

# A World We Women Want

Compendium on Women Voices and Good Practices  
towards Sustainable Development Goals



AIWEFA



AIWC

Case Studies from India, SAARC nations and Africa

NEW DELHI  
MARCH 2016



**A World We Women Want**  
**Compendium on Women Voices and Good Practices**  
**towards Sustainable Development Goals**

**By**

**Development Alternatives (DA)**  
**All India Women's Education Fund Association (AIWEFA)**  
**All India Women's Conference (AIWC)**

**Case Studies from India, South Asian Association for**  
**Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Africa**

**NEW DELHI**  
**March 2016**

## **A World We Women Want**

### **Towards the Sixtieth Session on the Commission on Status of Women (CSW60) and beyond**

#### **Lessons on Good Practices towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2016**

#### **Development Alternatives (DA)**

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#### **Disclaimer**

**DA, AIWEFA and AIWC:** The opinions in this document are the personal views presented by the organisations in response to questionnaires and *mohulla sabhas*, in the context of the broad theme 'A World We Women Want'. Good Practices towards Sustainable Goals (SDGs) were collated by DA and AIWEFA. The contents and responses are not the expression of opinions of DA and AIWEFA.

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## **FOREWORD**

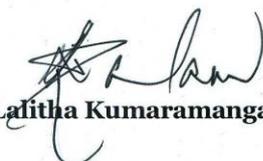
The sustainable development goals seek to change the course of the 21<sup>st</sup> century; through addressing key challenges such as poverty, inequality, and violence against women. It is well acknowledged that the high level of growth can only be sustained in any nation if women are made equal partners in the development process; societies which discriminate by gender tend to experience less rapid economic growth and poverty reduction. Gender equality and empowerment should, thus, be one of the core concerns of any developing country.

‘Inequality between men and women is one of the most crucial disparities in many societies, and this is particularly so in India’ says Amartya Sen. If accepted, in Indian context, the issue of gender equality becomes a major concern. Ensuring gender equality by removing gender discrimination is the key to real empowerment. Now for many years, we have had a vibrant *Women Empowerment Movement* involving a range of institutions As well as the State that have been committed to women’s equality and their empowerment. Despite impressive provisions and combined efforts of Government, voluntary organizations, international and bilateral organizations, gender disparity continues to be rampant and manifests itself in several ways. In order to take the movement to the next level, we need to understand gender inequality as a problem of marginalization. The participation of both genders can only lead to breaking the age-old traditions and patriarchy; and facilitate in creating a society that is truly gender equitable.

As we are aware that the world’s governments have adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development together with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is time that we talk about a strategy of implementation to decide what needs to be done so that the agenda lives up to what it promises? It requires creation of general awareness of women’s rights to build an environment for change and to focus on issues and interventions which can impact women’s lives. There is a need to have a reality check on what do women understand by women empowerment and what are their perceptions.

I am pleased that *All India Women’s Education Fund Association (AIWEFA)*, *Development Alternatives(DA)*, *All India Women’s Conference (AIWC)* and *Lupin Foundation* have come together as partners to work on this pertinent aspect of bringing forward women’s voices and good practice initiatives across India, SAARC Countries and Africa. The combined effort in getting empirical feedback related to women’s understanding, empowerment and their dreams and aspirations, presented in the document, is a laudable contribution. I am informed that the compendium is an output of the programme ‘*A World We Women Want*’, and I have no hesitation in saying that it has succeeded in reflecting the women’s voices and in mapping best practices as proven strategies to achieve goals of national policies and sustainable development.. I feel this initiative will go a long way in bringing positive changes in the lives of women.

New Delhi  
7<sup>th</sup> March 2016

  
(Lalitha Kumaramangalam)

## About DA, AIWEFA & AIWC

### Development Alternatives (DA)

Development Alternatives (DA) is a premier social enterprise with a global presence in the fields of green economic development, social empowerment and environmental management. It is credited with numerous innovations in clean technology and delivery systems that help create sustainable livelihoods in the developing world. DA focuses on empowering communities through strengthening people's institutions and facilitating their access to basic needs; enabling economic opportunities through skill development for green jobs and enterprise creation; and promoting low carbon pathways for development through natural resource management models and clean technology solutions.

### All India Women's Education Fund Association (AIWEFA)

AIWEFA was founded in 1929 by vibrant women stalwarts of the freedom movement like Sarojini Naidu, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Aruna Asaf Ali, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Annie Besant among others for empowering women. Education was recognised as the catalytic agent for social change, and in 1932, AIWEFA established the Lady Irwin College, New Delhi to bring a scientific temper in women's education. For the last eight decades, AIWEFA's programmes in rural and urban areas have been implemented to promote holistic and sustainable development for welfare of communities. Activities promote education and training of women for family and child care, environmental sustainability, nutrition and health, development of rural families through introduction of drudgery reducing equipment for agricultural management, women's skill development, women's political representation and programmes to fight violence against women. In 1999, AIWEFA was granted the "NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC)". In 2003, AIWEFA accepted the role of Regional Coordinator of the UN's Informal Regional Network of NGOs (NGO IRENE).

### All India Women's Conference (AIWC)

AIWC is an organisation dedicated to the upliftment and betterment of women and children was founded in 1927. The organisation over the years, has grown and spread all over India. Members across the country carry on the work zealously with selfless dedication. AIWC is recognised the world over as a premier organisation working for empowerment of women. Our vision is emancipation, education and empowerment of women and our mission is to work actively for the progress and welfare of women and children, to help women utilize to the fullest the Fundamental Rights conferred on them by the Constitution of India, to work for a society where women are free from all types of violence and sexual harassment and to prepare women for taking up leadership roles. At the international level AIWC has United Nations ECOSOC status, affiliated to IAW, PPSEAWA, INFORSE, GWP and WREN.



## Acknowledgements

*This Compendium on good practices towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is one outcome of the initiative 'A world we want want'-- towards the Sixtieth Session of the Commission on Status of Women (CSW60) and beyond. Another outcome is the organisation of and participation in the Parallel Event on 15 March 2016 at CSW60 (14-24 March, 2016). The idea is to develop sustainable solutions towards implementation in action projects involving partnerships among various NGOs, private sector groups or UN agencies to enhance the likelihood that they will be incorporated into national strategies.*

*'A world we women want' is a service delivery initiative, conceived and implemented in the true spirit of NGO partnership and private sector Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes. The All India Women's Education Fund Association (AIWEFA), in association with Development Alternatives (DA) and All India Women's Conference (AIWC), and with technical inputs from Dr. Pam Rajput, Convener Women 2030 and Lupin Foundation have collaborated in this programme that sees women donning leadership roles and not remaining as mute beneficiaries.*

*We express our gratitude to the women on the ground who have made their voices heard; to civil society organisations, academia, private sector companies from India, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Africa who have responded within time to our questionnaires. We express our deep appreciation to the resource persons at the National Consultation on 9 March, 2016 notably Ms. Rashmi Singh, Union territory and Civil Services, National Convener, National Forum for Action on Convergence; Dr. Huma Masood, Programme Advisor (Gender & Education), Education Unit, UNESCO New Delhi Cluster Office; Dr. Radha Subbier of Solidarity Among Women, Trivandrum; Dr. Vinita Sharma, Advisor, Task force on women in science, Ministry of Science and Technology, Ms. Anita Agnihotri, Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Mr. Alok Kumar, Advisor, Niti Aayog, Mr. P. K. Anand, Consultant, Niti Aayog and Mr. Amitabh Behar, Executive Director, National Foundation of India.*

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## Introduction

Women continue to be excluded in social, economic and political domains, which shows the inadequate attention towards inclusive growth and unequal gender relations. India ranks 127 out of 187 countries in the gender inequality index with a score of 0.536. The World Economic Forum ranked India 101 out of 136 countries in the Gender Gap Index with a score of 0.655. Gender biases due to patriarchal culture and tradition continue to exist within the household, impacting women's lives in the public and private sphere.<sup>1</sup>

Women's economic empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development and pro-poor growth. Achieving women's economic empowerment requires sound public policies, a holistic approach with long-term commitment and gender-specific perspectives must be integrated at the design stage of policy and programming. Women must have more equitable access to assets and services; infrastructure programmes should be designed to benefit the poor, both men and women, and employment opportunities must be improved while increasing recognition of women's vast unpaid work. Innovative approaches and partnerships include increased dialogue among development actors, improved co-ordination amongst donors and support for women organising at the national and global level (OECD, 2012).<sup>2</sup>

It is important in any project with empowerment objectives to design for multiplier effects - for example, an investment in economic empowerment can facilitate transformative change through social and political empowerment.<sup>3</sup> Poor and marginalised women both from the rural and urban localities are normally seen facing problems when it comes to livelihood support. They are clearly seen vocal on the account that they have to earn money to take some control of their life and of their family's welfare, but they do not seem to have any 'way out' as how to move ahead. They look towards others to give options, guidance and support so that they can earn money, as that is the immediate need to be addressed.

Concerned partner organisations have remained engaged in developing an understanding from rural women and from stakeholders working with women as to what are their desires, and what initiatives have the stakeholders taken to bring positive changes in their situation. Studies from ground have shown that women are ready to work and earn but they face challenges regarding financial aspects, backward and forward linkages and on the expertise or skills front. Many NGOs who are working with these women work towards

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<sup>1</sup><http://interactions.eldis.org/economic-empowerment/country-profiles/india>

<sup>2</sup>Women's economic empowerment: The OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET)

<sup>3</sup> Rosalind Eyben, 2011. Supporting Pathways of Women's Empowerment: A Brief Guide for International Development Organizations

institutionalizing them as Self Help Groups and get them bank linked. Some go one step ahead and work towards providing vocational skills, some get work to these women groups and strive towards establishing forward market linkages, but not many are seen working with an holistic approach towards the entire value chain.

### ***About the document***

The theme of this Compendium-- as sought by the NGO CSW/NY-- is to put forward rich solutions, based on experience and good practices in dealing with each issue and cross pollination of these good strategies from other nation states to yield comprehensive plans in terms of the successful actions that must be undertaken to implement the ideals and goals contained in the individual SDGs.

This document is an effort to bring to fore the issues related to women on ground and their expectations from their present and future. It is the result of a programme 'A world we women want' that strengthens grassroots women's voices and maps best implementation strategies, bringing forth sound practices with hard evidence from various states of India, SAARC region, and Africa, and emphasizes on the need to disseminate this information at different levels. The good practices and the case studies as presented by the NGOs and other stakeholder groups have been analysed and efforts have been made to link the ground experiences with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As we all are aware, 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016, marks the formal implementation of the universally accepted Agenda 2030 by UN Member States in form of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDG 5 to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”, as a standalone goal complements and is reinforced in the entire 17 SDG framework.



*Women and their daily life: a picture of women carrying loads of firewood (Udaipur, Rajasthan, Jan 2016)*

The first part of the compendium talks about the women's perspectives from the ground for which several *mohalla sabhas* were conducted from December 2015 to February 2016 in different states of India mainly Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Orissa, and Kerala. In general, there were similarities in responses from women who were mainly from the rural areas. The women want a world in which they are able to live a life, where they do not have to struggle for basic necessities like water, food, fuel, shelter etc. They seek reliable healthcare facilities that provide good care and attention as and when needed, good roads and good safe surroundings, where they can live and commute safely. They wish for good sanitation facilities and proper toilets so that they do not have to depend on any particular time of the day for relieving themselves. One of their major concerns was good healthcare assistance for pregnant and lactating women, newborn children and safety and security of adolescent girls.

The second part of the compendium refers to the best practices undertaken by the NGOs working for and with women groups in India and other SAARC countries. Their main areas of work were related to improved education for women, removal of drudgery, agriculture, health and livelihoods. Although all these areas indirectly point towards gender equality,

none of the NGOs directly work for equality. Surprisingly, equality was not an issue during the *mohalla sabhas* as well. Improvement in standard of living was the basic requirement as mentioned by the women.

This document points towards good practices that have positive results on ground and have possibilities for replicability and scalability at various levels, through interventions and policy implementation that directly link the present situation with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and will be helpful in achieving them on the whole. Also, it discusses the role of credible NGOs in bringing out significant changes on ground that directly or indirectly solve the purpose of the SDGs. This document is relevant for different sections of the society including general public, policy makers, academicians, researchers, NGOs and the corporate sector committed towards women empowerment.

