

Bearing Fruit Now



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Enhancing Women and Girls' Leadership
in Climate Change Adaptation in the Thar Desert, India

Annual Impact Assessment Study, 2021





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Annual Impact Assessment Study for the Project - Enhancing Women and Girls' Leadership in Climate Change Adaptation in the Thar Desert, India

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Foreword

Since 2019, GRAVIS has been implementing Enhancing Women and Girls Leadership in Climate Change Adaptation (EWGL) project in the Thar Desert with technical support from Help Age and Age International and with financial support from the European Union (EU). The project aims at contributing to the enhanced leadership of women and girls, and greater gender equality, in drought mitigation, Natural Resource Management and Climate Change Adaptation in the Thar Desert of India. The project provides an opportunity to annually assess the progress made by the project at the outcome levels and to examine the challenges faced during the implementation of the project. This will help the project to improve in the further implementation period based on the recommendations in the study.

As year 2 of the project comes to an end, this Impact Assessment Study has been documented to understand the progress made by the project and to look at the challenges faced. The overall idea behind the study is to lay recommendations for future work and for dissemination of lessons learnt. We strongly believe that women and girls have critical roles to play in drought mitigation and in climate change adaptation.

With the above intention, the study is available to read and to use as a helpful guide for drought and climate change related projects. I thank Sudhir Katiyar for leading the study and GRAVIS team and local communities for all their support. We sincerely thank EU for the financial support.

Prakash Tyagi
Executive Director, GRAVIS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The project made a good beginning last year, in spite of facing a serious disruption caused by the COVID 19 induced lock downs. The COVID disruptions continued in the second year as well with the second wave being much severe than the first, leading to a lengthy lock down period. The project has still managed to achieve all of its physical targets including those that required public gatherings of large number of people. This means that it has made significant progress in the task of drought proofing of villages and ensuring adaptation with climate change.

The NRM and CCA works have been carried out under the leadership of women and girls operationalised through 80 ILGs formed in the 20 project villages enrolling 1679 women and young girls. In an extremely patriarchal society, this marks a significant achievement. The groups are meeting regularly. The groups have been trained in gender and NRM issues. The group members are slowly beginning to be more assertive in the public fora.

In terms of physical structures created, the project has constructed 162 rainwater harvesting structures that includes 72 *taankas*, 72 *khadins*, renovation of 14 *beris* and 4 community ponds leading to increased water security. It has supported 80 community seed banks, 60 crop demonstrations, 60 AHUs, and two pasture development for food and nutrition security. Except for pasture, these structures have started creating significant benefits. The AHUs have started to bear fruit leading to availability of more nutrition for beneficiary households. Within the project, there is evidence that ILGs are playing a greater role in drought mitigation, NRM, and CCA.

The exclusive women's ILGs set up under the project are beginning to acquire a dynamic of their own. They have begun to engage with the Government on a variety of issues of public concern. This was most clearly visible in the recent campaign by the state Government titled 'Administration towards Villages', where all the Government functionaries from different departments come down to the village for a day to receive complaints and demands. The women members of the ILGs participated actively in the campaign and gave memorandum with different demands for better facilities in the village. The other area where ILGs are making significant impact is in girls' education. Active intervention by ILGs is preventing drop out of adolescent girls and continuation of their studies.

Project execution once again establishes the efficiency and efficacy of the GRAVIS model. The ILGs should now be prepared for a role beyond the project period. There is need for continued institutional strengthening of ILGs through training and adding features like exposure trips. Their roles in existing village institutions like School Management Committee and Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Committees (VHSNC) should be explored. The recommendations from previous year like formalizing ILG role in beneficiary selection, more innovative nomenclature, increasing number of young women in ILGs where they are below target are repeated for this year as well. It is also suggested that the project takes a look at the environmental and social impact of green technology power generation projects in its area of operation.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

GRAVIS is undertaking a project titled, Enhancing Women and Girls' Leadership (EWGL) in Climate Change Adaptation in the Thar Desert, India, funded by European Commission. The project seeks to contribute in enhancing women and girl's leadership and voices in drought mitigation, Natural Resource Management (NRM) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) through partnerships with various stakeholders promoting gender equality within their communities. The project is being implemented in four severely drought impacted districts of Thar namely Barmer, Bikaner, Jaisalmer and Jodhpur.



Hastu Devi at her field amidst the tara mira crop, a second crop that is possible only because of the khadin constructed on her land under the EWLG project

This report is the second Annual Impact Assessment Study (IAS) of the project. IAS aims to understand the progress made by the project at the output and outcome levels. IAS will examine the challenges faced as well as provide recommendations for future implementation of the project. It is expected that the impact assessment document will be used as a learning document as well as for the dissemination of the project progress within the communities. The detailed TOR is given in Annexure of the report.



Design and Methodology

The IAS follows the Log Frame of the project. The log frame provides the overall Impact, Outcomes, and Outputs of the project. It also provides the Indicators to be used to monitor progress and how these are to be measured. Some indicators are to be measured every year and some at the end of the project. The IAS limits itself to the Indicators that are to be measured annually.

The methodology combined secondary literature with primary data collection through structured schedules, and field visit to meet various stakeholders. The specific elements of the Methodology included

- Field visit – participation in two ILG meetings in Bikaner and Jaisalmer
- Field visit - Visiting sites of project interventions
- Field Visit - Interviews with key persons from the beneficiaries.
- Project records – List of beneficiaries, List of ILG members, List of dissemination material developed by the project, proceedings of monthly meetings of select ILGs (four – one in each district)
- Project Staff meeting – online

Structure of the report

After the initial introductory chapter that provides the design and methodology, the report provides the results of the Impact Assessment. This is followed by the concluding chapter that documents the key successes, challenges faced, and recommendations. The case studies documenting the testimonies of women empowerment are attached in the Annexure. The excel file that documents the benefits accruing from the physical structures erected under the project is available for reference.

