

Working and Growing Together



Gravis



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Study Conducted Under 'Enhancing Women and Girls'
Leadership in Climate Change Adaptation
in Thar Desert, India (EWGL)' Project



Co-funded by
the European Union





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Executive Summary

The objective of the study is to document the experience of the inter-generational approaches for gender and development. The study examined (i) how project activities have been impacted by Intergenerational Learning Groups (ILGs) and (ii) what lessons can be drawn in the context of gender equality through an ILG approach.

Following these objectives, the study focused on four aspects (i) Learning from each other in the ILGs (ii) Role of ILGs in project implementation (iii) Role of ILGs beyond project activities (iv) Role of ILGs in promoting gender equity. It has used the guidelines developed by HelpAge India to assess if the project has followed the IGL approach. It has used the Gender Marker developed by CARE to assess how well gender equality was incorporated in project design and implementation.

The methodology comprised of a review of project documents, analysis of project data, and a field visit to two of the project districts to meet ILGs and their members. The project staff was also interviewed collectively and individually.

The findings show that the project has operationalised the ILG concept well. It led to formation of 80 ILGs with more than 1,600 members. The project has achieved successfully all the physical targets. The ILGs have taken active role in project management. The quality of ILG varies but overall, it was estimated that the proportion of decision making on the key issue of distribution of benefits increased gradually over the project period. It currently stands between 40 to 85 percent across the four districts.

The formation of ILGs, and their emergence as viable groups has contributed to gender equality in a highly patriarchal society. There was significant inter learning in the group between the older and younger members. The project has advanced gender equality in all three dimensions of gender equality: 1) Build individual agency; 2) Change gender relations; and 3) Transform structures.

The study findings were tested against the elements of the guidelines of Help Age India. The project has performed well across all indicators. The project also scores well on most indicators of the Gender marker. Overall, it can be summarised that (i) the project activities have been impacted positively by the ILG approach (ii) the intergenerational approach contributes to gender equality.



Chapter 1

Introduction

Since 2019, GRAVIS has been implementing Enhancing Women and Girls Leadership in Climate Change Adaptation project in the Thar Desert (EWGL) 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.

GRAVIS has a proven community driven model of drought mitigation and climate change adaptation. This involves revival of traditional systems that are in sync with the environment, construction of rain water harvesting structures to conserve water for farming, drinking and household use, setting up of Arid Horticulture Units (AHUs), promotion of indigenous seeds through Community Seed Banks, and reviving community structures for water harvesting and pasture. The new element introduced in the project was adoption of the Inter Generation Learning approach. This involved formation of women alone Inter Generation Learning Groups (ILG) as community structures to mediate the project activities at the village level and promote gender equity.

It was proposed in the project that a study will be conducted to document the experience of the inter-generational approaches for gender and development. The study will examine how project activities have been impacted by ILGs and what lessons can be drawn in the context of gender equality through an inter-generational approach.

Study Design

Objectives

The objective of the study is to document the experience of the inter-generational approaches for gender and development. The study will examine

- How project activities have been impacted by ILGs and
- What lessons can be drawn in the context of gender equality through an inter-generational approach

The two key aspects of the study are gender equality and inter-generational approach. The study starts with an exploration of both these concepts before finalising the methodology.

What is ILG approach for gender and development

An intergenerational approach encourages two or more generations to work together for their mutual benefit and to promote greater communication, understanding and respect. Intergenerational contact interventions typically bring together older and younger people to work on activities or tasks that



encourage cross generational bonding, and address issues affecting one or both age groups and their wider community (HelpAge India 2022)

Assessing key principles of intergenerational change: The study has sought to assess if the key principles of an intergenerational approach have been followed and how these have helped in successful project implementation. These can be listed as

- Understand power dynamics
- Understand context
- Putting gender justice at the centre
- Clarify your role
- Don't start from scratch
- Involve diverse members of the community from the outset
- Avoid making assumptions
- Pay attention to who leads and who can lead
- Start with the premise that everyone has a skill and some knowledge to transfer
- Use a rights-based approach as a compass
- Go beyond participation to meaningful engagement
- Activities should be fun!
- Think 'structural' changes
- Track your progress and measure change
- Bringing generations together for change

Gender Justice

Gender Justice entails ending the inequalities between women and men that are produced and reproduced in the family, the community, the market and the state. It also requires that mainstream institutions — from justice to economic policymaking — are accountable for tackling the injustice and discrimination that keep too many women poor and excluded. (UN for Women 2012).

The international NGO CARE uses a Gender Marker to assess inclusion of gender justice in projects (CARE 2019). The elements in the marker are

Programme / Project relationship to Gender Roles and Relations: Did the project activities challenge existing gender norms? Or work within those norms?

Gender Analysis: Has a gender analysis been conducted that provides information about differences in the lives of women, men, boys and girls in this context (either a project-specific gender analysis or using data from other sources)?

Integrating Gender Analysis into Project Activities: Are the project activities designed to meet the



gender differences identified in the gender analysis? Can services provided by the project be safely and inclusively accessed by all participants?

Are there project activities to advance gender equality in ALL THREE dimensions of gender equality: 1) Build individual agency; 2) Change gender relations; AND 3) Transform structures?

Participation in project processes: Meaningful Participation: In this context, 'meaningful' requires the careful design of activities, structures, or mechanisms to provide real opportunities for participation by marginalised groups. For example, this means going beyond the inclusion of marginalised groups in a meeting to ensure that those groups have the confidence to speak out and that others will listen to their views.

- **Transparent Information-Sharing:** The clear, honest, safe and equally accessible sharing of relevant information with all project participants (not just community leaders/authorities). The project provides information to target groups so that they understand project initiatives, can participate in and benefit from them, and can hold GRAVIS to account.
- **Involvement in Decision-Making:** An equal and meaningful opportunity for project participants to be involved in decision making at various stages of the programme and project cycle.
- **Responsive Feedback Mechanism:** Accessible, safe, and reliable processes through which participants can report complaints or other feedback about the project. These mechanisms should be transparent, with standard procedures for responding to and learning from feedback, within a set timeline.

Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

- **Sex and Age Disaggregated Data (SADD):** Data that is collected and analysed by male, female, and different age groups. SADD provides information on how vulnerabilities, needs, risks, barriers, and access change according to sex and age. The age segments for age-disaggregation may vary by country or sector; however, commonly used segments include: children 0-9; adolescents: 10-19; very young adolescents 10-14; older adolescents 15-19; adults 19-60; women of reproductive age 19-45; elderly adults 60+. To tick this box, both sex AND age data must be collected – not just one.
- **Protection Risks and Needs:** In this context, 'protection' refers to work that aims to protect an individual's human rights, including safety, security and dignity; access to services; or data protection and privacy. While not all projects will consider all of these domains, gender sensitive and transformative projects must consider gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse risks in the initial gender analysis and in monitoring and evaluation systems.
- **Analysis of Unintended Consequences:** Unintended consequences are the changes and effects that occur from programming that were not expected. These can be both positive and negative. For example, a positive unintended consequence could be men doing more household work when their wives take on leadership roles in the community. A negative unintended consequence could be increased violence against women by men when women start occupying leadership roles that were previously filled by



men.

