Gendering MPSRLM Institutions: The Case of Gender Justice Program in Sheopur, Madhya Pradesh

Proof of Concept

About Us

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Cover Photo

 ANANDI

Acknowledgements

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List of Abbreviations

AAP	Annual Action Plan
ANANDI	Area Networking and Development Initiatives
ASPM	Assistant State Program Manager
BGF	Block Gender Forum
BMGF	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
BMMU	Block Mission Management Unit
BPL	Below Poverty Line
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CLF	Cluster Level Federation
CRP	Community Resource Person
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CTC	Community Training Center
DAY-NRLM	Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- National Rural Livelihoods Mission
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FNHW	Food Nutrition Health and WASH
GJP	Gender Justice Program
GM	Gender Mainstreaming
GPP	Gender Point Person
IB/CB	Institution Building/Capacity Building
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
IDI	In-depth Interviews
IWWAGE	Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy
KII	Key Informant Interview
LAK	Lok Adhikar Kendra
MIS	Management Information System
MKSP	Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MP	Madhya Pradesh
MPSRLM	Madhya Pradesh State Rural Livelihoods Mission
MT	Master Trainer
NMMU	National Mission Management Unit
NRETP	National Rural Economic Transformation Project
OB	Office Bearer
PALS	Participatory Action Learning System
SAC	Social Action Committee
SI/SD	Social Inclusion/Social Development
SHG	Self-help Group
SMMU	State Mission Management Unit
SPM	State Program Manager
SRLM	State Rural Livelihoods Mission
SS	Samta Sakhi
SWAYAM	Strengthening Women's Institution for Agency and Empowerment
TOC	Theory of Change
VO	Village Organization

Glossary

Adivasi	Member of an indigenous tribe
Anganwadi	Centre providing health and nutritional care for children (up to 6 years) and their mothers in rural India - part of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS); a government program in India
Avedan	Application
Ayushman Card	Cards given as part of Ayushman Bharat i.e., National public health insurance scheme of Government of India that aims to provide health insurance coverage for low-income earners
Didi	Sister
Dukh Sukh	ANANDI's PALS training tool on discrimination faced by women across their life cycle
Gram Sabha	General body of all villagers above 18 years of age, whose names are included in the electoral rolls for the Panchayat which meets at least four times per year
Janpad	Unit of local governance at the block level
Jansunwai	Public Hearing
Khadyan Parchi	Food coupon
Kisan Samman Nidhi	An initiative by Government of India to provide minimum income support to all farmers
Kiska Palda Bhari	ANANDI's PALS training tool on gender division of work and decision-making
Kuposhan se Jung	Refers to a government scheme in M.P. to fight against malnutrition among Sehariya tribals
Lok Adhikar Kendra	New institution set up by Samta Sakhis through GJP at Block level for addressing women's rights and entitlements
Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana	Sub-component of the DAY-NRLM to improve status of women in agriculture
Mera Haq, Meri Pehchaan	ANANDI's PALS training tool on women's rights and entitlements
Mukhyamantri Kanyadaan Yojna	Scheme by the Madhya Pradesh government to provide financial assistance for the marriage of women from BPL families
Munna Munni	ANANDI's PALS training tool on gender socialization and discrimination between girl child and boy child
Gender Samvaad	Joint attempt between DAY-NRLM and IWWAGE to create a common platform for generating greater awareness on DAY-NRLM's gender related interventions and the impact of its gender operational strategy across states
Gram Panchayat/ Panchayat	Unit of local governance at the village level
Prerak	Book keeper attached to the CLFs/VOs/SHGs, responsible for maintaining records of SHG loans and repayments
Sambal Yojna	Scheme by Government of Madhya Pradesh for unorganized sector workers
Samta Sakhi	Community Resource Person for Gender
Sarpanch	Elected Head of the Panchayat
Tehsil	Revenue office

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Introduction and Background

The Gender Justice Program (GJP) was implemented by a civil society organization (CSO), ANANDI,[1] in collaboration with the Madhya Pradesh State Rural Livelihoods Mission (MPSRLM). It was a two-year program which aimed to integrate gender within MPSRLM's institutions to advance rural women's rights and entitlements. GJP was one of the four gender pilots supported by 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. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation collaborated with the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) and CSOs like ANANDI, Project Concern International (PCI), Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN), Transforming Rural India Foundation (TRIF) and Chaitanya Trust to adapt their NGO models for collective women's empowerment for scaling with the State Rural Livelihoods Mission (SRLM) across four states; Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Jharkhand.

The GJP was the gender pilot implemented in Sheopur and Karhal blocks of Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh. The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) conducted a process documentation of the GJP, based on which, this Proof of Concept report has been prepared.

The Proof of Concept report demonstrates the changes (outcomes) enabled by GJP, the pathways of change (strategies and processes) and their embeddedness in the MPSRLM structures and processes. Further, it explores whether the Theory of Change (TOC) with which the GJP started was achieved and presents a roadmap for scaling up GJP within the SRLMs. This is not an evaluative report. Rather, it draws from the process documentation of the strategies and outcomes of the GJP during the first phase implemented between April 2019 to March 2021.

It is important to mention here that from September 2020, MPSRLM initiated upscaling of a gender strategy to 18 districts based on the GJP. Sheopur is one among

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

these 18 districts. After project paused[2] in April 2021, the program restarted in September 2021 using the upscaled gender strategy. The Proof of Concept report on the Sheopur intervention (till March 2021) is of great value since it is the first-of-its-kind report based on a process documentation of what happened, what it enabled and how. Although not an evaluation, it points in the direction of what has worked in the field and the processes involved. It will greatly strengthen the ongoing implementation of the upscaled gender strategy across all the districts and similar gender integration initiatives undertaken by DAY-NRLM in other states.

The report is divided into three sections. Section 1 outlines the methodology and limitations of the research and introduces the readers to the institutional framework of MPSRLM within which the program is situated. Further, it provides an overview of the state of gender responsiveness of MPSRLM institutions at the start of the GJP and presents the Theory of Change (TOC) of the program. Section 2 presents a

pillar wise analysis of the strategies, outcomes and their interactions as seen on the ground, along with an analysis of the assumptions made in the TOC. Section 3 provides a framework or roadmap for gender integration based on observations of the working of GJP and its outcomes. This is followed by a gap analysis and recommendations to further strengthen gender integration within the SRLMs.

1.1
Methodology

This report has drawn on the process documentation by the ICRW research team of the GJP for the period of January 2020 to March 2021. The process documentation involved qualitative primary research 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

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

National, State, District and Block levels, the ANANDI Project team[3] including Master trainers, ANANDI senior staff, IWWAGE staff, CLF office bearers, CLF SAC members and Samta Sakhis. After February 2020, all research activities were converted to the telephonic/online mode owing to COVID-19 travel restrictions and other administrative contractual issues.[4] The observations from 15 KIIs, 17 FGDs, 17 IDIs, 8 online consultations and participant observations/telephonic or online listening-in of 20 meetings (Table 1) have been analyzed to prepare this report. A detailed list of primary data sources is presented in Annexure 1.

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

The dates and time for FGDs with CLF office bearers and SAC members were facilitated through the BMMU team. All the Samta Sakhis recruited by ANANDI were invited for the FGDs. These were held block-wise and batch-wise (first and second batch). The dates and time for Samta Sakhi FGDs were facilitated through ANANDI's project team. IDIs were conducted with selected Samta Sakhis. This selection was done keeping in mind representativeness across blocks, CLFs, batch, caste and marital status. For in-person participant observation, the ICRW team accompanied the ANANDI project team to the scheduled/regular CLF and VO meetings. The telephonic/online listening-in was facilitated by ANANDI and IWWAGE team members. Standard procedures for recruitment, introduction and consent were followed in all cases. Given that this was human subject research, ethical practices such as informed consent, confidentiality, privacy and voluntary participation were strictly adhered to. Due to COVID-19, when all data collection activities were moved to remote methods, extra care was taken to ensure privacy and confidentiality of research participants. All names of research participants cited in the document have been changed for the purposes of confidentiality.

Table 1: Details of Primary Data

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

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

4 The effectiveness of telephonic interviews has been attested by various researchers especially during this period of COVID-19. For example, Khalil et al (2021) write that there is little evidence to suggest that quality or data interpretation is compromised in telephone interviews.

1.2
Limitations of the Study

Due to COVID-19 and administrative challenges, the original plan of the research team to engage in participant observation of CLF and VO meetings as well as Lok Adhikar Kendra (LAK)[5] processes, could not happen (except for a few CLFs and VOs which had been visited prior to March 2020). However, the work done by Samta Sakhis, such as training and social action[6] in CLFs, VOs and LAK, was analyzed through the insights provided by the Samta Sakhis, CLF OBs and SACs (who are also members of VOs), BMMU and DMMU staff and the ANANDI project team. The observations of different stakeholders on similar questions of processes and outcomes helped the research team to cross-verify the facts and understand multiple perspectives that are critical to understanding the barriers and enablers. Further, based on the scope of the study and GJP's initial design, the study focused on the changes at the level of CLFs and to a certain extent, at the level of VOs. Changes at the level of the SHGs were not captured in the study.

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

other researchers during this period. For example, Khalil et al (2021) in their work mention that telephonic interviews not only retain data quality, but also allow for some advantages that are not available in the case of in-person interviews, such as, contacting respondents at a time convenient to them, including evening, or even distributing an interview over several calls in case of disruptions. Similar to this observation, the ICRW team used the telephonic medium in a way that was advantageous for both the participants and the research.

When the project paused in the field by April 2021, there was a break period till the next phase of implementation started in September 2021. This study does not cover this break period though it needs to be mentioned that Samta Sakhis continued to work in their own villages and also managed the LAK during this period, despite not being paid.

1.3
Introduction to DAY-NRLM

The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods 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 India (National Rural Livelihoods Mission, n.d). 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. DAY-NRLM has a National Mission Management Unit (NMMU) to coordinate efforts at the national level, followed by the State Mission Management Unit (SMMU) which is present to implement, coordinate and monitor efforts at the state level. Similar units at the district and block level are the District Mission Management Unit (DMMU) and Block Mission Management Unit (BMMU) respectively. Further, as per the DAY-NRLM mandate to build institutions of the poor, there are several community institutions supported by DAY-NRLM. The first unit is the SHG formed at the village level by mobilizing

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

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

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 Cluster Level Federation (CLF). Each CLF is mentored and supported by a Block Nodal officer who is a BMMU staff member. DAY-NRLM's mandate is to provide financial linkage and livelihoods training to SHG members. SHGs and their federations are also mandated to ensure access to entitlements to rural poor households. A Gender Point Person (GPP) is appointed at the SHG level to discuss and address gender-related concerns of women of the SHG. SACs are present at the VO and CLF level to raise, discuss and act on social and gender issues in villages and blocks.[7] There are also community resource persons (CRPs) who are appointed by the CLFs but function across the three levels (SHG/VO/CLF) and are thematically appointed such as the Agriculture CRP (Krishi Sakhi), Bank linkage CRP (Bank Mitra), Livestock CRP (Pashu Sakhi) and the newly introduced Gender CRP (known as Samta Sakhis in Madhya Pradesh). The CLFs also appoint book-keepers (Preraks in Madhya Pradesh) who look into

books of accounts across CLFs, VOs and SHGs. Figure 1 is a diagrammatic representation of the MPSRLM structure at the government and community institution level.

Even though DAY-NRLM has been functional since the last decade, the evolution of gender focused strategies, its coverage and impact are still at a nascent stage. Since 2016, DAY-NRLM adopted a gender integration strategy with a focus on capacity building of staff and community institutions and piloting of gender strategy in a few blocks within interested states. Madhya Pradesh emerged as one of the forerunners to respond to the call of the DAY-NRLM and adopted a gender strategy. However, there is a greater need to integrate a gender lens within the different verticals of DAY-NRLM to build women's voice and agency. As observed in the Formative Research Report (Sengupta & Uppal, 2020), DAY-NRLM has a huge potential to transform the platforms and community institutions comprising millions of rural women into spaces of solidarity and social change.

Figure 1: Government and Community Institution Level Architecture of MPSRLM with which the GJP engaged

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

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7 Apart from *Samajik Gatividhi Samiti* (Social Action Committee), at the CLF level, other committees include *Nigrani Samiti* (Monitoring Committee), *Rozgar Samiti* (Income Generation Committee), *Ajeevika Gatividhi Samiti* (Livelihood Activity Committee) and *Bank linkage & Rin Vapasi Samiti* (Bank Linkage & Loan Repayment Committee).

1.4 ————————————
State of Gender Responsiveness of MPSRLM Institutions at the Start of GJP

ICRW conducted a Formative Research study in the first quarter of 2020 to explore the current state of gender responsive strategies and practices across institutions of MPSRLM (both government and community institutions—SMMU, DMMU, BMMU and CLFs) in Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh. The broad understanding of gender responsiveness that guided the research was derived from UNDP's definition: "Gender responsiveness refers to outcomes that reflect an understanding of gender roles and inequalities and which make an effort to encourage equal participation and equal and fair distribution of benefits" (UNDP, 2015). For the specific context of GJP in Sheopur, the research defined gender responsiveness as shifts in awareness of gendered power relations, and the actions undertaken to advance women's rights and gender equality by MPSRLM staff and members of community institutions such as CLF office bearers and Samta Sakhis.

The Formative Research showed that MPSRLM was one of the forerunners in responding to DAY-NRLM's call for adopting the gender strategy in 2016. Even before this, since 2013, MPSRLM had been actively working and collaborating with CSOs, including ANANDI, to strengthen its community institutions and to enable a gender responsive implementation of Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP).[8] Further, through ANANDI's earlier intervention in Mandla district of Madhya Pradesh, Samta Sakhis had been trained and a LAK was operational in Niwas block of Mandla. The gender operational strategy adopted post 2016 by MPSRLM was reflected in MPSRLM's Gender Annual Action Plan, through introduction of mechanisms such as SACs and GPPs. However, there was a lack of systematic implementation. For example, the GPPs had not yet been identified in Sheopur district and the SACs were largely non-functional. The Formative Research also found that at the SMMU level, there

was no focal point for gender appointed by the state. Gender was given as an additional charge, along with another portfolio to a State Program Manager (SPM). This indicated a lack of designated human resource for supervising gender work. Even at the DMMU and BMMU level, there was a lack of human resources, impacting overall mentoring support provided to SHGs/VOs. Additionally, most of the existing staff at all levels had limited understanding of gender and gender work. While they did refer to some manifestations of gender inequality such as discrimination in terms of education and nutrition, most of them did not identify underlying structural causes of gender inequality or point to the need for normative change. Another important observation made by the Formative Research was an absence of a robust gender monitoring mechanism capturing outcome level indicators. The existing Management Information System (MIS) only captured limited input level indicators such as the number of SAC members, number of trainings, etc.

