF, a Samta Sakhi saw a pregnant woman from Patonda village suddenly having labour pains on the way to a bank. The Samta Sakhi, along with ANANDI team members, took the pregnant woman to the Karhal hospital where the woman had her delivery. The Samta Sakhi found out that the sub-health centre in Patonda village has long been dysfunctional. She talked to the concerned doctor and Panchayat officials to reopen the sub-health centre in Patonda and ensured water and electricity supply. The centre is fully functional now and also caters to medical needs of nearby villages.
- VII. The sub-health center of Khirkhiri village was closed for a very long time and this was raised in the VO meeting. Drawing from a similar problem earlier faced in Patonda village, the Samta Sakhis told the women to write an application and give it to the Panchayat. Along with the Samta Sakhi who belonged to the same village, they started visiting the Panchayat regularly to follow-up on their application. Due to their persistent efforts, the officials reopened the centre.

D. Waste Disposal

- I. During a VO meeting in Lehchoda village of Sagar CLF, women discussed the lack of any proper space for waste disposal in their village. People used to throw their waste everywhere creating unhygienic conditions. All the VO members went to the Panchayat officials and asked them to provide a designated space to throw their garbage. The very next day, the Panchayat identified a barren piece of land which was turned into a waste disposal site.

3. Access to Schemes and Entitlements

A. Pension- Disability Pension, Widow Pension, Elderly Pension

- I. In Silori village of Karhal Block, a Samta Sakhi assisted a woman in getting her disability certificate and subsequently her disability pension.

The Samta Sakhi accompanied the woman to Sheopur Hospital for her certificate and later helped her in filling up forms for the pension. Using a similar process, a Samta Sakhi helped a couple in Ratodan village of Sheopur Block in accessing their disability pension.

- II. In Pandadi village of Sheopur Block, a recent widowed woman was struggling to get her widow pension and also her husband's insurance money. The Samta Sakhi along with VO OBs coordinated with the Sarpanch to get her certificate and fill the form to link her with the widow pension scheme. The widow will start receiving her pension soon. The issue of insurance was raised in the CLF and the Bank Mitra from the CLF helped the woman in filling the relevant documents in the bank and it is still under process.
- III. In Rudi village of Sheopur Block, a woman was not getting her elderly pension because her identification documents were under different names. The Samta Sakhi helped the woman in getting the identification documents in order and now she has started receiving her pension.
- IV. In Hamenta village, Samta Sakhis got to know of a disabled couple; the husband had access to his disability pension but not the woman. The Samta Sakhi discussed it with the CLF Nodal officer and immediately Rs. 20,000 was provided to the woman.
- V. In Silpuri village in Karhal Block, Vishwas CLF, during a VO meeting, three women said that they did not have access to disability pension. The Janpad Adhyaksh was also present in the meeting but she also did not know the procedure to apply for pension. The Samta Sakhi and Master Trainer shared the process with the members and also asked the women to come to LAK to fill up their forms. They also took them to the hospital for their disability certificate and the case is still under process. The Master Trainer also shared the details of the procedure with the Janpad Adhyaksh and helped her understand her duties.
- VI. During a SHG meeting in Pandadi village under Tulsi CLF of Sheopur Block, a physically challenged person requested for help in accessing his disability pension. The Samta Sakhi and SHG

members approached the Panchayat where they asked for his disability card. The Samta Sakhi then accompanied the person to the hospital and got his disability card. After submitting the card to the Panchayat, he got a tricycle for moving around and was linked to the pension scheme.