- Changing Gender Roles and Relations: Gender roles and relations are changing all the time. For example, women are increasingly entering national parliaments around the world, girls' education participation is growing, and men are taking on more unpaid work in the home in some countries.

Study Methodology

Following the literature survey of the key concepts and project documents, it was decided to focus on the following aspects of the project.

- Learning from each other in the ILGs: A key concept in ILG is learning across generations. So, it is important that the study captures this aspect.
- Role of ILGs in project implementation: This is one of the two study objectives.
- Role of ILGs beyond project activities: It was decided to explore the role played by ILGs in aspects beyond project management. This would point out to the sustainability of the groups. If the groups remain confined to project activities, then these might not last beyond project duration.
- Role of ILGs in promoting gender equity: This is one of the two study objectives. This explores role played by ILGs in promoting gender equity.

The study methodology comprised of the following

1. Secondary literature survey on ILG and Gender equality
2. Study and review of project documents and reports –
 - The Project proposal
 - Project Baseline
 - Annual Progress Reports
 - Annual Impact Assessment Reports
 - Detailed data on ILGs – membership, social profile
 - Proceedings of Eight ILGs
 - Gender Action Plan
 - Report of gender training
3. Analysis of select data analysis of select data from four villages – one from each project district. Data on caste break of village population, ILG membership, and distribution of physical benefits was analysed. This is critical to understand the effectiveness of project functioning.
4. Field work: A field visit was undertaken during which four villages were visited – two in Phalodi/Jodhpur district and two in Bikaner district. During the visit Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were held with the ILGs. In addition, In Depth Interviews (IDI) were held with individual members. Key Informant Interviews were held with project staff – in person as well as zoom.



- a. FGDs - 4 ILG
- b. IDI / case study – 4 two older women and two younger women
- c. KII – project staff – Project Coordinator, Field staff

The schedules used for data collection are attached in Annexure to the report.

Chapterisation

The Introduction section has the study objectives, design and the methodology. This is followed by the Findings section. This has two sub sections. The first section documents the findings from the project reports – the Baseline and Impact Assessment Studies carried out every year of the project. The second sub section carries the report of the field work carried out. The third section is the Conclusions section. This section has three sub sections. The first sub section presents the conclusions along the four key aspects that are the objectives of the study. These conclusions are then assessed against theoretical frameworks to assess if the project has followed IGL approach and how it scores on the gender marker.



Chapter 2

Findings

As shared earlier, this section provides the main findings of the study. It is divided into three sections. The first section compiles the relevant information from project documents. The second is an analysis of select data from four villages – one from each project district. The third section is the report of the Field Work carried out.

2.1 Findings from past documentation

The key project documents that have been used are the Base line document and the Annual Impact Studies. The relevant extracts from these documents are reproduced below

Base Line

The conclusion section of the Baseline touches upon the situation of women in the project areas.

The findings also bring out the fact that the life of women in the studied villages is more challenging with the increased risk and stress especially that comes single women or women headed households. The burden of responsibility with a low asset base increases the livelihood vulnerability among widows or single female-headed households. The only support they receive in the form of social security is the pension. The lack of insurance and protection to reduce the out-of-pocket support, institutional provision to take care of toddlers and small children, providing better work opportunities exaggerate the situation. Even for other women and girl children, there exists the issue of gender equality in the studied villages. On one side, it is the women who take maximum pain to manage the scarce resources and maintain the demand of household members and take care of their needs, whereas they are not much visible in the decision-making process. Though there are women who are associated with groups so there are possibilities to address the issue of gender inequality by working with women through the formation of groups. The group can work in alignment with the issues related to gender and climate change and show their leadership by taking responsibilities and getting into the process of decision making in bringing positive changes in their community.

The Annual Impact Assessment Report 2021

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.



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.

The Annual Impact Assessment for the year 2022

The EWGL project, three years since its inception, has resulted in tremendous change. A brief conversation with any of the women belonging to the ILGs and SHGs speaks volumes of their confidence, enthusiasm and resilience. The project has broken several socio-cultural and economic barriers to enable women and girls to play and pursue a larger goal, as envisaged. In a short span of three years, the project has resulted in establishing a strong community-based network of more than 1600 women leaders who are capable of confidently putting forth their opinions, concerns and demands, a change that was unthinkable a few decades ago. Women and girls, who are a part of these ILGs and SHGs, enjoy a sense of empowerment and purpose. More importantly, they enjoy a greater sense of identity, and this can certainly be attributed to the project interventions envisaged under the EWGL project.



A village in Thar Desert



The ILGs have emerged as a very important platform to cater to the needs of women and curate solutions based on traditional knowledge, wisdom and rich experiences of the older generation. The ILGs, comprising a heterogeneous group of women, is a mutual learning platform where problems and challenges are put forth and solutions are drawn. This process of knowledge and experience sharing has empowered women with the confidence, capacity and independence to take decisions that concern them or their children. Several testimonials of women emerged as they narrated how their lives were confined to household chores. Women did not have a voice or a platform to participate or even merely express their opinions or concerns. The concept of ILGs has transformed the lives of these women by not only providing a platform for them to exchange their experiences or problems but also by enabling them to step out with a purpose. Women can step out without having to be concerned about social or cultural barriers. They no longer must seek permission from their husbands or mothers in law to attend such meetings. Interestingly, the ILGs have impacted their lives so much that in many cases, the male members encourage them to finish the household chores so that they can attend their meetings. In some cases, the men even accompany them to their monthly ILG meetings. The women now enjoy a greater sense of identity, purpose, respect and confidence.

2.2 Analysis of project data : Caste dynamics in project areas

Caste is a major determinant of socio-economic and political life in India. Any development intervention has to factor in the caste dynamics in project interventions. Decisions like where to locate the ILGs within the group, formation of VDC, selection of beneficiaries – all have to factor in the caste dynamics, else the chances of take over by dominant castes become very high. The current study sought to determine the effectiveness of ILGs in tackling caste dynamics through undertaking a detailed analysis in four villages of the project – one in each district. The villages selected were Mohan Singh in Bikaner, Khara is Barmer, Kelawa in Jaisalmer, and Sinhad in Phalodi. For all the four villages, following caste wise data was compiled

- Number of households
- Number of ILG members
- Distribution of physical benefits

Data has been collected on castes in the village, the caste composition of ILG members, and distribution of benefits across caste groups. The caste system in rural India is marked by the presence of dominant castes who control social, economic, and political power.

