



ग्रामीण विकास मंत्रालय  
भारत सरकार  
**MINISTRY OF RURAL  
DEVELOPMENT**  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



# Proceedings of 5th Gender Samvaad

## Strengthening Response Mechanisms to address Gender-Based Violence



06 September 2024

## Event Summary of the Fifth Gender Samvaad

### Welcome Address- Ms. Radha Chellappa, Executive Director, IWWAGE

The Fifth Gender Samvaad began with a welcome address by Ms Radha Chellappa, Executive Director, Institute for What Works to Advance Gender Equality (IWWAGE) who highlighted the pivotal role of the Deendayal Antodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), State Rural Livelihoods Mission (SRLM), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and especially gender champions from Self Help Groups (SHGs) in fostering gender transformation at the grassroots level. Gender Samvaad serves as a platform for sharing experiences of women from community institutions across India, documenting their challenges in confronting gender stereotypes and norms, and their efforts in creating meaningful changes for themselves and the future generations.



Each Gender Samvaad has been carefully designed to spotlight critical social issues, including Gender Transformative Livelihoods, SRLM best practices in COVID-19 response and recovery, Food and Nutrition Security initiatives taken by SRLMs and SHG members, community-based strategies to address Gender-Based Violence (GBV) under DAY-NRLM. This year, the Fifth Gender Samvaad focused on 'Strengthening Response Mechanisms to Address Gender-Based Violence,' highlighting the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) and DAY-NRLM initiatives to amplify women's voices, choices, and agency in the fight against GBV.

### Context Setting- Prof. Asha Kapur Mehta, Chairperson, Centre for Gender Studies, IHD and Retired Professor, IIPA

Prof. Aasha Kapur Mehta, who moderated the Samvaad, outlined the discussion's objectives: to deepen understanding of the achievements and challenges faced by experts, policymakers, and gender champions in addressing gender norms and stereotypes around GBV. These platforms not only showcase DAY-NRLM's gender initiatives but also provide valuable co-learning opportunities, encouraging states to adopt best practices. Prof. Mehta emphasized that GBV is not just a women's issue but a human rights violation as well. Women community institutions, directly confronting these challenges, offer critical insights into how response mechanisms can be strengthened. She invited Mr Charanjit Singh, Additional Secretary, Rural Livelihood, Ministry of Rural Development, to deliver his opening remarks.

### Keynote Address- Shri Charanjit Singh, Additional Secretary, RL Ministry of Rural Development

Shri Charanjit Singh, highlighted poverty as a multidimensional issue that encompassed not only economic challenges but also social factors like discrimination and violence against women. He stressed that empowering the poor to address poverty themselves has always been the focus and that DAY-NRLM has been instrumental in raising awareness and mobilizing women. The SHG movement has mobilised 10-crore households into more than 90 lakh SHGs nationwide, linking them with livelihoods, financial inclusion and other community-centric issues.



Shri Singh underscored the importance of Gender Samvaads as platforms to raise awareness on GBV- defining what constitutes violence and outlining reporting mechanisms that address the issue. This knowledge equips communities, especially women, with vital tools to address GBV.

In addressing GBV, MoRD has established extensive support structures: **22 lakh gender point persons in SHGs across the country, 78,000 gender Community Resource Persons (CRP), 1.61 lakh social action committees (with 1.44 lakh at village level and 19,000 at the cluster level), and 51,000 gender forums at the Panchayat (34,000) and block level (17,000).** Looking ahead, MoRD envisions gender forums in every block and panchayat, with CLFs receiving ongoing training on gender issues in the next few years. Shri Singh concluded by underscoring that India's vision of a developed nation (Viksit Bharat) by 2047 can be only realised through women-led development, which needs to be aligned across various initiatives, programs and ministries. Convergence between the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Women and Child Development and Ministry of Law and Justice with the Ministry of Rural Development is crucial. With the support of the Department of Justice, SHGs could play a crucial role in spreading legal awareness to combat GBV injustices.