### ***International Platform and the SDG Connect***

The United Nations has achieved important results in advancing gender equality, from the establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women, which is the main global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. This has been possible through the adoption of various landmark agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.<sup>4</sup>

On the occasion of the 66th Session of the General Assembly held in September 2011, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon highlighted in his Report “We the Peoples”, the crucial role of gender equality as driver of development progress, recognizing that the potential of women had not been fully realized, owing to, inter alia, persistent social, economic and political inequalities.

It is well acknowledged that the high level of growth can only be sustained if women are made equal partners in the development process. It is obvious that societies which discriminate by gender tend to experience less rapid economic growth and poverty reduction. Gender equality and empowerment is, thus, a core concern of any developing country.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) directly promoted the need for gender equality through the Goal 3 which was to ‘Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women’. Target 3.A upheld the need to ‘Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.’<sup>5</sup> Combining women

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<sup>4</sup>Sustainable Knowledge Development Platform. Accessed: [sustainabledevelopment.un.org](http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org)

<sup>5</sup>Millennium Development Goals and Beyond 2015. Accessed: <http://www.un.org>

empowerment and gender equality in one MDG, interestingly, points to the fact that the two concepts are two sides of the same coin and have to go hand in hand.

Tracing back in history, the year 1995 represented a crucial milestone in the progress of gender equality and brought women's issues to the fore with the Beijing Declaration and its Platform of Action as a result of the Fourth World Conference on Women. The declaration was unanimously adopted by 189 countries and considered as the most progressive scheme and road map for advancing women's rights.

As a defining framework for change, the Platform for Action made comprehensive commitments under 12 critical areas of concern, namely, women and poverty, education and training of women, women and health, violence against women, women and armed conflict, women and the economy, women in power and decision-making, institutional mechanism for the advancement of women, human rights of women, women and the media, women and the environment and the girl- child.

Even 20 years later, the declaration remained a powerful source of guidance and inspiration. In 2015, Beijing +20 committed to renew political will and commitment to revitalize public debate through social mobilization and awareness-raising, strengthen evidence-based knowledge as well as enhance resources to achieve gender equality and women empowerment. Dwelling upon the post Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the challenge before us is to prioritize the actions to be taken in the subsequent years to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women at the national level. It got further reaffirmed with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals that got adopted by UN General Assembly in September 2015.

Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals reinforces the MDG. It aims to 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.' The target is to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere and eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation. If we take a look at how women are affected by equality within each of the seventeen proposed goals defined in SDGs, it becomes obvious that women's empowerment requires increased gender equality. As we draw close to the observance of International Women's Day, we need to build a momentum around the new sustainable development goals and related gender equality commitments. It falls very much in line with the *UN Women's Set Up initiative Planet 50-50 by 2030*.

However, Naila Kabeer<sup>6</sup> argues that unless provision is made to ensure that policy changes are implemented in ways that allow women themselves to participate, to monitor, and to hold policy makers and corporations, the potential of the goals to make a difference is unlikely to be realized.

### ***Strengthening the Roadmap***

One needs to recognize that peace and harmony are very closely related to gender equality across societies. Very aptly, the following recommendations made by the *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom* to the Commission on the Status of Women and the international community, reflect the strategies needed to ensure gender equality within nations.

- Ensure effective implementation of all existing mechanisms including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in particular.
- Promote an integrated approach to human rights and implement Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) from Women's rights perspective as a tool to achieve sustainable peace.

Together, in solidarity around the world, we need to raise our concerted voices for ensuring implementation of actions and mobilization of stakeholders for sustainable development and just peace.

The forth coming 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) has an important role to play in advancing the implementation of these recommendations as it has a role in overseeing the follow up actions on commitments made by governments.

Needless to say, Sustainable Development Goals seek to change the course of the 21st century, addressing key challenges such as poverty, inequality, and violence against women. Women's empowerment is a pre-condition for this.

It is understood that Human Rights Council Session is also coming up soon. It is another platform where we need to ensure that feminist /gender strategies are endorsed in implementation of Sustainable Development Goals. Most of the world's governments have adopted the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* together with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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<sup>6</sup>Kabeer, Naila, Gender equality and women's empowerment: a critical analysis of the third Millennium Development Goals. *Gender and Development* Vol. 13, No. 1, March 2005

## ***Strong Promises: An Opportunity***

SDG promises are substantial and should make feminists happy. Goal 5 addresses many issues of particular importance to feminist movements, including ending violence against women and girls, recognizing and valuing unpaid care and domestic work, seeking to advance women's equal participation and leadership, and ensuring access to reproductive rights (though carefully excluding sexual rights). Moreover, gender is mainstreamed throughout all the goals bringing into view crucial issues such as the need to give women equal access to economic resources including control over land and other property. SDG 5 is a far cry from the MDGs that reduced gender equality to equal access to primary and secondary education and to improving maternal health.<sup>7</sup> In the SDGs, politics is built in, structures of patriarchy are recognized as problems, and women are moved from clients to citizens with rights. Importantly, the SDGs apply universally and not only to low- and middle-income countries. They thus give a tool to activists both in the North and South to hold their governments accountable on issues ranging from ending discrimination to protecting the labor rights of migrant women.

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<sup>7</sup>[wilpf.org/feminist-strategies-for-implementing-the-sustainable-development-goals/](http://wilpf.org/feminist-strategies-for-implementing-the-sustainable-development-goals/)

## A World Women Want: Ground Perspectives

Most initiatives follow the top down approach taking into the purview the anticipated problems and issues of women that are perceived by different stakeholders including policy makers. Though this approach brings positive changes on the ground, a bottom up approach followed in this document may be seen as an effort to bring the women's desires directly into focus. The target participants were women from marginalized section of the society as it is well recognised that they face enormous challenges and are subject to daily drudgery. Our whole hearted attempt was to bring their voices to appropriate fora where the issues get duly addressed.

### **Approach and methodology**

Women's perspectives were collected from the ground for which several *mohalla sabhas* were conducted in different states of India. A total of 14 *mohalla sabhas* were conducted where focussed group discussions were done with a set of 30-35 women who were also members of various SHGs. It was an interactive process with the purpose of reaching to their minds and hearts and to openly share their desires and constraints. This was done with the help of grass roots level NGOs who are directly working with women. Also, desk research was done before reaching out to the NGOs and the women groups. The *mohulla sabhas* were mainly conducted in rural locations but few were also done in peri-urban and urban locations but these were mainly the poor settlements. The objective of conducting these *Mohulla Sabhas* were shared with the agencies and their support was taken to meet the women groups.

After the introduction and general conversation, the discussion points were to understand following two aspects.

#### **Situational analysis**

1. How do they spend their day?
2. What they see as main hurdles in their day to day life? What takes most of their time and energy? Main issues and challenges?
3. Their coping mechanisms?

#### **Aspirations**

1. What are their main asks and why? If they are given choice to ask for two things what will be the two main things?
2. What are the dreams for their future life, for their children, for their daughters?
3. What drives them or motivates them the most? What do they see as the most rewarding moments in their lives? What are the moments of happiness?

The responses from all *Mohulla Sabhas* were compiled and analysed. The main points are placed here as follows under relevant headings:

The FGDs were initiated with information sharing on their general life aspects like their socio economic conditions and their life style. This was through informal discussions on their income levels, age groups, literacy levels, types of occupations, type of houses, assets in form of animals, vehicles, number of children, their age groups and their educational status etc.

The participant women were mainly of the age group 20-45 years and were living in *semi pucca* houses to *kuchha* houses. Most of them were literate and only few of them were educated up to 5<sup>th</sup> standard. They were normally working in fields under MNREGA or in their small land holdings as labours. Almost all of them were getting their children educated and had lot of dreams for their children. The information shared in following sections is to be seen in this background.

One of the challenges was to make the women groups understand that we were not there to solve their problems and the second challenge was to make them speak about their 'dreams and expectations' from life and future. They were found more vocal while speaking about their problems and life struggles. The responses are divided into their needs and desires. The topics covered under 'Needs' are mainly regarding their immediate constraints and concerns regarding basic needs, whereas the second section is pertains to their long term desires and aspirations.

## **Basic Needs**

### **Lack of Education related infrastructure**

The women understand the importance of education and are well aware of the long-term benefits of securing good education. They want to be educated as it would help them in leading a better life. They also want that they should be able to sign rather than using their thumb impression. But the process of availing quality education has proved to be an uneasy path for them. Both illiterate and literate women were seen to be more interested in their children's education and wanted more schools and colleges near to their villages so that their children could go for higher education without hurdles. The mothers were also concerned for the security of their children, especially girls, going to school. Mostly, the schools are very far from the villages which makes it difficult for the young girls to continue their studies after 8<sup>th</sup> standard. Also, the teachers who teach in the schools have been unable to impart good quality education.

In some cases, the students come back home unenthusiastic, discouraged and disinterested to explore at all or to even believe themselves as able to continue pursuing studies. With such a state of the quality of education, the mothers wish to send their children to better, schools (mostly private), but the lack of good schools nearby and lack of resources, especially money, has proved to be yet another impediment in providing quality education to the children. Setting up of schools which impart education in English medium was a prominent demand from all the places where the *sabhas* were conducted. Presently, the people who have relatively more resources send their children to cities for English medium education and the underprivileged ones suffer. The women said that their girls are taught in Hindi medium due to which they are unable to get good jobs and opportunities after they finish their studies. Schools also lack good, functional toilets due to which women were seen disinterested in sending their adolescent girls to schools, something which is completely unacceptable by the mothers of girl students. The women want good infrastructure facilities for their school-going children so that they do not have to think twice before sending off their children to school.

“हम पहले पढ़ना चाहते थे, पर जल्दी ब्यादी हो जाने पर सब कुछ घूँघट के नीचे ही समा गया”

*(I wanted to study, but early marriage ruined my dreams under the care giving responsibilities)*



Women at TARA Akshar centre. Courtesy: Development Alternatives (Jan 2016)

Women want their children to study in a good environment and do not want them to face challenges which make their study difficult or not yielding. They said that as a provision of government, children from these localities should get 25 per cent of the seats in private schools but they do not get this provision. Rather they are denied any types of discounts in their fees in private schools. Women were vocal in saying that the provisions made for them by government should be made accessible and possible. They were sounding disturbed by the apathy and non-performance of government officials.

Women from the *Mohulla Sabha* at Lucknow expressed that their daughters are asked to do all kind of cleanliness in their schools which makes them disinterested in even going to schools. In Bundelkhand, women told that if family income is less then certain number the girls get scholarships but the problem is that most of the households fall in that category. So the struggle becomes like who all get the benefit and some girls are left out from this process. Women want to see good policies and provisions which match and cater to the needs of people at the ground level.

At some of the *mohulla sabhas* it was mentioned that if somehow, few children are able to pass the high school and intermediate exams, the access to higher education is very difficult to overcome. The reason for this is that colleges are far from their areas and the families do not have enough resources to send their children too far for higher studies. Therefore, schools up to 12<sup>th</sup> standard in their vicinity and good colleges in nearby town areas was a common demand by the women community.

Women further added that when it is about sending children to nearby cities for higher education, it is mostly for boys and girls are normally not given that space. This is mainly due to safety issues and women were clear that if good and safe facilities were available nearby, they will make their daughters study at least up to 10<sup>th</sup> standard.

### **Education to Livelihood Connect**

For the women themselves, they wanted to be educated only because they want to get better work opportunities so that they could help their family financially. Most women are interested in skill education especially sewing, beautician course, making sanitary napkins and others. They said that they could not study much because their parents did not send them out of the village so they could complete their studies only upto 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> standard.

Some of the women said that they get pained when they see their children not getting any good job after studying. According to them, it is difficult for them to educate their children and when these young boys do not get decent jobs they feel disgusted. These boys do not feel like doing menial jobs and when they remain jobless, they even tend to get depressed or even take a wrong path.

Women were found to express clearly that poverty is the root cause of all their problems. A woman from one of the *malin basti* of Lucknow, said that “we do not have money to give as bribe and that is why our children do not get jobs. Somehow we make up for our basic needs, or the loan repayments which we took for our small houses, but sparing money to bribe officials for jobs is not possible for us. Government pays more attention towards building parks and malls but is not concerned about making factories or *karkhanas* where people like us and our children get jobs as per our capabilities”.

### **Lack of Infrastructure related to Health Aspects**

Women wanted a *Swastha Kendra* in their village as it is not possible for them to go to the cities at odd times. Moreover, due to the lack of transportation facilities, they face major problems. In village Dhikoli, U.P, women said that they cannot take benefit of government hospitals as the medicines prescribed by the doctors are too costly to buy and these health centers and doctors normally do not provide any free medicine.