- VII. In Karyadeh village of Karhal Block, the Sachiv took a disabled man and woman to the hospital for their disability certificate but the hospital authorities mistreated them and sent them back. The Samta Sakhi took them to the Sheopur hospital and found out that the doctor had left for the day but his house was within the hospital premises. They got a wheelchair and visited the doctor at his house along with the family members of the disabled man and woman. The doctor behaved very rudely and called the Samta Sakhi uneducated and wanted to know her relationship with the disabled. The Samta Sakhi told him that they had come for help since they were not educated; the doctor despite all his education was misbehaving with them while they were treating him respectfully. They went back to the hospital but the doctor came to the hospital to look for them and helped them with filling up the form even after office hours. Then the doctor asked the Samta Sakhi about their work and expressed his appreciation. The disabled man and woman got their certificate. They were also successfully linked with the disability pension scheme.
- VIII. Two Samta Sakhis saw a man walking with the help of crutches on a bus. The conductor asked him for money for the bus ticket. They felt bad and paid for his ticket and found out that he had no idea about disability certificate. They told him the process and offered their help. Later, they connected him with the right person through whom he got his disability certificate from the office at Pohari Village.
- IX. An eighty-year-old woman, who was barely able to walk, went to the Janpad office with her son. She had visited the Janpad repeatedly as she stopped receiving her old-age pension since last one year but the peons did not let her meet the officials. She asked for help from the Samta Sakhis at the Lok Adhikar Kendra. The Samta Sakhis took her documents to the concerned officials in Janpad where they found out that her bank account was closed due to which she did not receive her pension. Then her son reactivated her bank account and she started receiving her pension again.

B. Entitlements and Identity Cards- Aadhar Card, Swasthya Card

- I. In the Karhal Block, Samta Sakhis helped women from Patonda and Karyadeh village to get their Aadhar cards. They visited the application centers with the women and got their cards made.
- II. Samta Sakhis helped 50 people in Kalni village of Karhal block to get their Swasthya (health) cards.

C. Kuposhan se Jang scheme

- I. In Annapurna CLF of Karhal Block, a Samta Sakhi found out that some women were not getting money under the 'Kuposhan se Jang' scheme. She took these women to the Panchayat and submitted an application. The verification process is currently underway.
- II. During a VO training in Khurd village, 9 women shared that were not receiving benefits under the 'Kuposhan se Jang ka Paisa' since three months. The Samta Sakhis along with the women raised this issue with the Sachiv but there was no action. The women came to the Sheopur LAK to register their case and within an hour of the women reaching the LAK, the Sachiv also reached. He said that he would resolve the case as he did not want it to be escalated. The women were then given the option to decide whether they want to register their case at LAK, or take it to the Jansunvai or allow the Sachiv to handle it. The women decided to let the case stay with the Sachiv who then resolved the issue and the women started receiving the money under the scheme.

D. Ration Card and Khadyan Parchi

- I. In Napakhedi village of Sheopur Block, a Samta Sakhi helped four families access Khadyan Parchi. She took up the issue with the Panchayat, helped them to fill their forms and the families will get the Parchi soon.
- II. In Dalarna Khurd village, a Samta Sakhi got to know that 12 families had ration card, but they were not getting ration. When she raised the issue in the Panchayat, she was told that they have to go to the Collector's office. She took the concerned families to the Janpad CEO who called the ration shop owner, Sarpanch, Panchayat Secretary. It was decided that new BPL ration cards will be prepared for these families and application forms were filled.

To ensure that they get ration in the meantime, a food coupon (khadyan parchi) was given to them based on which they can get ration. They are accessing ration with the khadyan parchi and waiting for their BPL ration cards.

- III. A similar case of APL ration card was reported in Patapara Village, where 15 families had APL cards. The Samta Sakhi visited the Sachiv with these families and got their forms filled for BPL cards through which they can get ration. She had made sure that they get the ration card in the name of the women of the house.
- IV. In Nanavad village, some women visited the Panchayat with their application for Khadyan Parchi but the Panchayat members did not pay them any heed. When the issue was raised in the meeting, the SHG members went to the Panchayat together. The Panchayat heard their complaint and also filed application for the Parchis for 21 families. Out of that 11 families had already received the Parchi and the rest will get it soon.
- V. In a VO training under Sagar CLF in Lehchoda village, five women requested Samta Sakhi to help them to get ration card. The Samta Sakhi also found out that 17 Muslim families were without ration cards and prepared a list of all such families. She took them to Sheopur Janpad office and shared the issue with the concerned official. The official immediately contacted the Panchayat officials and ration shop-owner. Then the Samta Sakhi took the families to Panchayat to fill up the form for ration card in the woman's name. They got Khadyan Parchi (food coupon) and their ration card is being processed.