Impact of COVID – 19

The project period saw the full impact of COVID 19 induced lock downs. For a period of six months, most project activities got suspended. It was not possible to hold meetings of the ILG and SHGs as group meetings were banned in lock down period. The project team too got engaged in the pressing work of providing relief. It was only in August that small group meetings were allowed. The impact on a program like EWGL can well be imagined considering that enhancing women's leadership was the key project objective. The training calendar was impacted. The Gender and NRM-CCA trainings got delayed.

Fortunately for GRAVIS, the ground work of formation of so many groups had been done in the first year despite the lock down. This allowed the project to immediately take off once stringent lockdown conditions were relaxed. As a result, Project has been able to meet all of the physical targets.

ILGs have also played an important role in COVID management in their villages. The epidemic saw widespread incidence of rumours, about testing and vaccination. The ILGs played a critical role in dispelling these rumours and spreading rational messages. The project staff got themselves vaccinated and used their own examples to convince villagers about the necessity of vaccination.

CHAPTER 2: RESULTS



Meeting with a SHG

The results of the Impact Assessment Study are presented following the sequence of the Log Frame – from Outcomes to Outputs. Each Output/ Outcome is captured in a sequential format that gives the Outcome/ Output followed by the Indicators, how will this be measured – Means of Verification, target value for the first year, baseline value in year 0, achievement, and comments. This is followed by a detailed description where required, especially for qualitative indicators. There is a separate section that provides the benefits accruing from the physical structures constructed by the project as these have not been captured sufficiently by the Log Frame. The Case Studies are given separately in the Annexure.

Outcome 1: To enhance voice and effective participation of women and girls in drought mitigation, NRM and CCA through an inter-generational learning approach

Indicator 1: The level of confidence of women and girls in drought mitigation, NRM and CCA

MoV: 1. EWGL Project Baseline Report, 2019 2. Annual impact assessment studies 3. Testimonies collected from women and girls

Target	Baseline value	Achievement	Comments
Increased confidence of women and girls in 80 Intergenerational Learning Groups (ILGs) and 80 Self Help Groups (SHGs), 2024	Minimal confidence of women and girls within the communities on drought mitigation, NRM and CCA, 2019	Regular participation in ILGs meetings has increased confidence levels of women. In two of the four ILGs studied, the members seem to have taken active role in beneficiary selection. The members also visit construction sites where work is going on	There is need for continuing work on this indicator.

A period of two years is not enough to change attitudes and practices that have held sway for centuries. Rural desert society is a highly patriarchal society with strict norms governing female behaviour. However, the evidence suggests that the change process has begun. One of these norms relates to women's non-participation in public sphere along with men. The women maintain strict purdah, even within the confines of their homes from their elders. Participation in public meetings is not allowed. Formation of all women 80 ILGs in a short period of time itself represented a big achievement in the first year.

Since then, the ILG meetings have been held regularly every month except during the lock down period when physical gatherings were not allowed. The ILGs have reached a stage where women themselves ask the local community workers as to when the next meeting is scheduled. Women are beginning to take a greater role in drought mitigation, NRM, and CCA interventions being undertaken by the project. It was informed that women also visit the construction site when work is going on and monitor the progress of work.

Meeting records of four ILGs were analysed in detail to understand the changes taking place.

Analysis of ILG meeting proceedings

Inter generation Learning Groups are a key institutional project intervention. Comprising of women across different generations, the ILGs are supposed to conserve traditional knowledge, transmit it to next generation, and advance role of women in project activities. As part of the impact assessment process, the consultant undertook a review of the proceedings of four ILGs – one in each project district.

ILG Jilani, Village Khara, Dist. Barmer: There have been eight monthly meetings of the group till November. Meetings have been held regularly every month except for the lock down period from April to August. The meetings have been well attended. There are 12 members of the group. Average attendance has been good at 10.

The discussions in the meeting have mostly revolved around the NRM interventions of GRAVIS. Other subject matters have not come up much except in a meeting in when the village level NRM interventions undertaken by the Gram Panchayat were shared within the group. It is interesting that in the very first meeting in January, the young girls raised the demand for supply of material related to their school. However, this demand does not seem to have been followed up. Also, it is a little surprising that the COVID situation does not get discussed much in the group.

ILG Kuldevi, Village Dasuri, Dist. Bikaner: There are 12 members in the group. It is located in a *dhaani* of the village. Proceedings of 16 meetings was shared. Average attendance has been 10. The group members belong to Meghwal caste that comes under Scheduled Caste category. The group has been meeting regularly every month. Even during the COVID lockdown, a meeting was organized on whatsapp. The project interventions are a main agenda of discussion. The group took a resolution for sanctioning *taankas* to group members who are living in hamlets/ *dhaanis* outside the main village. The group has been actively discussing other issues like COVID 19. The causes and the precautions to be taken have been discussed in the group. The group members are exhorted to undertake vaccination. The members are encouraged to participate in the panchayat meetings.



ILG Radhe Krishna, Village Kailawa, Jaisalmer: This group has 10 members. Proceedings of five months – from July to November – were shared. Average attendance has been nine. The proceedings have been written in a very brief manner – in one paragraph. To illustrate it is mentioned that works undertaken through GRAVIS were discussed in the meeting on 15th July 21. However, what are these works, what is the protocol for sanction and execution, is not mentioned.

ILG Ramabai Village Simhda, Jodhpur: This group has 10 members. Proceedings of eight meetings were shared. Average attendance has been eight. Mostly the group has discussed interventions undertaken by GRAVIS under the project. The resolutions for selection of beneficiaries have been taken in the group. Discussion on other agendas like health, education, nutrition at *anganwadis* is listed as bullet points in the proceedings. However, what was discussed and if there was any action agenda emerged out of the discussions is not clear. There does not seem to have been much discussion on COVID.