The charts below show the proportion of the major castes in the village, their proportion in ILG members, and the proportion of physical benefits received by them. The first chart gives the break up by caste groupings – dominant and marginalized. The second chart gives the break first five columns represent dominant caste – Rajput, Jats, Bishnoi, Brahmins, and Suthar. The next four columns represent comparatively marginalised castes – Meghwals, Bhil, Jogi, and minorities. The last column is the sum of remaining communities.



Membership of ILG : The analysis shows that ILG membership is biased towards the marginalized castes. Overall while dominant castes comprise 48 percent of the population, their share in ILG membership is 36 percent. However, distribution of benefits roughly mirrors the population proportion. These trends are further illustrated by the second chart that gives the break up by castes. To illustrate Meghwal community comprises 18 percent of the population but has 31 percent members in ILGs.

Distribution of benefits : Overall distribution of benefits is more even. In fact, dominant castes have received a slightly higher proportion of benefits than their population. The second chart shows that this anomaly has arisen because of the higher proportion of benefits received by Rajput community. The reason for this may be that even though dominant, sections of Rajput community are very poor and eligible for benefits. The other dominant communities share of benefits is much below their share in population.

Chart : Distribution of population, ILG Membership and physical benefits by dominant and marginalised castes

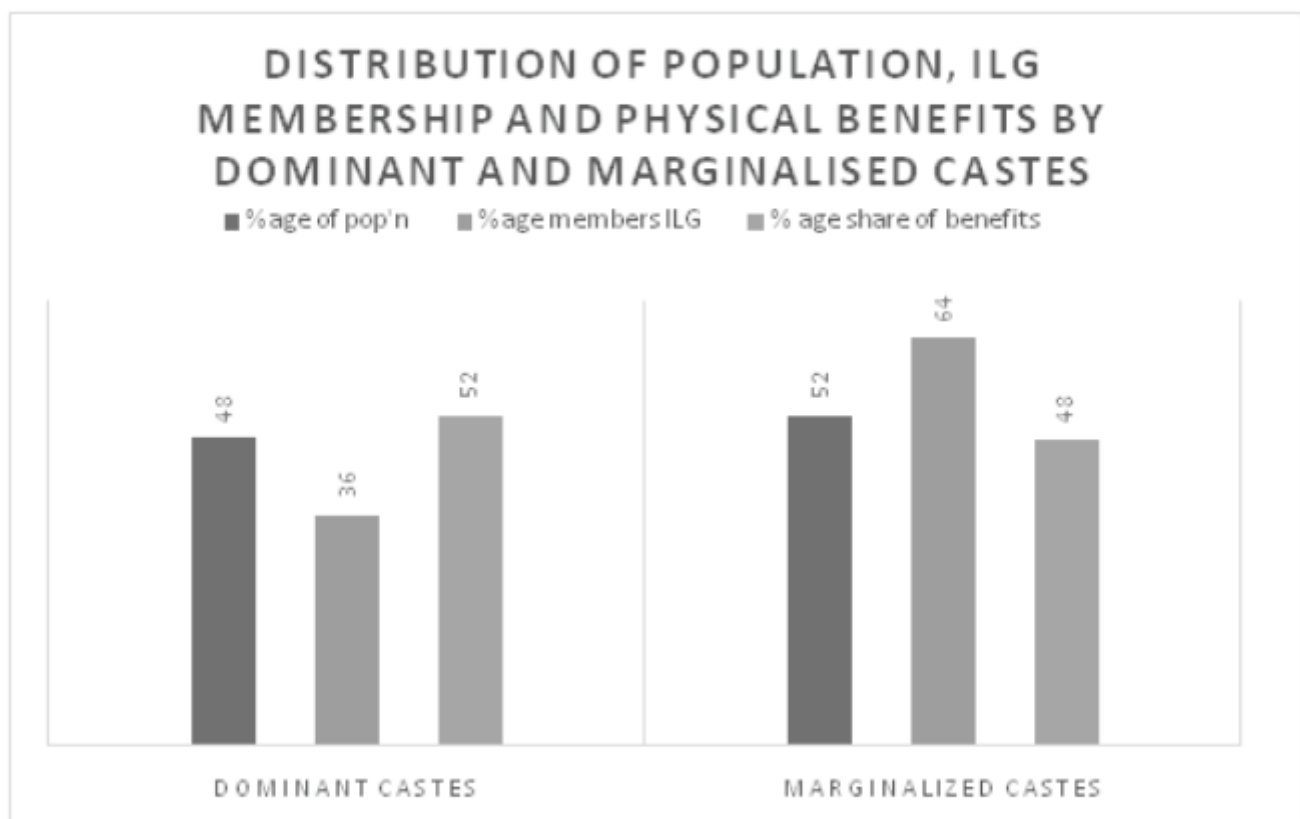
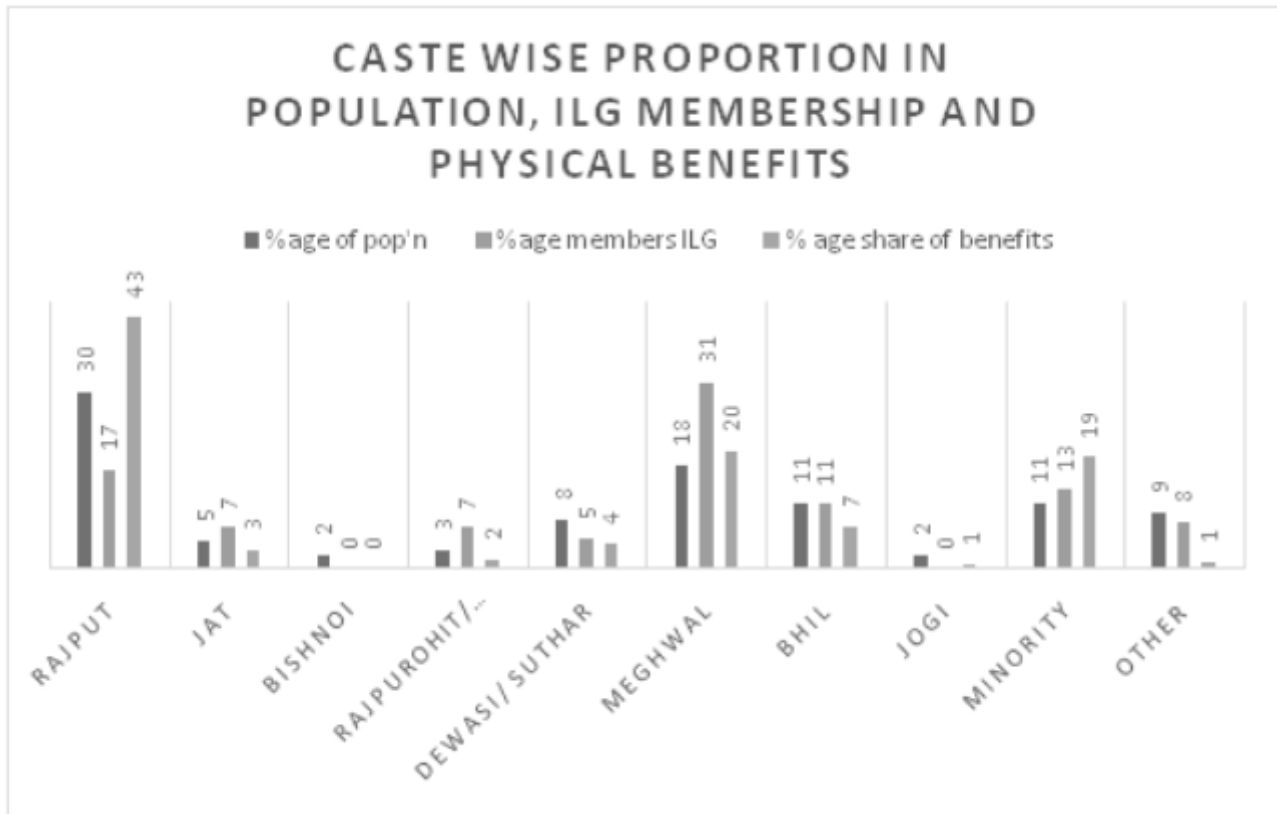




