

Gender Integration within MPSRLM: Case of Gender Justice Program

Research Brief



1 Introduction and Background

The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM) is one of the largest government programs for financial inclusion and livelihoods of rural women with a massive network of 72.6 lakh Self-Help Groups (SHGs) comprising 794.1 lakh households in 34 states and union territories of India¹. Each state has its own State Rural Livelihoods Mission (SRLM) which works under certain guidelines of the DAY-NRLM but also has some autonomy in planning and execution of programs. Since 2016, DAY-NRLM has adopted a gender integration strategy which

¹ Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-NRLM, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. Retrieved October 29, 2021, from <https://nrlm.gov.in/dashboardForOuter.do?methodName=dashboard>

focuses on capacity building of staff and community institutions along with piloting of gender strategy in a few blocks within interested states.

Madhya Pradesh State Rural Livelihoods Mission (MPSRLM) emerged as one of the forerunners to respond to the call of the DAY-NRLM and adopted a gender strategy with a focus on capacity and perspective building of staff, social action committee (SAC) members, amongst others, on gender. MPSRLM also integrated gender work within their Annual Action Plans (AAP), with the inclusion of mechanisms such as Gender Forum and Gender Points Person (GPP) (Sengupta & Uppal, 2020). However, as observed through the formative research conducted by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) in the first quarter of 2020 in Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh (MP), greater need to integrate a gender lens within the different verticals and community institutions emerged to strengthen the gender strategy. Amongst staff and office bearers (OBs) of community institutions (Cluster Level Federations (CLFs)),² there was limited understanding of gender,

the monitoring system mostly captured input level indicators, and community institutions largely functioned as platforms for only financial transactions and with sporadic focus on social action³.

Given the need to develop more gender-responsive institutions and practices in Sheopur, the Gender Justice Program (GJP) set out to integrate a strong gender lens within the MPSRLM institutional framework and establish systems and practices that empower rural women to voice and visibilize their concerns utilizing MPSRLM platforms. The GJP was implemented by a Civil Society Organization (CSO) ANANDI⁴ from 2019 to 2021 in collaboration with MPSRLM with ICRW as the research partner. GJP was one of the four gender pilots supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) under its SWAYAM (Strengthening Women's Institutions for Agency and Empowerment) initiative, with IWWAGE (Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy) as an umbrella coordination and learning partner.



2 There are several levels of community institutions supported by DAY-NRLM. The first unit is the Self-Help Group (SHG) formed at the village level by mobilizing 10–15 women members. Multiple SHGs in a village come together to form the Village Organization (VO) and several VOs in a block come together to form the CLF. Each CLF is mentored and supported by a Block Nodal officer (Nodals) who is a Block level staff member.

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

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

The GJP had a three-pronged strategy also called the three pillars of the GJP. These pillars were i) Feminist Leadership Development i.e., developing a strong cadre of community-based feminist leaders (Samta Sakhis/Gender CRPs⁵) who could raise, represent and resolve rural women's

concerns; ii) Institutional Strengthening i.e., strengthening community institutions, especially CLFs, to respond to gender and social issues; and iii) Gender Mainstreaming i.e., at the systems level by mainstreaming gender into the mandate, policy and structures of MPSRLM.

The Gender Justice Program was implemented from 2019 to 2021 in Sheopur and Karhal blocks of Sheopur district. After project paused in April 2021, the program resumed in September 2021 using the upscaled gender strategy. In each block, the program was launched in three CLFs each. In these six CLFs, there were initially 12 Samta Sakhis (two per CLF). Later, 12 additional Samta Sakhis were selected, bringing the total to 24 – four Samta Sakhis per CLF. ANANDI employed three Master Trainers to mentor, support and handhold them in the field.

1.1 Research Questions and Methodology

The research brief presents a summary analysis of the key GJP strategies, outcomes and a roadmap for scaling up GJP within the SRLMs. This research brief draws on the process documentation of the GJP from January 2020 to March 2021 undertaken by the ICRW research team. The objective of the process documentation was to study the strategies and processes through which rural women are empowered to claim rights and entitlements by exercising their voice (through various institutions and platforms) and agency (capacity to reflect, decide and act). The broad questions guiding this research were:

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

such as CLFs so that they are able to lead, engage, represent and carry out actions ensuring the rights and entitlements of rural women? (Institutional Strengthening)

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

The process documentation was undertaken through a primary study using qualitative research methods including Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), In-depth Interviews (IDIs), Online Consultations and Participant Observations with different stakeholders such as Mission staff at the National, State, District and Block levels, the ANANDI Project team⁶ including Master trainers, ANANDI senior staff, IWWAGE staff, CLF office bearers, CLF SAC members and Samta Sakhis. The data and observations from 15 KIIs, 17 FGDs, 17 IDIs, 8 online

5 Community Resource Persons (CRPs) are appointed by the CLFs and work across CLFs, VOs and SHGs. They are appointed thematically such as *Krishi Sakhi* (Agriculture CRP), *Bank Mitra* (Bank linkage CRP), *Pashu Sakhi* (Livestock CRP), etc.