Summary: The proceedings of ILG meetings of four groups are analysed along three indicators - regularity of meetings and average attendance, decision making power – whether resolutions for the beneficiaries are taken in the meeting, and discussion on issues other than NRM interventions undertaken by the project

- ***Regularity of meetings and average attendance:*** The meetings have been held regularly, except for the period during COVID lockdowns. Average attendance is good at more than 80 percent.
- ***Decision making power*** – whether resolutions for the beneficiaries are taken in the meeting: In two of the four groups, resolutions for sanction of beneficiaries have been taken in the ILG meeting. In other groups, while beneficiary names are listed, this is more in the nature of information being relayed to the groups.
- ***Discussion on issues other than NRM interventions undertaken by the project:*** The groups seem focused on GRAVIS interventions. Only one of the four groups had active discussions on subjects other than NRM interventions of GRAVIS.

The regular participation by women members in ILG has led to increased confidence in them as shown by the following examples.

- In Bhom Hem Singh village, the family of Sunita Meghwal who was a student ILG member and account keeper of the group, wanted to withdraw her from school and marry her off. Prompt intervention by the ILG members and GRAVIS staff ensured that she continued to study.
- Analysis of meeting records of four ILGs shows that the average attendance of the ILG is more than 80 percent.
- The Kul Devi ILG has held all the monthly meetings regularly despite the lock down. In May 21, the group met through whatsapp as a physical meeting was not possible. The group discusses all relevant issues besides the NRM interventions of GRAVIS.

The following were cited as indicators of women empowerment in the staff meeting

- Women member of the panchayat attending the meeting of the panchayat
- Women going to the market

- Women charged with household finances
- Men doing tasks that are traditionally reserved for women like fetching water, agriculture operations like weeding

Outcome 2: To create an inclusive environment where all the community members and local leaders and institutions contribute to setting up clean water and sanitation for all (without any discrimination)

Indicator 2: Number meetings of ILGs and SHGs women with local administrative units for participation of local communities in water and sanitation management

Means of Verification: 1. EWGL Project Baseline Report, 2019 2. Records and minutes of meetings between ILGs, SHGs, and local authorities 3. Records of policies established

Target	Baseline value	Achievement	Comments
At least 2 in every village, 2024	0 in 2018	ILGs are beginning to engage the local administrative units for access to their entitlements in water and sanitation. This was evidenced by their high participation in the recent campaign of the state 'Administration towards villages'	The applications submitted during the campaign need to be followed up

Project has been able to impact NRM and CCA interventions undertaken by local administrative units in a significant manner at both design and implementation level. All the interventions undertaken by GRAVIS are also undertaken by the state government through local administrative units viz. panchayats and panchayat samitis. This results into a creative tension between the two structures and a sense of competition in some cases. The project has limited resources. The more active ILGs monitor sanction of NRM works by the village panchayat and play a role in accessing it. This has been mentioned in the ILG proceedings described above. In Patrasar village of Barmer, VDC member Maga Ram, who was the Secretary earlier, has got 100 *taankas* sanctioned from Government. He also got two anicuts constructed. He is known in the whole block for having been able to secure maximum number of Government works. Similarly, Sushiya, a female ILG leader in Barmer, was instrumental in getting a sewing and tailoring training centre sanctioned for her village.

The ILGs have become active on issues of public concern. In village Bhom Hem Singh, a high-tension electricity transmission line is passing overhead of the Meghwal settlement. The ILG gave a memorandum to the Central Minister on this issue. Another issue for which ILGs have given memorandum relates to opening of Anganwadi centres in the *dhaanis*. Typically, the Government services remain restricted to the main settlement. The residents of the *dhaanis* are left out.

The increasing interaction of ILGs was best illustrated during the recent state campaign titled 'Administration towards Villages'. Under this campaign, all the Government Departments gather under one platform at the panchayat level. Anybody can submit a complaint and submit a petition. The petitions are followed by a senior Government officer. The ILGs have participated actively in this campaign and given memorandum on different issues. Case studies 6 & 7 capture this engagement.

Output assessment

Output 2: 80 strong, sustainable ILGs created and trained, and 80 existing SHGs identified and trained, to benefit the project villages, and as a resource for the future

Indicator: Number of women groups (existing or formed) fully trained on gender and development and CCA disaggregated by ILGs (groups formed) and SHGs (existing groups)

Means of verification: 1. EWGL Project Baseline Report, 2019 2. Annual impact assessment studies, 2024 3. ILGs and SHGs Meeting minutes 4. ILG and SHG members' lists. 5. Training attendance lists 6. Pre and post surveys at each training

Target	Baseline value	Achievement	Comments
Total groups trained - 64 (32 ILGs and 32 SHGs), 2021	Total groups trained - 0	ILG groups trained 32 SHG groups trained 32	100% achievement

The training calendar got disturbed because of the COVID 19 restrictions. However, after the lock downs were lifted, project was able to meet the target of trainings.

Output 3: An enabling environment created for women and girls, to lead on drought mitigation, NRM and CCA

Indicator: Change in the attitudes of members of the community, especially the men and boys, supporting women and girls' leadership in women and girls' led drought mitigation, NRM and CCA and on ILG approach

Means of Verification: 1. EWGL Project Baseline Report, 2019 2. Annual impact assessment studies, 2024 3. Report, Records and minutes of the meetings between local community leaders, ILGs, and SHGs.

Target	Baseline value	Achievement	Comments
Positively changed community attitudes towards women and girls leading the drought mitigation, NRM and CCA activities and understanding on the intergenerational learning approach	Rigid attitudes about letting women and girls lead and lack of understanding on the intergenerational learning approach, 2019	There has been gradual shift in the community attitudes as shown by the fact that ILGs have been formed and are functional. It is reported that there is also a gradual change in attitude of men. They are beginning to perform household tasks that were previously reserved for women like milking of cattle, fetching drinking water, farms tasks that were earlier performed by women alone.	The activities under this head have been impacted by COVID 19 restrictions.