Chart : The proportion of major castes in the village, their membership in ILGs and the physical benefits received by the caste



2.2 Field Report

A field visit was undertaken in two project districts – Jodhpur/ Phalodi and Bikaner to participate in ILG meetings first hand and meet individual members. The report below documents the findings.

Sihada village, tehsil Baap, District Jodhpur

This is a large village comprising of mixed castes. The caste composition comprises of Rajputs, Suthars, Devasi, Meghwals, Bhils, Jogis, and a sprinkling of other castes. The village has four ILGs – Rama bai, Daali bai, Bhavani Maa, and Aai Mata.

A meeting was held at the house of president of Rama bai group Dipu ji. This is a Meghwal community group. Ten women were present. However, some members of the Daali bai group, that comprises of Bhil community, were also present.



An ILG meeting

The group formation was not a problem. The GRAVIS team got support from the existence of SHG groups formed by Rajeevika program of the Government of Rajasthan. The president of the group Dipu ji was and continues to be active in Rajeevika.

The criteria for selection of beneficiaries for the project is their economic condition. The poor are given first preference.

The group has undertaken a number of tasks besides the project activities related to the EWGL project. The younger women have been helpful in writing the proceedings of the meeting.

There have been major changes over the years towards gender equality. The group members focused on three aspects

- Education of girls: There was a time when girls were not encouraged to go to school. However now they are being encouraged to not only study but even take up Government jobs.
- Child marriage: Child marriage was the norm earlier. The president of the group Tipu devi narrated her own experience where she was married at two years of age. This is no more the case. The girls are married at 18-19 years of age now.



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- The power relationship within the family has changed: Earlier, the daughter in law of the family had to follow the diktats of the mother-in-law. She could not even cook a vegetable without asking her mother-in-law first. This is no more the case. The daughter in law has become powerful and can take her own decisions. Earlier, there was a distinction between the daughter of the house and the daughter-in-law who did not get treated at par. The daughter received favourable treatment. Now a days both get treated equally. This is shown by the fact that many girls continue their education after the marriage. The in-laws encourage their daughters-in-law to continue their education. The daughter of the Gopi Devi, president of Dali bai group is pursuing her BEd degree at her in laws house. The daughter in law of Bhuri Ben of Bhavani group, Sushila, is doing her BEd from her in laws home.

The young women members were not present in the group. They had been married off. Their replacements were not present in the meeting.



Meeting of women

This group is also located in a Meghwal settlement of the village. The meeting was attended by three members of the group – Pushpa devi, Rekha devi, and Bhuri devi. The president of the group Laxmi devi was not present.

The members shared that the group was formed to access the benefits to be derived from the GRAVIS project. However regular meetings of the ILG have been helpful in empowering women.



One example of the increased status of women was that the families are happy with the girl child. Earlier the woman would keep bearing children till a male progeny was born. This is no more the case.

Tipu Ji Meghwal of Ramabai ILG

Tipu ji is a dynamic woman and president of the Ramabai ILG. She is 55 years old and heads her household. She first got exposed to outside world when Self Help Groups were formed in the village under the Rajeevika project of Government of Rajasthan. She has been an active member of the program and represented it at higher levels. She said that she can now go anywhere on her own and speak to anyone without fear. She got her bank account opened when she was working in the MGNREGA program. There is still a lot of work to be done.

When asked about participation in the village political process, she said that she has not been able to breach that barrier yet. She does not go to *panchayat* meetings as they do not come to know when the meetings are held. The *panchayat* remains in control of upper caste Rajput community. When asked why she did not become a ward member, this touched a raw nerve. She pointed out to another woman sitting in the group. She said that this woman was made the ward member and did not open her mouth during the five years. It emerged that election of ward members is done on a consensus basis by the elected *sarpanches* so that they can enjoy a free reign.

IDI with Gopi devi

Gopi Devi is a 45 year-old woman from Bhil community. She is not educated. Her husband is a teacher in the Navodaya vidyalaya. Her daughter is studying BEd at her in laws home.

She has benefitted from being a member of the ILG. Earlier she was shy to get out. Now she attends all the meetings of the group.

A common group meeting was held for two ILGs Karnimata and Kanhaiya in the Anganwadi centre near the school. Fourteen women participated in the meeting. There were six women each from the two groups with two non-members. The participants in the meeting were Lacha Devi, Hans Kanwar, Dayu Kanwar, Puja Kanwar from Karni mata group, Vimla, Bhikhi Meghwal, Susheela Meghwal, Rameshwari Meghwal, Tulsi Meghwal, Gita Meghwal, Gauri Meghwal, Bhanvari Meghwal from Kanhaiya group. The Karni group comprises primarily of Rajput women with one woman from Dholi community and one from Gavaria community. Kiran devi is the president. The Kanhaiya group comprises of women from Meghwal community. Badli devi is the president.