At the level of community institutions, the Formative Research found that CLFs/VOs/SHGs functioned mainly as platforms for financial transactions. Occasionally there was some discussion on government and livelihood-related schemes led mainly by the Block Nodal officers (Nodals) or Preraks. It was also reported that scheme-related information did not always reach all VO/SHG members because of the lack of a systematic mechanism for information sharing and also because some CLF members kept that information to themselves, their family members and friends. The Formative Research also found that despite the presence of active OBs at CLFs and VOs, the meetings were led by Nodals or Preraks, majority of whom were men. In fact, VO meetings were largely dependent on the presence of Preraks. In terms of CLF OB's own understanding of gender issues, the research found that there was an absence of a language of rights. Articulations were influenced by acceptable notions of motherhood and wifehood, such as how education of girls would bring greater status to their marital and natal families and enable them to become better mothers.

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8 In 2013, UN-Women and MoRD invited ANANDI to support MPSRLM as a technical partner towards engendering livelihoods. MPSRLM collaborated with ANANDI to develop an action plan for enhancing capacities of organizations for gender responsive implementation of MKSP.

Finally, the Formative Research pointed to the sporadic and limited social action conducted by members of community institutions. Such social action, usually on issues such as alcoholism and bank linkage, were largely dependent on the cooperation and support received from DMMU/BMMU staff. Systematic processes and mechanisms for social action were largely absent. Even the SACs were inactive. The lack of discussions and action on social and gender issues also reflected in the limited participation of women in Gram Sabha meetings and visits to institutions such as the Panchayat office, Janpad office and Tehsil office.

1.5
Introduction to the Gender Justice Program and its Theory of Change

Given the absence of 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 importance of having such an initiative in Sheopur was all the more, given its large SC/ST population who have been historically deprived of opportunities, and the low achievements on indicators of gender equality such as women's literacy rates, sex ratio and maternal mortality rates.[9] In this context, the GJP became an opportunity to strengthen the agency, voice and visibility of rural women by transforming community institutions supported by MPSRLM into spaces of collective strength that can advance gender equality. The GJP was implemented as part of the larger Project SWAYAM (Strengthening Women's Institutions for Agency and Empowerment) which aimed to showcase pilot projects in four different states of India to produce evidence of models that can be implemented to advance women's rights and gender equality in collaboration with NMMU, SMMUs and CSO partners. ANANDI–ICRW's partnership through the GJP model in Madhya Pradesh was one amongst these four pilots formalized through an MOU between ANANDI and MPSRLM. In this partnership, ANANDI was the implementation partner and ICRW was the research partner. The GJP was situated within the MPSRLM and aimed to develop rural women's voice and agency to claim their rights and entitlements through a three-pronged approach; also called the three pillars of the GJP. These pillars were Gender Mainstreaming i.e., at the systems level by mainstreaming gender into the mandate and structures of MPSRLM; Institutional Strengthening i.e., strengthening community institutions, especially CLFs, to respond to gender and social issues; and Feminist Leadership Development i.e., developing a strong cadre of community-based feminist leaders (Samta Sakhis) who could raise, represent and resolve rural women's concerns. The program was implemented in two blocks of Sheopur district, namely, Sheopur block and Karhal block. In each block, the program identified and obtained approval to work with three CLFs; Tulsi CLF, Sagar CLF and Pragati CLF in Sheopur block and Annapurna CLF, Vishwas CLF and Shakti CLF in Karhal block. Initially two Samta Sakhis were nominated to work through each CLF. Later, two additional Samta Sakhis were nominated to cover more villages within each CLF. Figure 2 explains the Theory of Change guiding the GJP.

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9 Performance of Sheopur on key human/gender indicators – Women's literacy rate- 40.77% (Census 2011), Sex ratio- 901 (Census 2011), Maternal Mortality Rate- 31 (for Chambal division of which Sheopur is a part, AHS 2010-11). Further, as per Census 2011 data, the district has a substantial population of SCs (15.81%) and STs (27.08%).

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

THEORY OF CHANGE

What is the problem?	Lack of gender integration is limiting the potential of MPSRLM institutions for advancing rural women's agency and their access to rights and entitlements
What is our approach?	By adopting a holistic gender transformative approach which addresses all three levels: individual (feminist leadership development of community leaders), community institutions (institutional strengthening by making them gender responsive) and systems (shifts in policy through gender mainstreaming), rural women are empowered to challenge gender norms and claim rights and entitlements leveraging multiple platforms of governance

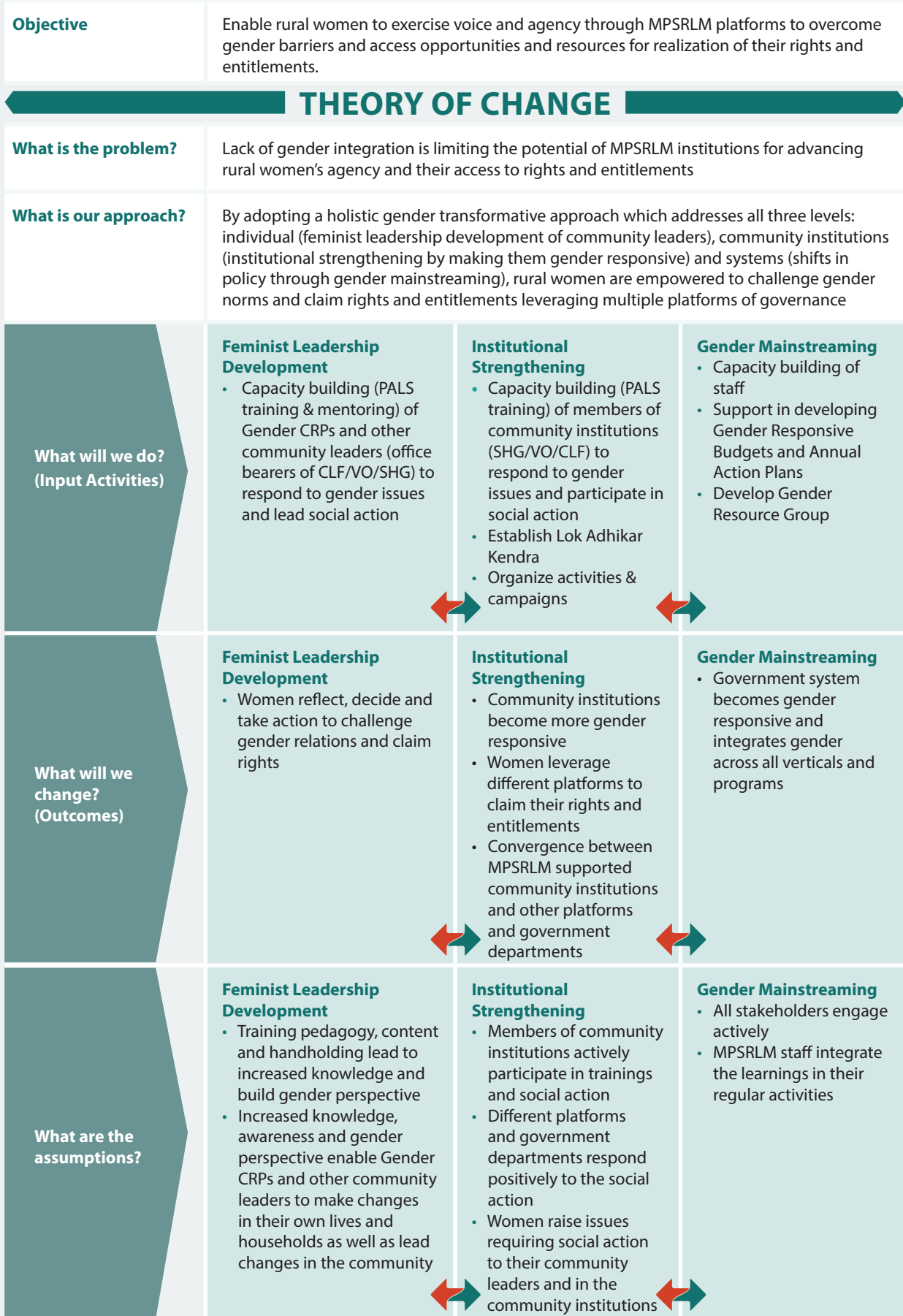|	Feminist Leadership Development	Institutional Strengthening	Gender Mainstreaming
What will we do? (Input Activities)	• Capacity building (PALS training & mentoring) of Gender CRPs and other community leaders (office bearers of CLF/VO/SHG) to respond to gender issues and lead social action	• Capacity building (PALS training) of members of community institutions (SHG/VO/CLF) to respond to gender issues and participate in social action • Establish Lok Adhikar Kendra • Organize activities & campaigns	• Capacity building of staff • Support in developing Gender Responsive Budgets and Annual Action Plans • Develop Gender Resource Group
What will we change? (Outcomes)	• Women reflect, decide and take action to challenge gender relations and claim rights	• Community institutions become more gender responsive • Women leverage different platforms to claim their rights and entitlements • Convergence between MPSRLM supported community institutions and other platforms and government departments	• Government system becomes gender responsive and integrates gender across all verticals and programs
What are the assumptions?	• Training pedagogy, content and handholding lead to increased knowledge and build gender perspective • Increased knowledge, awareness and gender perspective enable Gender CRPs and other community leaders to make changes in their own lives and households as well as lead changes in the community	• Members of community institutions actively participate in trainings and social action • Different platforms and government departments respond positively to the social action • Women raise issues requiring social action to their community leaders and in the community institutions	• All stakeholders engage actively • MPSRLM staff integrate the learnings in their regular activities

Figure 2: GJP's Theory of Change

2

Analysis of the Strategies and Outcomes of the GJP

This section provides an analysis of the strategies and outcomes of the program, arranged across the three pillars of Gender Mainstreaming, Institutional Strengthening and Feminist Leadership Development. The analysis also presents the interactions between the strategies and outcomes, followed by a discussion on the underlying assumptions of the program as envisaged in the TOC.

Gender Mainstreaming, Institutional Strengthening and Feminist Leadership Development represent gendering processes at three levels: community institutions, leaders of community institutions and government systems. For a government program like MPSRLM to integrate gender in its policy and operations, it is important that policy, staff, beneficiaries/participants and institutional structures together register a shift in gender norms and act towards gender equality. None of these stakeholders/institutions can integrate and sustain a gender responsive approach in isolation. To enable participants of community institutions to undertake gender responsive practices and utilize community institutional spaces to claim greater rights and entitlements, it is

important to have supportive institutions and systems. The three pillars create these synergies between systems, institutions and participants to enable gender integration across all levels. 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) and is supported by government policy and gender sensitive government staff that lends legitimacy and recognition to that change (Gender Mainstreaming). This section analyzes these processes in detail.

2.1
Feminist Leadership Development

The objective of this pillar was to create a cadre of women leaders i.e., Samta Sakhis or Gender CRPs in the community who can lead and represent rural women's concerns. In each CLF, initially two

Samta Sakhis were nominated. Later, two additional Samta Sakhis were nominated, making it a total of four Samta Sakhis for each CLF. Each Samta Sakhi was in charge of eight or nine VOs of that CLF. This section presents the strategies implemented to build the capacities of the Samta Sakhis to become community leaders and the outcomes achieved. Figure 3 presents the different strategies and outcomes under this pillar.

2.1.1
Strategies

The strategies and activities employed as part of the GJP to build a cadre of women community leaders included building their awareness, perspectives and capability to lead action in the field. Careful attention was given to develop a selection criterion

Strategies

Capacity Building

Engaging Samta Sakhis as Trainers

Engaging Samta Sakhis in Leading Social Action

Selection of Samta Sakhis by CLF Based on Specific Criteria

Outcomes

Access to Information, Skills and Ability to Problem Solve

Confidence, Self Esteem, Understanding of Gender Norms & Ability to Challenge such Norms

Ability to Lead & Facilitate Social Action at the Community Level

Recognition as a Leader and Development of Social Capital

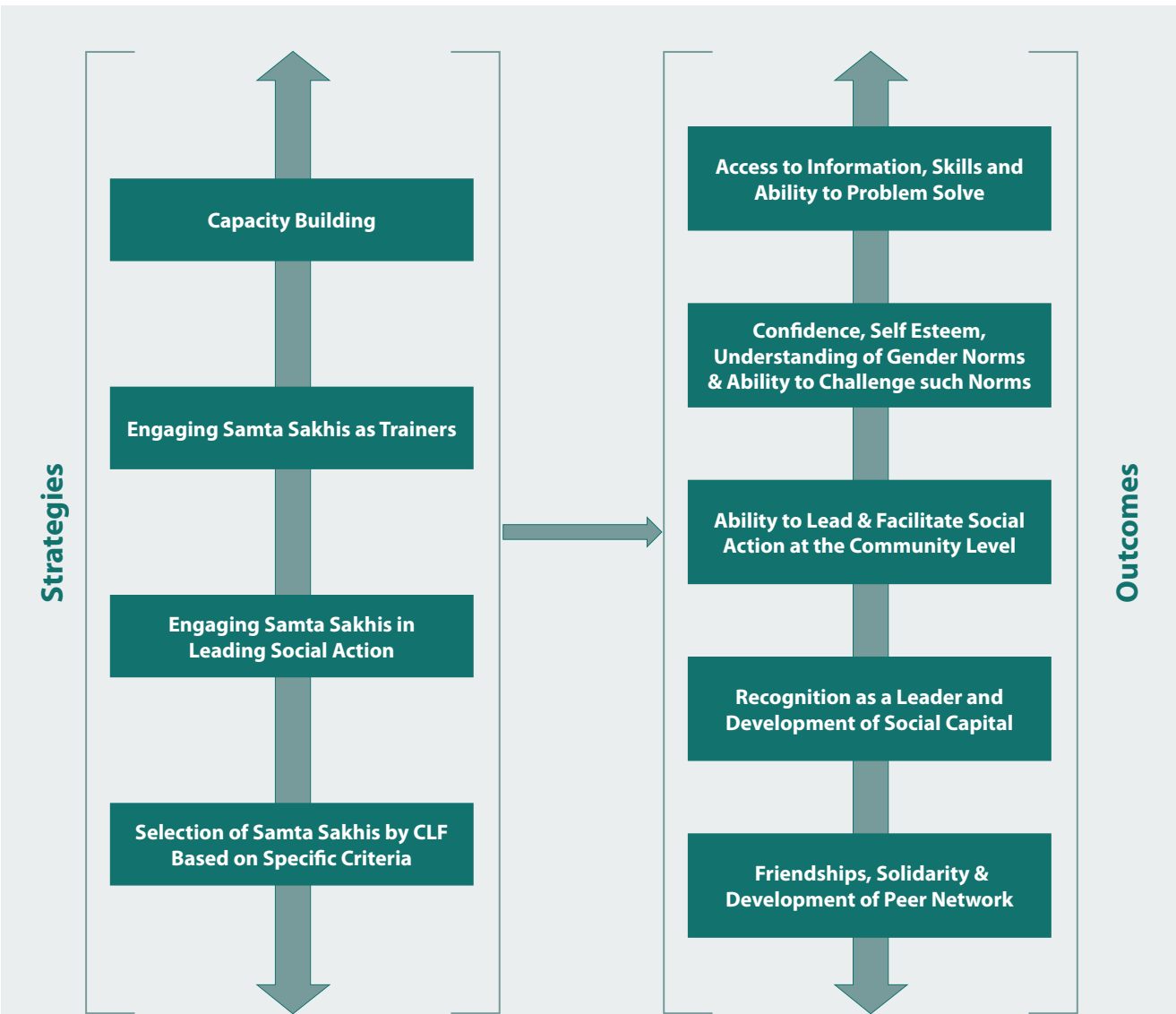**Friendships, Solidarity & Development of Peer Network**

Figure 3: Feminist Leadership Development Strategies and Outcomes

Note: The strategies influence each other, and outcomes also influence each other and are not separate watertight compartments. This is depicted by the two-way arrows.

that in itself enables the creation of such leaders. 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. However, later when the second batch of Samta Sakhis was selected, 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 the villages and their VOs).