*Women consultation at Udaipur, Rajasthan (Jan 2016)*

The women at almost all the locations mentioned that there were no good hospitals in the vicinity of the villages. Women insisted that there should be a hospital in the villages and if that is not possible, they should be at least within reach. Women at Dhikoli told that there are no doctors in the village and they have to go to Jhansi for even small problems. They want hospitals to be near to their village or at least one hospital within 2 kms reach.

Women from the *mohulla sabhas* in Lucknow complained that in nearby areas all the shops have kept second grade food items. As these items are consumed on daily basis, these people get into the trap of many ailments. Since there are no facilities for getting treatment nor there is any money with them, there are more untimely deaths in their families. In Mirzapur, most of the women complained that the Government facilities are not being properly distributed and they want proper health facilities. They also claimed that defecation in the open, improper drainage as well as unavailability of safe drinking water leads to an unhealthy situation in their villages.

### Lack of Infrastructure related to WASH

Women centered their talks on the fact that there was lack of cleanliness in their villages which has led to an increase in the occurrence of diseases. They want more cleanliness and more toilets to be built in their areas.

Presently they have to go to open field areas to relieve themselves which makes them vulnerable and this is more problematic for their young girls. They said that it is very difficult for young girls especially during the period days which are in a way a health hazard for them. They further said that during the rainy season the problem of getting space gets aggravated so they want this issue to get resolved by adequate water availability and provision of functional toilets. In this regard, women mentioned that the decision to have a toilet in their homes was mainly taken by men and men as such do not face many problems. They were aware that government provisions exist for the poor households but they also realize that this is more a mindset issue. There were no toilets at all in some of the villages. There is poor access to clean drinking water due to which they often suffer from stomach and other health related problems.

In village Punawli, U.P, 40% of the people have toilets in their houses but others were demanding the same and they wait for funds to come in before starting the construction. Three hundred and thirty two people in the village filled forms for getting money for toilet construction. Women also mentioned that people who had toilets in their homes are at times not using them as they are used as storehouses.

### Success Story



Head, SHG

Women of Punawli village mobilized finance from the village and functionalized an already set up water storage and distribution facility. The money collected was around INR 80,000. This is a success story with regard to community partnerships.

## Drudgery to fulfill basic needs

In some areas, women reported about lack of fuel due to which cooking food was a time taking and strenuous task for them. They mentioned of still using traditional methods of firewood burning which they find harmful for their respiratory system. The women wanted to have facilities related to fuel so that they do not have to travel too much to collect fire wood, have smokeless *chulhas* in their kitchen.

Women at most of the locations mentioned that the availability of water in the households is the main issue. They have to face a lot of drudgery because of water shortages and this was one of the reasons of their poor health. They complained that there were no taps in the houses. There were no wells and pipelines in the area and many had dried up. They wanted access to clean and safe water resources, near to their homes. Women in the villages of Bundelkhand mentioned about some construction activities happening under MGNREGA to improve water availability but right now it is at a very early stage. At some places, water is available through hand pumps or at places through taps, but is not fit enough for domestic purposes and is yellow in colour.



Improving water availability. Courtesy: Development Alternatives (Jan 2016)

## Employment and livelihoods

Women, during all the *mohalla sabhas*, demanded for an improvement in the opportunities for their livelihoods. They were happy to put efforts to do more work to fulfill their survival

needs. They said that their present income is only hand-to-mouth and it is very difficult to sustain themselves and their families.

Women were absolutely clear that they need better incomes for themselves and their families, but they do not see such opportunities where they do not have to go very far from their houses and are able to get engaged in income generation activities. They said that once they get up in the morning they do not get time to sit. They are extremely busy throughout the day in activities like cooking, collecting firewood, water, working in the fields, growing vegetables and looking after the children. In *mohulla sabhas* where women were coming from rural agricultural areas, they said that they are facing problems as agricultural yields have been going down for the past 2-3 years. In some areas, women are very poor and fear loss of present livelihoods also.

At some of the places where women were involved in income generation activities, like in village Punawli, U.P, and Bundelkhand, women said that they are not dependent on anyone. They make goods like *papads*, *achars*, teddy bears etc and sell them in the adjoining cities. In most of such cases women were actively involved in SHGs and were working closely with some NGO partner. In these cases, they contribute money to their SHGs and in case any of their fellow SHG members needs money, they give loans at small interest rates. These women do not have enough work to support their needs completely. They want more work options in hand so that they can utilize their time meaningfully and earn money to improve their lives. In Mirzapur, most of the women were dependent on daily wages and their income was hand-to-mouth and it was difficult for them to survive. Improvement in the status of life was needed by every woman and they want to do more work to fulfill their survival needs.



Women Consultation at village Punawli, U.P (Jan 2016)

#### In Nutshell

- Women insisted that there should be a hospital in the villages and if that is not possible, they should be at least within reach
- The women wanted to have facilities related to fuel so that they do not have to travel too much to collect fire wood
- They wanted access to clean and safe water resources, near to their homes
- Improvement in the opportunities for their livelihoods was a want.
- They wanted more work options in hand so that they could utilize their time meaningfully and earn money to improve their lives

## ***Dreams and Desires***

The dreams and desires of women from all the *Mohulla Sabhas* are contextualized as:

### **Economic Independence**

Women mentioned in their sharing that when it comes to economic independence, the women in the villages have none. Few women are able to make some money by working as labour on others' fields and by selling little produce of their own fields, or by working in MGNREGA schemes. They take care of the family and the cattle during the day and have no constant source of income. Their families are big and the collective income is very low, which leads to negligible savings. Women in few villages, who are SHG members, are able to make little savings, however the women rarely have savings deposited in any bank account. They take the help of the men of the house to withdraw money from the bank. All they hope and aspire is for constant source of income through skill development and sustainable economic activities. They believe that when they will become financially independent they will be able to have a better say in family planning, children's education and their family health and care. This brings forward the point that financial independence is very important for the world the women want for themselves.

The government schemes that run for the benefit of the target population gets held up by the higher authorities/ high caste members of the village council. The women wish for some intervention to loosen up that bottleneck so that they receive the benefits they are entitled to.

Women were upfront in sharing that their issues and concerns rarely come to the fore as this gets mostly overshadowed by their family needs and conveniences. Voicing concerns regarding domestic violence is absolutely unimaginable as it is part of day to day life. The world where the women have the freedom of speech to voice their dissent and discomfort and to command honor and respect is something they hope for.



*Women Consultation in Lucknow, U.P, (Jan 2016)*

Women in their own way expressed that when women are economically empowered, they have the ability to stand strong with their ideas and beliefs. They develop those ideas when they are educated or have some exposure. Once they have entrepreneurial mentoring, it would help them secure better sources of income and livelihood. This in turn would lead to increased mobility, increased awareness and the ability to spend effectively on healthcare and other dire needs of the family. One of the women from Mirzapur said that the woman of the house would spend most effectively when given the opportunity to do so, for she thinks not only of herself, but of her entire family. She further opined that when each and every woman will get the basic necessities she deserves, it will lead to the creation of the world they want.

Women want the kind of work engagement where the work opportunities do not fade out easily and where there is consistency of income and where they do not fall prey of sudden disasters. One woman said that for the safety of the girls, it may be good if they get an opportunity to learn self-defense techniques like Tycando or any such martial art.



Women consultation at village Dhikoli, Uttar Pradesh (Feb 2016)

### Participation in Decision Making

During the sharing with women, it was mentioned that common perceptions prevailing in the society about women's role is basically that of a care giver and her stake in important decisions is almost negligible. They further said that there is no doubt that women's say in the family matters has increased in the last two decades, but they are not at par with men in most of the aspects. As per the women from Bundelkhand, this is an unchallenged norm in the entire Bundelkhand region that women get lesser wages for the same kind of work so women look towards a world where they get same wages and do not get discriminated only because of being women.

“महिलाएं कहती है कि वे अपने लिए समय नहीं दे पाती, सारा काम करने के बाद भी उनके कामों को मूल्यांकन नहीं होता और ना ही उनके कामों को महत्व दिया जाता है। एक महिला कहती है: “षादी के पहले तो अच्छा गाना गाती थी, पर षादी के बाद तो ये सब बिलकुल भूल सा गयी हूँ!” एक दूसरी महिला कहती है “हम पहले अच्छा पेंटिंग करते थे लेकिन अभी उसके बारे में सोचना भी भूल गयी हूँ।”

Some of the women who participated in the *mohalla sabhas* were politically interested and empowered. They had even contested panchayati elections. Some of them had remained *Sarpanch* and *Ward Panch*. Women were concerned about the political issues. As per the

new Panchayati Raj (Amendment) Act, 2015, the eligibility for contesting elections for women is of being 8th pass, which women see as a hindrance. In Indian rural scenario, most of these women are not that educated at present. In their own ways women were vocal in saying that the policies need to understand the ground realities and also someone should look into the impacts as what is happening on ground, what is the need emerging from the people and this is the only way to track the efficacy of impact of schemes and programmes.

### Socio-Economic Status

According to the discussions with women in the *mohulla sabhas*, it came out clear that they require support and enhanced role of different agencies to increase their socio-economic status. Almost all the women mentioned that they have the capacity to work more if they are given a chance. They want to get linked with income generation activities such as livestock, farming products and food processing. In the development perspective, women said that they want a better home, better facilities at home, good roads to commute and good clothes to wear and money to buy jewellery. They yearned for a life free of drudgery.

They wanted buy scooters to enjoy more freedom of mobility and wanted a better house. Women of village Dhikoli in U.P referred to a village '*badhgarh*' where there are no roads and even a two wheeler cannot go easily. According to them, development process is presently slow and needs to be speeded up. Most of these women still do not have bank accounts as processing takes a long time. They said that if their small issues related to their day to day life and needs were resolved; they would be equal to others in all respects.

Some of the women mentioned that that they could not even get their *Kisan* card made as they are asked to pay 10,000 rupees for it. They said that neither they could say anything nor anybody listened to them. The women want a small bank in the village as it is presently far from their area. They said that their young girls want to learn different things and become self-sufficient but there are no opportunities available nearby and for them it is not possible to send their young daughters to distant places. Moreover safe regular transport system is also a major concern. Women want ample work opportunities for themselves and their children. They do not hesitate in taking more work for their better future, but want help and direction.

In a consultation in Mayavati Colony, Lucknow, more than 50 per cent of the women present were doing cleaning and washing work in nearby colonies, but many women said that not all women or families can do such jobs, so what do they do to earn livelihood is an issue. No one in the household has a regular income source which is an important issue of concern for them. In Mirzapur, women said that their daily basic necessities are getting fulfilled but if they get more money, they can spend more on good food, better clothes and other necessary things from the market.

## Gender Equality

The issue of gender equality is still in its infancy especially in the rural areas. Domestic violence is common and largely an uncontested reason behind social and financial problems in family due to ignorance and lack of awareness. Women from poor SC/ST groups are also vulnerable to sexual assault exercised by upper caste men.

In the *Mohulla sabhas*, the women were found to be more or less silent on the aspect of gender equality. During the discussions it emerged that there should be caste and gender equality but women did not mention this as a problem on their own. They said that they would love to enjoy equal rights as men but this was not emerging as a priority from their end. Women also referred to men who are into drinking habits and spoil the domestic atmosphere. In village Dhikoli, U.P, women spoke about many cases of domestic violence and they said that men do not allow their wives to go out and study. The men folk play *Juan* and they are worried as to what their children will learn. Women seem to be worried about the consequences of domestic violence and malpractices or social evils which get reflected in their lives on a frequent basis but they do not relate this to gender discrimination or violation of human rights.



*Women consultation at Asapur, Rajasthan, (Jan 2016)*

The women said that this is how people think about women and their roles but they did not perceive this as a road block. They also mentioned that there have been many changes in the past few years. People have started thinking that women are moving ahead and their participation can bring positive changes in their homes and for the village. **Now, if women**

**attend Gram Sabhas** and meetings or become active on social **issues as SHG members they are** not seen as odd people but if they are not doing this, they are not even encouraged to do so.