The meeting started with a discussion around the ghonghat pratha, drawing of veils by women in public. The GRAVIS worker asked the women to remove their veil. This was seconded by an older woman present in the group who herself had not drawn the veil. However, the other women protested saying that she herself will later say that women have become shameless. Most women continued to sit with the veil.



The women formed the group to access the project benefits. The process of group formation was assisted by the presence of Rajeevika groups earlier.

The selection process followed is that the ILGs receive applications from prospective beneficiaries. The ILG meets and discusses the case. It then decides on the priority to be given keeping in mind the need of the beneficiaries. The poor and the needy are given first priority. The selected list is then forwarded to the Village Development Committee that puts its stamp on the names.

There has been learning between the young women and older women in the group. The younger women learnt the importance of water conservation. The older women have also learnt to come out of their houses and participate in the meetings.

On changes in situation of women: Noticeable changes have taken place along following aspects.

Education of girls: The girls are now studying in school in same proportion as boys. Earlier the girls were discriminated. However, it was visible that there still remains some distance to be covered. There is a reluctance to send women outside the village for studies. The young woman member of the Karni Mata group Pooja had to give up studies after passing class VIII. The village school was till class VIII only. Subsequently the school has been upgraded to senior secondary level. Girls are now beginning to study after class VIII also.



Girls in schools

Child marriage: Child marriage was a norm earlier. It was common practice to marry off girls before the beginning of menstruation. Children could be married as infants even. This practice seems to have disappeared. Age of marriage is now 18 years or more.



Differences in upbringing: While the boys were sent to school, girls were put to household tasks like cleaning, fetching water, and collecting cow dung.

There was a major discussion on the Rajasthan Government scheme to distribute mobile phones. In the beginning, only the older women, single women, and young women have received the mobile phones. Some participants critiqued the scheme saying the older women did not have much use of the phone. Others pointed out the various uses the phone can be put to by the older women.

This is a ILG of Bishnoi community, a peasant caste. The households are comparatively better off. They spend the agriculture season of 4-6 months at their farms in dhaani. After the harvest the families go back to the main village.

There are 12 members in the group. Suvti Devi who is seventy years old is the president. The participants in the meeting were Suvit, Maina, Jashoda, Roshni, Basanti, Avina and Adarsh. The last two are the young women members. They are both studying in school.

The meeting was held at the farm house of the president of the group – Suvti Devi. The women were able to speak openly in front of the male members of the house who listened from the sidelines. Sometimes cracking jokes that time is near when they will have to do the cooking in the house.

Learning within the group: The younger women said that the older women have taught them how to use the water rationally. One learning that was cited was learning to speak Hindi. The women normally speak in the local Marwari dialect at home. However, joining the group and the exposure it has brought has exposed them to speak Hindi as spoken in urban areas and taught in schools. The president of the group Suvti Devi who is 70 years old could also speak in Hindi.

On changes in status of women: Besides the usual aspects of girl education and child marriage, a new change that was cited was that the registration of land in the name of women. The president Suvti Devi gave the example of her own household where land has been registered in the name of two daughter – in – laws of the house. Another major change captured was that the young women were riding motorcycles in the village. In fact, the two young women who were called to participate in the ILG meeting came on motorcycles.

IDI with Santosh Devi ILG Kanhaiya

Santosh is 26 years old. She is from Meghwal community. She has studies up to class V. She works as an Anganwadi worker in the village. She joined the group as it provided an opportunity to get more education and move ahead in life. She participates in all the meetings. She has received an arid horticulture unit from the project. She also received new knowledge on hygiene and health in the trainings she attended. The young women in the group have taught her to use her smart phone that has a touch screen. She feels that discrimination against women has come down. There are still some social evils like mrityubhoj (the feast



given at the death) and excess expenditure in marriage.

IDI with Hanskunwar ILG Karnimata

Hanskunwar of Karnimata ILG came across as a mature person with progressive views. This is also due to her family background. The older members of the family, even two generations back, were in Government service. In the group meeting, she argued strongly for the women to remove their veil.

She is 68 years old and studied up to class VIII. She is from Rajput community. She joined the group late after she came to know about the group from other women. She attends all the meetings of the group. She has had a *khadin* allotted to her. In addition to the physical assets, she also benefitted from the new information she got as a result of going out of her house. The younger women can handle modern technology better. She learnt new technologies from them like operating a smart phone. She became more aware of the education of girls after joining the group. She agreed that there is discrimination between male and female in society. It is changing now. Women could not leave the house earlier. Now they go out easily. The project beneficiaries were earlier chosen by men. Now women are doing this task. The discrimination can be further reduced through female education. There remain social customs that need to be changed. These include *mrityubhoj* and dowry.

IDI with Pooja

Pooja is 21 years old. She studied up to class VIII. After that she have up her studies as the village school was till class VIII only. She keeps the record of the group.

She has benefitted from joining the group. Her family received an AHU from the project. She has received exposure and can now speak openly. She has learnt how to conserve water from the older women in the group.

Her case was also cited by the project team. She gave a good speech at a public function to commemorate four years of the project at the block headquarters.

Women discrimination is reducing. The women are consulted in household matters. Their opinion is taken. Education will go a long way in bringing about equality between men and women.

**Lachha Devi**

Lachha Devi is 66 years old. She is a member of the Karni mata ILG. The group comprises of 12 women of which 10 are Rajput. Lachha Devi belongs to the dholi caste. This is one of the most marginalised castes in the caste hierarchy. She came out as an outspoken woman. She said that she sits together with other caste women, who may belong to the castes that are much higher in the caste hierarchy. Considering the stark nature of caste hierarchy in rural India, this is a big achievement.

IDI with Adarsh ILG Sriram

Adarsh is 17 years old. She is studying in class 12th. She has been a member of the ILG from the very beginning when she was studying in class IX. She would like to go to the college also. Participation in ILG has been helpful to her as she came to know of the old knowledge. How people managed to remain healthy with their lifestyle.

She feels that changes are coming in and discrimination against women is reducing. One custom that she pointed out needs to be changed is the system of purdah, women drawing veil in front of older women and males.

Local pressures

Many times, the project staff faces pressure from local politicians. Two examples of such pressure came up in Bikaner district.

In Tokla village, the sarpanch who belongs to Meghwal caste, demanded a *taanka* for himself. The project did not oblige him. He has threatened the local field worker with consequences.