Multiple efforts were made to build the capacities of Samta Sakhis. These include trainings, an exposure visit to Gujarat, review reflection meetings and mentoring by the ANANDI project team, primarily the Master Trainers. The original plan of the program was to conduct multiple phases of residential trainings for Samta Sakhis. However, due to the pandemic and associated restrictions, only one residential training was organized while the others were conducted as one-day trainings. The five-day residential training on gender perspectives was organized in November 2019 for the first batch and in November 2020 for the second batch. In fact, for the training of the second batch, two of the Samta Sakhis of the first batch also conducted a session. This was done to present the first batch of Samta Sakhis as role models and also to bring on board their rich field experiences. The residential trainings aimed to build Samta Sakhis' gender perspectives and understanding about the concepts of gender, patriarchy, gender

socialization and gender discrimination amongst others. The training also introduced the participants to the concept of rights, citizenship and identity documents. The training pedagogy was participatory and interactive using tools such as *Kiska Palda Bhari* and *Mera Haq, Meri Pehchan*. Songs, role-plays and other activities were used to initiate discussions and conversations. Need-based refresher trainings were also organized later on with the training tools. It is important to mention that all these trainings ended with action plans and were directly tied to ongoing and future actions in the field. The tools with which the Samta Sakhis were trained were precisely the tools they used when conducting training for CLFs/VOs/SHGs. The reflections and discussions that came up during the trainings for Samta Sakhis were often utilized by them to trigger discussions on rights issues during the trainings that they conducted. Additionally, ANANDI also conducted trainings on COVID-19 preventive behavior with the Samta Sakhis.

To enable continuous reflections and peer learning, monthly review and reflection meetings were organized between the Samta Sakhis and the ANANDI project team, including Master Trainers. The objective of these monthly meetings was to provide a platform to collectively review and reflect on the activities of the month and plan for the month ahead. As all Samta Sakhis came together at these meetings, they also learnt from each other's field experiences, both best practices and challenges and mitigation

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.

strategies. These were also occasions when Samta Sakhis discussed practical steps to achieving rights and entitlements related to issues that had come up during their trainings with CLFs/VOs/SHGs.

When a mobile-based application Adhikar Saathi was introduced to capture stories of social action and training, Samta Sakhis were trained on how to use the App and fill data of social action cases at the CLF level. Master Trainers also supported them in the field on how to fill information. During the establishment of the LAK, a training was also conducted to build Samta Sakhis' capacities to manage the LAK. They were trained to register cases at the LAK, to connect rights holders to various departments at the Janpad/Tehsil and other offices, document the progress of the cases etc. Capacity building of Samta Sakhis also included an exposure visit to Gujarat. The objective of the five-day exposure visit was to familiarize Samta Sakhis with ANANDI's interventions in Gujarat where LAK had been set up about two decades ago. This enabled the Samta Sakhis from Sheopur to learn from the experiences of

a well-established LAK and see for themselves how it is managed successfully. Another important capacity building input on schemes related to Anganwadis and nutrition was given by the Department of Women and Child Development to Samta Sakhis during a training.

One of the most important components of the capacity building activity has been the mentoring provided by Master Trainers. They provided continuous and on-job handholding and guidance, both in person and telephonically. They provided Samta Sakhis with information about schemes, clarified their doubts, guided them in case of any social action case, mentored them on documentation and use of the Adhikar Saathi App etc. Further, Master Trainers handheld Samta Sakhis when they first began to perform their roles as trainers of CLFs/VOs. Initially, the Master Trainers led the trainings and the Samta Sakhis observed them and supported them. Gradually, Samta Sakhis started leading one or two sessions in the training. Finally, when they felt confident, they started conducting the trainings independently.

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Another key strategy to build the capacities of Samta Sakhis was through their direct engagement in facilitation of social action. In this too, Samta Sakhis' own training and the handholding by Master Trainers played an important role in creating awareness, understanding steps, preparing necessary documents, leveraging existing platforms and government departments, overcoming challenges and resolving cases.

2.1.2
Outcomes

These strategies, taken together, enabled the following outcomes. It is important to note that each of these outcomes also strengthened the other, creating a web of empowerment processes that interacted with each other. It is also important to state that these outcomes are not end points but a process, a journey which is ongoing. This report discusses the direction of the journey and some of the milestones achieved in this journey.

2.1.2.1
Access to information, skills and ability to problem solve

Capacity building efforts, including day-to-day mentoring by Master Trainers, have led to increased awareness and knowledge amongst Samta Sakhis about women's rights and entitlements. The awareness is not limited to the types of entitlements and rights that rural women can access, but also about the process of attaining these and the institutions that can be leveraged to attain them. Thus, they have information and the skills for understanding eligibility criteria, preparing application documents, approaching relevant government departments and institutions, and utilizing escalation mechanisms. Samta Sakhis have also become effective trainers who not only impart knowledge and perspectives on gender issues, but also facilitate discussion on rights denials and entitlements. Samta Sakhi Sushma shared, *"Earlier, I had no such knowledge. After the five-day training, I learnt about the different women's rights and entitlements and I also learnt about how to take women's concerns to the Panchayat."*

Another important skill that Samta Sakhis have acquired through the training, mentoring and social action, is the ability to problem solve. Be it issues of household, community or administration, they have

used pragmatic strategies to negotiate and overcome challenges and roadblocks. Initially handheld by Master Trainers to problem solve, they soon learnt to devise and execute strategies independently. For example, during exchanges with the Panchayat office on a particular rights issue, if the Panchayat Secretary or Sarpanch were uncooperative, they would use strategies such as persuasion, collective pressure (through participation of a large number of women) and escalation (to higher authorities at block and district level) to overcome the challenge and ensure cooperation. As shared by Master Trainer, Aditi, *"Saying the right thing, at the right place at the right time is critical to achieving a right."*

2.1.2.2
Confidence, self-esteem, understanding of gender norms and ability to challenge such norms

Continuous capacity building and the translation of these capacities into action on the field (through the training and social action conducted by Samta Sakhis), have led to increased confidence, self-esteem, understanding of gender norms and the ability to challenge such norms. Samta Sakhis reported that the five-day gender perspective training gave them an in-depth understanding about gender inequality in terms of access to resources and property, decision-making, division of labor and mobility. Their work as trainers and facilitators of social action strengthened this understanding and increased their confidence to challenge such norms. For example, at the household and community level, they were able to challenge restrictions on women's mobility, sometimes by negotiation and subversion (for example, by citing the importance of their work) and sometimes by resistance (for example, by asserting a woman's right to move around freely). Samta Sakhi Geeta shared that she has claimed the right to go out and interact with other people. In her own words, *"We will also go out. For how long will we continue to suffocate inside the four walls of our homes, and inside our veils? We too have rights."*

At the household level, many of them have been able to restructure the division of labor and have engaged men and boys in household work, such as cooking. One of the Samta Sakhis also stood up against domestic violence in her own family and was able to convince family members to support her stand. Several Samta Sakhis have also incorporated their names in property and land papers. At the level of administration, they have negotiated, persuaded and spoken across power

to enable community women to attain their rights. Though the response from institutions at the block and district levels has been by-and-large positive, there have been challenges at the village level such as non-cooperative officials in Panchayats or the absence of women in Gram Sabhas. In all these cases, Samta Sakhis have created a visibility and voice not only for themselves but for community women through representation, raising of issues and negotiation with officials for the resolution of these issues. Sometimes, the issue has not been about entitlement but about human dignity and equal treatment, as exemplified by this narrative shared by Samta Sakhi Ankita:

"In a Panchayat office I visited, an Anganwadi worker (a female) was sitting on the ground and the Panchayat Secretary (a male) was sitting on the cot. I asked the Anganwadi worker to go and sit on the chair. I told her that we are all equal, then why should you sit on the ground while the secretary sits on the cot? The secretary also agreed that I did the right thing. I told them that men and women have equal rights. Slowly, that realization is spreading amongst everyone in the village also. The day after this incident, the secretary shared it with everyone in a meeting and appreciated me by saying that I did a very good thing by speaking about women's rights."

Through Samta Sakhis' own narratives, their confidence and self-esteem come through repeatedly. This self-esteem derives largely from the work they do in terms of helping others, but also from the unlearning of gender norms that accord a subordinate status to women. Almost all Samta Sakhis talk about the fact that they have overcome fears, whether of stepping out, talking to people including officials, addressing a large audience, or challenging norms in their households and communities. In the words of Samta Sakhi, Priya, *"Now I am not afraid of anything or anyone."* Their self-esteem is also bolstered through the appreciation they have received from community members and government officials. All of these together have created a set of confident, vibrant and fearless leaders who are also pragmatic and able to challenge entrenched gender norms.

2.1.2.3
Ability to lead and facilitate social action at the community level

Social action for enabling rural women's rights and entitlements has been an integral part of the GJP. The Feminist Leadership Development pillar focused importantly on creating the ability of Samta Sakhis to lead and facilitate social action. The evidence from the ground points to the development of such ability and the emergence of Samta Sakhis as community leaders. They respond to almost every kind of issue that members of community institutions and beyond bring up for advice and resolution. In fact, their role is not only to act on the issue but also to help women articulate and raise the issue and to empower community women to themselves act on that issue. On the first two counts, i.e., the ability to facilitate raising of rights issues and leading social action on those issues, there has been great success. During the training and discussion sessions in VOs/CLFs, Samta Sakhis were able to trigger discussion on actual problems and rights denial experienced by the members. Based on this, they took up social action on a range of issues such as access to entitlements (pension, ration, identity cards, Ayushman Bharat cards), access to public services (water supply, roads, waste management), COVID-19 response, issues of land rights, domestic violence and caste-based discrimination amongst others. Samta Sakhis also used different strategies to conduct social action, for example, raising issues at community platforms such as Gram Sabhas or Jansunwais (public hearings), negotiating with Panchayat officials such as the Panchayat Secretary or Sarpanch, escalating cases to block level officials such as the Janpad CEO or District Collector and liaising with administration such as line department officials, hospitals and police stations. With the help of Master Trainers, Samta Sakhis have also set up and managed the LAK, which is an institutional platform at block level that helps in resolving entitlements and rights cases of rural women by connecting them to relevant line departments. Thus, depending on the type of cases and the level at which they are stuck, Samta Sakhis have used various strategies and leveraged various platforms to resolve the issue. Most importantly, their work has enabled them to represent the voice of community women and that of community institutions within the corridors of government and administration. A senior district team member shared, *"Our District Collector also informed the Chief Minister about Samta Sakhis' work and how they have played a crucial role in creating awareness and access to rights. Our sisters have become politically awakened. They can no longer be oppressed. They are capable of becoming District Panchayat Presidents."*

On one count, however, only limited success has been achieved. While Samta Sakhis tried to encourage SHG/VO/CLF members and SAC members to actively participate in social action, such participatory social action is still at a nascent stage and is largely observed in cases of public utilities such as water or roads which

impact the whole village. This is not surprising given the social context where women hardly ever step out of their homes or acknowledge their issues to themselves. The fact that Samta Sakhis have undergone a transformation to become leaders who take up the cause of so many rural women, has been facilitated by intensive investment in terms of training, handholding and motivation. The remit and structure of a project in which they are identified as the principal change makers also help in bringing about this change. For the same change to occur within members of community institutions, sustained efforts over a long period of time are required. Members of SACs also need to be trained and motivated to perform their roles as change agents who will facilitate and lead social action. The scaled-up gender strategy is currently focusing on this process.

2.1.2.4
Recognition as a leader and development of social capital

Social action conducted by Samta Sakhis in their own villages as well as other villages has helped in creating acceptability and recognition as leaders. Initially, Samta Sakhis used to hear many taunts from community members about going out to work every day, given that entrenched gender norms dictated that women should stay at home. In the villages they visited, women would not be willing to attend meetings or trainings, thinking that such trainings were useless. However, as Samta Sakhis persevered and not only shared important information but also helped people in attaining rights and entitlements, the situation changed. The trust of the community members in their intention, ability and work increased and they started reaching out to them for guidance and support on various issues. Taunts stopped and people welcomed them to their villages. An important approach that helped Samta Sakhis wear down initial resistance was patience, willingness to listen and help. Now, not only ordinary community members, but even Panchayat members and Anganwadi workers reach out to Samta Sakhis for help.

With their continuous social action and the establishment and management of LAK, Samta Sakhis' acquaintance with senior and line department officials at block and district levels also increased. This helped them in enabling community women's access to entitlements. Sometimes, when they faced a roadblock such as an uncooperative Panchayat official, they could escalate the problem to senior officials at the block or

district level and create pressure from above to resolve the issue.

Additionally, as Samta Sakhis repeatedly visited local governance institutions such as Panchayats, people's forums such as Gram Sabhas and Jansunwais, police stations, women and child department, government hospitals etc., they built their own identity and rapport with these institutions and institutional actors. This led to the creation of a shared network and increased their social capital.

During an FGD, one of ANANDI's project team members shared that around April 2021 during the second wave of COVID-19, even though the GJP program was on a pause, *"Samta Sakhis were invited by the Zila Panchayat for a meeting on how to keep villages COVID free. Their names were added in the Panchayat committees, and they worked very closely with the Panchayat to safeguard their villages from COVID."* Thus, the role and contribution of Samta Sakhis has been well recognized by state actors. They have received numerous invitations by MPSRLM for trainings, meetings and functions and their work has also been recognized at the national level since MPSRLM has showcased some of their work at DAY-NRLM forums.

Such recognition of Samta Sakhis and Master Trainers by the state and community, along with their growing social capital, contributed to their self-esteem, increased their status at home and enabled them to facilitate community women's access to rights and entitlements faster and better. The state's recognition particularly lent legitimacy and credibility to their work, giving them greater bargaining power with various platforms and institutions. Further, given that Samta Sakhis are the Gender CRPs of CLFs, this recognition is of the CLF itself and their social capital becomes an important resource for the MPSRLM supported community institutions (CLFs/VOs/SHGs) to draw upon.