### In Nutshell

- All they hope and aspire is for constant source of income through skill development and sustainable economic activities.
- The women wish for some intervention to loosen up that bottleneck (were benefits of schemes do not reach them) so that they receive the benefits they are entitled to.
- The world where the women have the freedom of speech to voice their dissent and discomfort and to command honor and respect is something they hope for.
- The women feel that when each and every woman will get the basic necessities she deserves, it will lead to the creation of the world they want.
- Women look towards a world where they get same wages and do not get discriminated only because of being women.
- Policies need to understand the ground realities and also someone should look into the impacts as what is happening on ground, what is the need emerging from the people and this is the only way to track the efficacy of impact of schemes and programmes.
- Women want ample work opportunities for themselves and their children. They do not hesitate in taking more work for their better future, but want help and direction.
- Women seem to be worried about the consequences of domestic violence and malpractices or social evils which get reflected in their lives on a frequent basis but they do not relate this to gender discrimination or violation of human rights.

## ***The Concerns and Voices of Women: Verbatim***

***I wanted to go to school but my parents did not allow me. I am the youngest in my house. All my brothers go to school and my niece also studies in a school. I collect firewood for home.***

- *A young girl (12-13 years old) who met this team on the way to Aaspur, Udaipur*

***I want to have a scooty of my own like the teacher who comes to teach in the neighboring school. I want to travel outside my gaon (village).***

- *A women (30-35 years old) said this while the consultation in Sarada, Udaipur*

***I want to have good jewellery. I like to wear good clothes but first priority is my family.***

- *A women (30 years old) said this while the consultation in Aaspur, Udaipur*

***We want to help other women and want them to help many others. In such a situation, no man will dare to resort to domestic violence as he knows that somebody is keeping an eye on me.***

- *A women (37-40 years old) said this during the mohulla sabha at Gaushala in Bundelkhand*

***The situations have changed now. Earlier, were not allowed to move out of our houses. Now, we tell them that we have to go for meetings and they allow. In fact, our suggestions are taken during panchayat meetings.***

- *A women (35 years old) said this during the mohulla sabha at Gaushala in Bundelkhand*

***There has been loss of agricultural production during the past two years. I do not know what to feed to our children. We cut our own part of food to give to them, but how long is this going to be possible.***

- *A women (40 years old) said this during the mohulla sabha at Dhikoli in Bundelkhand*

***We want good toilets to be built. Our young girls have to suffer during periods and we can not go outside during rainy season. It's much easier for men, and this helplessness is troublesome as it affects our health and peace of mind.***

- *A women (45 years old) said this during the mohulla sabha at Dhikoli in Bundelkhand*

## Good practices

Many non-government organisations have been working on different areas to resolve the issues and problems which poor and marginal women face in their daily lives. This most of the time is in response to the problems which are faced by these women. As a lot of good work has been done in this regard by different stakeholders and efforts have been made to make a collection of good practices from the NGOs working in India, SAARC nations and Africa to get their initiatives on board.

### ***Approach and Methodology***

The objective is to promote cross learning's and replication of the good work done elsewhere. As expected, in this process of giving their good practices, the challenges and coping mechanisms adopted by these contributing organisations, have also got duly recorded.

As a first step, the non-governmental organisations working on women empowerment through various initiatives were reached to collect their good practices, which they have been carrying out in their region. Good amount of secondary data research was done to get a list of organisations to be contacted and then a format was circulated to get information from them.

The format for collecting the information had two parts. The first section was designed to get information on the NGOs profile on what they do, where they work and what is their target group, and since how long they have been working on ground. The second part was designed on get information on the good practices, time span and date (in terms of years), its impact on women lives, the indicators of it being classified as good practice, replicability and scalability aspects of the good practice, role of stakeholders and similar details. Most of the NGOs were unable to give information in the given format and they found it easy to provide details of their good practices as documents already prepared to disseminate and communicate. This information was compiled, analyzed and classified and is being presented here in the following section.

Information from selected 41 NGOs has been presented here and 80 per cent of the information is form India. Selection criterion used was mainly quality of information provided in terms of practices adopted, and its impact in lives of women, data to support the same and work done in recent past. The information about the best practices was received from different regions and states of India and some case studies were received from Srilanka, Pakistan and Africa.

Most NGOs contacted were seen to be focusing on poverty, grass root democracy, education, socio-economic empowerment, domestic violence and gender equality. Their target groups were women, children and underprivileged groups. Almost all of them were involved in awareness initiatives and training programmes. Most of the contributions given in this document are from NGOs who have long working experience on ground and less than 10 per cent are from NGOs who do not have much experience in terms of number of years on ground.

### ***Interventions as Good Practices***

The good practices are presented here under different heads. Though there are overlaps at places, the classification is based on the type of interventions of the contributing organisations.

#### **Vocational skills leading to livelihoods improvement**

Most of the NGOs had their direct focus on skill training and entrepreneurship development that has led to livelihood enhancement. Although, their methods were different depending upon the region and possibilities, their objectives were almost same. Some of the cases that have significantly led to an improvement in the livelihood status of women are discussed here.

##### **a. Through focusing on health as sector of intervention**

The Healing Fields Foundation trained women in different states of India as Community Health Facilitators (CHFs) to generate livelihood opportunities. External evaluation of the program revealed that more than 80% of the CHFs gain increased respect from their families and others in their village after this program. Total of 781250 women and adolescent girls were educated on health, nutrition, sexual and reproductive health and menstrual hygiene. Pregnant women in 2400 villages were reached with awareness on nutrition, pregnancy care, colostrums feeding and referrals to institutional delivery. Every year International Women's day is celebrated by their CHFs in their communities by organising workshops, health camps, competitions, pregnancy functions etc.

Access to sanitary napkins has been created to more than 2,00,000 rural women and adolescent girls. Construction of toilets has helped the women and adolescent girls in managing their menstrual hygiene better and also have privacy and safety. CHFs actively refer pregnant women for institutional deliveries and also ensure the women get the pregnancy related services. Women also received wage compensation in case of hospitalization. The personal accident benefit had a special focus for girl children providing both education and marriage benefit to the girls. The women through the health savings groups have access to financing for the health care needs of themselves and their families.

*This shows that the organisation was not only ensuring access to good health facilities through CHFs but was also working on the economic front by ensuring certain provisions.*

About 940 women who have completed training as CHFs were involved in livelihood activities and are earning an average income of Rs 1500 per month. Healing Fields' Community Health Facilitator program is a tested, proven and replicable model. They have a robust monitoring mechanism and regularly get the impact data from the field through our routine reporting or impact studies. The data reveals that 96% of the CHFs were able to bring changes in health behavior in their families and 66% of the CHFs reported increased income after this program.

Jatan at Udaipur is focusing towards environment by working on a new area which is reducing the use of disposable sanitary napkins. They promote use of reusable sanitary napkins which give women an opportunity to earn livelihood. Jatan provides support through trainings, and also helps in market linkages.

#### **b. Trainings on service related skills**

Saath Charitable Trust, working in the states of Gujarat and Maharashtra, mentioned about organized vocational training programmes for youth and skill upgradation programme for construction workers. The programme has trained 850+ women as Home Managers. 100+ women were trained in non-traditional courses of electrician, mobile repairing, sewing machine repairing, plumbing etc. 9,000 slum households have been covered and in past 6 months 2,478 linkages have been provided. 850+ people have been able to buy their homes and 6,120 houses come under the project. 2,500+ rural women were members with cumulative savings of Rs. 57 Lakhs and loan disbursement amount of Rs. 1.20 Cr+.

Almost 50% of the trainees have been women who have been placed with salaries in the range of Rs. 4,000-Rs. 8000 per month and many women have started small enterprises from their home. 2,871 members have been young girls who have participated actively in youth groups formed. 33 girls have also been provided Urban Animators Training. 598 girls have been provided micro entrepreneurship training. 3,527 have been linked with various financial options and 3,799 have been linked with jobs. *The good practice here brings forward the integrated approach of trainings, institutional strengthening and providing access to finance.*



*Women were happy to receive course completion certificates (left) and women being trained in construction activities. Courtesy: Saath Charitable Trust.*

### **c. Agriculture and Animal Husbandry as areas of intervention**

Matashree Gomati Devi Jan Seva Nidhi (MSGD), an organisation based in Alwar district, Rajasthan, promoted high value crops (Fruit Plantation, Vegetable cultivation, Floriculture etc.) and organic farming. They also promoted biogas, improved crop management program and micro irrigation and judicious use natural resources. The impact of their initiative was seen in the form of a change in the cropping pattern and increased crop production and net income of farmers.



*Livelihood generation in Rajgarh, Alwar*

Awareness level of community integrated dairy / animal management practices (Breed, feeding, housing, animal health, milk marketing etc.) has also increased. Daily drudgery of women was reduced as biogas is a very useful cooking fuel as well as it does not impact the health. Selling of dairy products has also increased the income of women.

As women already put most of their time in these activities, they are well versed with them and when they are told about the interventions to improve yields they can very well relate to it. *The achievements in form of better outcomes get spread very fast among their peers as women normally share and tend to work together and learn fast from each other.*



*Livelihoods impact of MSGD, Alwar*

SLYCAN Trust, Srilanka in collaboration with Nagenahiru Development Society of Trincomalee has initiated a pilot project in January 2016, which focuses on women's empowerment to adapt to climate change through economic diversification and crop diversified agriculture. The project focuses on addressing the risks created by relying on single crop based agriculture (which is paddy for the selected area) that increases the risks of crop and income loss due to impacts of climate change.

The selected region noted change in weather patterns resulting in unpredictability of rain that result in crop damage and lack of water/ floods impacting agriculture. There persists also a lack of knowledge among farmers on crop diversification, and the need for leadership development for female lead agricultural initiatives with the community's agricultural initiatives being mainly lead by male farmers. The initiative by SLYCAN Trust prioritizes on training female farmers on how they could introduce crop diversification as a step towards climate change adaptation, economic diversification and livelihood development. Activities include workshops to build their capacity on themes such as crop diversified farming, water management, understanding climate change impacts, financial management, participatory decision making. The project aims to develop livelihoods of women of the Trincomalee district, Srilanka.

Janathakshan (through Climate Action Network South Asia), builds the capacity of the beneficiaries to effectively mobilize and motivate to engage in the proposed economic activities. It provides training on the economic activities such as: Chemical free home gardening technologies, Irrigation practices, goat rearing, and poultry rearing. Natural Resource Management techniques such as growing plants in bags, building poultry farms that are adaptive were introduced to adapt to the impacts of climate change including floods and droughts. Technical support to address issues of lack of water for agriculture introduced sprinkler micro irrigation systems, close planting system and fence cultivation. The initiative has so far increased the income of 145 women headed families by 25% through agro-based livelihood options supported by increased productivity, market & service linkages, and improved infrastructure. There is increased drought, flood and cyclone resilience of the women headed families through adapting sustainable NRM (natural resource management) techniques.

AIWEFA and its Partners' Project 'Nindana – A Model Village' is a step to develop specific SDG implementation plans that focus on innovative ways to create new advocacy strategies and solutions for rural areas. It makes full use of the expertise of the NGO Community, the experience of the agencies and other organisations of the UN, regional and national government agencies, civil society and the business sector, as sustainable practices in India, are a way of life.

#### **Case study: Village Adoption in Haryana**

Sumitra, a farm woman from village Tirpadi, and Dayawati of village Daboda in the Farrukhnagar district of Haryana state, India, installed net houses for early cropping of nursery-grown vegetables, used improved quality seeds for profuse flowering, adopted efficient sowing methods to conserve water and energy, used innovative technology like the hand-held wheel hoe to reduce drudgery, added value to raw cow dung fuel by converting it into chemical-free manure through vermi compost pits, introduced hardy, high-yielding and more nutritive fodder seeds and increased awareness for energy resource management by spreading awareness for biogas plants. They became the path-breaking leaders of the 100-125 women in their own and surrounding villages.

*Source: AIWEFA*

#### d. Construction sector as an area of intervention

Unnati, Rajasthan had assisted in development of women masons through trainings and hand-holding support which has provided a new opportunity and entry into a hitherto prohibited arena for the rural women in the western part of Rajasthan. These women were earlier engaged as agricultural or construction laborers earning far less than their male counterparts. Now their wages are improved and they get respect as well as recognition in their families and society. They are called by others to help in building houses or rain water harvesting tanks. These women trained as masons have got late acceptance in the villages as skilled work in construction is always seen as men's' job, but once their role was seen and the advantage of their being trained became visible they were duly recognised and appreciated.

##### **Case study: Pushpa Devi saved more than Rs.24,000 after advanced mason training**

Indira awas was sanctioned to 38 years old Pushpa. She took the mason training and prepared 1300 bricks for the ceiling of her house and also laid them saving a considerable amount on mason and material. She used the technique learnt during her capacity building. She designed her house at her own level and says "MHARA MAKAN MAI APNE HAATHO BANAYA".