The project has undertaken specific activities in the form of (i) Awareness camps on gender and climate change (ii) Village Dialogues towards achievement of this output. These activities have been organized in spite of the COVID lockdowns.

Output 4: 800 rainwater harvesting (RWH) structures constructed under the leadership of women and girls for community use and as demonstration models for future replication

Indicators: Number of women and girls leading the creation of these RWH structures and food and nutrition activities

Means of verification: 1. EWGL Project Baseline Report, 2019 2. Annual impact assessment studies, 2024 3. Feedback and inputs from the women and girls involved in the project 4. Case studies collected by the project team

Target	Baseline value	Achievement	Comments
1600 women and girls (at least 160 younger girls) of ILGs and SHGs in 2024	0 in 2018	1679 women and girls enrolled as members of the ILG, however number of girls below 18 enrolled is 131. <i>72 taankas, 72 khadins, 14 beris</i> have been constructed and 3 village ponds have been restored.	The target for total enrolment in ILGs is exceeded by 5 percent. However, the target to enrol younger girls has fallen short by 18 percent. This figure is same as last year.

161 rainwater harvesting structures have been constructed under the leadership of 1679 women in 80 ILGs. The targets for enrolment of women in ILGs and construction of rain water harvesting structures have been achieved fully.

However, the target to enrol younger girls in ILGs has not been fully met. There is a 18% shortfall overall.

Output 5: 908 Women led initiatives (300 Community Seed Banks (CSBs), 300 crop demonstrations, 300 Arid Horticulture Units (AHUs) and 8 pastures) organized for food and nutrition security

Indicator: Number of food insecure people receiving assistance through interventions supported by the EU (EU RF number 2.1)

Means of verification: 1. EWGL Project Baseline Report, 2019 2. Annual impact assessment studies, 2024 3. Feedback and inputs from the women and girls involved in the project 4. Case studies collected by the project team

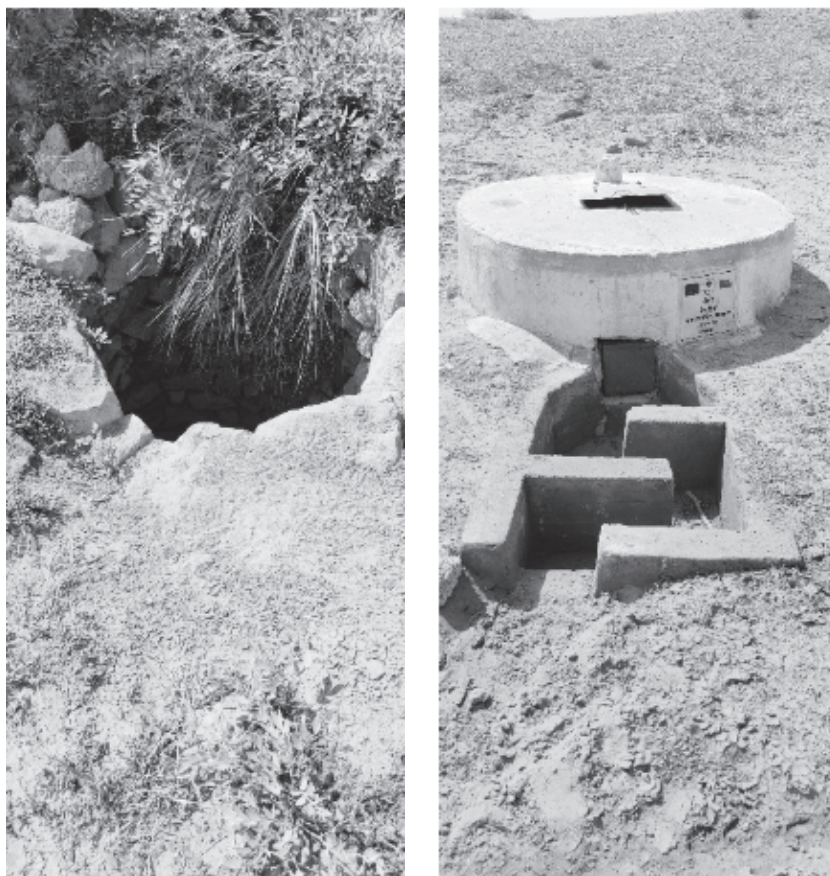
Target	Baseline value	Achievement	Comments
Community seed banks - 80	0 in 2018	80	The targets are achieved 100%
Crop demonstrations – 60		60	
Animal Horticulture Units - 60		60	
Community pasture - 2		2	

Impact assessment of physical structures created by the project

The project has created a series of physical structures that have improved the (i) water security in terms of assuring water for household purposes including drinking water for household members and animals (ii) food security in terms of increased availability of food for household members and animals. The interventions in the first category comprise of construction of *Taankas*, renovation of *Beris*, and renovation of *Naadis*/ village ponds. The interventions in the second category comprise of construction of *Khadins* leading to higher production, Crop Demonstrations, Community Seed Banks, and Agroforestry Horticulture Units (AHUs), and development of Village Pastures locally known as orans. These interventions form a part of the NRM and CAD package developed by GRAVIS over a period of years. Their efficacy and efficiency is well established.

It was decided to document the impact of these interventions by collecting data from a small sample. The results are given below.

Beris: These are pre-existing wells that tap sub terranean water preserved underground found in some locations of the project area. These have been renovated under the project leading to higher retention of water and ensuring higher purity of water by installing silt catchers. Data from two *beris* was collected.



The two photographs above show the condition of beri before and after the restoration work done in Bhom Hem Singh village of Bikaner

One *beri* was dysfunctional before being restored. It now provides water for 10 households and 200 animal heads for 10 months of the year. In the other *beri* availability of water has increased from eight to 10 months. While the number of beneficiary households remains same, the number of animal heads benefitting has increased from 100 to 125.