2.1.2.5
Friendships, solidarity and development of a peer network

Over the last couple of years, as Samta Sakhis worked with each other and with the Master Trainers, a strong peer network has been enabled where they support and learn from each other professionally and personally. In the words of Samta Sakhi Rashmi, *"It all feels like a family."* Close friendships have been formed between some of them where they can share their personal

issues and find relief, advice, support and care. For instance, when one of the Samta Sakhis was subjected to domestic violence by her husband, other Samta Sakhis and the Master Trainer visited her house in a show of support. They counseled her husband and made it clear that the Samta Sakhi was not alone and if such an incident recurred, the matter would be taken up seriously. Samta Sakhi Sushma shared, *"After becoming a Samta Sakhi, I talk to the Master Trainer and other Samta Sakhis a lot. Sometimes they share their family problems, sometimes I discuss my issues. We share with each other the ups and downs of our lives and we feel lighter after this."*

Such friendships beyond the familial enabled Samta Sakhis to find spaces of solidarity, sharing and connection to a wider community. However, it needs to be noted that there were also few instances of interpersonal clashes between Samta Sakhis of the first and second batch. Since the Samta Sakhis of the second batch were more educated than the first, they had been given the responsibility of documentation, which made them feel that they had a higher work burden. Some Samta Sakhis from the first batch also felt that their importance was waning because of their inability to document. These problems were resolved mainly through the mediation of Master Trainers who explained that both the batches came with their relative strengths; the first batch with their experience and the second with their skill of documentation, both of which were critical to the program.

2.1.3
Analysis of the Underlying Assumptions of the TOC

The first assumption that training and pedagogy would lead to increased knowledge and understanding held for the Samta Sakhis. ANANDI followed a feminist pedagogy for the five-day residential training on perspective building. The pedagogy was interactive and based on participatory learning action methods, using music, role-play, reflections from lived experiences of

the trainees and an action plan based on the learnings. This enabled better learning and ability to reflect on gender disparities in one's own life and community.[10] This process of understanding was strengthened by the fact that this was not a one-off training but was supported through day-to-day mentoring, monthly review and reflection meetings and sustained action on the field. Such mentoring was primarily provided by the Master Trainers.[11]

The second assumption of the TOC was that increased awareness and knowledge would enable Samta Sakhis and other community leaders to make changes in their own lives and households as well as lead changes in their community. The community leaders other than the Samta Sakhis, such as CLF and VO OBs and SACs who received training from the Samta Sakhis through a cascading model of training did not become the kind of change agents that the Samta Sakhis themselves became. This was because the investment of the GJP on developing the capacities of Samta Sakhis was much more intensive and sustained compared to the other leaders. The Samta Sakhis were able to translate their knowledge and awareness into action and change in their own lives and in the community. However, this was not a seamless process. Knowledge and awareness while necessary, were not sufficient conditions. In fact, many CLF SAC members had also been part of the five-day residential training on perspective building organized by ANANDI for the Samta Sakhis. However, unlike the Samta Sakhis, they did not work on concrete action plans or under the continuous mentoring and guidance of Master Trainers. It was this continuous guidance, mentoring and the specific action plans that enabled Samta Sakhis to translate their learnings into everyday actions in the field. Gradually, through iteration and repeated social action, Samta Sakhis became much more independent and could act on their own without any structured plan or handholding. It is important to note that what also strengthened Samta Sakhis' ability to lead changes in their own lives and the community was the recognition they received from the community and the state, which bolstered their self-esteem and confidence. Finally, another reason why Samta Sakhis were able to translate

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10 The pedagogy used in ANANDI's training sessions reminds one of Paulo Freire's (2000) approach to pedagogy where he emphasized the importance of providing the students with the knowledge and skills to deconstruct social relations and enable them to become equal citizens in substantive democracy.

11 The role and importance of continuous mentoring in creating robust leaders has been documented by various researchers. Mentoring is important not only for continuous learning and technical knowledge but also for role modelling, personal support, increasing confidence and self-awareness (Lee, 2021; Bradley, 2018; Stead, 2005).

their learnings into action was that most of them were women with their own histories of struggle and resilience. This not only enabled greater understanding and empathy for the suffering of others, but also inspired higher motivation to bring about change. As Samta Sakhi Rashmi said, *"Because I myself experience*

problems, I can also understand the problems of my sisters." Throughout the research, Samta Sakhis referred to stories from their own lives, which inspired them to continue working for women's rights, even when they did not receive any honorarium during the program pause period (April–August 2021).

Outcomes of FLD at a Glance

- There is increased awareness and knowledge amongst Samta Sakhis about women's rights and entitlements, including processes and institutions that can be utilized to attain such rights. They have also developed skills as trainers and problem solvers.

- There is increased confidence and self-esteem through the unlearning of discriminatory gender norms, the leadership role in training others and community level social action, as well as through the recognition they have received from the community and the state.

- Samta Sakhis have challenged gender norms at the household level (for example, mobility, sharing of household work among men and women, property rights, and decision-making) and have also raised and represented women's issues at various platforms at the community level.

- Samta Sakhis have led and facilitated social action on various issues that rural women have brought up either during the CLF/VO trainings and meetings or at the LAK. They have used strategies like raising issues at community platforms such as Gram Sabhas, Jansunwais or negotiating with Panchayat officials like Panchayat Secretaries or the Sarpanch, escalating cases to block level officials such as Janpad CEO or District Collector, and liaising with administration such as line department officials, hospitals and police stations.

- There has been a growing recognition of Samta Sakhis as community leaders among the community and government officials because of the social action. This has also led to increased social capital which also helps them in resolving cases of entitlements. Further, Samta Sakhis and Master Trainers together have formed a close peer network where they support and learn from each other, not only professionally but also personally.

Key enablers in this journey of Samta Sakhis have been the gender perspective training, continuous capacity building and day-to-day mentoring, the opportunity and mandate of the program to translate learnings from trainings into action, leadership opportunities, peer networks and the recognition from the community and the state.

2.2
Institutional Strengthening

The term Institutional Strengthening borrows from Organizational Development literature but deviates considerably from its traditional conceptualization. Organizational Development frameworks focusing on

efficiency and sustainability of organizations have been critiqued by feminist thinkers and activists owing to their gender blindness and lack of attention to equity and participation (Plowman, 2000; Rao & Stuart, 1997). Development practitioners and feminist thinkers, instead, explored new approaches to organizational change that placed gender equality at the heart of institutional change processes (Friedman & Rao,

1998). Plowman (2000) writes about the criticality of reorganizing organizational cultures to enable greater leadership and participation by women and infuse values of equality and rights within policy, cultures and programs of organizations. It is this thinking that guides the definition of Institutional Strengthening in the context of GJP.

The CLF as an organizational space consists of women representatives from all the VOs in its cluster. It elects a team of five members (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Joint Secretary) to lead the organization. It also appoints a team of Preraks (Book-keepers) who manage accounts of the CLF and its VOs; committees for supervising various kinds of work such as Bank Linkage, Livelihoods and Social Action; and Community Resource Persons (CRPs) to carry out specific functions such as SHG formation and activation, bank linkage and livelihoods linkage.[12] CLFs are supported by a Block Nodal officer. As discussed in Section 1.4, despite this elaborate structure, the leaders of CLFs were found to be largely dependent for decision making and conducting of meetings on the Nodal officer and Preraks. Further, the social action committee (SAC) entrusted to take up different social issues facing members was found to be largely non-functional. Most importantly, the CLFs, while being a women's organization, did not have gender equality as the core of its practice and culture. Given this, the GJP defined the process of Institutional Strengthening as the process of enhancing 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.

The initial focus of the GJP was largely to transform CLF spaces, and to an extent, VO spaces. During the first national lockdown at the onset of COVID-19 (March–May 2020), when larger groups were not allowed to meet as per government regulations, Samta Sakhis started conducting trainings and discussions in SHG groups which were smaller and were still meeting. Given the primary thrust of GJP on the CLF space, this report explores changes mainly at the CLF level and to a certain extent, at the VO level. This section presents the strategies and activities as envisaged by the program, the adjustments to the activities during implementation, and the initial outcomes that have been enabled on ground. It concludes with an analysis

of the underlying assumptions.
Figure 4 illustrates the various strategies and outcomes under this pillar.

2.2.1
Strategies

The Institutional Strengthening pillar aimed at creating strong women's community institutions which are spaces where women can confidently raise, represent and resolve rural women's concerns. One of the key strategies of the GJP focused on building the capacities of office bearers (OBs) and members of community institutions. Following the cascading model of training, ANANDI trained Samta Sakhis and they conducted trainings at the community institution level. Trainings were conducted on the designated meeting day of CLFs and VOs. Once the pandemic hit, leading to mobility restrictions, Samta Sakhis took trainings at the level of SHGs within their own villages. These trainings were conducted using the tools in which the Samta Sakhis had themselves been trained by ANANDI. These included tools such as *Kiska Palda Bhari* (focused on gendered division of labor and inequality in decision-making within the household) and *Mera Haq, Meri Pehchan* (access to rights and entitlements). Pre-pandemic, the *Kiska Palda Bhari* tool was widely used. However, during the pandemic, *Mera Haq, Meri Pehchan* was used extensively, keeping in mind the community's need to access schemes and relief offered by the government. Trainings were also conducted on COVID-19, including sharing of scientific information about the disease, busting myths, handwash demonstrations, and discussions on preventive measures. Additionally, Samta Sakhis stayed in touch telephonically with CLF/VO leaders and shared information with them.

Samta Sakhis used songs, their own personal stories or other anecdotes to discuss issues of gender discrimination to create interest and relatability. The tools by themselves were participatory, thereby enabling greater interaction with the participants. Such training pedagogy proved useful not only in developing knowledge but in eliciting various issues and concerns faced by women in these villages, which the Samta Sakhis later acted upon. Samta Sakhis also

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12   The different committees at the CLF level include *Samajik Gatividhi Samiti* (Social Action Committee), *Nigrani Samiti* (Monitoring Committee), *Rozgar Samiti* (Income Generation Committee), *Ajeevika Gatividhi Samiti* (Livelihood Activity Committee) and *Bank linkage & Rin Vapasi Samiti* (Bank Linkage & Loan Repayment Committee). Community Resource Persons are appointed thematically such as *Krishi Sakhi* (Agriculture CRP), *Bank Mitra* (Bank linkage CRP), *Pashu Sakhi* (Livestock CRP), etc.

conducted discussions on the roles and responsibilities of OBs during these meetings to enable them to better deliver their role.

Additional capacity building interventions included a session on gender in the trainings organized by MPSRLM at the block level at the Community Training Centers (CTC) for SHG/VO/CLF members. Capacity building activities were conducted by Samta Sakhis from January 2021 for SAC members of CLFs and

VOs and Gender Point Persons (GPP) at the SHG level. ANANDI developed a new module for this training, which focused on building their perspectives on gender, patriarchy and gender-based violence. It also focused on discussions on their roles and responsibilities so that these actors could respond on the ground to gender and other social issues. Some of the CLF SAC members also participated in the five-day residential training of Samta Sakhis organized by ANANDI. Further, as book-keepers (Preraks) are key

Strategies

- Capacity Building through Cascading Model of Training
- Utilizing SHG, VO, CLF Spaces for Gender Work
- Creating Institutions & Leveraging Other Platforms
- Anchoring Selection and Work of Samta Sakhi & LAK in CLF

Outcomes

- CLF OBs own the Gender Strategy and have the Capacity to Lead CLF
- CLF OBs and SACs Gain Gender Perspectives & Rights Awareness
- Establishing the LAK & Leveraging Other Platforms for Social Action
- Convergence with Other Platforms and Institutions
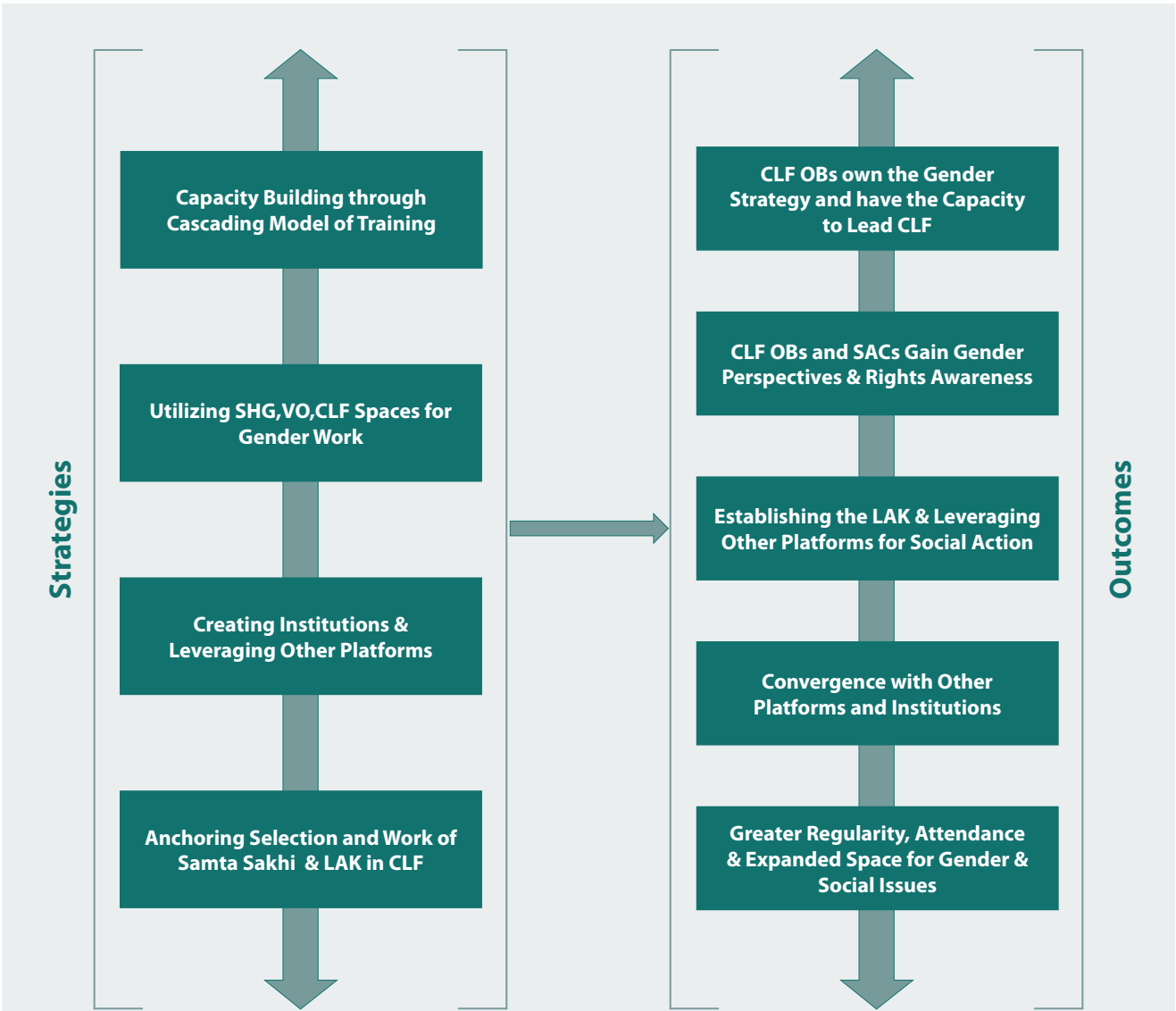- Greater Regularity, Attendance & Expanded Space for Gender & Social Issues

Figure 4: Institutional Strengthening Strategies and Outcomes

Note: The strategies influence each other, and outcomes also influence each other and are not separate watertight compartments. This is depicted by the two-way arrows.

stakeholders in these institutions, though they were not provided separate gender perspective trainings, they were given training on recording discussions and actions in VO SAC registers.