6. For the purpose of the brief, ANANDI project team refers to Project Coordinator and Master Trainers, both. It does not include ANANDI senior staff.

consultations, participant observations and telephonic or online listening-in of 20 meetings have been analysed to prepare this report. Given that this was human subject research, the study was approved by Institutional Review Board and the ethical practices such as informed consent, confidentiality, privacy and voluntary participation were strictly adhered to. In order to maintain confidentiality, all names have been changed.

2 Analysis of Strategies and Outcomes

The three pillars of the GJP aimed to create synergies between systems, institutions and individuals to enable gender integration across all levels as summarized in Figure 1. The cadre of community leaders (built

through Feminist Leadership Development) become the agents of change within the community institutional framework which restructures itself through the introduction of new practices to become gender responsive (Institutional Strengthening). This is supported by government policy and gender sensitive government staff that lends legitimacy and recognition to that change (Gender Mainstreaming). This section presents the key strategies and outcomes within each of the GJP pillars.

2.1 Feminist Leadership Development

The objective of the pillar was to build a cadre of women community leaders i.e., Samta Sakhis, who support community institutions and work towards advancing rural women's rights and entitlements. Samta Sakhis were selected, based on specific criteria⁷, by the CLFs themselves. Samta Sakhis were paid a monthly honorarium by ANANDI. However, to build ownership amongst the CLF and ensure the sustainability of the strategy, CLFs were expected to support Samta Sakhi's honorarium when the project paused in April 2021. Barring one CLF, no other CLFs paid the honorarium citing fund crunch issues.

The key strategies to build these leaders included continuous capacity building such as intensive trainings (five-day residential training on gender perspective development using Participatory Action Learning System (PALS) training tools, training on Lok Adhikar Kendra (LAK) facilitation), exposure visit to Gujarat and monthly review and reflection meetings. Subsequently, following the cascading model of training, the Samta Sakhis were entrusted with training other community members in CLFs, Village Organizations (VO) and SHGs and facilitating and leading social action on various issues that were raised in the community. Most of the social action needed to leverage governance and administrative platforms such as Panchayat, Janpad and line departments



Figure 1: GJP's multi-level approach

7. The criteria included women from socially marginalized communities, who had experiences of struggle and resilience in their own lives, had the ability to spend time and move around for project work and were CLF members. For the second batch of Samta Sakhis, two additional criteria were added; the ability to read and write (for record keeping and documentation-related requirements) and representation across geography (to enable wider coverage across VOs).

at the block and district levels. Figure 2 shows the different roles and functions of Samta Sakhis within the GJP. The cascading model of training and social action, therefore offered direct opportunities to the Samta Sakhis to translate what they learned into action and create pathways for change in their own lives and that of the community. A critical component of capacity building was the day-to-day mentoring and handholding support offered by the Master Trainers to Samta Sakhis. These continuous processes have played a pivotal role in transforming Samta Sakhis into confident, aware and spirited community leaders.

I did not have much experience before, I could not speak freely, ANANDI training gave me information and knowledge and the work has given me the courage to speak and do.

– Kiran, Samta Sakhi

Earlier no woman would come to Panchayat. Now less men and more women come to the Panchayat office. I really feel very proud for bringing about this change.

–Sushma, Samta Sakhi

Features of Participatory Action Learning System (PALS) based Training:

- Participatory and Interactive – discussions encouraged through the use of training tools, songs, role-plays, etc.
- Reflections by participants based on their lived experiences encouraged.
- Action plan drawn up at the end of training session and followed through subsequent review meetings.
- Supported post training by continuous mentorship, refresher trainings and exposure visits.