4. Violence

- I. In Chainpura village of Karhal Block, a woman was abused by her in-laws after her husband's death and she came back with her children to her maternal house. However, her own brother also ill-treated her and did not let them stay. She started staying with a Samta Sakhi who helped her to get khadyan parchi and file a police report. The case is being processed.
- II. In Jwalapur village of Sheopur Block, a widow was harassed by her in-laws and forced out of the house. A Samta Sakhi went to meet the woman at her brother's place where she was staying. The

woman wanted to claim her share of property from the in-laws. The Samta Sakhi raised this issue in the VO and then at the Panchayat level. Currently, the case is still being followed-up by the Samta Sakhi.

- III. In Premsar, a woman was subjected to physical violence by her husband. She started staying with her parents and reached out to a Samta Sakhi. The Samta Sakhi and the Master trainer told her about the legal options available and a report was filed at the police station. Then the husband apologized and signed a paper in front of the police saying that he will never commit violence again. The woman started staying with her husband and there was no further incidence of violence.
- IV. In Soi Kala village, a woman tried to commit suicide by consuming poison due to problems with her in-laws and had to be hospitalized. After a Samta Sakhi along with CLF members intervened to support her, the husband and wife started staying separately from her in-laws and the woman is in good mental and physical health.
- V. In Pragati CLF of Sheopur Block, Samta Sakhi Neha was subjected to physical abuse by her drug addict husband who took away her phone. The VO members talked to her husband and retrieved her phone. The Samta Sakhi went to her parent's house and discussed her plight at the CLF meeting. With the support of VO members, she confronted her husband. She told him that they had equal status and violence was not acceptable. The husband apologized for his actions.
- VI. In Bhilwada village under Tulsi CLF of Sheopur Block, a woman reported her husband's abusive behaviour during a VO meeting. After the VO members and Samta Sakhis talked to her husband, the physical abuse stopped but mental harassment persisted. The Samta Sakhis and VO members visited the husband again and provided support to the woman.
- VII. In Dhoti village under Tulsi CLF of Sheopur Block, a woman's in-laws abused her repeatedly. When this was raised in a VO meeting, the VO members talked to the woman's in-laws but that did not resolve the problem. A Samta Sakhi took the woman to the LAK and registered a case at the one stop center. The family members were called in and they reached an understanding. The VO SAC members continue to follow up with the woman.
- VIII. Nirmal, a member of the Tulsi CLF was abused by her husband for 15 long years. He suspected her when she started going out for CLF work though she explained the nature of her work. Finally, she contacted the Master Trainer who along with the Samta Sakhis helped her to file a complaint in Sheopur Police Station. The Samta Sakhis also put pressure on her husband by saying that Nirmal had the support of the entire collective. The police asked Nirmal if she wanted a divorce, but her parents advised against it as she had two small children. The husband signed a paper promising never to hit her again in the police station. Nirmal began to live peacefully with her husband and Samta Sakhis followed-up to check on her well-being.
- IX. During a VO meeting under Pragati CLF of Sheopur Block, a domestic violence case was raised. The woman ran away from her in-law's family in Rajasthan and came to live with her parents in Sheopur after her father-in-law sexually harassed her. Her husband told her that she should do as his father says. She went with a Samta Sakhi to LAK where her case was registered with the one stop center. Following the centre's advice, a lawyer was hired, and the woman demanded a divorce and all her dowry back. The case is still ongoing.
- X. An Anganwadi worker in Masavani village was physically abused by her husband and father-in-law. She came to live with her parents in Khirkhiri village but her Aadhar and Pan card were in Masavani. When she went to retrieve the documents with her parents, they were threatened by the husband who refused to give her documents back. The woman did not file a police case as she was afraid. Then she met a Samta Sakhi in Khirkhiri who took her to LAK and the LAK gave the responsibility of the case to the Samta Sakhi as she was from the same village. The Samta Sakhi involved the powerful mukhiya of the tribal village and all of them accompanied the woman to Masavani. The Samta Sakhi also registered a complaint with the police on the way and took the police along with them. Due to the presence of the police, the husband returned all the documents and even the dowry to the Anganwadi worker.
- XI. In Purachorkala village in Karhal Block, four families had to run away from the village as the mukhiya tried to capture their land. He also entered their houses in the night in a drunken state and harassed the women. The Sarpanch and the Patwari did not listen to the families who