As the key objective of the program was to create strong and gender responsive institutions, GJP focused on utilizing the existing SHG/VO/CLF spaces for trainings, discussions and social action. All trainings were conducted on the designated day of CLF and VO meetings. Despite the challenges posed by irregular VO meetings, the Samta Sakhis showed exemplary determination to utilize this space. They visited the village a day prior to the VO meeting to inform the members and mobilize them to attend the meeting. Samta Sakhis utilized these meeting forums to conduct gender training and encourage women to raise issues and concerns they were facing in their lives. Subsequently, the members and leaders of these

forums along with the SAC members were encouraged to respond to these issues raised by women and to take action at the village level through the Panchayat, Jansunwais and Gram Sabhas. Participatory social action was encouraged. Additionally, at the level of SHGs, on the request of the CLFs, Samta Sakhis worked to form new SHGs or reactivate defunct SHGs. They motivated women to join these forums and utilize them not only for savings, loans and livelihoods but also for access to rights and entitlements.

In order to respond to the issues and concerns raised by community women and facilitate the community's access to rights and entitlements, certain processes and institutions were established. To begin with, processes such as trainings and discussions on gender issues were established during regular VO and CLF meetings. Issues raised during these discussions were acted upon either through individual accompaniment or through

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participatory action. Certain pathways for action were laid out, such as creating a consensus and passing a resolution in the VO/CLF, writing an application (*Avedan*) and placing it at the Gram Panchayat office or raising a demand at the Gram Sabha. For entitlement-related issues, the eligibility criteria and necessary identity documents were specified. In case the issue was not resolved at the village level, standard steps for escalation were followed; for example, connecting the rightsholders to senior officials at the block and district level. Additionally, the program established the LAK and Block Gender Forum (BGF) to strengthen convergence and facilitate improved access to rights and entitlements. LAK was established as a bi-weekly center (Tuesday and Friday) in Karhal in June 2020 and in Sheopur in October 2020 with an aim to establish a platform owned and managed by the CLF at the block level, through which rights and concerns of community members could be raised with the respective line departments. The LAK is situated at the Janpad/Tehsil office and serves as an escalation mechanism wherein if a case is not resolved at the village level, it can be escalated to the LAK.

After establishment of the LAK, the BGF was also convened in both the blocks. The first meeting of Karhal BGF was organized in October 2020 and of Sheopur BGF in January 2021. 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. The BGF has been formed with representatives of different line departments, Janpad, CLF OBs, Samta Sakhis, Master Trainers and MPSRLM Nodals among others. It is envisaged to meet once in two/three months.

All the activities under the GJP were anchored within community institutions, especially the CLF. Before implementing the program, discussions were held at each CLF to enable their buy-in and approval to implement the program. CLFs passed a resolution to implement the GJP. Subsequently, CLFs were asked to nominate Samta Sakhis based on a set of criteria. As Samta Sakhis were primarily CLF members and functioned as Gender CRPs, they were attached to the CLF itself. They also reported monthly to the CLF about their work and future plans. CLF OBs had to sign off Samta Sakhis' monthly reports, after which ANANDI processed their salary. One CLF in each block was made the Nodal CLF for managing the LAK. This was also done to facilitate higher uptake and involvement of the CLF and its leaders in key program activities, so that they see LAK as their own platform.

Due to COVID-19, some program strategies did go through adjustments, such as the initiation of training at SHG levels. A few activities such as organizing campaigns and lateral activities could not take place due to COVID-19 restrictions. Further, given MPSRLM's own priorities and the needs on the ground, the GJP also started training VO SACs and GPPs towards the end of the program cycle. Initially, this was not part of the program design. A new training module was developed for this purpose by ANANDI which focused on the understanding of gender, moving beyond binary genders to understand the issues and rights of transgender persons, gender norms, stereotyping, gender-based violence, gender discrimination and role and function of SACs/GPPs.

2.2.2
Outcomes

These strategies interacted with each other to enable certain outcomes which indicate how institutional spaces, especially the CLFs, are on a journey to become more gender responsive. As in the case of Feminist Leadership Development, here too the outcomes are processes that are ongoing and work together to strengthen community institutions.

2.2.2.1
CLF OBs own the gender strategy and have the capacity to lead CLFs

When the GJP started, either Nodals or Preraks used to hold meetings, but now CLF OBs have started to lead and facilitate meetings. A CLF OB from Sheopur block shared, *"In our CLF, now even when the Nodal is absent, the OBs conduct the meeting."* They have also started to hold everyone, including Preraks, Samta Sakhis and Nodals accountable for their work. As Rama, a Samta Sakhi from Karhal block said, *"A year ago, the Nodal used to hold the meetings but now I am seeing a change. In a recent CLF meeting, one of the OBs said that as they were office bearers, they don't need to wait for the Nodal, they can themselves also run their CLF. When refreshments came, OBs immediately asked for a bill, when sarees for CLF members came, then also they asked for the bill. Earlier all these payments were being done by the Nodal but now the OBs are paying the bills. In my CLF, OBs have become more responsible and hold everyone accountable."* As per the ANANDI project team, this shift in the attitude and confidence of CLF OBs has been influenced by

discussions on leadership with the Master Trainers and Samta Sakhis during trainings conducted by the Samta Sakhis. Anchoring the activities of the GJP, including the work of Samta Sakhis and LAK within the CLF, helped in building the capacities of CLF OBs to lead and also enabled a sense of involvement. As Samta Sakhis led social action and enabled access to rights and entitlements of members and also helped CLFs with other mandates such as forming or activating SHGs, CLF OBs' willingness and ownership of the program increased. In some cases, CLF members and OBs reached out to Samta Sakhis and invited them to visit their villages to conduct trainings.

However, during the project pause period (April–August 2021), only one CLF, Sagar, paid the Samta Sakhis' honorarium out of their own funds. In other CLFs, while most OBs appreciated Samta Sakhis' contribution, they cited paucity of funds for non-payment of the honorarium. Samta Sakhi Ankita reported, *"The CLF OB said this is ANANDI's work and now ANANDI is over, so why should we give you money? At this point, the Nodal also did not say anything."* Given that the upscaled gender strategy of MPSRLM is expecting CLFs to pay for Samta Sakhis, it needs to be probed to what extent CLFs have funds to support Samta Sakhis and whether OBs have the authority to decide how to spend these funds. This issue was outside the scope of this research but needs to be examined through future research. Currently, the SMMU has indicated that it will allocate funds for the Samta Sakhis' honorarium in case CLFs are unable to pay from their own funds.

2.2.2.2
CLF OBs and SACs gain gender perspectives and rights awareness

An emerging language of rights and understanding of gender inequality in terms of access to resources, land rights and decision-making is noticed amongst the CLF OBs. In the words of a CLF OB, *"Women and men should have equal land rights. Women should have the right to visit wherever they want to. Women should also have equal right to decide about their work."* This is an improvement from the beginning of the program when the articulation of gender equality by OBs was largely guided by manifestations in terms of education and nutrition. However, this evolving gender perspective is not uniformly seen across all CLF OBs and SAC members, and some of them are still not able to identify unequal gender norms and structures. For example, a CLF OB refused to accept that there was

any gender discrimination at all. In her words, *"There is no discrimination between boys and girls, now both are treated equally."* Nevertheless, all OBs and SAC members across the six CLFs where the program was implemented, demonstrated an increase in their awareness regarding scheme-related entitlements and ways to claim them. As shared by a CLF SAC member, *"Earlier I did not know anything, but since Samta Sakhis have started working, I have gained information about schemes and also about which government office I need to visit."* The continuous monthly engagement at the level of CLFs and some VOs, along with social action led by the Samta Sakhis in the field, has enabled this increased awareness.

2.2.2.3
Establishing the LAK and leveraging other platforms for social action

During the Formative Research in 2020, it was seen that a lack of systematic mechanisms and processes to respond to social issues led to limited and sporadic social action, largely dependent on the patronage of block and district MPSRLM officials. The program has since been able to establish systematic strategies for social action, which have been extensively used by the Samta Sakhis in the field to enable access to rights and entitlements. The establishment of LAK and the Block Gender Forum have also been instrumental in creating better linkages of the community to their rights. Further, the LAK provided greater visibility of the women and their collectives at the Janpad office.

Social action facilitated by Samta Sakhis at the village level and through LAK at the block level has enabled access to women's rights and entitlements for public services and goods such as water, roads, streetlights, access to schemes and entitlements such as pension, disability certificates, ration, MGNREGA job cards and housing. Samta Sakhis have also worked on land rights, domestic violence, caste-based discrimination and on relief, awareness and prevention of COVID-19. While some of the social action, especially over public services, was participatory, most of it was led by Samta Sakhis. An OB from the Kanderkheda VO shared an incident where the VO members themselves initiated action.

"Since the last two years, we had been having issues with public water supply because there was no public tubewell. We had to request someone with a private tubewell for water, but he was not very helpful. We used to travel to

another village to get water. Earlier, we never went to the Panchayat with the problem because we did not have the information about what could be done. In our VO meeting, we discussed this problem with Sushma didi, our Samta Sakhi. She told us that we should submit an application to the Panchayat. We took the help of our Prerak to write the application. Sushma didi had also spoken to the Prerak to help us. Following her suggestion, two of us from our VO went to the Panchayat. This was the first time I visited the Panchayat to meet the Sarpanch. I gave him the application and discussed the issue. I was very scared to talk to him, but the Sarpanch spoke to us nicely and said he will resolve the problem. Within the next ten days, public tubewells were dug and now it is very convenient for all of us to get water. We do not need to go to another village for water. Now, I have also gained the confidence to talk to the Sarpanch. I feel our didis (Samta Sakhis) are also with us."

However, such cases are limited and most of the social action has been led by Samta Sakhis. Table 2 gives a glimpse of the number and type of cases handled by the Samta Sakhis through the LAK. It is important to bear in mind that this excludes the social action cases that were resolved at the village level.

While many rights and entitlements of community women have been enabled, more could have been achieved had CLF/VO OBs and SACs taken a more

Photo Credit : ANANDI

leading role in social action. It is expected that with focused training of SACs and GPPs under the upscaled gender strategy of MPSRLM, these actors will play a greater role in social action. There have also been challenges faced by Samta Sakhis during social action such as unresponsive or uncooperative Panchayat officials. This was mostly resolved through the intervention of Janpad level officials. The line department officials have been mostly cooperative except for one person. In that case, intervention had to be sought from the District Collector's office.

Table 2: LAK Cases

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

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

Note: At the time of data collection, LAK Sheopur had been active for eight months from November 2020–June 2021 and Karhal LAK had been active for one year from June 2020–June 2021.
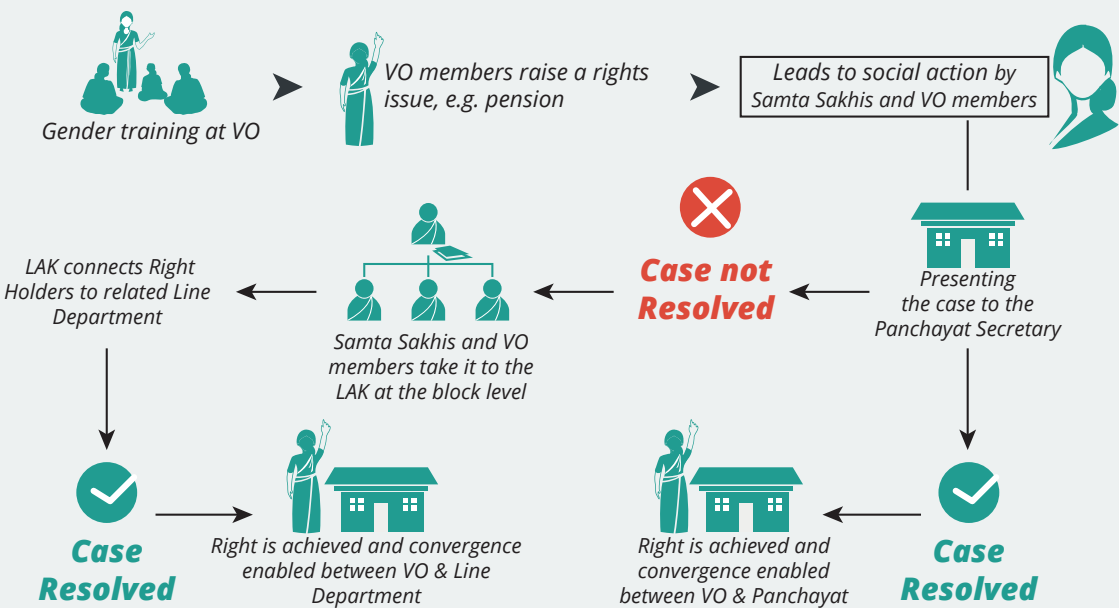
2.2.2.4
Convergence with other platforms and institutions

Continuous social action facilitated by the Samta Sakhis by leveraging various platforms and institutions at the village and block level enabled better convergence between MPSRLM supported community institutions and other institutions such as Panchayats, Janpads, Tehsil offices, line departments, hospitals and police stations. The location of LAK at the Janpad and/or Tehsil office itself indicates convergence between the CLF and block administration and acts as a bridge between the community and the government. The

BGF (represented by CLF OBs, Samta Sakhis, Master Trainers, CEO Janpad, line department officials, BMMU and DMMU), which meant to resolve the concerns of CLF and LAK, also enabled greater convergence. Such convergence not only helped in better attainment of rights and entitlements for the community, but also enabled a coordinated response to crisis situations such as COVID-19. During the COVID-19 period, Samta Sakhis worked closely with the Panchayat and Janpad to conduct awareness among members of community institutions, ensured access to relief, and also participated in vaccine drives. Figure 5 presents an example of how Samta Sakhis have worked through the GJP to enable rights and better convergence with Panchayats, Janpads and line departments.