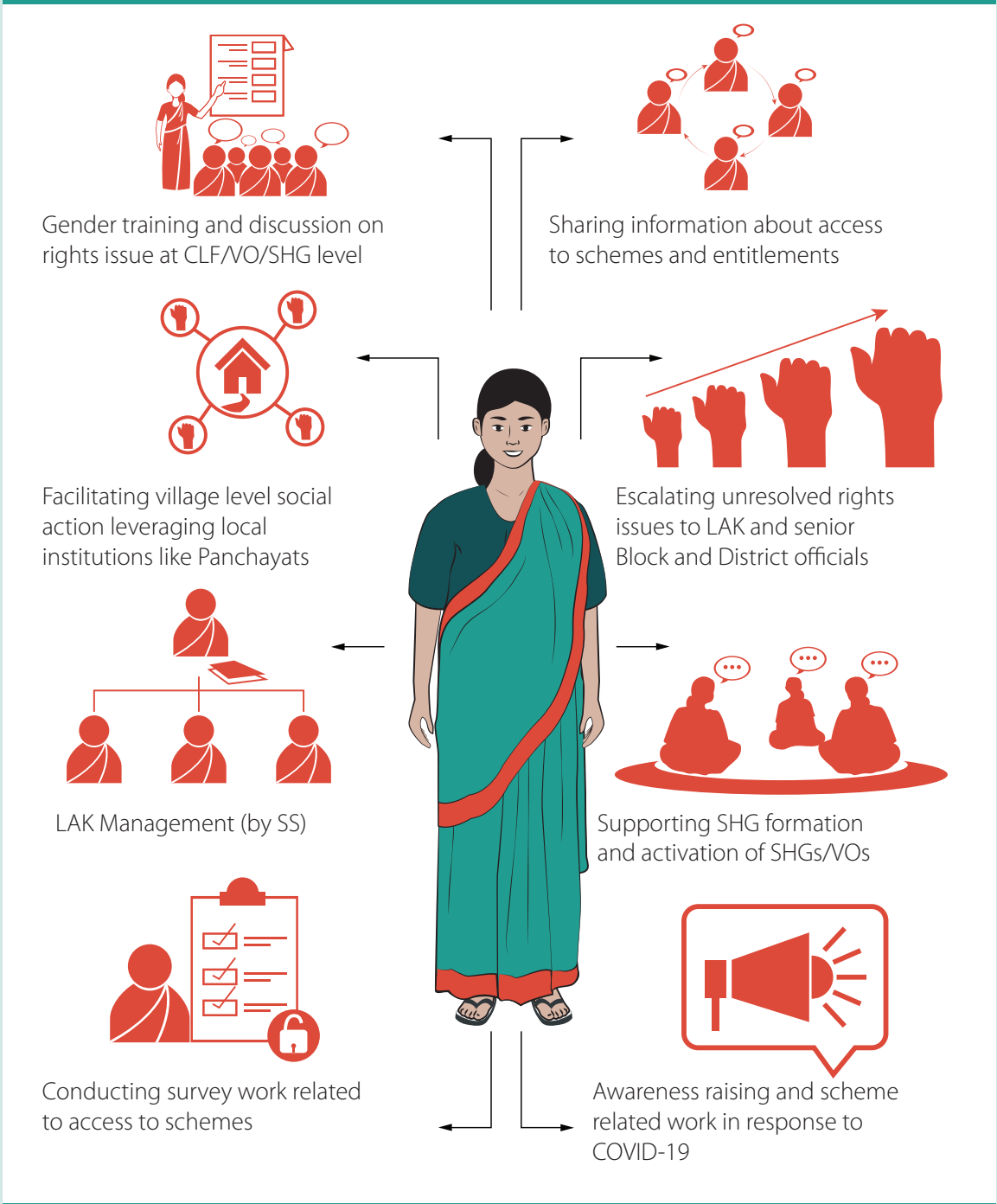
Examples of Training Tools Used:

- *Kiska Palda Bhari* – Training tool on gender division of work and decision making.
- *Mera Haq, Meri Pehchan* – Training tool on women's rights and entitlements.
- *Munna Munni* – Training tool on gender socialization and discrimination between girl child and boy child.
- *Dukh Sukh* – Training tool on discrimination faced by women across their life cycle.

Key strategies:

- Intensive and continuous trainings using PALS approach
- Tying training into action by engaging Samta Sakhis as trainers and facilitators of social action
- Exposure visit to Gujarat
- Mentoring and supportive supervision by Master Trainers

Roles and Functions of Samta Sakhis



SS: Samta Sakhis ; LAK: Lok Adhikar Kendra

Figure 2: Roles and Functions of Samta Sakhis

Key Outcomes

- Over the last two years, Samta Sakhis have evolved into leaders who have successfully raised, represented, and resolved women's concerns and facilitated their access to rights and entitlements. They have led from the front, fighting for the rights of themselves, their families and communities.
- Through the various capacity-building efforts, Samta Sakhis have gained access to information, tools and skills. An increase in their awareness, knowledge, confidence, self-esteem and courage to talk across power is observed. They have also developed skills as trainers and problem solvers.
- Samta Sakhis show a greater understanding of gender inequality and rights-based language is noticed. They identify discrimination not just in terms of differential access to opportunities or policies and schemes but also the different axes of discrimination such as caste, gender, and physical ability.
- Samta Sakhis have overcome their fears, whether of stepping out, talking to people including officials, addressing a large audience, or challenging norms in their households and communities⁸.
- Samta Sakhis have led and facilitated social action on various issues. They have successfully negotiated with and navigated various government institutions and institutional actors. This has also led to the creation of their own independent identity as community leaders, who fight for women's rights and gender equality.
- They have developed social capital through their continuous engagement with various government officials and derived collective strength and a sense of solidarity through a peer network of supportive colleagues (Samta Sakhis and Master Trainers).
- Samta Sakhis have challenged gender norms at their household level (for example, mobility, sharing of household work among men and women, property rights, and decision-making).