Khadin: is an earthen embankment erected in fields to capture rainwater increasing moisture in the soil and thus leading to higher production of crops. A survey of 5 *khadins* constructed under the project showed that on average, each *khadin* led to an extra 0.6 bighas of land being brought under cultivation. There was additional production of 4.3 quintals of food grain and 4.4 quintals of fodder per *khadin*. The production went up by 40 percent for food crops and 55 percent for fodder.



Swarup Kanwar at her khadin in village Tokla with the land sown for gram, a first time in the village.

Taanka: *Taanka* is a rainwater harvesting structure that stores rainwater for household use. It stores rainwater that can last for a certain number of months. Thereafter it provides storage space for water brought through tankers. Arranging water for household use is a significant cash expenditure and also takes up time. Analysis of expenditure in time and cash in arranging water for 7 households where *taankas* were constructed under the project shows that on average *taankas* stored water for 4.4 months. Each *taanka* resulted in an average saving of 2.8 hours of manpower per day. The average expenditure incurred on getting water reduced from Rs. 1357 per month to Rs. 457 per month, a reduction of 60 percent.



A taanka by the project



CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSION, EMERGING LESSONS, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This last concluding chapter provides the emerging lessons and good practices, challenges faced, and recommendations.

Emerging Lessons and good practices

High Female Representation in the Project Team: A woman centric project needs to have a strong women cadre in its implementation team. GRAVIS has made successful efforts to recruit women staff that is not easy considering the tough terrain. The project is led by a woman. In the field staff also, half the workers are female. Some of the staff represent strong women leaders in their own right. This is a good practice and needs to be recommended.

Successful completion of targets in spite of COVID 19 induced lockdowns: The fact that project has been able to achieve all the physical objectives in spite of a long COVID 19 induced lock-down is remarkable and needs to be commended. This could happen because the project had completed the basic community infrastructure related to formation of ILGs and VDCs before the lock down was imposed.

The GRAVIS model: The GRAVIS model of drought proofing – *taankas*, *khadins*, AHUs, *naadi* restoration, community seed banks, crop demonstrations, and pasture development – has emerged as a proven model that is highly replicable across the variety of desert terrains in Thar.

Challenges

The main challenges faced by the project team are described below

- **Vested interests:** In spite of many changes, the desert society continues to be feudal where vested interest hold sway over the local politics. These powerful interests seek to divert benefits accruing from the project to their own henchmen, instead of genuine beneficiaries.
- **Environmental and social impact of Green Technology power projects in operational area of the project:** Thar desert has emerged as a hub of green technology in the state and the country. The district of Jaisalmer has seen installation of hundreds of wind turbines. Similarly, the area around Baap tehsil in Jodhpur has emerged as a hub of solar power generation. Solar power plants with capacity of hundreds of mega wats have been set up and are being set up in the region. Any large-scale intervention is bound to have a side effect. This is the case with green technology also.
- **Girls' education in minority community:** Education of girls is a key means of social transformation. This is well recognized by the project that has made a specific provision for enrolling school going girls as members of the ILG. However, the minority community presents a special challenge. It is after much effort by the project team, that minority community girls have begun to come out to attend *madarasa*. Their mainstreaming in the education system presents a big challenge.



Recommendations

The first year Impact Assessment had made certain recommendations. This section notes the action taken and reiterates the recommendations besides adding some new ones.

Strengthen and formalize role of ILG in deciding the beneficiaries: A key decision to be taken in the project relates to selection of beneficiaries for individual structures like *khadin*, *taankas*, and AHUs. These are high investment units for which there is high demand that outstrips supply. The Impact Assessment exercise in the first year had observed that the process so far seems to be that the ILGs recommend names that are then finalized by the VDCs. This process seemed to be happening informally as the ILG records did not have the lists of beneficiaries. It was recommended that the names of beneficiaries be identified formally in the ILG itself and recorded. There has been some progress on this recommendation. However, there is still scope for improvement. Analysis of records of four ILGs show that while lists of beneficiaries find mention in the records, only in two of the four ILGs, formal resolutions have been taken recommending the names of the beneficiaries. In the other two, the process seems to be more of informing the ILGs of selection that has been done by VDC. The ILGs need to play a formal role in beneficiary selection as this will give the women a sense of empowerment.

Name ILGs after prominent women personalities: It was recommended that the ILGs be named after prominent women – social reformers, educationists, high achievers – to create new role models. This recommendation is being reiterated.

Increase Enrolment of Adolescent Girls in ILGs: The First year IA had recommended that there is need to increase enrolment of girls in ILG and ensure that every ILG reaches this minimal target. This recommendation is being reiterated as there seems to have been no action on this. It is also recommended that the voices of the adolescent members be given due weightage.

Broadening the agenda of ILGs: The ILGs have been set up primarily to enhance the leadership of the village women in the CCA program of GRAVIS and later with the state programs also. These are also expected to engage with more generic gender issues. The first objective is getting achieved. The groups have been set up after lot of efforts. There is a need now to broaden the agenda of ILGs and take up other women related issues.

Education of drop out girls/ Kasturba Vidyalay: It emerges that the girls are being sent to schools in greater numbers. It seems that there is almost universal enrolment of girls till class V where the school is nearby. Drop out starts after that as the girls have to travel for reaching the school. Even when there is a senior secondary school in the village, the girls have to travel from the *dhaanis*. There also seems a movement whereby the household prefer to live in the *dhaanis* even though they may have a house in the main village. If there is no school in the village, then the distance to be travelled increases that much more. One agenda that the ILGs could take up is enrolment of drop out girls. The young members of the group could be encouraged to take up a census of the drop out girls in their community. These girls could be encouraged to join back the school. If the girls have dropped out and grown older, they could be encouraged to join Kasturba Residential Schools that target drop out adolescent girls.