Process of Achieving Rights and Convergence

Gender training at VO

VO members raise a rights issue, e.g. pension

Leads to social action by Samta Sakhis and VO members

Presenting the case to the Panchayat Secretary

Case not Resolved

Samta Sakhis and VO members take it to the LAK at the block level

LAK connects Right Holders to related Line Department

Case Resolved

Right is achieved and convergence enabled between VO & Line Department

Case Resolved

Right is achieved and convergence enabled between VO & Panchayat

VO: Village Organization, LAK: Lok Adhikar Kendra

Figure 5: Process of Achieving Rights and Convergence

2.2.2.5
Greater regularity and attendance and expanded space for gender and social issues

Since gender training through the cascading model used to happen during regular CLF and VO meetings, these were the places where different issues of rights denial and entitlement claims were raised. Often, cases requiring collective action were decided together during these meetings and resolutions were passed. Some of the VO and SAC members then participated in the collective action such as raising a demand at the Gram Sabha. This meant that the CLF/VO meeting space became more gender responsive and enabled discussions beyond financial issues. However, there was a lack of uniform participation by CLF, VO and SAC

members in village level social action, which limited the extent of gender responsiveness of the community institution.

At the VO level, mobilization efforts by Samta Sakhis for VO meetings helped to ensure better attendance. As Samta Sakhis started utilizing the VO spaces for training and discussion on gender and social issues and conducted social action on these issues, members started showing greater interest in attending and participating in these meetings. Even during SHG formation and activation, some of the Samta Sakhis were able to integrate gender issues in mobilizing women for regular meetings. Such an approach expanded the scope of community institutions to incorporate gender and social issues and discussions on rights and entitlements. Figure 6 shows how Samta Sakhis, through the GJP, were able to transform the CLF/VO spaces.

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

Samta Sakhis conduct gender training during usual CLF & VO meetings

Increases awareness of members of community institutions

Members raise rights issues

Samta Sakhis involve the members in social action

Increased trust and ownership among CLF & VO members

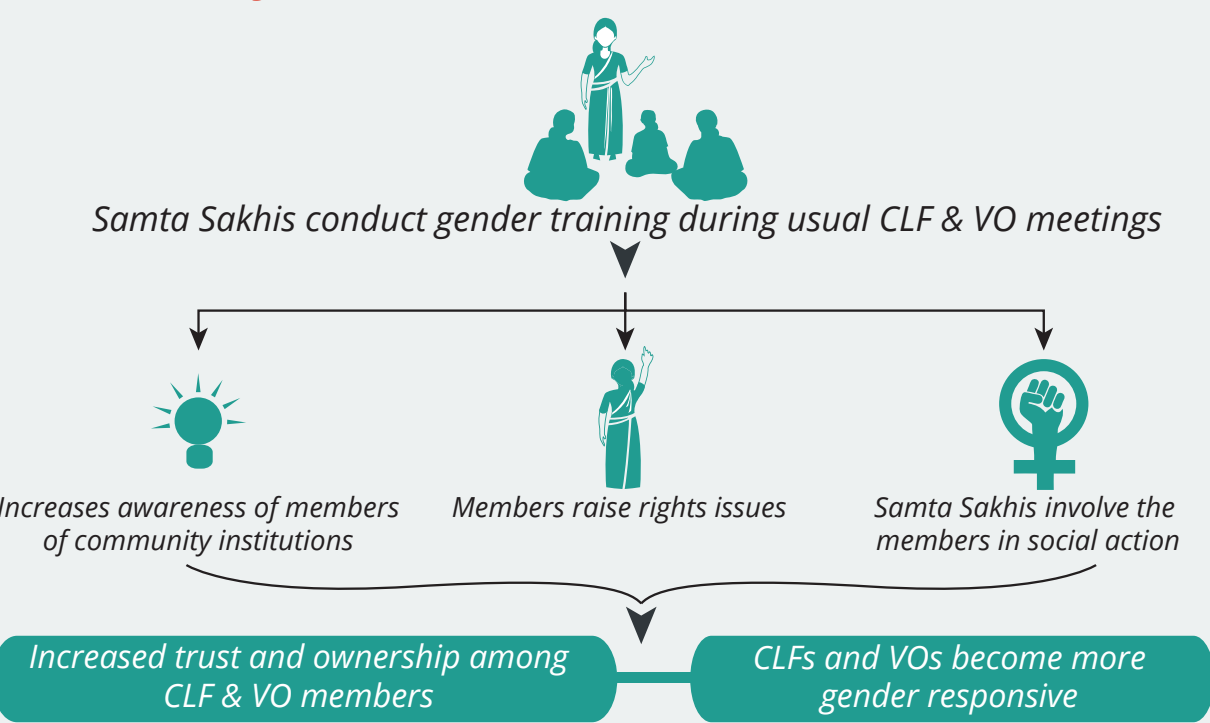*CLFs and VOs become more gender responsive*

Figure 6: GJP's Embeddedness Creating Ownership of Gender Strategy and Gender Responsive Community Institutions

2.2.3
Analysis of the Underlying Assumptions of the TOC

The first assumption of the Institutional Strengthening pillar in the TOC was that members of community institutions participated actively in trainings and meetings. During the period of the GJP, there was an incremental positive shift in attention during trainings organized at CLF/VO meetings. However, many members, including OBs, continued to be involved in financial transactions during the course of training, causing distraction and lack of attention. However, certain training tools such as *Dukh Sukh, Kiska Palda Bhari* and *Mera Haq, Meri Pehchan* were very relatable and created lively discussions. Even if some members were busy with financial transactions, others participated in the discussions and shared their own experiences and issues of rights denial. In case of social action, the participation of leaders and members was largely limited to cases pertaining to public services such as roads, clean drinking water or waste management and also some cases of domestic violence. Thus, this assumption did not entirely hold and set limits on the potential of GJP to transform the CLF/VO spaces into gender responsive institutions. While the spaces expanded and became more gender responsive than before, more could have been achieved had all members participated equally in trainings, discussions and social action.

The second assumption was that different platforms and government departments would respond positively to social action. By and large, the government departments at the Janpad and district level responded positively to the social action led by Samta Sakhis. However, Samta Sakhis reported that these spaces were not equally responsive to ordinary community members unless they were accompanied by Samta Sakhis, or the case came through the LAK. There was also one case of a non-responsive line department official which was resolved through intervention from the District Collector's office.

At the Gram Panchayat level, Samta Sakhis initially faced challenges from some Panchayat Secretaries and Sarpanches. Samta Sakhis used various strategies such as collective pressure and escalation of cases to the Janpad level to mitigate these challenges. Most importantly, as they started working closely with Panchayats, especially during the COVID-19 period, the behavior of the Panchayat members shifted and became more supportive. Therefore, while the assumption that all platforms and institutions will respond positively to social action did not hold automatically or uniformly, Samta Sakhis and Master Trainers were able to mitigate most of these challenges and ensure support and cooperation.

The third assumption of the TOC was that women would raise issues requiring social action to their community leaders and in the community institutions. In fact, most of the cases of rights denial and entitlement claims were raised to Samta Sakhis during their training sessions at CLF and VO meetings. Some cases were communicated by community women telephonically to the Samta Sakhis. During COVID-19, since community institutions were not meeting, most of the cases were raised telephonically or through door-to-door visits by Samta Sakhis in their own villages. CLF/VO OBs also brought several cases to the attention of Samta Sakhis during this period. There were also a few walk-in cases at the LAK. Thus, community women did raise their issues at the community institutions but specifically to the Samta Sakhis. Whether they raised such issues to other community leaders such as VO/CLF OBs and SAC members in the absence of Samta Sakhis is not known.

Key Outcomes of IS at a Glance

- CLF OBs have started to lead and facilitate CLF meetings, which is a change from an earlier period when Nodal officers or Preraks led the meetings. The OBs have also started assuming their leadership role by 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 in the beginning of the program. However, it is not uniform across all CLFs or among all CLF OBs.

- Most OBs have shown an evolving ownership and involvement in the program. Unfortunately, the non-payment of Samta Sakhis' honorarium by CLFs (except Sagar CLF) during the time when ANANDI's implementation had been paused (April–August 2021), may be indicative of limits to that ownership. However, this may also have been the result of lack of funds rather than lack of willingness to pay. In fact, most OBs barring a few, acknowledged Samta Sakhis' work even when they could not give them their due remuneration.

- GJP has successfully established mechanisms and processes to respond to social and gender issues including how and where to raise complaints, how to write an application, how to escalate an issue, and the steps involved in resolution of a case. The LAK and BGF have also been established and are functional. In fact, even during the period when the project was paused, Samta Sakhis continued to manage the LAK, despite not receiving any honorarium.

- The GJP has improved the community's access to their rights and entitlements through social action led by the Samta Sakhis. The range of issues Samta Sakhis have worked on include pensions, identity cards, disability certificates, caste certificates, access to public goods like water, roads and streetlights, access to ration, housing and MGNREGA job cards, etc. They have also addressed issues of caste-based discrimination and supported survivors of domestic violence. During COVID-19, GJP adjusted its strategies and training component to increase awareness, facilitate access to government relief and health services and prevent the spread of infection through identification and quarantining. All of these activities were done in close collaboration with the Panchayat and Janpad. These issues were handled through social action both at the village level and through the LAK.

- Most social actions were led by the Samta Sakhis but some participatory action at the village level has been observed, especially for cases related to public goods and services such as water and also in cases of domestic violence.

- Social action at the village level and establishment of the LAK and 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.

- There has been an improvement in regularity and attendance in VO meetings. Some SHGs have also been formed and activated using the interventions of Samta Sakhis.

- Most importantly, due to the trainings, discussions and social action, VO/CLF spaces are moving beyond financial transactions and emerging as platforms where women are able to voice and visibilize their concerns and claim their rights.
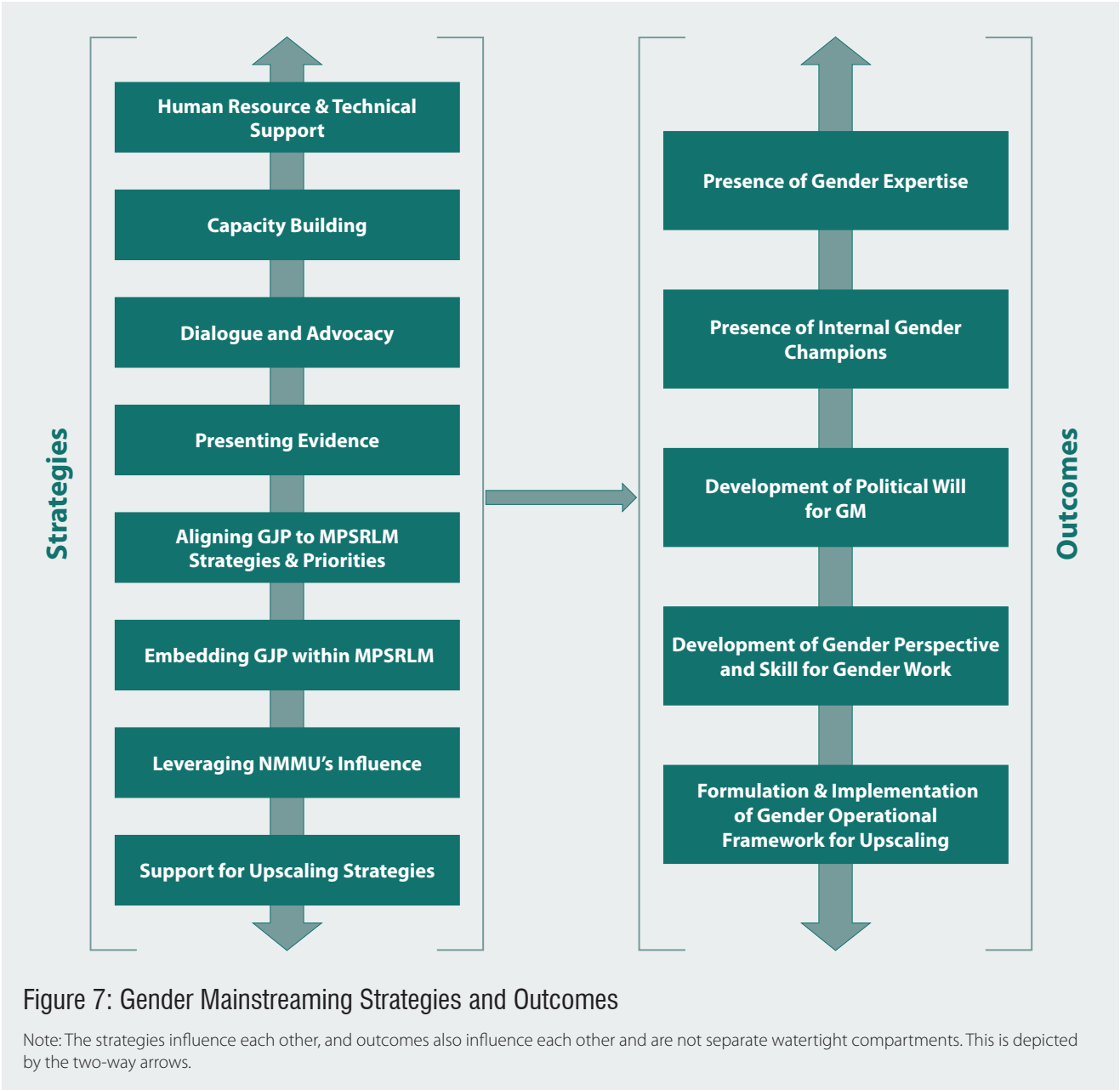
Key Enablers: The embeddedness of the GJP in the community institutional structure, the leading role played by Samta Sakhis in training members and facilitating social action, the creation of standard processes and mechanisms of social action, including institutional platforms such as LAK, have helped in strengthening the community institutions and making them more gender responsive.

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. This section presents an analysis of the strategies, outcomes and their interactions within this pillar. Figure 7 presents the varied strategies implemented and the outcomes they have enabled. The different strategies worked together to enable these outcomes, which have in turn, reinforced and strengthened each other.

2.3.1
Strategies

At the beginning of the program, ANANDI had identified the need for technical expertise and human resource support at the MPSRLM state office, the SMMU. Therefore, ANANDI and IWWAGE appointed a senior gender trainer and a technical gender expert at the state level to support gender work, including upscaling. ANANDI's senior members themselves offered technical support for many issues such as the drafting of the State CRP Policy, Annual Action Plans, Gender Operational Framework etc. Despite initial

Strategies

- Human Resource & Technical Support
- Capacity Building
- Dialogue and Advocacy
- Presenting Evidence
- Aligning GJP to MPSRLM Strategies & Priorities
- Embedding GJP within MPSRLM
- Leveraging NMMU's Influence
- Support for Upscaling Strategies

Outcomes

- Presence of Gender Expertise
- Presence of Internal Gender Champions
- Development of Political Will for GM
- Development of Gender Perspective and Skill for Gender Work
- Formulation & Implementation of Gender Operational Framework for Upscaling

Figure 7: Gender Mainstreaming Strategies and Outcomes

Note: The strategies influence each other, and outcomes also influence each other and are not separate watertight compartments. This is depicted by the two-way arrows.

planning, capacity building through gender perspective training could not be done for SMMU, DMMU or BMMU staff as part of the first phase of GJP. However, BMMU staff were invited for an exposure visit to Gujarat to observe the functioning of the LAK established there by ANANDI. Only two BMMU representatives, one each from Sheopur and Karhal blocks were able to participate in the exposure visit.