Key Enablers: The gender perspective training, Samta Sakhis own personal struggles, continuous capacity building through day-to-day mentoring, the opportunity and mandate of the program to translate learnings from trainings into action, peer networks and recognition from the community and the state have played a pivotal role in this journey of Samta Sakhis.

Key Barriers and Mitigation Methods: One of the key challenges that the Samta Sakhis faced was at the Panchayat level, with uncooperative and unwelcoming officials. Samta Sakhis were not accepted as community leaders instead they were taunted with comments such as, "who are you, why are you being a 'madam'". This was resolved through collective

pressure, escalation, successful resolution of cases from the community and collaborative work with the Panchayats especially during a crisis situation such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This helped in building trust, visibility and credibility of Samta Sakhis with Panchayat. Initial challenges at the level of the community and the household in terms of Samta Sakhis' restricted mobility, continuous scrutiny, taunts by men or non-acceptance as leaders were overcome by their ability to help people including family members by claiming their rights and entitlements and through a combination of strategies of resistance, subversion and negotiation. Further, their recognition as leaders by the administration also helped Samta Sakhis in navigating such challenges.

8. For more details, please refer to the Case Studies Report, titled- Stories of Change: Samta Sakhis of Sheopur, Madhya Pradesh

2.2 Institutional Strengthening

Institutional Strengthening is the process of strengthening the gender responsiveness of community institutions such as the CLF, so that they can raise, represent and resolve women's issues to advance gender equality. Some of the key strategies of this pillar included i) capacity building of CLF/VO/SHG members, SAC members and few Gender Points Person (GPP) at SHG level through a cascading model of training given by Samta Sakhis on gender, women's rights and COVID-19 prevention; ii) creating processes and institutions for social action on gender issues led and facilitated by Samta Sakhis; and iii) leveraging different governance and administrative platforms at the village and block level for enabling women's access to rights and entitlements.

As the key objective of the program was to create strong and gender responsive institutions, the activities

under the GJP were anchored within community institutions, especially the CLF. GJP focused on utilizing the existing SHG/VO/CLF spaces for gender trainings, discussions and social action. All trainings were conducted on the designated day of CLF and VO meetings. Another critical strategy was also the establishment of the Lok Adhikar Kendra (LAK) at the block level (in both Sheopur and Karhal Blocks) managed by Samta Sakhis and Master Trainers. The LAK was housed within the Janpad or Tehsil office and enabled community women's access to entitlements by connecting them with block-level line departments. It also served as an escalation platform for unresolved village-level cases. Figure 3 illustrates the establishment process of the LAK. Further, Block Gender Forum (BGF) was also formed to strengthen convergence and facilitate improved access to rights and entitlements. The main objective of this forum is to create a space for citizen interface through groups such as LAK/CLF with the state administration and also serve as an escalation mechanism for pending cases at LAK. It constitutes representatives from different line departments, Janpad, CLF OBs, Samta Sakhis, Master Trainers and MPSRLM. It is envisaged to meet once in two/three months.

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

- CLF OB, Sheopur Block

Women have started to fight their own battles. Earlier they did not have information, exposure and their mobility was restricted. But as we made our SHGs, VOs and Samta Sakhis started coming to these spaces, they shared a lot of information with us. Women became more aware and now they visit Panchayat, Tehsil.

-CLF OB, Karhal Block

Key strategies

- Capacity building trainings of CLF/VO members, SAC members and GPP on gender and women's rights by Samta Sakhis
- Creating processes and institutions for facilitating social action to claim women's rights and entitlements
- Leveraging government platforms for social action
- Anchoring GJP's activities within community institutions i.e. CLF, VO, SHG