Sanitation: The Government has undertaken a massive Swachhta Abhiyan where it is seeking to ensure that every household has an attached toilet and there is no open defecation. Graffiti declaring particular villages to be ODF (Open Defecation Free) can be seen in many villages. However, the reality is different. A large number of households still do not have an attached toilet. The ILGs could make a push for enumerating such households and then putting pressure on local panchayats to bring these under coverage of their schemes.

Education of Moslem Girls: While it does seem that girls' education has picked up significantly, there is one community that seems to be still lagging behind. While no survey has been done to arrive at accurate data, it was reported that the community is still not sending its children to schools. The girls are rather sent to *madarasa* and that is considered sufficient schooling. This seems to be a potential area of intervention.

Engage with state sponsored village level committees – SMC and VHSNC: One area where the project seems to be facing some mismatch vis a vis the outcome is its interface with the state agencies. The project document envisages that the project would be able to influence state policies and actions. This is a difficult target to achieve. It is recommended that the project engages actively with the village level institutions set up by the state to enlist public participation. Two such village level committees are recommended for engagement with the project

- **School Management Committee:** This Committee is set up to enlist participation of parents in school management. It is supposed to monitor enrolment and retention of students in the school and ensure that there are no drop outs. The local school headmaster is the Secretary and plays a key role. As ILGs are expected to play a role in ensuring girls' education, they could engage actively with the SMC.
- **Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committee:** This Committee is formed to ensure public participation in health, sanitation, and nutrition. It is anchored by the local *anganwadi* workers. The ILGs have a mandate in all the subject areas of VHSNC.

These village level committees are more often than not formed only on paper, The state functionaries are the only active members. Involvement of ILGs could activate these committees.

Assess the Impact of green technology projects on the environment and intervene where required: Thar desert has emerged as a hub of green technology in the state and the country. The district of Jaisalmer has seen installation of hundreds of wind turbines. Similarly, the area around Baap tehsil in Jodhpur has emerged as a hub of solar power generation. Solar power plants with capacity of hundreds of mega wats have been set up and are being set up in the region.

Any large-scale intervention is bound to have a side effect. This is the case with green technology also. While doing the field work in village of Kolayat tehsil of Bikaner, the consultant learned about the side effects of the large solar power plants. This village is the site of a large power plant. The villagers talked about the harmful impact of having such a large-scale power plant in their midst. They spoke of two aspects



- **Land use:** The power plants take up a large amount of land. This may be bought or taken on long term lease. The power plant companies offered good rates and the villagers gave their land willingly. However as happens in such cases, the large cash flow gets spent in conspicuous consumption like purchase of vehicles. The recurring income from land is gone forever. The diversion of large amount of land has disturbed land use. The cattle have that much less land to graze. The diversion of land for non-agriculture use is almost permanent. The solar panels are set up on concrete bases causing long term damage to the land.
- **Increase in temperature in the vicinity of the power plants:** The villagers reported that the temperature in the vicinity of solar plants increases substantially. The cattle passing from land adjacent to the power plants develops rashes.

GRAVIS is working on climate change issues. Preservation of natural eco system is an organizational objective. Hence it is recommended that GRAVIS initiates a study to understand the impact of the large solar power plants on the natural and human eco system of the desert. The study needs to assess the impact on both natural resources and human and animal population. GRAVIS could also intervene at the stage of setting up of the new plants. All large projects need environmental clearance and an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) study has to be carried out. Public hearings are part of the EIA. GRAVIS could spread awareness about this process amongst the village communities and encourage their participation in this process.

CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1

Impact of *taanka* on overall well being

In a desert climate, drinking water is the most critical resource. Its scarcity can create multiple effects impacting the household. *Taankas* create water security that impacts overall wellbeing of the household including savings in household expenditure, improved hygiene and health, less drudgery for women members of the household and encouragement to girls' education. This is illustrated by the case study of Ramu Devi of village Dasudi.



With her taanka

I Ramu Devi wife of Jagdish Ram Meghwal is a resident of village Dasudi. My hamlet is 4 kms away from the main village. The people living in the *dhaanis* do not get any public facility. My husband is one of the four brothers. All depend on agriculture. Between four brothers we had a small *taankli*, There was a big water problem. The reality was that no one would get the *taankli* refilled even ten days after water got over. We could not bathe for 10 days. Myself and my daughter used to get water from a far off Jatoni *dhaani* through headload. The brothers of my husband used to live separately. My children's education was also getting affected. When Begi Behan ji and Luna Ram from GRAVIS came for survey, we told them about the scarcity of water. We had only a small tankli between four brothers. If we had a big *taanka*, then it would be very beneficial. I joined the ILG that was formed. One year passed away. Then I spoke to all the members and gave a proposal. This was passed in the VDC. After my tanks has got constructed, I feel I am in heaven. I had never even dreamt that I will have such good facility of water. Now we are able to bathe daily. My daughters are going to school daily. We are able to wash our clothes on time. We get good rainwater right in front of our house for our use. With more cleanliness, there is less disease. Earlier we used to spend up to Rs. 9,000/- for getting water from tanker. Now both time and money is saved. Earlier we used to be worried about water as soon as we came home from our farms. Now that is no more.

As narrated to GRAVIS staff.

Case Study 2

ILG promotes Girls' Education

Girls' education is a key route to socio economic transformation of society. A common trend in rural communities is to withdraw girls from schooling after they have reached a certain level and they have to travel outside their village for their education. The ILGs promoted under the project have a conscious policy of including educated girls in the group. These have the potential to promote schooling of older girls as illustrated by the case of Sangeeta Meghwal of village Bhom Hem Singh.