took refuge in a nearby village. On learning about the case, the Master Trainer and Samta Sakhi of the Vishwas CLF took them to the LAK in Karhal. The Patwari was called to LAK and he confirmed that the land legally belonged to the families. The families decided to stay in the new village but farm on their land in the old village. The Samta Sakhi advised them to file a police complaint in case there are further problems posed by the mukhiya.

5. Caste and Gender Discrimination

- I. A Samta Sakhi saw a female Anganwadi worker sitting on the ground and the male Panchayat secretary sitting on a chair during a meeting. She told them about ANANDI's training on gender discrimination. She asked the Anganwadi worker to sit on the chair as well. The secretary
- appreciated her for spreading awareness on women's equal rights.
- II. In a school in Karhal block, the mid-day meals were cooked by a tribal woman. Only the tribal children ate at the school and all the other children from non-tribal families went back home for their meals. The Samta Sakhi from the same village talked to the teacher and children to explain that tribals are no different from or inferior to non-tribals. After understanding about the ills of caste based discrimination, the non-tribal children talked to their parents who then allowed their children to eat at the school with the tribal children.
- III. Samta Sakhis told the Janpad CEO of Karhal block that women are not allowed to wear slippers in their village. The CEO visited the village along with the Samta Sakhis and told the men that a woman has the right to wear slippers anywhere.



Photo Credit : Pradeep Gaur/Shutterstock

Annexure 4

Excerpt from DAY-NRLM MIS Related to FNHW and Social Development

FNHW and Social Development	
9.1	No of SHGs oriented on FNHW
9.2	No of Households covered under FNHW
9.3	No of SHGs practicing Dashasutri
9.4	Total number of Social Action Committee members in the VOs
9.5	Number of SAC members oriented / trained on FNHW and gender
9.6	Number of SHG-member households with PDS / FSA ration cards (including AAY)
9.7	Number of SHG-member households that have functional toilet
9.8	Number of SHG-member households that were enrolled/renewed health insurance
9.9	Number of SHG-Woman households that redeemed health insurance benefits
9.10	Number of SHG-Woman households that were enrolled into PMJJY insurance
9.11	Number of SHG-Woman households that were enrolled into PMSBY insurance
9.12	Number of SHG-Woman households that redeemed benefit under PMJJY
9.13	Number of SHG-Woman households that redeemed benefit under PMSBY
9.14	Number of SHG members that accessed loans for health purposes
9.15	Amount of loan accessed by SHG member for health (in Rs.)
9.16	Number of deliveries conducted
9.17	Number of institutional deliveries conducted
9.18	Number of children to be immunized
9.19	Number of children immunized as per schedule
9.20	Number of children born with less than 2.5kg weight (LBW)
9.21	Number of Social Action Committee (SAC) Members of VO participating in VHND

Notes

[illegible]



ICRW Asia

Module No 410, Fourth Floor
NSIC Business Park Building
Okhla Industrial Estate
New Delhi – 110020, India
Tel: 91.11.46643333
E-mail: info.india@icrw.org

 www.icrw.org/asia

 [@ICRWAsia](https://www.facebook.com/ICRWAsia)

 [@ICRWAsia](https://twitter.com/ICRWAsia)

ICRW US

1120 20th St NW, Suite 500 North,
Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel: 202.797.0007
E-mail: info@icrw.org

 www.icrw.org

 [@ICRWDC](https://www.facebook.com/ICRWDC)

 [@ICRW](https://twitter.com/ICRW)