--*Courtesy: Unnati*



*Pushpa Devi constructed her Indira Awas. Courtesy: Unnati-Organisation for Development Education.*

As a normal routine the houses need lot of repair and in rural India and more specifically in poor and marginalized households maintenance of the houses involves lot of funds. Moreover, in semi-arid and arid areas of country, water harvesting and water storage related structures are always in high demand. *Unnati's attempt to train women in this sector has actually been a very good and smart move. This has actually helped them in not only getting good income but also maintaining and beautifying their houses, and fulfilling the most basic need related to water harvesting and storages.*

### **Imparting literacy and from literacy to self reliance**

Education is the primary need before there is any possibility of an increase in the livelihoods scenario. Development Alternatives, New Delhi initiated a programme TARA Akshar which was recognized as one of the only two IT based adult literacy programme by the Ministry of Human Resources, Government of India. The programme amply demonstrated that literacy is the bedrock of women's economic, social and psychological empowerment. TARA Akshar is an innovative literacy programme, which teaches illiterate people to read and write in just two months. Every month, this programme enables 5,000 women to attain literacy. From January 2007 until October 2009, DA made more than 56,000 women literate through its 300 literacy Centers across Northern India. Till 2010, the organisation has enabled 61,500 illiterate women to read and write, linked 25,000 women with financial services, 30% of whom, i.e. 7,500 have availed credit services and has supported 14,000 families to access public programmes through information and capacity supports. Since 2013 the organisation has worked with more than a lakh woman and imparted them with literacy and numeracy skills in rural India.

As women are too occupied with their house hold work they at times do not find time to practice and tend to forgot what they have learnt in two months span. As a good practice the organisation has designed the TA programme and included the six months duration Gyan Chaupali session where neo literate women are made to practice and to get chances to understand the application part of this neo literacy in their day to day life. Similarly as a good practice DA has also worked on the concept of 'Literacy to Self Reliance' where neo literate women get training and support to run the enterprises. *The integrated approach as seen here is to work on the sustainability aspect of the initiative, so that neo literate women see the advantage of getting literate through financial gains also.*



TARA Akshar Programme. Courtesy: Development Alternatives

### Case Study: TARA Akshar, Development Alternatives

Meera who lives in Malai village faced a lot of problems due to her inability to read and write. “I did not like that I was dependent on others for almost everything in life.” And even though she looked for ways to change the situation, she found none. When TARA Akshar+ Centre opened in the village, Meera enrolled herself for the programme immediately.

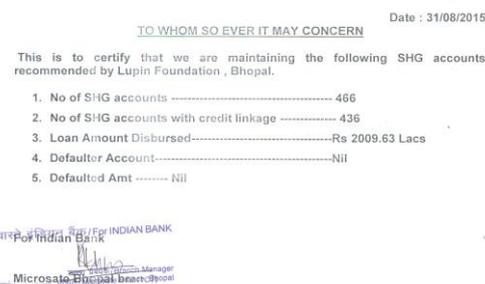


## Ensuring financial support for having improved income generation options

### a. Engaging closely with financial institutions

This section presents examples of best practices that although did not directly focus on trainings for livelihood generation, but provided financial support in some form or the other which has led to improved livelihoods and socio-economic status. Many a times, absence of finance is the only reason for lack of empowerment opportunities and the following section presents how these issues can be tackled.

Lupin Human Welfare & Research Foundation organised women Self Help Group promotion during 2009 to January, 2016 in Raisen and Vidisha district, M.P in collaboration with microsat branch of Indian Bank due to which 470 women SHGs with membership of over 5000 families mobilized own savings of over Rs 2.25 crore. It also led to bank loan mobilization of Rs 20.06 crore for income generation activities, in collaboration with microsat branch of Indian Bank, Bhopal with 100% bank loan recovery rate. Over 3000 families started having additional annual income of Rs. 60,000 to 3 lakh. It helped over 3000 families to improve their economic conditions significantly and also has improved their participation in the local governance.



*SHG accounts in Indian Bank (left) and SHG Women giving speech during a Sammelan. Courtesy: Lupin Human Welfare & Research Foundation, Bhopal centre.*

Jan Chetna Sansthan intervened to provide sustainable microfinance for empowerment of tribals for enhanced livelihoods. Their initiative led to membership base of 8640 women and men constituting of four clusters. It covered 470 villages in 105 Panchayats of 11 blocks. This is promoting livelihoods of the most vulnerable group, that is persons with disability, in order to promote livelihoods amongst PWDs. Accordingly, 2000+ farmers now follow better farming system.

Parineeta Piprural Development, an NGO setup in Karnal, Haryana, helps the local women through skill training like sewing, making handicrafts, and they also give primary coaching. 70% of the women that have been a part of the NGO have started their own business at home. They are now able to earn for themselves. The women have learned skills that have made them confident enough to lead a stable life and also send their children to school. The NGO provides sewing machines to the physically challenged women so as to remove their dependence on their families, at least financially.

SARTHAK has motivated and inspired many women to start saving in a group on a regular basis and utilize the saved money for small ventures to be financially independent to support their families. SARTHAK has made literate more than 8000 women who are now comfortable in reading, writing along with basic skills of calculations. This has made them confident enough to lead their life with a renewed pride. These literate women are now acting as role models for other women of the villages and inspiring others to start learning to bring a change and a better understanding in their lives.



*Photographs showing SARTHAK's work related to literacy*

### **b. Support in setting enterprises**

Some of the NGOs have helped women set up their own businesses which have significantly improved their socio-economic status. The practices are presented in this section.

Practical Action South Asia Regional, in Sirohi, Mount Abu has worked for economic empowerment of women. They helped women to start registering their own business for creating income.

Be Fund! Provides risk capital to young adults, especially young women, preferably in the 18-30 age groups to start enterprises that solve development gaps for women and girls in particular in impoverished communities. Their focus and interventions are in the area of enterprise development. So far, 90 entrepreneurs have been funded in different sectors

such as food, agriculture, renewable energy, recycling waste, handloom, traditional craft and more. Over 180 jobs were created by entrepreneurs over the last four years. This has led to financial and social empowerment. These women entrepreneurs have created 132 jobs for women in their communities. 41 women entrepreneurs funded up to January 2015; 85 women in 17 villages earn an average of Rs. 1000-1500 every month through a woman entrepreneur, Archana's enterprise. Women in Archana's village did not have access to jobs that they could do from home. Archana too did not have the formal education qualifications to secure a job. She started an areca leaf plate making enterprise which earns an additional income of Rs. 5,000 to 6000 per month and provides employment to 85 women in 17 villages.

Nearly 80% of the farming work in India is carried out by women. Despite all the hard work, agricultural incomes are variable. Uncertain availability of tractors used for agricultural work disrupts the schedule of agricultural activities. A woman entrepreneur, Kalpana is a role model for women in her community. As a result of her initiative 20 women farmers have additional earnings of Rs. 24,000 to 36,000 by selling ginger directly to APMCs. Kalpana, took to farming to support herself and her family. She had to do the ploughing by using a pair of bullocks and had to wait for a tractor to complete agricultural operations, which was time taking. She decided to start her own business of making tractor services available for farmers and their families, enabling them to access this basic service easily.

Though women do 80% of the agricultural work in India, they own only 13% of the land. While Sulekha cannot reform the land ownership structure in her village, she found a way to achieve higher returns for the work women put in agriculture. She mobilized the women farmers in her community to start community managed cultivation of ginger on a wasteland. She sells this produce directly to the APMC (Agriculture Produce Marketing Corporations).



*Women Entrepreneur, Kalpana. Courtesy: Be Fund!*

*In all these three examples the NGO has made specific and targeted interventions to individuals by helping them in setting enterprises so that they not only support themselves but become job creators where other women also gain advantage. In this way the intervention done at one point brings outputs at multiple households.*

## **Awareness raising towards increased engagement and ownership**

### **a. Through communication in a campaign mode**

Awareness raising improves the current situation of the people living in areas where they are devoid of the kind of information which is required for improving living standards. Some cases that have focused on awareness generation for improving living standards of the village women community are presented here.

The Population Foundation of India implemented a programme since 2013, MKBKSH (*Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon*) in two districts of Bihar – Darbhanga (Sighwara) and Nawada (Kauwakol) but focused on U.P and Bihar on the whole. Using a 360° communication approach, MKBKSH reached out to intended audiences through TV, radio, IVRS, social media and an intensive outreach through NGO partners, to enhance knowledge, change perceptions and shift attitudes on the stated social issues.

In order to support the outreach effort, a set of communication materials were developed on the themes shared in the show. Print and audio-visual materials on the theme of early marriages, delaying first pregnancy, spacing between births, contraceptive use and prevention of sex-selection were developed to share in the field. It was a cost effective primary health and family planning approach applied at scale that can be replicated in other slums. The aim was to increase the demand for family planning services in project states among women and men in the reproductive age group, especially among youth (15 – 24 years) and to ensure improvement in family planning/reproductive and child health status of vulnerable populations. The possible impact at the stage of the implementation of the programme was the development of a replicable model for population stabilization by using effective persuasion through community activists and persuasive technology.



*Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon. Awareness initiative of the Population Foundation of India*

The initiative led to an increased knowledge among men and women accessing reproductive health services and information on adverse effects of early marriage, early and closely spaced pregnancies; and increased knowledge empowering young couples and college students with improved communication and decision making on issues of early marriage, early and closely spaced child births, body literacy and sexuality. Community action was built against sex-selective practices and women accessing safe abortion services in three blocks of the project. There is now increased community acceptance of delaying the first

birth till the woman is 21 years of age, and the use of contraception by couples to delay the first child.

Development Alternatives ran a similar campaign in Bundelkhand (Shubh kal) to engage with communities through Rural Radio Show on the theme of making people aware of climate change issues. There were 186 participating groups in 100 villages in Bundelkhand (2011-2012) and there were 5 rounds of competition. As a result of the rural reality show there were 25 winners and change agents, about 1,00,000 + villagers were aware about climate change and 855 households embraced climate friendly practice and this all took 12 months time. The rural reality show's outreach and behavior change methodology can be implemented for various social, economic and environmental issues.

Rupayani (Rural People's Awareness, Youth Action in India) helped generating awareness about HIV AIDS among young women and men. They were also involved in regular meetings with peer regarding safe sex, safe blood transfusion, increasing use of condom, change in behavior and clinical examination of STD. This has proven that it is a best proven practice to stop HIV AIDS in the region. The NGO was also involved in making people aware about the problems of sex ratio declaration and malpractices of ultra sonography. Their 'We can' campaign about domestic violence addressed 15000 people and women issues.

#### **b. Awareness raising and engaging with women to take leadership roles**

SPARK (Society for Participatory Action Research and Knowledge) has worked to promote violence free lives for women in Jharkhand and to empower them to take leadership role in Jharkhand during their programme period of 2001-2015. They also have helped women become organised and aware of their rights. They are now raising voice in village level meetings and platforms. Women are seen to be taking a leadership role and are active in decision making in the village and in the PRI structure. Women are not dependent on their male counterpart for small expenses. They are managing the working of women and girls in the metro cities without exploitation. The girls have also taken training and some of them started working in other enterprises. 60% women were elected in PRI election. The women are solving the cases of violence through counseling at the village level. Women are taking decision in Gram sabha and Gram panchayat meetings.



*Gender sensitization programmes by SPARK (Society for Participatory Action Research and Knowledge)*

In these cases the NGO initiative was solving the most vulnerable aspect of women’s lives by making a difference through engaging women from their own community. This thus becomes a good practice which brings sustainability in the efforts.

Sehgal Foundation has formed women collectives and village leadership schools in Mewat district, Haryana and promoted sustainable agriculture practices through training and demonstrations. Due to the initiative, 5 mahila sangathans were formed and there are 607 active women participants. They trained around 100 girls in stitching and tailoring and improved awareness of girls about government programs and schemes. Around 10 girls who were trained in their literacy centres have been selected to work in Government’s Adult literacy programs in their villages. 3 girls have been selected for training in government KVK (Krishi Vigyaan Kendra) and 10 girls received order to stitch 100 bags for which they were provided input materials and earned labor charges. Girls have become more proactive in availing the benefits of government schemes such as ‘Ladli Yojana.’