An ILG member - Sangita

Sangita Meghwal is resident of Bhom Hem Singh. Her father's name is Tulchha Ram who passed away 13 years back. Her mother is Champa Devi. She has six sisters and one brother. All are married except Sangita. Her brother has two sons and two daughters. Farming is the main source of livelihood. Running the household is tough for her brother as he has to also undertake some expenses for the married sisters. Sangita wanted to continue her studies. She was the book keeper in the ILG formed under the EWLG project in her village. However, the brother wanted to marry her off in view of the difficult conditions faced by the household. When GRAVIS staff came to know about this, they along with other members of the ILG, talked to Sangita's mother and brother. They explained that she has already studied till class X. Once she completes her studies, she can start earning and help the household. Let her continue her studies. They got convinced. As a result, Sangita was able to continue her studies. She is studying in class XII now.

Case Study 3

Difficulties faced in formation of ILG: Case of Aayad Mata ILG, village Luna Kala

Inter generation Learning Groups are a key institutional project intervention. Comprising of women across different generations, the ILGs are supposed to conserve traditional knowledge and advance role of women in project activities. In the highly patriarchal society of Marwar, forming these all women groups is not easy as illustrated by the case of Ayad Mata ILG in village Luna Kala of district Jaisalmer.



An ILG training

After the baseline survey of the village, it was decided to form four ILGs in the village. Three ILGs had been formed in different *dhaanis*. However, the fourth ILG was proving problematic. This was to be made in Darjiyon ki *dhaani*. When the GRAVIS staff went to the *dhaani*, for a meeting, the women refused to meet. They said that many people come with different assurances. They have no faith. When the staff went again, they said that they do not want to form any organization. The staff may please leave. When the staff explained that if they join the organization, then they will be exposed to training and meetings. This will help them develop. Then they asked the staff to come another time. The GRAVIS team went for a third time after another two days. Some women got convinced. However, some continued to instigate others. Then somehow, the team convinced them all to form the group. Finally on 14th February 2020, the ILG group was formed and named after Ayad Mata.

After that, monthly meetings started being held. The group members were given information on gender and development, climate change. Trainings on Gender and Development and Climate Change have been

held in which the group members participated actively. The group has undertaken project works like Agro-horticulture Unit, *taankas*, and *khadins*. Now the group is very active. If the project staff is not able to go for a meeting, the group members call up. They are able to conduct meetings on their own.



SHG training

Case Study 4

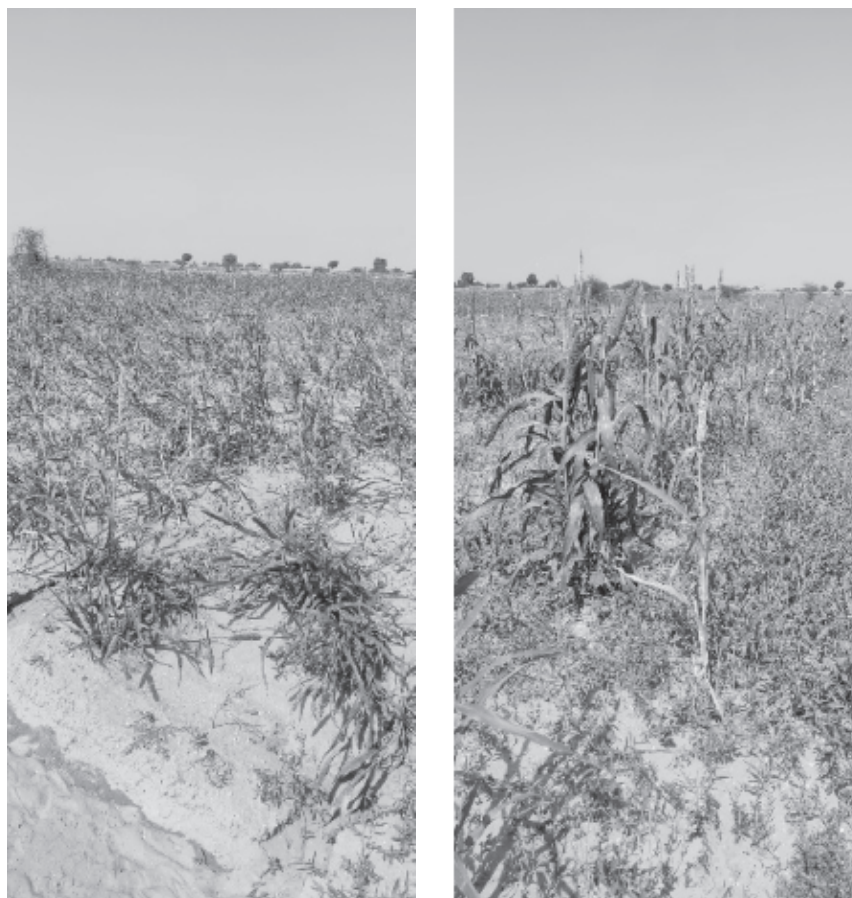
Impact of *Khadin*

The *khadin* of Swarup Kanwar covers 5 bighas of land in village Tokla of Bikaner district. It has led to significant increase in crop production this year. The farmer reported that last year the land produced 2 quintals of bajra millet. This year the expected production is 5 quintals of bajra millet, 1 quintal of moth, 5 quintals of guar. In addition, the farmer has sown the land falling under *khadin* with a second crop of gram to take advantage of the late rains. **This is the first time in this area that gram has been sown as a Rabi crop.**



Swarup Kanwar at her khadin in village Tokla with the land sown for gram, a first time in the village.

The *khadin* also has a crop demonstration of bajra millet. The pictures below show the difference in the production of two crops.



The picture on the left shows normal baajra while on the right is crop demonstration seed.