Figure 3: LAK Establishment Process

Key Outcomes

- CLF OBs started to lead and facilitate CLF meetings, which is a change from an earlier period when Nodal officers or book-keepers (Preraks) led the meetings. The OBs started holding Preraks, Samta Sakhis and Nodals accountable for their work.
- In terms of gender perspectives, an emerging language of rights is observed among the CLF OBs, which was absent at the beginning of the program. However, it is not uniform across all CLFs or among all CLF OBs.
- Most OBs have shown evolving ownership and involvement in the program. Unfortunately, the non-payment of Samta Sakhis' honorarium by CLFs (barring one CLF) during the project pause period may be indicative of limits to that ownership. However, this may also have been the result of lack of funds rather than lack of willingness to pay.
- Systematic mechanisms for raising, processing and resolving rights and entitlements issues have been developed, such as writing applications, negotiating with Panchayats, raising issues at Gram Sabhas, and escalating issues to Janpads and line departments. The LAK and BGF have also been established and are functional.
- Through systematic social action⁹, at the village level and through the LAK, Samta Sakhis have enabled greater access of rural women to resources, services and entitlements such as pensions, identity cards, ration, housing, water, roads, streetlights, MGNREGA job cards and Ayushman Bharat health cards. They have also worked on issues of land rights, caste discrimination, domestic violence and COVID-19 prevention.
- Out of the 784 cases that were registered at LAK (till June 2021), around 62% cases (490 cases) have been resolved. LAK operations (eight months in Sheopur and one year in Karhal) have potentially unlocked¹⁰ around INR 4 Cr.
- Most social actions were led by the Samta Sakhis. Participatory social action is at a nascent stage, observed mainly in cases related to public goods and services such as water and few cases of domestic violence.
- Social action at the village level and establishment of the LAK and the BGF have facilitated better synergies and convergence between women's community institutions and other governance and administrative platforms to advance women's rights and entitlements. Figure 4 presents an example of how Samta Sakhis have worked through the GJP to enable rights and better convergence.
- Improvement in regularity and attendance in VO meetings is noticed. SHGs have also been formed and activated by the Samta Sakhis.
- Through trainings, discussions and social action, VO/CLF spaces are moving beyond financial transactions and emerging as gender-responsive platforms where women are able to voice and visibilize their concerns and claim their rights. Figure 5 shows how Samta Sakhis, through the GJP, were able to transform the CLF/VO spaces.

9. For specific stories of social action, please refer to the Process Documentation Report, titled: Exploring Strategies and Outcomes of the Gender Justice Program in Sheopur, Madhya Pradesh.

10. For more details, please refer to the Process Documentation Report, titled: Exploring Strategies and Outcomes of the Gender Justice Program in Sheopur, Madhya Pradesh.

Key Enablers: The embeddedness of the GJP in the community institutional structure, the leading role played by Samta Sakhis in conducting gender training of members and facilitating social action, the creation of standard processes and mechanisms of social action, including institutional platforms such as LAK and BGF, have helped in strengthening the community institutions and making them more gender-responsive.

Key Barriers and Mitigation Methods: Irregular VO meetings, low attendance, limited participation of VO/CLF members and mistrust amongst members in

Samta Sakhis' ability to bring any change were some of the critical challenges. As Samta Sakhis successfully fought for women's rights and entitlements, demonstrated leadership during the COVID-19 crisis and took proactive measures of mobilizing women for VO meetings these challenges were mitigated. Community members began to trust Samta Sakhis and recognized them as leaders who could alleviate their concerns. One of the challenges that continue to exist is inactive SACs, concerted efforts are needed to activate SACs.