A key strategy of the GJP was to engage in continuous dialogue and advocacy at all levels of MPSRLM and present evidence from the ground. From initial discussions to build consensus and ownership for the GJP to monthly reports on project activities and consultation on key programmatic issues, ANANDI maintained a continuous channel of communication with SMMU, DMMU and BMMU. At the district and block level, the project team including Master Trainers, reached out to BMMU and DMMU from time-to-time, sometimes through formal meetings, and sometimes through WhatsApp, to share progress and any other issues of GJP's functioning on the ground. They also advocated proactively for upscaling of GJP and incorporation of gender indicators in the MIS. Evidence from the ground in terms of trainings and social action conducted was shared regularly with the MPSRLM teams across levels. In fact, evidence from Niwas block of Mandla district of Madhya Pradesh, where ANANDI had previously trained Samta Sakhis and established the LAK was also presented to strengthen the will for gender strategy upscaling. Samta Sakhis and Master Trainers from Sheopur and Mandla spoke at state and national forums about their work and journeys of change. SMMU officials, including the CEO, were invited to visit Sheopur and observe the work on the ground. DMMU and BMMU officials visited the LAK and Nodals interacted with the Samta Sakhis every month at the CLF meetings. The CEO of MPSRLM, Bhopal also visited Sheopur and personally interacted with Samta Sakhis and Master Trainers at the LAK.

To facilitate greater ownership and create a replicable model, the GJP embedded itself within MPSRLM's own 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/SHGs. No

parallel system was created. Samta Sakhis also worked closely with the Preraks of the community institutions and in consultation with CLF OBs and Block Nodal Officers. Even the LAK was anchored by CLFs within government offices such as the Janpad and Tehsil office. From December 2020 onwards, Samta Sakhis worked closely with community institutions to identify SAC members and GPPs and started training them in gender issues. They also worked on the various issues identified by the CLFs and Nodals as important priorities for MPSRLM, such as formation and activation of SHGs, survey work for identifying people without access to government schemes, identifying eligible beneficiaries for the street vendor scheme etc. During COVID-19, Samta Sakhis and Master Trainers worked in close collaboration with MPSRLM officials and the Panchayati system on awareness and prevention of COVID-19, including quarantine and support for returnee migrants, access to government relief such as ration and direct cash benefits, vaccination drives and production of masks and soaps. This embeddedness of the program's design and operations within MPSRLM's own structures and functions created ownership, acceptance and scope for replication and upscaling.

As the GJP is part of the larger SWAYAM project of Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in collaboration with DAY-NRLM, NMMU's influence could be leveraged effectively to implement GJP in Sheopur. Some of the initial discussions with MPSRLM state office on the GJP happened in joint meetings with NMMU officials. NMMU's thrust on a gender operational strategy for the SRLMs also strengthened the mandate for gender work and for the gender upscaling strategy. ANANDI leveraged this momentum effectively to advocate and offer technical support for the upscaling strategy and GJP served as an effective model on which to base the upscaling strategy. Upscaling activities began by September 2020. At this time, a one-day state workshop was organized with the DMMUs of the upscaling districts to introduce them to the objectives and strategies of the GJP. Subsequently, a state level training was organized for the Samta Samanvayaks[13] in Bhopal in December 2020. Also in December 2020, a two-day workshop was organized with CLF leaders for them to understand GJP and gender and human rights work. In January 2021, MPSRLM invited ANANDI for a two-day workshop for District/Block Managers of those districts which were

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13   Under the upscaled strategy, one Samta Samanvayak (Senior Gender CRP) along with 5–6 Samta Sakhis (Gender CRPs) are to be appointed per CLF to supervise gender work and the setting up of LAK at the block level. In total, across 18 districts, 19 blocks and 60 CLFs are being covered.

part of the GJP upscaling phase. However, from April to August 2021, these activities too were stalled. From September 2021, the program began once again in all the upscaling districts, including Sheopur.

ANANDI understood the importance of monitoring indicators for gender work and suggested the introduction of such indicators in the MIS. However, this has still not happened. All the GJP reports from the ground are kept separately and do not find their way into MPSRLM's overall monitoring framework. Currently, IWWAGE is working with DAY-NRLM to create a robust gender monitoring framework and once this is put in place, MPSRLM may also utilize this framework to report on its gender work. At the CLF level, ANANDI also developed an android-based application, the Adhikar Saathi App to capture social action. The Samta Sakhis were supposed to regularly fill data in this application. However, due to technical challenges and the limited digital literacy skills of the Samta Sakhis, the App was later discontinued.

Finally, the GJP envisaged the setting up of a gender resource group at MPSRLM. This has not happened. Instead, a gender resource group has been created at the DAY-NRLM level, which is currently looking into gender auditing of NRLM's training curricula across verticals.

2.3.2
Outcomes

The different program strategies worked in tandem to enable certain initial outcomes. As with the other pillars of GJP, in the Gender Mainstreaming pillar too, the outcomes are processes and not end points. They are not disjointed but interact and influence each other.

2.3.2.1
Presence of gender expertise

The appointment of gender focal points within the MPSRLM by ANANDI and IWWAGE enabled the creation of gender expertise within the organization. These experts assisted MPSRLM in coordinating the gender strategy in Sheopur and also supported the implementation of the strategy in GJP upscaling

districts as well as in some of the non-GJP districts of MPSRLM. It has also enabled some initial conversations on gender integration across verticals, through capacity building activities such as holding an hour's session on gender during trainings organized by other verticals such as agriculture.

2.3.2.2
Presence of internal gender champions

ANANDI's long standing work (since 2013) with MPSRLM has led to certain internal staff emerging as gender champions i.e., people who provide active support and advocate for gender work within the MPSRLM. These are present at all levels—state, district and block—partially facilitated by ANANDI's trainings and work, and partially by their own motivation. As an MPSRLM official shared, *"ANANDI's presence has enabled an uptake for gender work in MPSRLM, and the staff who have worked closely with ANANDI, do have an understanding of gender and want to work on it."*

2.3.2.3
Development of political will for Gender Mainstreaming

ANANDI's sustained engagement with MPSRLM over several years, technical and human resource support in this phase of work and constant dialogue and advocacy at all levels has enabled the willingness among senior SMMU officials to systematically implement the gender strategy. At SMMU, a State Program Manager (SPM) for SI/SD which includes gender, and an Assistant State Program Manager (ASPM), Gender, have been appointed by MPSRLM. Such appointments by SMMU indicate its commitment towards sustained gender work. Further, MPSRLM has decided to upscale the GJP to 18 districts, including Sheopur and Mandla. Upscaling institutionalizes the GJP as a key gender strategy adopted by MPSRLM. Even before upscaling took off, MPSRLM had institutionalized the Gender CRP (Samta Sakhi) policy in its overall CRP guidelines, laying out the selection criteria for Samta Sakhis, job description and honorarium. For a program, whose key priority is livelihoods generation and financial inclusion,

the willingness of the senior leadership has played a pivotal role in carrying out gender work. Additionally, the program's embeddedness in the existing structures of the MPSRLM, including leveraging and strengthening existing mechanisms such as CLFs, SACs and GPPs, facilitated a buy-in and uptake for gender work because the work was seen as within the ambit and purview of MPSRLM's own mandate. As shared by an ANANDI team member, *"MPSRLM has grown beyond the token 'women empowerment'. It understands the realities and interconnections and dynamics women go through. It is convinced that GJP should be seen as MPSRLM's project, and that ownership should be there from the district and block teams."*

However, at the block level, there has been a varied degree of involvement and support extended by the Nodals to the GJP. While most Nodals have cooperated if the Samta Sakhis or the Master Trainers needed any information or feedback, active support in terms of visiting the LAK or supporting Samta Sakhis during challenges of social action, for example, issues with non-responsive Panchayat officials, has been varied. The limited ownership is also indicated by their lack of support (barring one Nodal) for the payment of honorarium to Samta Sakhis during the project pause period (April–August 2021). However, one of the reasons for non-payment could also be a real fund crunch faced by the CLFs. According to a project team member, one of the Nodals said, *"Already the CLF is paying for 11–12 CRPs, how will it pay for more? Where will the funds come from?"* At the SMMU level, however, there have been deliberations on how to support Samta Sakhis in the upscaled gender strategy. In the upscaled model, ANANDI will bear the expenses of Samta Samanvayaks (Senior Gender CRPs) while the Gender CRPs or Samta Sakhis are to be funded by the state. A senior MPSRLM official mentioned that if the CLFs are unable to pay the Samta Sakhis from their own funds, the MPSRLM will provide the honorarium from its own budget.

2.3.2.4
Development of gender perspective and skill for gender work

Capacity building for district and block staff of the gender upscaling districts was conducted by ANANDI in January 2021. This included gender perspective training and discussions on GJP upscaling strategy.

Block level representatives from Sheopur district—one each from Sheopur and Karhal blocks—also participated in this training. However, before this, no systematic training had been organized for the district and block staff at Sheopur. During the Formative Research, it had been observed that while some of the staff had a clear articulation of discriminatory and oppressive gender norms, many of them viewed gender issues in a limited way, restricted to unequal nutritional and educational attainments of boys and girls. Despite the lack of capacity building, being part of the GJP had enabled a deeper understanding of gender issues for most of the block staff, with recognition of decision-making and land rights as crucial elements of gender equality. However, some of them continued to have a limited vision, connecting gender work only to service delivery of schemes. For instance, a BMMU staff expressed discomfort over challenging gender norms, and said, *"Change should be brought in slowly, otherwise we (BMMU officials) will be blamed for causing disharmony in the family."*

As shared in the earlier section on Institutional Strengthening, the GJP has focused on creating ability of CLF OBs to take decisions and lead meetings. A few Nodals were not comfortable about this change. The project team shared that owing to differences in education and social background, a Nodal could sometimes be dismissive about a CLF OB's ability to lead. This points to the need for perspective building of BMMU staff on gender and its intersectionality with different oppressive systems.

2.3.2.5
Formulation and implementation of a gender operational framework for upscaling

MPSRLM had decided to upscale the GJP even before the intensive Sheopur phase of the GJP was completed. This decision was enabled by the evidence generated in the previous phases of ANANDI's work with the MPSRLM and ANANDI's advocacy efforts for gender work and replicability of the GJP model. The upscaling phase marks a systematic effort on the part of MPSRLM to integrate gender intensively in 18 districts. The continuous support provided by ANANDI to all kinds of gender initiatives by MPSRLM over the years, including the current phase of work, has been pivotal in creating trust, political will and the capacity for gender work within MPSRLM.

2.3.3
Analysis of the Underlying Assumptions of the TOC

One of the assumptions for the Gender Mainstreaming pillar in the GJP TOC was that stakeholders (SMMU, DMMU, BMMU) at all levels of MPSRLM will actively engage in the program. As analyzed in the previous sections, this held for the most part, though BMMU staff did not always cooperate, especially after project paused. ANANDI's strategy of continuous sharing at all levels; alignment of GJP's work with MPSRLM's priorities, especially during the COVID-19 period; inviting staff for exposure visits etc., enabled this cooperation. The program's embeddedness within the MPSRLM structure itself also helped. A greater degree of support was noticed at state and district level, which was also guided by the role played by internal champions at both the levels. At the block level, there was varied level of cooperation from the Nodal officers and in a couple of instances, Nodal officers were dismissive of Samta

Sakhis. Overall, this did not create a debilitating effect for the functioning of the GJP. However, it did impact Samta Sakhis during the program pause period wherein most CLFs did not pay Samta Sakhis their honorarium, partly because of lack of funds, but also because of lack of encouragement by the Nodals.

The other assumption with which the program started was that the staff will integrate the learnings into their regular activities. This assumption did not hold. Beyond SI/SD that leads the gender strategy at the state level, no other vertical adopted any gender lens in their regular activities. After the appointment of a technical gender expert at the state level by IWWAGE, a few conversations took place and one gender session was incorporated into a training conducted by another vertical. However, there is a long way to go and gender integration across verticals is still a dream of the future. As one official pointed out, *"Modules across verticals should have gender component/gender lens and gender budgeting is required. Every vertical should earmark funds for gender trainings as well."*

Key Outcomes of GM at a Glance

- A political will and mandate have been created for GJP. This has resulted in upscaling of the program to 18 districts of Madhya Pradesh.

- There has been institutionalization of Samta Sakhis within the SMMU's CRP guidelines applicable across the state.

- There has been overall buy-in, uptake and support for the program by the Sheopur district and block staff. However, there have been instances of lack of support during challenges faced by Samta Sakhis on the field and during the project pause period (April–August 2021).

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

3

Roadmap for Gender Integration within DAY-NRLM Institutions

This section builds on the analysis of the GJP strategies and outcomes in the previous section to present a roadmap for gender integration within the existing structures and institutions of DAY-NRLM. In MPSRLM, this process has already been initiated by upscaling a gender strategy to 18 districts including Sheopur and Mandla. Based on the changes observed due to implementation of the GJP between January 2020–March 2021, this section also maps out the strategies and outcomes at each level of MPSRLM institutions, including community institutions. It then engages in a gap analysis and makes concrete recommendations for strengthening a gender integration model.

3.1
The Gender Integration Model

Through its three pillars—Feminist Leadership Development, Institutional Strengthening and Gender Mainstreaming—the GJP made interventions at every level of MPSRLM (SMMU, DMMU, BMMU) as well as community institutions such as CLFs and VOs. Drawing from the TOC and the analysis in the previous sections, Table 3 summarizes the strategies, outcomes and underlying assumptions that held on the ground and were achieved at each level of MPSRLM's institutional framework. Therefore, this table provides a level-by-level indication of which strategy would lead to what kind of outcome, based on which assumption. If the DAY-NRLM wants to adopt a gender integration model, this table would provide a comprehensive roadmap based on actual observations from the GJP in Sheopur.

3.2
Gap Analysis

While the GJP has achieved many positive outcomes and been able to make community institutions more gender responsive, certain gaps have been observed in the field, which if addressed, would make the process of gender integration across all levels stronger and sustainable.