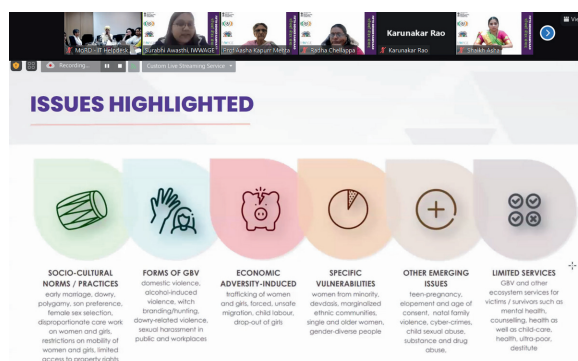
## Reflections of Nayi Chetna: Experiences from the field to address GBV

Ms Surabhi Awasthi from IWWAGE and Ms Madhu Khetan from PRADAN jointly presented on the Nayi Chetna campaign, which was launched in November, 2022. They shared insights from a qualitative and quantitative assessment of this national gender campaign, supported by a comprehensive documentation. This year's theme, **“Sahenge Nahi, Kahenge, Chuppi Todenge”** (We Will Not Endure; We Will Speak Up, Break the Silence), focused on raising awareness about GBV and increasing reporting. The assessment aimed to inform future expansion, highlight the collective strength of SHGs in driving the campaign's success, and make recommendations.

Ms. Awasthi highlighted that the primary objective of the Nayi Chetna campaign is to boost awareness of GBV and increase reporting. Conducted across 10 states, the campaign engaged both the elders and the youth to explore intergenerational dynamics around gender-based conflicts. **This approach is crucial, as the campaign targets not only women's concerns but also men's, aiming to address GBV across generations. It emphasizes the need for re-engineering the program's design to meet the needs of diverse age groups through capacity building and community engagement.**

Field reflections from the campaign reveal a shift from private conversations around GBV to more open dialogue, which has never happened before. Conservative elders and younger generations were involved in community discussions through group activities, which offered a platform to address and potentially resolve intergenerational conflicts. Activities utilised public spaces, **including rallies and rangoli competitions at panchayat offices**, which sparked curiosity and fostered a broader understanding of GBV.

The campaign has now completed two years, showing notable improvement in outcomes. An increasing number of women now recognize their right to own property, and there has been a positive shift in women's perception of household violence by in-laws and husbands. These insights emphasise the importance of strengthening response mechanisms and using community engagement to enhance women's voice, agency and collective power. These insights emphasise the importance of strengthening response mechanisms and using community engagement to enhance women's voice, agency and collective power.



Data from the MIS portal further reveals that the critical role of Village Organizations (VO) in empowering and raising awareness among their members, highlighting the sustainability of human capital investments in the entire process.

Ms. Madhu Khetan added that while normalization of GBV has come down over the years, violence within households – including issues around lack of decision making, deprivation and discrimination, stereotyping and women’s participation in public spaces – remains largely undiscussed. In some places, the reality of victim blaming the victim persists. She stressed that GBV affects not only individuals but also society and women’s rights as a whole, and this understanding must be effectively communicated among members, communities, and other stakeholders.

**Convergence will be essential to address these issues in a more sustained manner rather than through short-term, superficial solutions.** Ms Khetan emphasized the

importance of Gender Community Resource Persons (CRPs) in the Nayi Chetna campaign, and urged the utilization of various cadres within DAY-NRLM ecosystem. She shared several recommendations to enhance the impact of the campaign:



- 1. Foundational Gender Work: Invest more time in preparatory activities to foster gender consciousness, establishing a foundation for the campaign’s objectives.**
- 2. Partnering NGOs and Women’s Groups: Partner with NGOs, women’s groups and regional partners before commencing campaign activities, and curate activities that address region-specific issues.**
- 3. Locally relevant IEC material: Develop IEC material tailored to address local issues using relatable vocabulary. Adapt the material size and format to met regional contexts.**
- 4. Partnerships with Gram Sabhas, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), and Men: Engage Gram Sabhas, PRIs, and men in the community to collaboratively address GBV.**
- 5. Traditional Media for Dissemination: Use traditional media sources, like Radio and Doordarshan, to disseminate public messages widely.**
- 6. Timely MIS Training: Ensure Management Information Systems (MIS) training is conducted during the campaign.**
- 7. Dedicated Campaign Budget: Ensure a dedicated budget to support the campaign’s goals effectively.**

Following the presentation, Didis (SHG members) from Bihar and Andhra Pradesh shared their insights and approaches regarding campaign activities, highlighting the grassroots impact of Nayi Chetna in their communities.