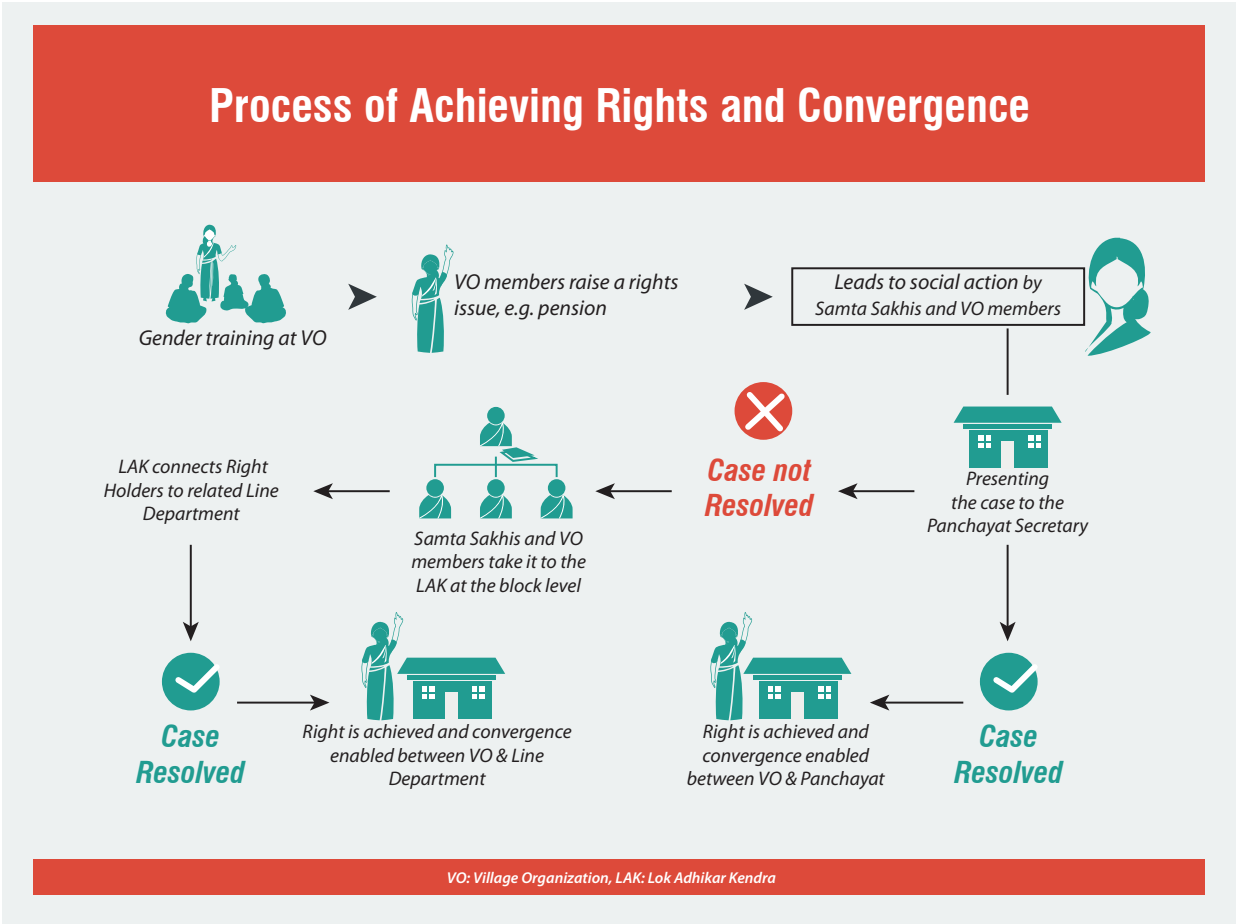


Figure 4: Process of Achieving Rights and Convergence

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

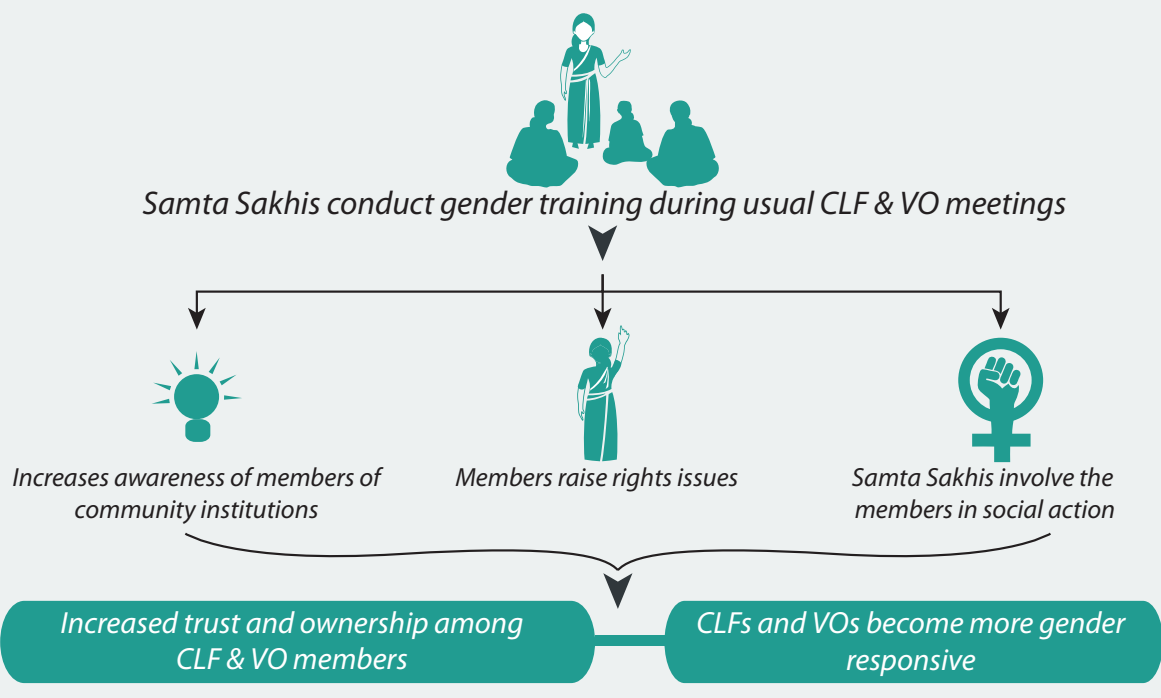


Figure 5: GJP's Embeddedness Creating Ownership of Gender Strategy and Gender Responsive Community Institutions