In Hadda village, the political struggle within two groups has led to stoppage of work on renovation of *naadi*. The *naadi*, a dugout pond to store drinking water is a community asset. Renovation of the *naadi* needs permission from the *sarpanch*. The permission has got stuck because of ongoing political tussle between two groups. There are two opposing groups – one belonging to Rajputs and the other to Meghwals. The *naadi* was earlier named after a person from Rajput community. Then the Meghwal group changed its name. The Rajputs are resisting the name change. In the process, the permission to renovate the *naadi* has got stuck.



Chapter 3

Findings and Conclusions

The Conclusion chapter has three sections. The first section presents the findings derived from (i) the review of project documents and (ii) primary study undertaken. The findings are presented by the key areas that were identified as focus areas for the study in the methodology section. These are

- Learning from each other in the ILGs
- Role of ILGs in project implementation
- Role of ILGs beyond project activities
- Role of ILGs in promoting gender equity

The second section assess these findings against the Help Age framework for ILG approach to see if the elements of the framework have been followed.

The third section assess the project outputs against the CARE framework for gender equity.

3.1 The key findings

Learning from each other, transferring knowledge from older to younger generations

The groups have provided an institutional forum for transfer of knowledge from older generation to new generation. There are several areas that can be cited where this knowledge transfer took place.

Use of traditional seeds : The older generation had a system of preserving their seeds. However, the new generation is more interested in buying seeds from the market. The ILGs have provided a forum where the new generation has learnt the advantages associated with use of old seeds and how to preserve old seeds.

Use of water : The old generation uses very little water for their day-to-day needs. The new generation is more profligate in use of water. This is another area where the new generation learnt the value of economising the use of water for day-to-day needs.



A taanka under EWGL project



Animal husbandry : Animal husbandry is literally the lifeline of the desert. It provides a vital means of livelihood. Even when there is drought, animals continue to provide sustenance. The older generation had very close, and even empathetic, relationship with their animals. To illustrate from a live example, the old woman would ask its cow not to enter agriculture fields while she was busy with household chores. This is missing in the new generation. The ILGs have provided a forum where such knowledge has been transferred across generations. The new generation has learnt from old how to treat the animals better, how to be empathetic towards them.

The transfer of knowledge is not all one way. The older generation is also learning from the young generation.

Technology : The Government of Rajasthan recently launched a large-scale program of distribution of cell phones to women. Six million women all over the state have been given mobile phones. The priority was given to older women, widows and college going young girls. As a result, a large number of older women in the ILGs received mobile phones. They were using these phones for the first time and did not know how to use these. The younger girls taught them how to use mobiles.

Spread of literacy : Almost all the elderly women are illiterate with a few exceptions. The young girls have taught the older women to write their names.

Attitude to girls' education : Education is a key tool of women empowerment. Traditionally girls' education has been looked down upon, especially at higher levels. The ILG have helped in changing such attitude among the elderly women by bringing them into contact with young girls who are enrolled for higher education.

Learning to speak Hindi : The elderly women have also learnt to speak in Hindi. Earlier they would only speak the local dialect. This is also a means of empowerment as Hindi is the official language.

ILGs role in program implementation

The EWGL project had a significant outlay on creating physical assets for drought management and Climate Change Adaptation. Allocation of assets to the deserving beneficiaries is a difficult task that needs to be handled with care. Indian rural society is highly stratified along caste system with the powerful castes having a history of cornering benefits from any public program. Traditionally GRAVIS has undertaken program management in the village with the help of Village Development Committee (VDC) that has representation from all the communities of the village. However, the EWGL project formed Intergenerational Learning Groups (ILGs) to manage the project. In each village, four ILGs have been formed. The names of the beneficiaries are proposed by the ILG. These are then sent to the VDC for final selection.

The VDCs would sometimes differ from the names sent by the ILGs. It would undertake its own verification



and would say that the selected person does not fill the criteria. In such cases, there would be a back and forth amongst the ILG and the VDC till a consensus was reached. This could be a time-consuming process with three four meeting happening before a consensus was arrived at. To get over this problem, the GRAVIS staff started organising the meeting of VDC and ILGs together once every three months.

As part of the study, the field staff was asked to assess proportionate share of ILGs in decision making in the project.

Barmer: The ILG took the lead in distribution of household benefits like *khadins*, *taankas*, *AHUs*, *beris*, and crop demonstration. The community level assets like naadi and pasture were decided by the VDC. Overall, the ratio of ILGs can be put at 70 percent.

Jaisalmer : The role of ILGs in beneficiary selection increased gradually from 30 percent in first year to 70 percent in second year to 85 percent in third year.

Jodhpur : It was reported that 40 percent of beneficiaries are selected by the ILGs.

Bikaner : The role of ILGs in beneficiary selection increased gradually from 10 percent in the first year to 60-80 percent in the last year of the project.

It can be seen that the ILGs have played a significant role in beneficiary selection. Further their role increased gradually. Currently, it stands at 40 percent in one district to a high of 85 percent in another district.

ILGs playing a role beyond project management

An important indicator to understand the sustainability of ILGs beyond the project duration is if the ILGs are active in matters beyond project implementation. This has been the case with a number of ILGs.

In Sinhda village of Phalodi district, three ILG members have been selected as ASHA workers while one has been selected as Anaganwadi Sahayika. Tipu Devi who is president of one of the ILGs is also associated with Rajeevika, a Rajasthan Government program to improve livelihoods of the poor. She was instrumental in starting training by CAZRI, in her village.

In Barmer district, half the ILGs are active. The groups here have focused on education of girls. There were a large number of girls who had passed class X and then dropped out. The ILGs motivated such girls to start studying again and fill forms for Board examination for class XII. Twenty girls joined back their schooling like this.

The ILGs have linked women members employment through Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). The Act promises 100 days of employment to every family. The women used to give their Employment Cards to a local intermediary for a small sum of money. ILG members exhorted the



women to instead undertake work themselves and get paid their full wages. Up to 80 women started getting employment in this manner.

The ILGs have been instrumental in getting the Self-Help Groups to get loans from banks.

Increased access to Government schemes : The welfare state has a host of schemes for the poor and the needy. However, the bureaucratic functioning and control over the local representative institutions by vested interests means that these schemes do not reach their targeted beneficiaries. The ILGs have ensured better access to these schemes. One key such scheme is MGNREGA that promises 100 days of employment to every rural household. This scheme is demand driven as households that need employment can ask for employment at the local panchayat level. While gender neutral, in practice it is women centric. A study in the year 2017 reported that in Rajasthan, women comprised 68 percent of the workforce in MGNREGA.

Selection as workers in Government schemes : The host of welfare schemes have created scope for employment of women, with comparatively not very high level of education, at village level. The opportunities include Anganwadi worker and helper, ASHA sahyogini, mid-day meal cook, and as mate in MGNREGA. The ILGs have facilitated entry of women into these jobs that are low paid but regular. These not only create source of steady income but also empower rural women.