## Experience of GRC responding to Gender Based Violence

Ms Pinki Kumari, Gender CRP, Nari Shakti CLF in Nalanda (Bihar) shared insights on the role of a Gender Resource Center (GRC), known as Didi Adhikar Kendra in Bihar, at the block level which is gradually being equipped to handle GBV cases. She emphasized the prevalence of violence faced by women members within the community, noting that while such incidents were often noticed, the Gram Sabha couldn’t was unable to provide much help to the women.



Also, there was a lack of awareness about what constituted violence. Through the campaign activities on November 25, 2022, CLF members received training on various aspects of GBV, including child marriage and sexual assault. They also visited police stations to understand women’s rights and the redressal mechanisms available for GBV cases. This knowledge was shared with other members through a pledge taken by all the members collectively, which led to increased awareness and improved reporting around GBV. This led to **cases being resolved or settled either with the help of the police or through inter-personal communication.**



In cases of extreme violence, support was provided to the women for medical treatment, filing complaints and ensuring end-to-end resolution. By working closely with local authorities, the team has successfully prevented several child marriages and provided pre-legal assistance to survivors of violence.

Ms Kumari noted that Gender Resource Centres have now been established in 174 blocks in Bihar, which provided financial support of INR Five lakh DAY-NRLM for self-sufficiency. Additionally, a Gender Fund has been set up, with members contributing ₹2 monthly to sustain the GRCs. She recommended expanding the GRCs to 534 blocks in Bihar and eventually extending them nationwide to enhance support for women in the country.

## Awareness and Advocacy through Nayi Chetna

Ms Shaik Asha, President, VO BI Fathima SHG, Guntur (Andhra Pradesh) shared that the gender campaign has been implemented at both the village and district levels, with village organisations participating in gender pledges and oath-taking. In Guntur, a key focus has been re-enrolling adolescent girls (6-16 years) in school, as well as providing **orientation on safe touch awareness for both boys and girls.**



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Prior to these campaign activities, discrimination between boys and girls in access to education was common, and domestic violence against young girls had been rising. At the **Mahila Samakhya office**, helpline numbers and working hours are now prominently displayed, providing a crucial resource. In one notable success, the team successfully prevented a child marriage in the village and resolved other gender-related issues. With assistance from the Mandal Assistant, Project Manager, and others, VO members successfully mediated a dispute between a mother and son, ultimately restoring the mother's pension.

Consistent efforts in Guntur based on **close collaboration between PRIs and SHGs have led to a reduction in child marriages, greater property rights for women, and decreased violence both at home and in workplaces.** Additionally, women's financial contributions to their households have increased through SHG loans, further boosting their household income.

## Strengthening State strategies for addressing GBV

Ms P.I. Sreevidya, Mission Director, Karnataka SRLM & State Urban Livelihoods Mission (SULM) emphasized the critical role of DAY-NRLM initiatives in poverty alleviation. Despite economic empowerment, many women still lack the decision-making power over how they want to spend their earnings, highlighting the need for greater gender awareness. She stressed that it is essential for women to know their rights and the freedoms guaranteed to them under the law and the Constitution.

The GBV Campaign, which has been ongoing for several years, is a crucial initiative, with each state adopting different strategies to address gender issues. A major challenge, she noted, is that many women are unaware that their rights and often fail to recognize when their rights have been violated. Furthermore, a lack of knowledge about redressal mechanisms, coupled with the normalization of violence, has led to hesitation among women about reporting these issues.

SRLMs play a pivotal role, both in numbers and in strength, to support and address GBV, especially given their local presence. Institutional mechanisms such as gender nodal persons, gender forums, and other resource persons can support women in reporting violence issues wherever they reside.

Ms Srividya provided several recommendations for strengthening state strategies to address GBV: **1. Nayi Chetna activities should be a continuous, year-round campaign rather than a limited-time initiative.**

2. Each state should map its specific issues and work on context-specific solutions. For example, Kerala faces the issue of dowry, while Karnataka struggles with female foeticide and child marriage. Due to the different socio-economic status of communities, in both Kerala and Karnataka, solutions must be tailored to engage community members effectively. Customizing strategies is, therefore, essential.

3. SRLMs and SHGs face certain limitations and need the support of other departments, such as legal services, CSOs, PRIs and even religious leaders when necessary, to address these challenges comprehensively.

4. Men should be actively involved in these discussions and meetings. Targeting schools, colleges and youth clubs can help reach a broader community base.

5. These discussions should capture multiple issues to provide a comprehensive understanding of gender. States should prioritise which issues they wish to address, allowing for more targeted interventions.