2.3 Gender Mainstreaming

The objective of the Gender Mainstreaming pillar was to mainstream and integrate gender within the systems and structure of MPSRLM across all levels i.e., state, district and block. Some of the key strategies used by GJP included continuous dialogue and advocacy, capacity building of staff, and technical and human resource support for gender strategy across state, district and block MPSRLM teams. Further, to facilitate greater ownership and create a replicable model, the GJP embedded itself within

MPSRLM's structures and institutions and aligned itself to the priorities of the MPSRLM. As a result, Samta Sakhis were chosen from the CLF members, worked as CRPs attached to the CLFs and worked with all the community institutions such as CLFs/VOs. No parallel system was created. This embeddedness of the program's design and operations within MPSRLM's structures and functions created ownership, acceptance and scope for replication and upscaling. MPSRLM initiated upscaling of a gender strategy to 18 districts (including Sheopur) based on the GJP from September 2020.

Key strategies:

- Technical and human resource support for MPSRLM's gender strategy
- Embedding GJP within existing structures
- Dialogue and advocacy

Key Outcomes

- Through continuous dialogue, advocacy and evidence, a political will and mandate has been created for GJP. This has resulted in upscaling of the program to 18 districts (covering 19 blocks and 60 CLFs) of Madhya Pradesh. Upscaling institutionalizes the GJP as a key gender strategy adopted by MPSRLM.
- There has also been institutionalization of Samta Sakhis within the SRLM's CRP guidelines applicable across the state.
- Deepening of gender perspectives among some district and block staff, though it was not observed amongst all staff. There is need for more capacity and perspective-building trainings.
- The overall buy-in, uptake and willingness to carry out gender work is evident at the state, district and block levels. However, in a couple of instances, Nodal officers were dismissive of Samta Sakhis.

Key Enablers: Continuous dialogue and advocacy by ANANDI, the embeddedness of GJP within MPSRLM's own institutional structure, ANANDI's long-standing relationship with MPSRLM (since 2013) and the evidence of empowerment on the ground have enabled the uptake of the program and the political mandate for an upscaled gender strategy.

Key Barriers and Mitigation Methods: Non-uniformity of gender perspectives amongst staff created differences in approach to gender work and

the GJP, signalling the need for intensive gender perspective building training of staff. The current monitoring system records largely input level indicators, there is a need for robust and gender-responsive monitoring which includes outcome and process indicators such as number/type of social action cases recorded and resolved, etc. Through the GJP, an android application- Adhikar Sathi App was developed to record and monitor social action cases at CLF level, this was not successful due to technical issues as well as a lack of digital literacy skills in the Samta Sakhis.

ANANDI's presence has enabled an uptake for gender work in MPSRLM. The staff who worked closely with ANANDI have an understanding of gender and wants to work on it.

-MPSRLM official

Gender work is important to strengthen livelihoods with dignity.

-Senior MPSRLM official

3 Roadmap for Gender Integration

This section builds on the analysis of the GJP strategies and outcomes in the previous section to provide DAY-NRLM and SRLMs with a blueprint of a successful gender mainstreaming model that can be upscaled to other districts and states. It presents a roadmap for gender integration¹¹ within the existing structures and institutions of DAY-NRLM. Figure 6 summarizes the model.

11. For more details, please refer to the Proof of Concept titled- Gendering MPSRLM Institutions: The Case of Gender Justice Program in Sheopur, Madhya Pradesh.

Roadmap for Gender Upscaling based on GJP, Sheopur (M.P.)

Overall Impact : Community Institutions become gender responsive and move beyond spaces for financial transactions to facilitate discussions and access to women's rights and entitlements.