Case Study 5

AHU of Sua Devi at Dasaudi village in Bikaner

The AHU is located in a remote area where there is no road. The farmer has a 100 percent survival rate for the saplings. On her own initiative, the family replaced the 6 feet tall pillars with eight feet tall pillars as the area is visited by *nilgais* that can jump high fences. The family even demanded extra wire for an additional wire layer. When this was not available, they tied up an extra layer of cloth strip all around to increase the height of the fencing. The interest shown by farmer is also exhibited by the fact that he himself undertook grafting a *ber* tree and it was successful.



Sua Devi in front of her AHU at Dasaudi village in Bikaner district. The white cloth band above the project provided fence wiring illustrates the extra effort put by the farmer to sustain the unit.

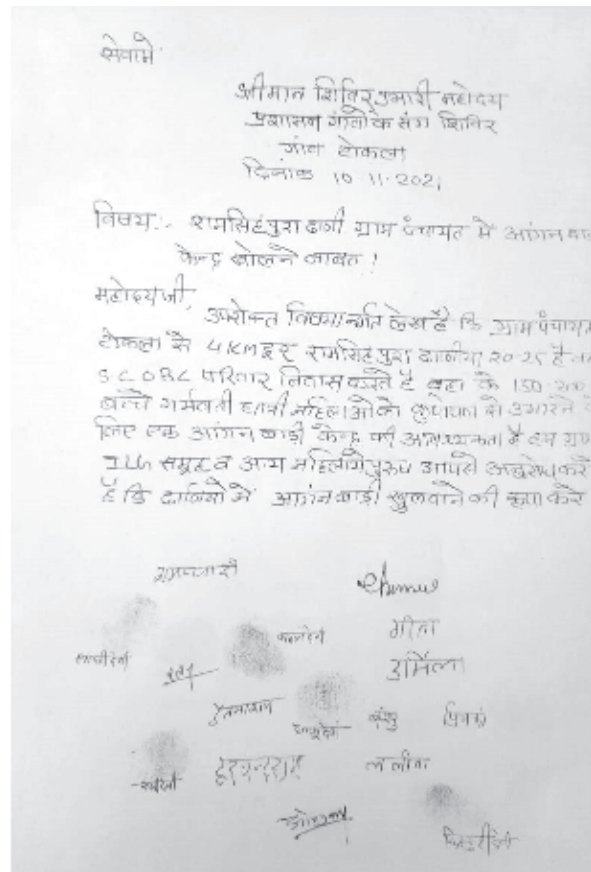
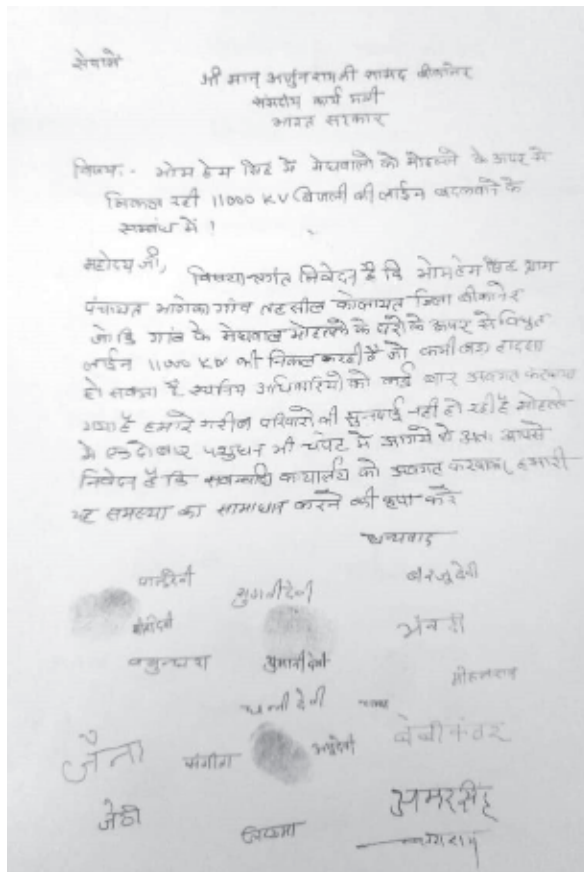
Case Study 6

Applications submitted by ILGs on Issues of Public Concern

The increasing role played by ILGs is illustrated by the applications submitted by ILGs on a variety of issues of public concern.

In Bhom Hem Singh village, a high-tension electricity transmission line is passing over the settlement of Meghwal community. The ILG gave a memorandum to the Central Minister from Bikaner Sri Arjun Ram Meghwal for getting this removed.

In village Tokla, the hamlet of Ramsingh Pura has 25 households. However, there is no Anganwadi centre to provide nutrition to children. The ILG gave a memorandum at the Administration towards Villages campaign for opening an Anganwadi centre.



Letters from villagers



Case Study 7

ILG engages with the state campaign : Administration to Villages

The Jagriti and Marwar ILGs in village Kailwa of Jaisalmer gave memorandum to the Administration towards Villages Campaign on 18th October. The memorandum demanded

- GLR and pipe line for drinking water
- Toilet construction
- Sanction of new Anaganwadi
- Allocation of Government land for Anaganwadi centre and ANM quarter

Three of these demands were sanctioned during the campaign.

The ILGs in this village were formed after much difficulty. The women would refuse to come out for public meetings. Even if they came, their men folk would accompany them. Women of different age groups would refuse to sit together. The purdah system was very strong. It was after much effort that the meetings began to be held regularly.



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Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti (GRAVIS) or Center of People's Science for Rural Development is a non-governmental, voluntary organization that takes a Gandhian approach to rural development by working with the poor of the Thar Desert to enable them to help themselves. Since its inception in 1983, GRAVIS has worked with over 68,000 families across over 1,600 villages reaching a population of over 1.6 million, and has established over 3,800 Community Based Organizations (CBOs).



GRAVIS is registered under Rajasthan Societies Registration Act and under section 80 (G) and has tax exemption under section 12 A of IT Act, 1961 of Govt. of India.