## Forward Looking Pathways

### Scope of collaboration between PRI and SHG members in addressing GBV

Mr Vipul Ujjwal, Director-Capacity Building, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, highlighted the significant underreporting of GBV cases in India. According to NCRB data, estimates an estimated 4.5 lakh cases are currently underreported, a figure that is considerably lower than actual occurrence, as many cases go unreported until they become repetitive. Multiple initiatives and interventions addressing GBV have been launched across departments at both the state and Central levels.



Additionally, there is a 33 percent reservation for women in elected representatives, totaling about 14 lakh elected women representatives, with 21 states extending this reservation to 50 percent. **A joint advisory for collaboration between PRIs and SHGs has been issued, and incorporated into the Gram Development Plan.** Despite these initiatives, GBV is still prevalent across the country.

Mr Ujjwal proposed that collaboration between SHGs and PRIs could effectively address these issues. SHGs can play a vital role by providing women livelihood opportunities, thereby supporting their financial independence. On an individual level, SHGs can focus on shifting attitudes and behavior around gender. At the same time, PRIs can help institutionalise these shifts at a systemic level, fostering an enabling environment that empowers women with awareness of reporting mechanisms and their legal rights. The collective bargaining power of SHGs offers considerable potential to mobilise resources, and enhance gender awareness among individuals.

### Strengthening legal recourse and ensuring last mile connect for addressing GBV

Ms Madhu Mehra, Founder, PLD, emphasized that while legal recourse is important in addressing GBV, it however GBV plays a small part, as it only comes into play only after violence has occurred. She argued that eliminating GBV requires **mobilization of women through SHGs, especially in rural areas.** She also highlighted the need for a societal value system where women are treated equally and which goes beyond just enacting laws.



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To achieve this, it is essential to challenge and change gender norms to prevent society from condoning violence. By empowering people to contest the space for patriarchy, the scope for tolerating GBV can be reduced over time.

Expanding on the concept of violence, Ms Mehra noted that its definition varies across contexts and individuals, with only extreme forms of violence receiving attention from communities and courts. Everyday, subtle forms of violence, such as harassment **while commuting, matrimonial violence, or workplace discrimination, often go unrecognized, as does natal family violence.** This normalization can have long-lasting impact on young girls who become conditioned to tolerate such forms of violence.

Ms Mehra recommended widespread dissemination and amplification of large **public campaigns and messaging to challenge these norms and offer solidarity to the victims.** She stressed the importance of training as a collaborative platform to bring different cadres together. She underscored the value of commissioned resources for GRCs which could prevent the need to seek resources for reporting and redressal repeatedly.

### **Institutional strengthening of support centers for addressing GBV**

Dr Pam Rajput, Professor Emeritus, Panjab University, Chandigarh, spoke on the time-sensitive nature of addressing GBV, advocating for the role of DAY-NRLM and NULM in establishing vital centers for redressing GBV. She recommended the convergence of Gender Resource Centers into institutional settings and school curricula in a time-bound manner, aligning with provisions in the NEP to achieve this. Dr Rajput also called for an **expanded definition of GBV, including a redesigned framework that covers various forms of violence, along with ongoing functionality and regular assessments of these programs.**

**She stressed the importance of translating IEC material into local languages and conducting regular training refresher courses for GRCs to reinforce understanding of gender issues.**

A unique suggestion put forward by her was using **GRCs as crime mapping centers to better track and address violence across communities.** She also emphasized the need to reach women at the last mile, such as those in agriculture, to ensure impact. Ultimately, she concluded that addressing power imbalances and advancing women's development are crucial for India to develop.

### **Concluding Remarks and Vote of Thanks**

Ms Nivedita Prasad, Deputy Secretary, Rural Livelihoods, Ministry of Rural Development, concluded the Fifth Gender Samvaad by acknowledging the inspiring stories shared by Village Organizations (VOs) and Cluster Level Federations (CLFs) as key to effective GBV intervention. She reiterated the role of information dissemination and tailoring strategies to local context - including developing IEC material that is relevant and accessible to each region - as crucial for having conversations around GBV.



She emphasized the need for inter-departmental convergence and partnerships with CSOs, including identifying and prioritizing issues specific to each state as a year-round strategy. She concluded by recognizing the many valuable suggestions shared by other panelists, stating that these should be considered in greater detail and implemented wherever feasible.