Levels	 SMMU	 DMMU/BMMU	 Community Institutions	 Gender CRPs (SS)
Strategies	Human Resource support Technical support Focused & systematic gender strategy	Capacity building of Staff (limited) Technical support for implementing gender strategy Continuous sharing & consultation on gender work with DMMU/BMMU	Discussions with CLFs on gender strategy and SS selection SS selected by CLF from the pool of CLF members & CRPs based on specific criteria SS conduct gender training using PALS tools during regular CLF/VO meetings Establish LAK and Block Gender Forum Processes created for conducting social action at village & block level leveraging other institutions & platforms SS lead and facilitate social action at village & block level SS encourage participatory social action on village level issues & share information with rights holders for access to entitlements SS conduct gender training for CLF/VO SACs & GPPs & encourage VO SACs to accompany them for social action SS report to CLF on monthly basis	SS selected from CLF members based on experience of social marginalization, struggle & resilience as well as mobility & availability Continuous & intensive capacity building through trainings, exposure visits, review reflection meetings, day to day hand-holding by MT Create supportive peer network consisting of other SS, MT through participatory work, monthly review reflection meetings
Outcomes	Dedicated human resource for gender work Presence of a large pool of expertise to conceptualize & operationalize gender strategy Clear operational framework & guidelines for gender work	Partial capacities and perspectives built to execute gender strategy Large pool of expertise available to operationalize gender strategy Greater involvement & ownership of gender strategy among staff	Consensus & buy-in among CLF members for gender work Community leaders drawn from CLFs enabling greater ownership & cooperation of CLFs Perspectives built & discussions on social & gender issues during regular CLF/VO meeting Facilitation of community's rights, escalation mechanism at Block level established, & convergence enabled Systematic social action for access to rights & entitlements & convergence with other platforms achieved Women's issues visibilized & rights & entitlements enabled Members of community institutions empowered to claim entitlements on their own (limited instances) Some SAC members start visiting different platforms & govt. offices to claim rights and entitlements Accountability & ownership of CLFs for gender work enabled	Community leaders created who are locally grounded & empathetic to women's issues SS capacities & perspectives built to conduct training, facilitate social action to enable access to rights & entitlements for themselves & their communities Peer learning and support to overcome challenges at individual & community level

SMMU: State Mission Management Unit / DMMU: District Mission Management Unit / BMMU: Block Mission Management Unit / SS: Samta Sakhis
MT: Master Trainers / LAK: Lok Adhikar Kendra / PALS: Participatory Action Learning System. Community Institutions refers to CLF/VO/SHG.

Figure 6: Roadmap for Gender Upscaling based on field evidence from GJP, Sheopur

4 Conclusion and Recommendations

The GJP took a holistic approach to integrate gender within the DAY-NRLM. It worked at the systemic level (policy change through Gender Mainstreaming), the institutional level (making institutions gender responsive through Institutional Strengthening) and the individual level (creating a cadre of strong women community leaders through Feminist Leadership Development). Through this multipronged approach, the GJP was able to strengthen policy, institutions and individuals to address rural women's concerns on the ground. Persistent social action and support provided by Samta Sakhis leading to the realization of rights and entitlements of community members created strong credibility, trust and acceptance of the program and Samta Sakhis among the community and administration and eased a lot of challenges.

Through the GJP, ANANDI has been able to enable certain shifts within the MPSRLM and its institutions. One of the most critical shifts that is observed is the development of political willingness and buy-in to upscale the model to 18 districts. Further, GJP enabled CLF spaces to move beyond financial transactions and become more gender-responsive. The program led to the development of feminist community leaders who challenged gender norms across the household, community and state. The program also empowered members of community institutions to claim their rights and entitlements through social action leveraging various spaces of governance and administration, thus enhancing women's voice and visibility in public and administrative spaces. Additionally, social action enabled synergies and convergence between institutions such as women's community institutions, Panchayat, police station and local administration. However, in order to further strengthen the gender integration model, following recommendations should be considered.

Recommendations

- Intensive and systematic gender perspective and capacity building training for all staff at state, district and block levels across verticals of DAY-NRLM.
- Proactive measures (such as gender integrated training curricula) to integrate gender across all verticals of DAY-NRLM.
- Dedicated and clearly earmarked funds for gender work.
- Gender responsive monitoring mechanism with outcome level indicators.
- Capacity building and handholding of SACs and GPPs to lead gender work along with Samta Sakhis.

As change is a process and as the project is being upscaled to other districts as well, this research has thrown light on the need to delve deeper into certain processes to understand the dimensions, pathways and sustainability of change better. Some of these research questions include, how does a program like the GJP impact SHG members at a household and individual level? (in terms of decision making, redistributing HH work, control over income, control over produce, ability to talk across power, etc.) How effective is the cascading model of training in building perspectives of members of community institutions at VO and SHG levels? What strategies and factors are critical to sustaining the observed changes at

the level of community institutions and their gender responsiveness? What processes are required to encourage greater participation and leadership of members of community institutions in taking forward gender-responsive strategies and action?

Nevertheless, the experience of the GJP has created valuable lessons for gender mainstreaming within any large government program engaging with community platforms/groups. For example, some of the strategies used in the GJP such as the creation of strong community leadership; capacity building and gender sensitization of government staff, program staff and members of community institutions; development

of systems and platforms enabling women's voice, visibility and access to rights and entitlements can be equally effective in other development programs. In conclusion, the GJP has been a successful pilot in gendering the existing system from within and has presented a model for integrating a gender-focus within DAY-NRLM and similar development programs.

Acknowledgements

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Research Team Members

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