*Outreach programmes of the Sehgal Foundation*

Women are the worst sufferers of prevailing social evils and they are the last to get justice from the existing system. Jatan an NGO working in Rajasthan has worked closely with

communities by involving them in the processes leading to long term changes. The programme identifies peer educators who give life skill sessions to young girls. An adolescent girls club of 25-30 girls transact the session. This is meant to teach life skills including health and education. They are able to express their feelings easily.

Life Bloom Services International (LBSI), Kenya conducts workshops, training sensitizations, campaigns, and gives counseling for capacity building. As a result of the sensitization, half of the population is departing from prostitution; there is use of protective measures by sex workers and more access to medical services. This has led to social empowerment. As a part of the initiative, 856 Peer Mentors were trained in Transformative Leadership, Personal journaling, counseling, and Life Skills between 2004-2014.

They are the current community mobilizers and campaigners. 38 of these women are Senior Mentors, having shown big shift in their lives and community leadership. They are either employed, or in businesses etc. Three of them currently sit on Life Bloom Services International Board of Directors. More than 6500 women led households were benefited. Women One Stop Centre (the first of its kind in Kenya) was commissioned in 2014 after LBSI and the women constructed it.



*Sharing experiences: Life Bloom Services International*

The approach explored here is to organise women groups, impart them trainings to link them to such livelihood options where they themselves become the torch bearers.

### **Support to improve participation in governance**

Jatan is an organization based in Udaipur which works on different areas to improve women status and their participation by engaging with communities. They worked through formation of '*Mahila Jagruk Manch*' which helps in solving problems of elected women and to prepare for future elections; and block level campaigns which conduct street plays for awareness. They are also running a project '*Betiyan ki baatein*' focused on sex ratio under which they conduct '*Gode bharayi rasam*' in front of all people which bars them from infanticide. Apart from this we reward women with girl child with certificates. This is helping in the improvement of sex ratio in the area. Apart from this, they have opened Panchayat Gender Resource Centers which is to help women who are not able to avail what they are entitled to. They are working in *Khildwara*, Rajasthan covering 248 *Anganwadis*. The NGO referred to the problem that women usually do not bring to forth issues related to domestic violence. However, when the issue becomes very intense, they come to forth and the NGO helps them.

### **Through Institutional strengthening of women as Self Help Groups and Federations**

Most of the NGOs work with this approach. Bhoruka Charitable Trust, Aaspur is dedicated to socio-economic transformation of rural and remote areas of India, especially the weaker and socially underprivileged groups, through physical, social, cultural and economic development of rural people, groups and institutions. BCT has been actively involved in formation of Self-Help-Groups in its all the target villages in Rajasthan. In Dungarpur, BCT has been implementing the promotion and linkage of 250 SHGs in 74 villages of 17 Gram Panchayat of Aaspur block since September, 2010. A total of 37 SHGs were formed and linked with the bank up to March, 2011. Special focus on migrant labor and their families for improved awareness on HIV/AIDS about 300 such family and 145 labour are given regular awareness and counseling. Their initiatives have helped in financial and social empowerment of women and in providing entrepreneur training. Also, it has caused skill improvement on technical and non technical trade for improved employability.

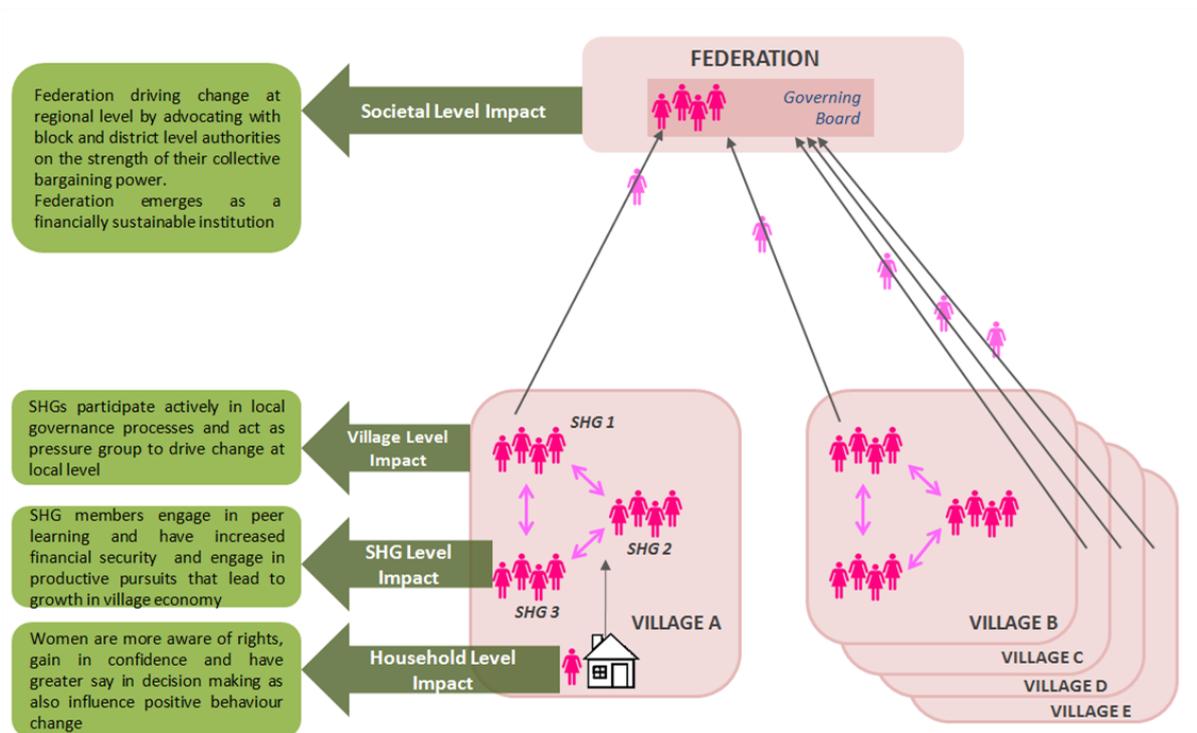
### Case Study: Bhoruka Charitable Trust

Manjoo Devi 35 years old, village Aaspur, Rajasthan got married at an early age of 14 years and has three children. Her husband is a migrant agricultural labourer, and hence seasonal employment made it difficult to meet the day to day needs of the family. Manjoo met the facilitators of BCT with 11 other women and formed Laxminarayan SHG and started saving Rs. 50 per month. In the year 2010, she availed a loan of Rs. 20,000/- from the group and started a tailoring cum cloth shop in the village. Now she is able to earn Rs. 1500 – Rs. 2000/- per month to meet her basic needs. She is now financially secure and has increased her savings from Rs. 50 to Rs. 100/- per month in the group. Her total savings in group is now Rs. 6,600.00/- and she is planning to avail another loan of Rs. 50,000/- to construct a room for her son and expand the bangle business. Recently her group has decided to give interest free loan to its members for constructing sanitary unit (Toilets) in their home. Once the grant from Swachh Bharat Mission program is received, these households will make repayment to the group.

SARTHAK in eastern UP has been actively working with women of vulnerable community since 1997 especially for their health and exclusive rights to live with dignity. It has formed 235 Women Self Help Groups including women groups with 4500+ active members across more than 200 villages of Majhwa and City blocks of Mirzapur.

SARTHAK has also made 408 adolescent girl groups in both of the blocks covering 200 plus villages. These 408 AGGs have more than 7300 adolescent girl members who are regularly being trained on life skills along with a focus on their specific health issues; making them to overcome hesitation and be confident about themselves.

Development Alternatives (DA), New Delhi, has promoted formation of women collectives to enhance their bargaining power and enable them to engage in savings and inter-loaning for financial resilience; income generation activities for livelihood development; and addressing development concerns of the community through multi-stakeholder action. DA facilitates the formation of women's collectives at two levels: **Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Federations.**



Multi level Impacts of SHG - Federation Programme. Courtesy - DA

To ensure sustainability of the SHGs and Federations, DA has built the capacity of the Federations for access to livelihood development solutions; access to products such as solar lights, seeds, cook-stoves, water purification and agriculture inputs; provide its members with access to basic needs products; establishes market linkages for procurement of products and creates demand for the same amongst the community. The federation manages and operates community level infrastructure for basic needs such as drinking water, home electrification, and sanitation facilities on a payment for services model. Federations act as change agents.

### IMPACTING LIVES AT SCALE

- 1100+ SHGs**
- 12,000+ SHG Members**
- 40% women engage in Income Generation Activities**
- 60% access rights and entitlements**
- 4 Federations with 770 SHGs**
- 2 Federations reach out to 10,000+ HHs with services**

### Case Study: The Story of Sankalp Swashakti Mahila Mandal

**Sankalp Swasakti Mahila Mandal (SSMM)** a registered women federation of SHGs with 500 members in Bundelkhand.

The Federation provides a common facility centre with infrastructure facilities that can be used by paying a rent for value addition to local agri produce. The Federation also plays the role of an entrepreneur by aggregating and processing farm produce like spices and vermi-compost for accessing improved markets. More than 1000 farmers and women in the area benefit from the facility.

SSMM also manages and operates a safe domestic drinking water supply facility through a pay for service model in two villages. This intervention has ensured regular safe drinking water access to 100 families and reduced the drudgery up to 3 hours per day. The federation collects nominal monthly fees from the households for maintenance and operations.



*Source: Development Alternatives*

Youth Net and Counseling (YONECO) with funding from UNFPA and European Union at Africa is implementing a project called as “Gender Equality and Women Empowerment”. The project is empowering women through four sectors that comprise health, education, agriculture and road infrastructures. One major component of the project is the economic empowerment of vulnerable women through a number of initiatives that includes Village Savings and Loans. This best practice highlights the achievements YONECO has registered through improved livelihood of women who are members of a number of VSL groups YONECO established and trained.

### Natural Resource Management linked with livelihood generation

Women’s role in maintaining environmental balance exists since times immemorial. However, direct initiatives to involve women on a greater extent in environment related initiatives is still lacking. Women are the most vulnerable to climate change and have no say

in decision making even at the community level, although they are the ones who bear the brunt of climate change and the burden of adaptation.<sup>8</sup>

The Centre for Environmental Management and Participatory Development (CEMPD), Kolkata implemented natural resource management based activities which has provided opportunity for wise use of wetlands through community based conservation of wetlands and engagement in pond-farming activities such as fish and shrimp cultivation and using the eco-system as local resource for their livelihood and economic development. This also resulted in a social safety net to women for economic independence.

Apart from this, there is family based participation by women through Self-Help Groups to conserve the wetland and its surrounding areas and use water based products for livelihood. This is maintaining the ecological balance and bio-diversity and enhances species and diversity management. Wetland environment has improvement through restoration and conservation involving community participation.



*Wetland based activity undertaken by CEMPD, East Kolkata*

With an environment focus, Seva Mandir in Udaipur have worked closely with communities to regenerate common, private and pasture land, treat watershed area through soils and water conservation technique, and have introduced efficient agriculture practices to enhance rural livelihoods – micro irrigation systems, improved variety of seeds, and organic

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<sup>8</sup> Himangana Gupta (2015), Women and Climate Change: Linking Ground Perspectives to the Global Scenario, *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 22(3).

manure. As a result of these initiatives, women have their own platform to raise and resolve social and economic issues such as violence, non-functioning of government schemes/services. Women have more funds and financial security for emergency expenditures, assets, and daily spending such as food, medicine, school fees. There has been a reduction in drudgery of women for collecting firewood, and fodder and health of women has improved. There is increased women representation in committees.

*This integrated approach where communities become responsible for their natural resources because that brings food, shelter to them, has the inbuilt component of sustainability in the long run.*

## **Supporting the value chain through market approach**

### **a. Provision of intermediary and supporting services**

There are many opportunities that underlie the oldest profession of India, i.e, agriculture. Some NGOs have taken initiatives to not only recognise those opportunities but have also reached the women famers for implementation on ground.

Cotton Connect SA Pvt. Ltd. has implemented awareness drives/community mobilization, trainings, workshops, intermediary services (linking women with social security schemes, bank accounts, insurance providers etc.) for women in Cotton growing communities. The impact was enhanced livelihoods, increase in incomes, better profitability for women farmers, improved educational status/ access to resources for women and their children and enhanced financial literacy for farm and household financial management. This also empowered women to startup microenterprises and be self-sufficient entrepreneurs.

Seva Mandir in Udaipur operates full-day child-care centres (Balwadis) in collaboration with local communities. Balwadi centres operate on the principles of an integrated approach to community development with various objectives of improving health and nutritional status of children, enforcing cognitive development, enabling caregivers to opt for multiple task and enhancing awareness of children's needs within the community, particularly of parents whose children attend the Balwadis. Balwadi Centres have enabled more than half the mothers to pursue livelihood activities and/or domestic work.

