

SWAYAM PROCESS EVALUATION A YEAR LONG ETHNOGRAPHY STUDY MADHYA PRADESH & ODISHA

Learnings From DAY-NRLM's Gender Programming Initiative



Background

The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) has made efforts to integrate gender into its programme framework since 2016. Institute for What Works to Advance Gender Equality (IWWAGE) provides technical assistance and knowledge support through the Strengthening Women’s Institutions for Agency and Empowerment (SWAYAM) initiative. In 2022, a year-long ethnographic study of SWAYAM’s scale-up efforts in Madhya Pradesh (MP) and Odisha was conducted to assess its impact.

Rationale of the Study

This study aimed to track and assess the impact of training programs on community change and empowerment, particularly among Self-Help Group (SHG) members, Village Organisation (VO), and Cluster-Level Federation (CLF) leaders. Additionally, district-and block-level functionaries were interviewed from the Madhya Pradesh State Rural Livelihoods Mission (MPSRLM) and Odisha Livelihoods Mission (OLM) to understand how line departments engage with, address, and resolve complaints concerning rights, entitlements, gender-based violence, etc., in collaboration with community-level institutions.

Study Objectives

- To assess changes in Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) following gender programming, particularly in the context of entrenched social and gender norms at each study site, considering that gender programming is a relatively recent intervention.

- To map the experiences of community members, including leaders of change within SHGs, VOs, and CLFs, with regard to enhanced empowerment from being exposed to gender programming since late 2021.
- To understand the nature of impact, exploring whether it follows a linear or dynamic path, and to identify typologies or archetypes of individual and collective change journeys.

Methodology

- The process evaluation employed a comprehensive, year-long immersive ethnography study conducted over 12 months with researchers based within communities in two states - Madhya Pradesh (Petlawad block, Jhabua district) and Odisha (Tileibani block, Deogarh district). The study used a mixed-methods grounded approach to systematically gather and analyse field data, while adopting a structuralist and iterative approach using a gradual methodological extension, combining several qualitative research methods, including unstructured data through participant observations, semi-structured in-depth interviews (IDIs) with 53 conducted in Madhya Pradesh and 58 in Odisha, along with 9 key informant interviews (KIIs) in Madhya Pradesh and 13 in Odisha. In this study, we also utilised design research methods, particularly journey and service mapping, to trace how complainants and community cadre leaders perceived changes in empowerment and in delivering solutions for women over time.
- The study triangulated data from multiple stakeholders, including community cadre members (including GCRPs), SHG women, family/friends/acquaintances of the cadre, and government officials.

Key Findings

- The pace of change in KAPs following the implementation of the Gender Transformative Model has been significant amongst community cadres, demonstrating that change is rapid among those challenging violence and discrimination, and those fearing the loss of rights and entitlements (land, property, food subsidies, and health schemes), particularly in Madhya Pradesh. Cadre members within the MPSRLM have been able to leverage this shift effectively.
- Emerging patterns show that during the formative years of gender programming, speedy changes are most likely among women who already possess a predisposition for change, strong personal agency, and a desire for improved livelihoods, especially when they have previous exposure to gender and rights messaging prior to training.
- The strongest changes are observed in community cadres, who, after receiving gender training, gain space to explore gender concepts, articulate their understandings, and openly discuss gender inequality.
- The quality and impact of training are higher when conducted in person using creative, interactive methods, resulting in better recall and motivation among participants. Conversely, remote or protracted training sessions can weaken recall and restrict dissemination at this stage.
- Knowledge transfer is most robust among confident individuals and cadres in formal settings such as meetings and structured discussions. This efficacy diminishes in home settings, often dissipating entirely if male household members are unsupportive, indifferent, or violent.

- Male central figures continue to heavily influence the mobility, behavior, and opportunities of even leading women in the community, though those described as "fortune makers" tend to be notably resistant to male dominance due to their prior negative experiences.

Recommendations

1. Systemic Response

- **Review top-down training design:** Current gender messaging primarily reaches SHG cadres but tapers off when it comes to families and non-SHG members. Strategies should focus on improving the transfer of messaging beyond SHGs, exploring synergy with other community platforms, and incorporating community-wide dissemination during training sessions.
- **Scale-up strategically:** Gender programs demonstrating behaviour change or improvements in KAP should be scaled up systematically to ensure quick, sustainable, and wide-reaching impact.
- **Intensify training of key ecosystem actors:** Executive Committee members, Social Action Committee members, and Gender Point Persons play a critical role in supporting complainants, but often lack gender sensitisation training. Their capacity must be strengthened.
- **Leverage informal SHG spaces:** Informal SHG settings provide safe spaces for deeper gender dialogue and social bonding, and should be actively used for programme activities.
- **Engage adolescent girls (14+):** Establish adolescent SHG platforms for young, unmarried girls focusing on reproductive health, legal awareness, financial planning, and career guidance, ideally through convergence with the Women and Child Development (WCD) department.

- **Pilot male engagement:** Test couple-based approaches for young families and actively engage fathers in gender discussions to promote equitable roles and responsibilities.
- **Strengthen ground-level referral systems:** Support gender cadre members in handling cases related to domestic violence (DV), child sexual abuse (CSA), and trafficking. Build strong linkages with police, legal bodies, Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs), and child protection services. Ensure confidentiality, improve victim follow-up, and integrate strategic messaging on rights and entitlements.

2. Pedagogic Expansion

- **Expand methods for greater participation:** Use theatre-based tools (e.g., Theatre of the Oppressed), games, local language, and real-life stories to improve engagement, understanding, and message retention.
- **Develop modules on high-demand topics:** Create dedicated modules focusing on high-demand issues such as land and property rights, rights within marriage, and child marriage (including counseling strategies). Create dedicated Training of Trainers (ToT) modules to ensure consistency and quality in programme delivery.

[Read the full report](#)

IWWAGE – An Initiative of LEAD at Krea University

Block M 6, Second Floor, Kharera, Hauz Khas New Delhi,
Delhi - 110016 | +91-11-49403983



www.iwwage.org