Spread of scientific temperament as witnessed by role in COVID vaccination : Rural India is marked by blind faith and superstition. Women being more uneducated and bound to home are more susceptible to it. The ILGs have provided a forum for spread of scientific knowledge. This is borne out by the positive role played by women during COVID vaccination. Formation of ILGs and the project duration has coincided with the spread of COVID. There was great resistance to COVID vaccination in rural India. All sorts of rumours led to rural communities refusing to get vaccinated. The ILGs played a crucial role in dispelling these myths and women coming forward to get vaccinated.



GRAVIS' health support during COVID

The scientific temperament has been useful in other aspects as well like girls' education that will be covered under other sections.



Advancing Gender Equity

This is a critical outcome. The ILGs been instrumental in advancing gender equity across the three dimensions of 1) Build individual agency; 2) Change gender relations; and 3) Transforming structures.

A number of incidents reveal that the ILGs have been instrumental in advancing gender equity. A number of aspects of individual empowerment have already been cited in previous pages. The ILGs have provided an important forum for removal of purdah

The project organized dissemination events in all the districts where it is working. These were district level public events with large scale participation. At the event in Bikaner, the local Pradhan had been invited as the chief guest. She was a 60-65 years old woman sitting at the dais. Her husband was also present and she had a large veil in front of her face. The GRAVIS worker went to her and said that from whom are you maintain purdah? Everybody is younger to you. Following this, her husband asked her to remove the veil and she sat with her open face at the dais. Encouraged by this, a number of other women sitting in the first row also removed their veils.

In the similar event at Pokran, a large crowd of 100 people participated in the public event. The ILG leader spoke in front of the crowd for 15 minutes. This was a very rare event where a woman addressed a public meeting comprising of both men and women. She spoke very confidently.

It is reported that 50 percent of the ILGs formed are fully functional and active.

The ILGs role in promoting gender equity across all three dimensions are summarised below

Building individual agency :

Increased access to education : Girls are beginning to go for higher education. They are not only going to college but even enrolling for professional courses that would lead to salaried jobs.

Taking up regular employment in Government schemes : As reported under another section, ILGs have facilitated entry of members into Government scheme jobs at village level like Anganwadi worker and helper, ASHA sahyogini, mid-day meal cook, and as mate in MGNREGA

Changing gender roles :

Increase in women's role in household decision making : Women get consulted in important household decisions like marriage, sale and purchase of livestock, collective participation in agriculture and education of girls.

Differences in upbringing : There used to be a difference in the upbringing of sons and daughters within the family. While the boys were sent to school, girls were put to household tasks like cleaning, fetching



water, and collecting cow dung. With girls going to school and even enrolling for higher education, this has begun to change,

Changing equations in the household : Earlier, the daughter in law of the family had to follow the diktats of the mother-in-law. She could not even cook a vegetable without asking her mother-in-law first. This is no more the case. The daughter in law has become powerful and can take her own decisions. Earlier, there was a distinction between the daughter of the house and the daughter-in-law who did not get treated at par. The daughter received favourable treatment. Now a days both get treated equally. This is shown by the fact that many girls continue their education after the marriage. The in-laws encourage their daughters-in-law to continue their education.

Transforming structures :

Reduction in incidence of child marriage : This is a significant development. In desert regions, child marriage was the norm. It was normal to get children married even before they started walking. This is no more the case. It is very rare to come across girls being married before reaching 18 years of age.

Reduction in ghonghat pratha : Drawing of veil – ghonghat – is a very common practice. Women remain under veil not only before strangers and elderly male but even before the elderly women in the confines of the household. This is beginning to change though it is not disappeared yet.

Enrolment of girls in higher education: Education is a key means of empowerment. Girls' education lags behind boys. Even when sent to school in the village, they are normally withdrawn after primary level if there is no school for higher classes in the village. This has begun to change. The state Government has now opened schools till class XII in all panchayats. The girls are now enrolling for higher education and even going to study in college.

Women able to go out for meetings and to market place on their own : Women remained confined to their homes. They would only go to their agriculture fields. Now they are able to come to ILG meetings, go to market on their own.

Property rights for women : One source of powerlessness by women is that they seldom own any property. Agriculture land is the main property in rural areas. However, land records are only in the name of the males of the household. Legally the daughters have an equal share in family property. However historically instances of land being registered in the name of daughters is very rare. This is now beginning to change. In some communities and villages, land has been registered in the name of the women.

3.2 Assessing the Findings against the Help Age framework for ILG approach

The findings given in the previous sections are analysed against the HELPAGE framework to determine how well the project has followed the IGL approach



Understand power dynamics : Formation of women alone groups in a patriarchal and caste driven society requires an acute understanding of the local power dynamics. The project staff has factored in the power structure of the village to decide on the location of the ILGs in the village to ensure that while all communities get represented, the marginal communities have higher representation.

Understand context : The field staff has prior experience of the area and understands the context well. It has given priorities to the communities that reside in the dhanis as these are more vulnerable. It also ensured that the marginalized communities have a higher representation in the ILGs as shown in the previous section.

The above two elements can be explained with the factors that the project staff had to consider while undertaking ILG group formation that are summarised below

- **Dispersed population in small hamlets/ dhanias :** The settlement pattern in desert areas is marked by small settlements in the fields called dhanis. The nature of agriculture is such that farmers have to stay close to their fields during the agriculture season. This creates a problem in getting people together for a meeting, and even more so for women.
- **Women not allowed to go out on their own :** While women go out of their homes to work in their fields, they are not allowed to go out on their own for meetings.
- **Young women not allowed to go out :** ILGs have teen age girls as members. The families are especially reluctant to let their young daughters go out.
- **Casteism :** The rural Indian society is highly stratified by caste. It is very difficult to get different caste members to sit together. While some of the ILGs are homogenous in caste composition, some are heterogenous.

Putting gender justice at the centre : The ILGs comprising of women members only were the community groups that mediated the project. The ILGs played critical role in selection of beneficiaries as discussed earlier. Gender justice forms an important component of the project. All ILG members have received gender training.

Clarify your role : The project staff has played a facilitatory role in project implementation.

Don't start from scratch : The EWGL project has aligned itself with the ongoing initiatives. The two major initiatives in the field area of EWGL are

Rajasthan Grameen Ajeevika Vikas Parishad (Rajeevika) project of Rajasthan Government : The project seeks to enhance the economic opportunities and empowerment of rural poor with focus on women and marginalized groups in Rajasthan. The project is operationalised through community institutions with a focus on women's self-help groups. As part of the project, Government promoted Self Help Groups in large numbers in villages. In nearly all project areas of EWGL, Rajeevika promoted SHGs are present. However, the project is not very active now with reduced funding. The project has sought to build



synergy with this program by including four SHGs in each village in the project training activities. It has also used the women cadres that came up under the project as illustrated by the case study of Tipu Ji of Rama Bai ILG.