*When the care giving role of women gets supported by NGO initiatives it leads to positive impact on their lives.* This gets reflected in reaping benefits from the income generation opportunities and also leads to their increased participation at various fronts, which is an inherent component of sustainability of any such effort.

## b. Through interventions leading to strengthening the product value chain

In Srilanka, most of the organisations were supporting the farmers for a long time to move from high external input chemical agriculture to more sustainable form of agriculture. The Bridge Market concept, jointly established by Janathakshan, Oxfam and World Vision, is a direct solution to address inherently complex problem in the eco-friendly product value chain. The Bridge Market initiative that was started on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2015, aimed to build up the power in market of the poor men and women small scale farmers and producers in the East region. This market intervention was expected to bridge the gap between poorer small scale producers with the middle class and upper middle class consumers who seek good food. The Bridge Market has shown during the short period of time that the initiative has the capacity to develop as a sustainable social enterprise but it needs right time and right investment.

During the first phase of the Bridge Market from April 2015, the village level poor producers received a very dynamic opportunity to increase their income at with a premium price to their products, supplying them to Bridge Market. Coming to the Bridge Market as vendors had made them proud of their capacity to cater the demand of the city consumer. The Bridge Market has given them the confidence and credibility to increase their volume and acreage that they are cultivating according to eco-friendly farming methods. The Bridge Market has reached around 300 producers with 20-30% of income increase than the farm gate price through 50 vendors. There are around 1500 consumers weekly visiting the venue for purchasing and the producers have taken around Rs. 11 million to their villages in 41 events and it is expected that this will reach Rs. 15 million by end of April 2016 (end of first year). This initiative has brought different types of government institutions and NGOs to work together towards one vision to provide market facilitation for the poor and marginalized communities in the Eastern province.

Around 70% of the producers and vendors represent the women participation through the value chain in the Bridge Market initiative. Developing women economic leadership is targeted from the production process itself. *The Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) approach is used in building the capacity of the different actors throughout the value chain as the intervention is aimed in changing the traditional gender roles more meaningfully and collaboratively.*

Gayatri Sewa Sansthan, Udaipur, focuses on enhancing the level of awareness in the community towards rights, equality and justice of the girl child. They have formed 150 SHGs in the tribal dominated region of Udaipur district through which services regarding microfinance, livelihood generation and social development are being provided. An initiative, Grelth, for selling chemical free foods has increased livelihoods in the villages. They aim at capacity building and facilitating market linkage for SHGs formed by

Government Departments and other Agencies. *Women most of the times find problems in setting forward and backward linkages while they run enterprises. If this gets supported by the NGO initiatives at preliminary stages, their initiatives get good boost.* This support can be short term but in such cases the strengthening of processes is needed for sustainability.

### **Renewable energy based livelihood generation**

As a relatively newer concept, some NGOs started working on livelihood generation through renewable energy based initiatives.

Practical action aimed to build Micro Hydro Projects (MHP), Small Wind Energy Systems, MHP based Entrepreneurship in Koraput district, Odisha (2014-2017). Their aim was to improve access to Clean Cook Stoves for economic sustainability and social wellbeing. The impact of their initiative was the fulfillment of basic energy needs, improved health, improved productivity to work in night, improved awareness through television and radio, women were able to finish their household work in the night which was pending earlier, reduced danger from animals and insects in the night, reduction in thefts at night and improved social status among relatives from other villages.

LEAD Pakistan imparts training to women from un-electrified areas and they are handed over solar lanterns to be rented out in their villages resulting in provision of light through clean energy and increased income of women entrepreneurs. Specifically, the project “Bright Enterprise” aimed at promoting women entrepreneurship in the use of clean energy in underprivileged un-electrified villages of District Rajanpur. The project focused on empowering women through capacitating them in enterprise development of solar lanterns, thereby also reducing their poverty besides decreasing their sense of deprivation of not having electricity by providing a cost effective and healthy lighting solution. Poor women run this business independently without the involvement of their husbands and other male relatives thus boosting their confidence. There are thirty three women entrepreneurs who were provided with the solar lanterns and were trained in entrepreneurship and basic financial management.

These women entrepreneurs have improved their socio economic status through carrying out the business activity vigorously, thereby reducing their financial stress through increased income from this project. A rapid assessment of beneficiaries’ income shows that the average income of beneficiaries before the project was Rs. 4055 which was increased to Rs. 5303 after the project, making a positive difference of Rs.1248 per month. There is a sizable increase of 31% in the average income of the beneficiaries by providing three lanterns to each woman which can be raised up to 100 percent by providing 10 lanterns each.



*Sensitization programme for entrepreneurship through solar technology, Lead Pakistan.*

Development Alternatives (DA), New Delhi has formed the Women Energy Cluster in the Bundelkhand region (2010-12). The Sustainable Civil Society Initiative to Address Global Environmental Challenges (SCSI) spans over 15 years' period with a long term vision to eradicate poverty and regenerate the natural resource base across 1000 villages in the region. Due to the initiative, bioenergy plants are running which has also led to an increase in the incomes of the households.

As work related to clean energy is in high priority, the organizations get good opportunities to innovate products as well as processes and when this gets linked with the livelihood options the outputs of such initiatives are seen to enhance manifold.

## **Role in strengthening national processes and emerging needs**

### **a. Strengthening of institutional capacity of the national level Institutions/Machinery**

Though this aspect is considered important, not many organisations have reported to be working in this most needed area of strengthening national level government mechanisms and mainstreaming these concerns at appropriate forums. Youth Net and Counseling (YONECO) at Africa has worked towards strengthening institutional capacity of the national Gender Machinery, enhanced capacity for mainstreaming gender in National Aids

Commission and the key sector, improved equality between women and men in society through economic, social and legal empowerment and increased understanding of the social cultural practices impacting negatively on gender and HIV and AIDS by the communities.

Among many other project initiatives, the project “Gender Equality and Women Empowerment” also supported the establishment of a toll free National Gender Based Violence reporting line popularly known as GBV Crisis line. The line is accessible free of charge on two telecommunication companies that include Malawi Telecommunications Limited and Telekom Networks Malawi. The line is accessible countrywide and operates around the clock. Some of the clients are kept temporarily at the organisation’s safe place while the Police and Social Welfare are sorting out their cases. On weekly basis the GBV crisis line receive 65 to 77 walk in clients.

*This level of work when gets performed by NGOs bridges the most evident gap between policy and practice and thus leads to long term benefits to the target population.*

#### **b. Disaster risk reduction as area of intervention**

Unnati, Rajasthan took initiatives for Disaster Risk Reduction focusing especially on the aftermaths of the disasters. They help in reconstruction activities after relief and rehabilitation support to the affected communities of different disasters. Understanding is developed on the owner driven reconstruction approach. Community managed disaster risk reduction practices are demonstrated primarily in the contexts of floods and droughts. Along with this, through regular capacity building inputs and practical trainings, village bare-foot horti pasture experts have been developed.

These volunteers have proved necessary for the sustainability of the intervention and they regularly monitor the growth of plants, timely inputs by farmers and provide specialized inputs to the various plots. This strengthens the local capacities on horti-pasture practices. Barefoot experts have developed skills on grafting and some of them have started functioning as local resource persons extending voluntary support to local government functionaries advising on choice of seeds and specific techniques such as grafting.

Adaptation strategy to droughts and also to climate change variability in western Rajasthan should lean heavily towards strengthening of a livestock based economy. Unnati initiated the ‘Horti-pasture development by rural women.’ It was to start individual initiatives of gardening in the year 2008 to support hitherto migrating families to be able to feed their cattle and earn a basic living from their marginal desert land. Drought Risk Reduction through promotion of horti-pasture in the desert area by proper utilization of local resources was one of the major project objectives. The initiative was implemented in four blocks of Jodhpur and Barmer districts in Rajasthan. The initiative addresses the property

rights, as well as nutrition, and local employment of the women. Unnati's interventions sought to generate possibility of meaningful and sustainable empowerment of desert communities to manage drought. Hortipasture plots were a strategic and multi-pronged solution to varied dimensions of vulnerabilities of drought prone communities. Evidences also suggest that it can contribute to poverty reduction and help move people into productive livelihoods.

#### Case studies: Unnati

As a result of the initiative 'Horti-pasture development by rural women,' Dariya Devi sold berry fruits of Rs. 30,000 while received fodder for the goats and fuel also as berry twigs at very low expenses in the year 2014-15,. Moreover she shares happily the produce with her relatives.

Another woman, Gauri Devi planted 32 saplings of *ber*, 25 saplings of *goonda*, six *karonda* and one lemon. In the second year, *Guvar* was introduced. She started getting direct benefits from her plants by the end of second year. Gauri devi feels that the hortipasture increases the work hours only marginally. She has to put in about two hours of extra-effort daily along with her family for the up-keep of the plants. However, the benefits are immense in terms of fodder, fruits, vegetables and produce from inter-crops.



*Dariya devi enjoying the greenery of her individual horti pasture*

Women are the worst sufferers of natural and man-made disasters as they being care takers are the first to bear brunt of disruption of services. The attempts made to engage women in this process by capacity building are a major effort to bring sustainability and to mitigate impact of disasters.

### **In Nutshell**

- **The Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) approach is used in building the capacity of the different actors throughout the value chain as the intervention is aimed in changing the traditional gender roles more meaningfully and collaboratively.**
- **Women most of the times find problems in setting forward and backward linkages while they run enterprises. If this gets supported by the NGO initiatives at preliminary stages their initiatives get good boost. This support can be short term but in such cases the strengthening of processes is needed for sustainability.**
- **This level of work when gets performed by NGO's it bridges the most evident gap between policy and practice and thus leads to long term benefits to the target population.**
- **Women are the worst sufferers of natural and man-made disasters as they being care takers are the first to bear brunt of disruption of services. The attempts made to engage women in process by capacity building are a major effort to bring sustainability and to mitigate impact of disasters.**

### ***Replicability and scalability***

The replicability and scalability of the activities discussed in previous sections depends on the area in which they are being carried out. However, most NGOs are optimistic about the replicability of certain models, but such details are not available in the information provided. The analysis provided here is based on the types of interventions as per the need, policy connect and experience from the pilot initiatives.

As a point of analysis, renewable energy based livelihoods is a multi-benefit approach as it not only employs women in such a work but also provides low cost energy options. Apart from this, it is environment friendly. There is a possibility of replicating such activities in different villages as a part of clean technology and rural electrification programmes keeping employment generation for women as a focus.

As discussed, livelihood generation is the main objective of most NGOs whether it is through skill training or through development of entrepreneurship or by providing financial support. It may depend on the region and the optimism of the local women as to what is most suitable. According to an NGO, it requires a lot of work in the field in terms of building capability, forming women's collective and creating awareness among the villagers. There

must be suitable conditions for them to be involved in new opportunities and it would become easier to replicate models if women are aware about other successful women leaders. Exposure visits to such locations and meetings with successful women to spread these messages can be of help.

Corporate involvement and the banks who can help women SHGs in maintaining bank accounts and in giving loans for livelihood development will increase the replicability of financial approaches to livelihood. More and more media involvement for generating awareness is already doing wonders in most parts of the world and in India and will play a key role in replicating good practices. Capacity building through skill training is the need of most women across the states and therefore, it comes out to be a viable model for replication.

An NGO mentions that a locally designed and contextualized technology and project model can be scaled up by various women SHG groups in different parts of the country. Some projects and initiatives have multidimensional impacts, i.e. gender mainstreaming, women empowerment, economic development, community development, promotion of clean and safe energy and instant lighting solution. In off-grid areas, the government can initiate such projects for addressing communities' basic needs which can have other cross cutting impacts as well. Empowering community members with necessary skills and instilling a sense of ownership can also support other groups to establish new associations and increase the scalability of the ongoing projects.

Also, NGOs stress that good practices are scalable through the current focus of the government on skill development of the youth for sustainable employment and the engagement of organized groups of women with National Rural Livelihood Mission for access to entitlements and livelihood enhancement of BPL households. The Equal employment opportunities can be taken by women in this way because the economic empowerment plays a big role in family decision making as well as increases the status to take care of child education, which may affect long term educational goal to educate the girls.