Table 3: Gender Integration Model

Level	Strategy	Outcome	Assumption
SMMU	Leveraging NMMU's own gender operational strategy to create a mandate for gender strategy within MPSRLM.	SMMU draws a mandate from NMMU for gender strategy.	SMMU responds positively to NMMU's gender operational strategy.
SMMU	Human resource support for gender work, including appointment of a gender focal point (SPM/ASPM) at SMMU.	There is focused work on building and implementing gender strategy.	Human resource appointed at the SMMU have the capacity and are able to dedicate their efforts in gender work instead of getting diverted to other activities.
SMMU	Technical support (by CSOs, experts, etc.) for creating and implementing a gender strategy.	SMMU is able to draw on a larger pool of expertise to conceptualize and operationalize gender strategy.	SMMU is interested and a pool of experts/CSOs is available to provide expertise.
DMMU/ BMMU	Capacity and gender perspective building through training and exposure visit (for some staff) and continuous dialogue.	Some staff become capable and sensitive towards gender issues and gender work, but this is not uniform across all staff.	Staff will participate and be interested in gender work and integration of gender in their regular approach and activities.
DMMU/ BMMU	Technical support to DMMU/ BMMU for operationalizing gender strategy on the ground through conducting trainings for relevant actors such as Gender CRPs, SACs etc.	DMMU and BMMU are able to operationalize the gender strategy on the ground through community institutions.	DMMU and BMMU would be interested and work closely with technical experts to operationalize gender strategy.
DMMU/ BMMU	Continuous sharing, planning and consultation with DMMU/ BMMU on gender work.	There is some involvement and ownership of the gender strategy at least among some staff.	DMMU/BMMU staff will respond to dialogue and become involved in gender strategy operationalization.
CLF	Conducting intensive discussions with CLFs regarding gender strategy and the appointment of Samta Sakhis.	Consensus and willingness is built among CLF members for gender work.	CLF members show interest in undertaking gender work.
CLF	Gender CRPs (Samta Sakhis) are appointed from the pool of CLF members by the CLF, based on specific criteria.	There is a dedicated group of community leaders for conducting gender work.	There is interest at the CLF level for gender work and some members are willing to work as Samta Sakhis.
CLF/VO	Samta Sakhis conduct gender training (perspectives, rights and entitlements) through a cascading model for CLFs/ VOs, taking out dedicated time during regular meetings.	Perspectives of CLF/VO members are built and issues of rights denial are brought up during the training.	Samta Sakhis have the capacity to conduct training and the trainings enable CLF/VO members to understand gender discrimination and share about rights denial and absence of entitlements.

Level	Strategy	Outcome	Assumption
VO	Samta Sakhis mobilize women for VO meetings a day prior to the meeting and on the day of the meeting (for VOs where they are conducting gender training/discussion that month).	VO meetings are more regular and attendance is higher.	VO members respond to mobilization efforts by the Samta Sakhis and attend the meetings.
CLF/VO	Establishing mechanisms for conducting social action (passing resolutions at CLF/VO meetings, raising demands at Gram Sabhas/Panchayat office through *Avedans*, creating pressure groups through collective action, escalating unresolved cases to block/district levels, completing paperwork for scheme related entitlements, etc.).	Clear pathways of social action, resolution of cases and solutions for backlash or uncooperative systems are established leading to frequent and systematic social action for access to rights and entitlements.	Community women are aware and follow these mechanisms, and the governance and administrative system responds positively to these demands.
CLF	Establishing Lok Adhikar Kendra (LAK) at block level Janpad/Tehsil/other administrative office, LAK operates twice a week, LAK is anchored by a CLF.	Facilitation of rights and entitlements through convergence with line departments; LAK provides platform for escalation of cases unresolved at Panchayat level; LAK provides voice and visibility of community women in other institutional forums.	Line departments and other authorities respond positively to LAK and community members come to the LAK with their issues.
CLF	Establishing Block Gender Forum (BGF) with representatives from CLFs, BMMU, DMMU, Janpad, line department officials, Samta Sakhis, Master Trainers, Collectorate office, etc. BGF meets at a frequent interval (once in two months).	Convergence is achieved between SRLM supported institutions and district and block level administration. Additionally, BGF provides a platform for escalation of unresolved cases of the LAK.	District and block authorities will be willing to participate and cooperate through the BGF.
CLF/VO/SHG	Samta Sakhis lead and facilitate participatory social action based on issues raised by CLF/VO members.	Issues of community women are raised and visibilized, rights and entitlements are enabled, and some community members are also empowered to participate directly in the process of claiming rights.	Community members would have the willingness and ability to participate in social action.

Level	Strategy	Outcome	Assumption
CLF/VO/SHG	Samta Sakhis, rightsholders and other community leaders leverage multiple platforms at village, block and district level (Panchayat, Gram Sabha, Tehsil, Janpad, Collectorate, police station, etc.) for access to rights and entitlements.	Rights and entitlements are enabled, convergence is achieved between different institutional and governance spaces, community women are able to challenge social norms and gain visibility and voice across various platforms.	Community members participate along with Samta Sakhis across multiple platforms, platforms respond positively to demands by community women, there are systems for resolution of backlash and non-response.
CLF/VO	Samta Sakhis work closely with Preraks (book-keepers) in CLF/VO meetings and Preraks are trained to fill information in VO SAC registers.	Book-keepers learn through observation of Samta Sakhis at these meetings and become more responsive to gender work over time.	Working with Samta Sakhis and being present during trainings by them will create responsiveness and sensitivity towards gender work.
CLF	Samta Sakhis report to the CLF on a monthly basis on their various activities, including training and social action.	Accountability, ownership and engagement for gender work is created in the CLF.	There is interest amongst CLF members to listen attentively to Samta Sakhis' reports.
Gender CRPs (Samta Sakhis)	Samta Sakhis are selected from the pool of CLF members and CRPs based on specific criteria including experience of struggle and resilience, background of social and economic marginalization, ability and willingness to commit time and mobility for gender work.	Community leaders created who are locally grounded and empathetic to women's issues.	Women with these backgrounds come forward and are interested in the role of Samta Sakhi.
Gender CRPs	Continuous and intensive capacity and perspective building through residential trainings on gender and entitlements, exposure visits, mentoring, day-to-day handholding support by Master Trainers, need-based refresher trainings, LAK management training, etc.	Capacities and perspectives are built of Gender CRPs to conduct training, facilitate social action (village and LAK) to enable access to rights and entitlements for themselves and their communities.	All these activities would lead to confidence and capability to conduct training and social action.
Gender CRPs	Create a supportive peer network consisting of other Samta Sakhis, Master Trainers, community leaders, etc. through participatory work, monthly review reflection meetings, etc.	Samta Sakhis are supported to overcome challenges at all levels and learn from each other.	Samta Sakhis, Master Trainers and other community leaders are willing to support each other, negotiate their internal conflicts and help in resolution of issues.

Source: Based on the ICRW research team's observations of GJP implementation on the field between January 2020 and March 2021.

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 8: Roadmap for Gender Upscaling based on GJP, Sheopur

Note: Summarizes the gender integration model laid out in Table 3.

3.2.1

Absence of a Robust Monitoring System with Outcome level Indicators for Gender Work

A robust and gender responsive MIS was one of the expected outcomes of the GJP. Unfortunately, despite ANANDI, IWWAGE and ICRW's suggestions for outcome level indicators, the MPSRLM MIS as well as the DAY-NRLM MIS reflect only input level indicators such as number of trainings, number of participants, number of gender forums formed, number of Gender CRPs identified, etc. The detailed list of indicators which are most closely related to gender and part of DAY-NRLM MIS on FNHW and Social Development is given in Annexure 2. The GJP project team reported to BMMU, DMMU and SMMU on some gender outcomes, such as number of cases raised at the LAK, types of cases, number of cases resolved etc. on a monthly basis and this information was shared through google sheets. This information did not find its way into the MIS.

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

3.2.2

Lack of Budgetary Resources for Gender Mainstreaming

Budgetary commitment on the part of the government is crucial for the success of any gender mainstreaming program. It is necessary to ensure the sustainability of an intervention beyond the CSO funded project cycle. Neither NMMU nor SMMU have specific funds earmarked for gender at present. At NMMU, funds for gender work are part of the overall Institution Building,

Capacity Building (IB/CB) pillar and at SMMU, funds for gender work are part of the overall Social Inclusion, Social Development (SI/SD) pillar. The SI/SD pillar covers the salaries of all DMMU and BMMU staff as well as trainings across all verticals, along with FNHW (Food Nutrition Health and WASH) work and gender. An MPSRLM officer shared that it would be good to have specific funds earmarked for gender work because currently the same funds are utilized for competing priorities. Under the gender upscaling model, ANANDI will be funding the Samta Samanvayaks' honorariums in all 18 districts and Samta Sakhis' honorarium only in Sheopur and Mandla. The rest of the Samta Sakhis across the remaining 16 districts will be funded either through the MPSRLM or through the CLFs. Given the recent experience of non-payment of honorarium during the project gap period (April–August 2021), there are concerns about the feasibility of Samta Sakhis' payment through CLFs. A senior MPSRLM official stated that they will be ensuring funds for Samta Sakhis' honorariums in case CLFs cannot support them. Currently, however, MPSRLM has funds to cover only three months of Samta Sakhis' honorariums.

3.2.3

Lack of Gender Integration across Verticals

As mentioned above, gender work is subsumed within the pillar of SI/SD at MPSRLM. Except for the SI/SD vertical, no other vertical has shown sufficient interest in integrating gender in its operations. Some initial discussions and conversations on this have been started by the ANANDI and IWWAGE appointed technical experts, but these are still at a very nascent stage. There has been one session on gender in a training organized by another vertical, but beyond that, inroads have not yet been made. However, at the NMMU level, work is ongoing on a gender audit of curricula across verticals. Once NMMU completes this task and sends a signal for gender integration across all trainings of all verticals, it is expected that MPSRLM will follow suit. Gender Samvaads organized by IWWAGE at the NMMU level, bringing together staff across verticals, across states as well as community institutions, are also creating an enabling ground on which gender integration work across verticals can take off.

3.2.4
Lack of Uniform Gender Perspective and Gender Sensitivity among all MPSRLM Staff

There is no uniformity in gender perspectives among staff at all levels; SMMU, DMMU and BMMU. This also creates differences in approach to gender work and GJP, especially at the block level where Nodal officers for CLFs work most closely with GJP and influence it. Samta Sakhis reported that not all Block Nodals were equally supportive of their work, especially when challenges arose, such as uncooperative Panchayat officials or when there was pressure on the block office to complete certain tasks such as survey work, which they wanted Samta Sakhis to prioritize over other activities. There was also a lack of support for payment of honorariums to Samta Sakhis during the project pause period (April–August 2021) except in the case of one Nodal officer of one CLF. There have also been some instances of Nodals not being supportive of CLF OBs taking on leadership roles during CLF meetings. Gender perspectives and understanding of intersectionality with caste was also not uniform across all staff. While some staff showed a strong understanding of gender norms and unequal structures, some others did not feel comfortable about questioning gender relations.

The reason for this non-uniformity or limited understanding could be the lack of a systematic and intensive perspective building with all staff. This gap needs to be addressed especially because MPSRLM staff play a critical role in creating an enabling environment and ensuring sustainability of the gender integration process beyond any project cycle period.

3.2.5
Limited Participatory Social Action

While GJP has enabled several rights and entitlements through extensive social action by leveraging different platforms and institutions, social action has been led mainly by the Samta Sakhis. Community members in CLFs and VOs have certainly raised these issues during the meetings, but their participation in the action (except for the rights holders who were being directly accompanied) has been limited. The maximum participatory social action was seen in the case of public goods and services-related issues such as water, roads, streetlights etc., and also in some instances of domestic violence. One of the reasons for this was inactive SACs at both CLF and VO level. Towards the end of the project phase, around December 2020, Samta Sakhis worked with community institutions to identify the SAC members and GPPs for SHGs and then training was imparted to them on gender issues, rights and also on how to address domestic violence issues. There was also discussion on the roles and responsibilities of SACs and GPPs. After the project paused in April 2021, this training was stalled. It is yet to be seen how such trainings impact the participation of SAC members in social action.

3.3
Conclusion and Recommendations

The GJP took a holistic approach to integrating gender within the DAY-NRLM. It addressed the systemic level (policy change through Gender Mainstreaming), the institutional level (making institutions gender responsive through Institutional Strengthening) and the individual level (creating a cadre of strong women community leaders through Feminist Leadership Development). Through this multipronged approach, the GJP was able to strengthen institutions, individuals and policy to address rural women's concerns on the ground. One of the key strategies of the program was to invest in community leadership who would steer gender work through training and action through community institutional spaces, thereby transforming such spaces beyond financial entities into platforms that raise and represent rural women's issues. This strategy has certainly worked and Samta Sakhis (the Gender CRPs) have utilized CLF and VO spaces effectively to raise, discuss and act upon gender and social issues. Samta Sakhis have indeed emerged as vibrant and capable community leaders and this would not have been possible without a process of continuous capacity building and handholding by the Master Trainers. Another key achievement of the program has been the ability to leverage different platforms and institutions of governance and administration at village, block and district levels to enable rural women's rights and entitlements. In doing

so, critical convergences have been created between MPSRLM and other institutional spaces and platforms. Most importantly, it has given voice and visibility to rural women in different spaces, be it the Gram Sabha or Janpad office. The changes that Samta Sakhis have been able to bring about in their own lives and the community and the way they and other community women have raised and represented their issues in different forums and platforms have shifted the gender norms of institutional spaces and rural society which traditionally invisibilized women and did not allow their voices to be heard. Such a program gives hope and establishes the potential of community institutions supported by the Rural Livelihoods Mission to become platforms for representing and resolving rural women's concerns.

The GJP in its first phase (April 2019–March 2021) truly served as a wonderful gender pilot, showing what worked and also what did not, thereby pointing to the achievements as well as the gaps that need to be addressed. The key recommendations that flow out of the gap analysis are given below. Addressing these gaps will further strengthen the gender integration strategy and thereby add to the roadmap for gender integration within DAY-NRLM.

Recommendations

- Intensive and systematic gender perspective and capacity building training for all staff at SMMU, DMMU and BMMU across verticals.
- Mandate and proactive measures (such as gender training of staff and gender integrated training curricula) to integrate gender across all verticals.
- 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.

Not only DAY-NRLM, the experience of the GJP creates valuable lessons for gender mainstreaming exercises within any large government program engaging with community platforms/groups. For example, some of the strategies used in the GJP such as 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. Some of these broad lessons are summarized below:

- Creation of women community leaders who undergo intensive and continuous gender training, enabling them to adopt a gender lens to all the program activities and take action on issues of women's rights and entitlements.
- Creation of systems and platforms that encourage participation, decision making and action on social and gender issues by members of community institutions/participants of development programs.
- Capacity development through intensive gender training focusing on norm change across staff and participants of programs.
- Creation of convergences across different programs and utilization of different platforms and institutions by participants of a development program to leverage multiple rights and benefits.
- Introduction of outcome focused gender indicators within monitoring and information systems.
- Creation of gender action plans and institutionalization of a gender focus within the design of the program.

In conclusion, the GJP has been an extremely successful pilot in not only what it has achieved, but what it has offered in terms of learnings and recommendations for integrating a gender focus within DAY-NRLM and similar development programs.

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Annexure 1

Details of Primary Data Collection

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

Participant Observation- VO/CLF Meeting Attended in Person

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

Annexure 2

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

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

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