NABARD sponsored CAZRI project training on women farmers in agriculture and animal husbandry: Central Arid Zone Research Institute (CAZRI) undertakes 30 days training of women farmers in select villages. The participants are given half day training continuously for 30 days in the village itself. The training covers a range of topics including farming practices, animal husbandry, and impact of climate change. GRAVIS team has engaged with the CAZRI training teams in selection of participants.

Involve diverse members of the community from the outset : The project staff has factored in the diverse composition of village population while forming the ILGs. As seen in the chart, all communities are represented in the ILGs. The ILGs by definition have to include women from across also age groups. The project has also included single woman household and disabled. To illustrate the Bhawani Mata ILG of village comprises of Rajput women. However, a woman from the dholi caste is also included in the group.

Pay attention to who leads and who can lead: Identification of leaders is critical to formation of a group. The project staff has this ability. That is how it was able to form such a large number of groups in a short time span. Every group has one or more members with leadership qualities.

Start with the premise that everyone has a skill and some knowledge to transfer: Women across the age range have an opportunity to contribute to group functioning.

Use a rights-based approach as a compass : A human-rights based approach means that all forms of discrimination in the realisation of rights must be prohibited, prevented and eliminated. It also means that priority should be given to people in the most marginalised or vulnerable situations who face the biggest barriers to realising their rights. The project has a rights-based approach. The marginal communities are present in ILGs in a proportion higher than their proportion in the population. The groups have also taken up rights issues like right to education for girl child, right of women to property.

Go beyond participation to meaningful engagement : The role played by ILGs in activities beyond project shows that the project has secured meaningful engagement. Women have emerged as active leaders from the group.

Activities should be fun! The ILGs have acquired a dynamic of their own. From a time, when had to be pushed to join the meetings, a time has come where they look forward to the meetings. In fact, when the study author was making the field visit, the ILG members were discussing with the project staff possibility of organizing an exposure visit that will let them go out of their villages to another place. The study author also observed the close personal relationship that the field staff had with the ILG members. They discussed even personal details like the status of children and what is going on in the households.



Think 'structural' changes : The ILGs have promoted structural change as brought out in the previous section. The groups have taken up issues like the ghonghat pratha, decision making in the household, domestic violence, migration.

Track your progress and measure change : The project has built in mechanisms for tracking progress. Every year an Impact Assessment is carried out that tracks the progress and recommends steps for follow up. So far three such assessments have been carried out.

Overall, the project has scored well on all the indicators listed in the HelpAge framework.

3.3 Gender Marker to Assess Incorporation of Gender Justice in the Project

Programme / Project relationship to Gender Roles and Relations

Did the project activities challenge existing gender norms? Or work within those norms?

While project activities may not have challenged all gender norms, some have been challenged. These include holding women alone meetings, taking women out of the village for trainings, and encouraging women to have a bigger role in public sphere.

Gender Analysis

Has a gender analysis been conducted that provides information about differences in the lives of women, men, boys and girls in this context (either a project-specific gender analysis or using data from other sources)?

A gender analysis has not been carried out.

Integrating Gender Analysis into Project Activities

Are the project activities designed to meet the gender differences identified in the gender analysis? Can services provided by the project be safely and inclusively accessed by all participants?

Project has undertaken gender training that addresses gender inequity. It focuses exclusively on women through formation on women alone ILGs. In fact, the physical benefits that are allocated are in the name of the women members of the household.

Are there project activities to advance gender equality in ALL THREE dimensions of gender equality: 1) Build individual agency; 2) Change gender relations; AND 3) Transform structures?

As described before, project activities have advanced gender equality in all three dimensions.

Participation in project processes



Meaningful Participation : *In this context, 'meaningful' requires the careful design of activities, structures, or mechanisms to provide real opportunities for participation by marginalised groups. For example, this means going beyond the inclusion of marginalised groups in a meeting to ensure that those groups have the confidence to speak out and that others will listen to their views.*

As shown in the Bhavani Mata ILG, project has been able to ensure enrolment of women from marginalized communities in an ILG where dominant community members are the majority. The IDI of the member from marginalized community shows that she is able to participate with confidence and with full equality.

- **Transparent Information-Sharing**

The project provides information to target groups so that they understand project initiatives, can participate in and benefit from them, and can hold GRAVIS to account.

A review of the proceedings of the ILG meetings shows that relevant information is shared in a transparent manner with all participants.

- **Involvement in Decision-Making**

The project provides equal and meaningful opportunity for project participants to be involved in decision making at various stages of the programme and project cycle.

- **Responsive Feedback Mechanism:**

The ILG meetings provide an open transparent forum where everybody can participate.

Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

- **Sex and Age Disaggregated Data (SADD) :** Data that is collected and analysed by male, female, and different age groups.

The ILG membership data is age disaggregated. Using this data, the Impact Assessments pointed out that the membership of young women is to be increased

- **Protection Risks and Needs**

The project staff is aware of the risk and ready to respond to the same as these arise. The political pressure on the project staff is documented above

- **Analysis of Unintended Consequences**

Changing role of women will have consequences man sitting on the outside of the Shr Ram ILG meeting commented that the time is near when they will have to start cooking food. Though said in jest, the comment captures a changing reality.

- **Changing Gender Roles and Relations**

The field study and the project reports document that gender roles and relations are changing rapidly. Girls are going for higher education, taking up public jobs, and participating in public activities in ever greater numbers. The dress code, the language, the means of transport – all are changing rapidly.



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Glossary

Dhaani: hamlet of the village

Ghoonghat: drawing of veil by women over their faces

Khadin: rainwater harvesting structure in agriculture field

Mrityubhoj: feast given at death of a person

Naadi: community pond

Taanka: water harvesting structure for drinking water

Abbreviations

MGNREGA: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

Rajeevika: Rajasthan Grameen Aajeevika Vikas Parishad

SHG: Self Help Group

VDC: Village Development Committee

ILG: Intergenerational Learning Group

GRAVIS: Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti



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GRAVIS is a leading Non-Governmental Organization working in rural India in the States of Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, and the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh. Since its inception in 1983. GRAVIS has worked in over 2,000 villages reaching a population of over 2 million and has established over 4,000 Community Based Organizations (CBOs). GRAVIS believes in participatory community development that blends traditional knowledge and modern sciences and promotes equality.

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