## Conclusion

As a conglomeration of different views and suggestions that have been reached at through various *mohulla sabhas*, it is clear that women are vocal in raising their concerns and they look towards options to explore. These were the women who had showed interest in taking more responsibilities, getting more earnings for their families, their children and in fulfilling their dreams. Not all were from institutions like Self Help Groups but they had the courage and readiness to voice their displeasure, apprehensions, as well as their aspirations and desires.

The NGOs were responsive in sharing their initiatives and its outputs. This shows their eagerness to see these good practices being disseminated, scaled and replicated in different geographies and through different partners. It also points towards their openness to learn from each other towards strengthening their initiatives, which is one of the major objectives of this document, where it talks about cross fertilization of good ideas and practices across boundaries. The information from the NGOs on good practices shows that they are well aware of the demands of women and their initiatives link towards solving these problems, but this connect is not always found to be direct and yielding. The sharing from NGO's talk about their initiatives very clearly, but information on its outcome and impacts is not too visible.

Women have shown concern about difficulties in meeting the basic needs like water, sanitation, fuel wood etc (which takes lot of their time and energy), and many NGOs have been seen to work on these areas but this is not coming as main intervention point in the good practices. Women had much to say regarding lack or insufficiency of infrastructure pertaining to education and health needs. Education emerged as a priority among the women participants (during *mohulla sabhas*). They feel that education can change the future scenario and so they want their children to be educated. Some of them said that they want their daughters to be educated as they were denied education by their parents. The interesting part was that they do not see education as the ultimate aim rather they see it as a 'means' to better life and so they were concerned about its 'livelihood' connect.

Women were seen to be relatively less vocal about issues related to their health like reproductive health, family planning and nutritional food availability, though they do want good hospitals in the vicinity of their villages as it is difficult to address emergencies, especially at odd times. These aspects are seen to be covered by the NGOs as there area of intervention but it does not appear to be to the required level in terms of sharing of good practices.

Women have demanded for skills and qualifications to secure livelihood options and a job. For this, most NGOs have kept their attention on skill development like sewing, beauty

courses, and other trainings (agriculture and livestock based). Women are able to learn new skills and have in many cases, started their own business. Among the good practices, there is mention from NGOs where such women entrepreneurs have employed other women and have helped to provide financial independence and entrepreneurship among the women. Although many trainings and skill development programmes have done wonders for some women, the tracking in terms of sustainability of efforts and its showcasing is seen to be missing.

As mentioned in *Mohulla Sabhas*, in most of the cases, women did not have the financial capital to start one or scale up their existing business. For such problems, some NGOs have followed the financial support based approach in which they have helped get bank loans or have mobilized money through SHGs. Such initiatives of the NGOs to improve the economic condition of the women appear as great and significant step towards gender equality and it also addresses SDG 5.

Prevailing gender inequality and need of gender equity did not emerge as an important issue from the *mohulla sabhas*. This may be due to the fact that addressing day to day needs is important and so their focus is more to fulfill their basic needs, get more income to improve their living standards, which improves their situation. They do not seem to be going beyond and questioning the underlying inequalities and discriminatory practices. This brings to the fore that for them, addressal of practical gender needs is urgent and basic to lead life.

Renewable energy based improvement in livelihoods has emerged as a newcomer, especially when we talk about NGO initiatives. However, not many programmes are seen to be helping significantly in improving livelihoods and environmental conservation. As far as the replicability and scalability of the initiatives is concerned, it largely depends on the NGO support in form of technology and its sustenance (repair, updation etc) and the pro active approach of women to venture into new areas.

All focal points, i.e, education, health, food security and energy generation through sustainable pathways is tackled by the NGOs through various initiatives. They are primarily working directly to solve the issues and concerns that women have voiced themselves. The SDG 1 (No Poverty) seems to be the overriding priority of most of the NGO work on ground. Financial stability, however, is the basis for women empowerment. Likewise, the other SDGs, especially SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), were not only the major demands of the rural and urban women, but are also a part of NGO initiatives which in turn, solves the purpose of SDG 5, i.e, Gender Equality in long run.

The information from NGOs shows that not many NGOs have been able to work closely with governments which are an important pre requisite for sustainability and scale. They are seen to be piloting and showing success as solo initiatives at small scale but the sustainability and scale aspect seems to be lacking altogether. Very few NGOs mentioned about convergence with government schemes and policy influence work which speaks loads about the problem and bottle necks. In the last few years NGOs are said to be important for their grass root connect but this being used as a building block in women empowerment initiatives, still remains to be duly explored.

Although a lot of efforts are being made to bring economic stability and independence in lives of women but as per women voices the crying need is for sustainable livelihood opportunities near their homes, easy access to finance to set small enterprises, easy forward and backward linkages to sustain their business initiatives, which are not getting fulfilled to the required extent with the value chain approach.

The needs and desires of the women directly point towards the 17 SDGs. It reflects that the SDGs very well cover the aspects which women mention as their concerns and desires and in countries where the implementation of the schemes and programmes linked to the SDGs, gets done adequately with a focused approach, the steps towards women's "dreams coming true" will be possible and realistic.

## Annexure 1: List of partner organisations who have contributed to the 'Good practices' section of this document

S No	Name of the Partner Organisation	Years of existence
<b>Responses from India</b>		
1	Centre for Environmental Management and Participatory Development (CEMPD)	13 years
2	Institute of Social Sciences (ISS)	30 years
3	Lupin Human welfare & Research Foundation, Bhopal centre	17 Years
4	Healing Fields Foundation	15 years
5	Saath Charitable Trust	27 Years
6	Matashree Gomati Devi Jan Seva Nidhi (MSGD)	22 years
7	SEEDS Trust	18 years
8	Jan Chetna Sansthan	28 Years
9	Population Foundation of India	46 years
10	RUPAYANI (Rural People's Awareness, Youth Action In India)	23 Years
11	Practical Action South Asia Regional	50 Years
12	Cotton Connect SA Pvt. Ltd.	6 years
13	Practical Action	50 Years Globally (15 Years in India)
14	Be! Fund	5 years
15	Kurichi group, Kanyakumari.	Unavailable
16	National Workers Movement	Unavailable
17	Bhairavi Foundation	Unavailable
18	Neelam Group	Unavailable
19	Kuringhi NGO	Unavailable
20	Ekta	Unavailable
21	Amritha Women's Development Society.	Unavailable
22	Kerala Mahila Samakhya.	Unavailable
23	Bhuvaneshwari Seva Sasmthe	Unavailable
24	Arshabharath	Unavailable
25	Parinaama Development Foundation	Unavailable
26	Shapla Nari Unnayan Foundation (SNUF)	4 years
27	SPARK (Society for Participatory Action Research and Knowledge)	17 Years
28	Sarthak	22 years
29	Sehgal Foundation	15 years
30	SevaMandir	48 years
31	Bhoruka Charitable Trust	53 years
32	Development Alternatives (DA Group)	33 years
33	Jatan	15 years
34	Gayatri Sewa Sansthan (GSS)	30 years
35	Shiva Gramudyog Sewa Sansthan	Unavailable
36	Unnati	26 years
37	Parineeta piprural development	Unavailable
<b>Responses from SAARC countries and Africa</b>		
38	LEAD, Pakistan	Unavailable
39	Janathakshan, Srilanka	Unavailable
40	Life Bloom Services International (LBSI), Africa	12 years
41	YONECO, Africa	17 years

## **Annexure 2: Pointers for FGD with women groups (*Mohulla Sabhas*) to get women voices on the theme “The World Women Want”**

### **Introductory part**

1. Teams introduction
2. Purpose of visit (in simple words the purpose needs to be communicated as we are there to meet them, to talk to them about their day to day life and what are their future dreams)
3. Its relevance in their context (how this meeting is going to be of any use to them in addressing their issues in days to come)

### **Situational analysis**

4. How do they spend their day?
5. What they see as main hurdles in their day to day life? What takes most of their time and energy? Main issues and challenges?
6. Their coping mechanisms?

### **Aspirations**

7. What are their main asks and why? If they are given choice to ask for two things what will be the two main things?
8. What are the dreams for their future life, for their children, for their daughters?
9. What drives them or motivates them the most? What do they see as most rewarding moments in their lives? What are the moments of happiness?

### Annexure 3: Questionnaire to capture stakeholders Experiences on their work regarding Women Initiatives

#### A. Organisation/Institution Overview

1. Name and complete contact address of organisation
2. Name and contact details of contact person
3. Duration of existence (In years)
4. Geographic focus
5. Organisations' Objectives
6. Target groups

#### B. Projects Overview

1. Basic details

S No	Main areas/sectors of work*	Nature of intervention**	overall impact	on women***	on environment (if any directly or indirectly)

\*health, education, natural resource management, environment, forestry, others etc

\*\*Nature of intervention - Awareness drives/community mobilization, trainings, workshops, direct product delivery, direct service delivery, intermediary services (for ex. linking women with employment or skilling initiatives, employment generation, other (pl specify))

\*\*\*Nutrition and general health (including mental health); Sexual and reproductive health; fulfilling basic needs like water, sanitation, energy needs and literacy, financial literacy; Vocational skills; ,

financial empowerment like employment, entrepreneurship; social empowerment; political empowerment; others (pl specify)

2. What is the basis for selecting your beneficiaries?

- a) Age: Please specify age range targeted \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Social group: Please specify social group targeted \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Occupation: Please specify occupations targeted \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Personal experience (for example, victims of domestic violence or sexual violence): please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- e) Geographical location: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- f) Others (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**C. Best proven practice/practices (BPP) in case of NGOs and Private sector players and case studies (CS) in reference to Women Study Centres**

*You can give up to three BPP/CSs and for second and third BPP/CSs you can copy and paste the same table provided below*

BPP/CS 1	
1	Why do you call it as the BPP/CS/which need/needs of women does it address
2	Date of start and end
3	Location
4	Main process steps (in bullet points)
5	Main challenges* and coping mechanisms (in bullet points)
6	Output and impact (in bullet points)

7	Main stakeholders** and their role	
8	Indicators based on which it is termed as BPP/CS	
9	Hard evidence and data support***	
10	In what way do you think this BPP/CS is scalable	
11	In what way do you think this BPP/CS is replicable	
12	Main Learnings (in bullet points)	
13.	Recommendations (if any) for better adoption (in bullet points)	
14	Visuals/links etc****	
15	Total budget and source of funding (optional)*****	

\* internal challenges like Finance, Institutional capacity, Human resource, Technology, Other (Please specify), external challenges like Policy, Bureaucratic hurdles, Community mobilization, Other-Please specify)

\*\*government (national), government (state), government (local), non-government organisation, foundations/trusts, multilateral agencies, companies, and target community

\*\*\*in terms of changes made, number of people reached, influenced, impacted, infrastructure created, income enhanced, others etc

\*\*\*\*Up to 2 photos of the work in action (each file should not exceed 500 kB in size and should be in the jpg, jpeg or png format). If available, please provide a relevant video link to your project. Grant,

\*\*\*\*\*Concessional loan, Market rate loan, Equity, Retained organisational earnings, Others (Please specify)

## About Development Alternatives (DA)

DA is a premier social enterprise working in the field of sustainable development. Established in 1982, and headquartered in New Delhi, it has built up a global presence in the fields of economic development, social equity and environmental management. It has also built up a strong reputation as the major innovator of technologies and delivery systems for sustainable livelihoods in the developing world. The Development Alternatives Group **envisions** a *world where every citizen can live a secure, healthy and fulfilling life in harmony with nature*. It believes that 'development' is a dynamic process that transforms the relationships among nature, machine and institutions for the sustained benefit of people. The Group's primary **mission** is to achieve its vision through the *creation of sustainable livelihoods in large numbers*.

## About All India Women's Education Fund Association (AIWEFA)

Celebrating 86 years in welfare, recent programmes include skilling of women in safe car driving, ; in association with UNESCO organising a conference "Transition of Women from Education to full Employment" highlighting employment opportunities through skill development; training women in self defence techniques , initiated the Swachh Campaign, presented the XIIIth AIWEFA Nina Sibal Memorial Award to an organisation working in the area of disabilities, launched the programme for conducting 100 Cyber Security Workshops" with Google and other partners.

## About All India Women's Conference (AIWC)

The major thrust area of AIWC all through has been in the area of literacy & education, health, family welfare & population, Socio-economic upliftment, non-conventional & renewable energy, rural sanitation, water & waste management, disaster management and consumer awareness. Activities of AIWC revolve around these focuses and provide welfare institutional services, mainly for women and children. AIWC plays a significant role in bringing about various Legislative Reforms.

### Contact Details

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